DISSERTATION

SHE BEGAT THIS - A BLACK GIRL MIXTAPE: EXPLORING RACIALIZED AND

GENDERED PORTRAITS OF BLACK WOMEN PRESIDENTS AT HISTORICALLY

BLACK COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.

- James Baldwin

Black women have always been in the forefront leading change and supporting the attainment of education in the academy. They have been the greatest hidden figures. This study strives to nuance the experiences of Black women presidents at historically Black colleges and universities who are often overlooked and ignored. The purpose of this study is to explore how Black women make meaning of their lived experiences regarding race and gender as they laid a foundation towards a pathway to the presidency at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Using portraiture methodology, I illustrate how Black women have navigated and resisted the challenges presented by patriarchal leadership positions in the academy. I employ critical race theory (CRT) and Black feminist thought (BFT) to sculpt a critical lens that interrogates and problematizes Black women's racialized and gendered experiences. Crenshaw (1989) attributes these differences to intersectionality, a term used to address the marginalization of Black women due to their dual social identities. Centering the experiences of Black women HBCU presidents provided insight to the context in which Black women experience and navigate racism, bigotry, and patriarchy within the academy. The findings presented developed into four themes:1) the placation of whiteness as a standard 2) operating at the margins of Blackness 3) the surveillance of Black bodies and 4) resisting systems of patriarchy. Decolonizing the generational trauma that stems years of systematic racism and a patriarchal higher education

institution will prove to illuminate the challenges and triumphs they experienced while leading

from the president seat.

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"Every part of me is a vision of a portrait of Mona, Mona Lisa. Every part of me is

beautiful and I finally see I'm a work of art, I'm a Masterpiece."

Masterpiece (Mona Lisa) – Jasmine Sullivan

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- *Asé (I am because you are)*

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the wonderfully and fearfully made Black women in my family particularly my mom, Debra Ann Ford Ramsey and Grandmother, Jean Derouselle Ford and all the Black women who are still fighting in the struggle.

#BelieveBlackWomen #CiteASista

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TRACK 1: INTRODUCTION

The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them

- Ida B. Wells

I always think about the duality of being a Black[1] woman living in this world. No matter how I decide to start my day, the world reminds me of how my identities continuously cause me to think about how I show up in all that I do. My Blackness is one of my most salient identities; it truly defines who I am and how I view the world. Consequently, my gender identity also provides an added layer of nuance and uniqueness that not many people can relate to. When I think about the lessons that I have learned about being a Black woman, many of those lessons were lessons that I picked up outside of the classroom and academia. My mother and other Black women who influenced my life taught me many life lessons. However, many missed lessons could not be taught by my community, and I had to learn about them independently. Miseducation or unlearning takes place when the world controls the narrative of how Black women made meaning of our experiences. This dissonance is contrary to what Black women are traditionally socialized to think about their identities as a Black woman.

In 1998, when I entered my first year of college, Lauryn Hill coined her critically acclaimed album, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*. This album carved out a pathway for me to

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[1]Throughout this paper terms such as Black(s), Negro(es) and African American(s) are used interchangeably to denote people of African descent or descending from the African Diaspora who are citizens of the United States of America. The determination of when a specific term is used depends on the context of the discussion as well as the period being referenced.

think about my Blackness and femininity through the lens of hip hop. Until this album, many of

the women portrayed in hip hop music were not showing up articulating knowledge and

challenging the status quo the way Lauryn was able to. Every song on the album spoke to a

different aspect of my life that I was trying to navigate blindingly. Many of the topics Lauryn

covers speak specifically to a Black woman's experience that I could relate to. One song in

particular, "Everything is Everything," discusses the inequities Black women experience as soon

as we are born. The title of the song "*Everything is Everything*" comes from a term of

endearment, meaning that *what is meant to be will be*, suggesting change will happen eventually,

but for the time being, to just deal with the challenge at hand. The lyrics say:

> Everything is everything
>
> What is meant to be, will be
>
> After winter, must come spring
>
> Change, it comes eventually
>
> I wrote these words for everyone who struggles in their youth
>
> Who won't accept deception, instead of what is truth
>
> It seems we lose the game
>
> Before we even start to play
>
> Who made these rules? (Who made these rules?)
>
> We're so confused (We're so confused)
>
> Easily led astray
>
> - Lauryn Hill, "Everything is Everything" by Lauryn Hill & Johari Newton © Sony/ATV
>
> Music Publishing Ltd.

These lyrics suggest Black women are playing on an unlevel playing field, with rules that have been decided for Black women. A Black woman's survival depends on her ability to use all the economic, social, and cultural capital afforded to us from the larger society and community. The paradox lies in that these resources do not consider the multiple jeopardies Black women endure. Particularly, leadership within our community at historically Black colleges and universities with constituents that I share identities with, yet inequities still arise. The leveling of this playing field is the basis of where this study began. I am compelled to discuss the experiences Black women have in leadership.

Understanding the Landscape for Black women

Working in higher education exposed me to a career path that allowed me to imagine myself as a leader differently. Seeing other Black women in leadership working throughout the academy inspired me to aspire to be seen in the same light. Many of the Black women I encountered were vice presidents, deans, and directors leading the charge and serving as agents of change on their campuses. While Black women were leading and impacting change on campuses, I observed Black women playing more of a supporting role in the hierarchy and fabric of leadership in higher education but not occupying the president's seat. While this could have been discouraging, at the time, it intrigued me. I immediately became enthralled with the possibility of being a Black woman who could shatter the "glass ceiling" and overcome the "concrete ceiling" theories to become a historically Black college or university (HBCU)[2] president. Barnes (2017) uses the metaphor concrete ceiling (as opposed to glass ceiling) to

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[2]HBCU refers to historically Black colleges and universities. Founded in the early 1800s as a place for education for Blacks prior to integration and Jim Crow.

describe the fixed barriers encountered by African American women in their pursuit of organizational leadership.

Women and minorities in the academy face common barriers to leadership comparable to their corporate counterparts, including homosocial reproduction (Shorter – Gooden, 2014), glass ceiling effects (Williams, 2014), and intersectionality (Jackson & Harris, 2007). For women, the glass ceiling allows you to see the goals to which Black women aspire to while still being held back from achieving them. While the sticky floor forces Black women to always combat misogyny, microaggressions, and bigoted ideologies that hold Black women back from progress. This contrast led me to research how many Black women held the position of president at a HBCU. I was not shocked to learn that of the 101 accredited historically Black colleges and universities, only 3.7% had ever had a Black woman hold this seat (NCES, 2020). This juxtaposition between how hard I saw Black women working versus seeing them as the vital leaders caused me to question, what barriers existed that kept them from attaining this coveted position? How could I be successful in attaining this goal when there was a scarcity of Black women who could accomplish this feat?

The Margins of Blackness

Throughout my career, I have had the opportunity to lead in different ways. Starting my career at an HBCU was both rewarding and fulfilling while presenting challenges that tested my ability to exercise my emotional intelligence levels. In 2018, I began a new leadership position, working in an HBCU environment, in which I felt safe and accepted partly due to one of my long-time mentors hiring me for the job. Almost immediately, I was met with challenges and dissent. During the first seven months, I had six different human resources grievances opened on

me, questioning my leadership decisions, and accusing me of stealing money from the university. There were individual professional staff members inciting students to write emails to the university president and vice president of student affairs asking for my termination, citing that I was not a "good fit" for the university. All the claims were proven unfounded, but each situation took a toll on my emotional, physical, and mental well-being.

I recall driving into work one day, like I always did, dreading having to go. Every morning I drove past a memorial set up next to where Sandra Bland was initially apprehended in a traffic stop in Prairie View, Texas. I could not help but think about her, which was not different than any other morning, but on this particular morning, my thought was, *"They kill Black women here, with no disregard."* Later that day, I received a call from a colleague and friend, who happened to be a former employee at the institution. I had reached out to him to gain insight into how I could make an inroad with the team that seemed not to want me there. In my last effort to make sense of this whole experience, he divulged to me his story. In the next hour, I found out why I was being shunned and ostracized by my people. At that moment, it hit like a ton of bricks. An overwhelming sense of betrayal and brokenness filled my head, a feeling that was so familiar. At that moment, I had a range of emotions from anger, fear, resentment, and fatigue, and felt betrayed. I had been left to fend for myself for the past year, with no explanation or compassion for what I was experiencing. All I could do was think about how and why I was drawn to the HBCU community in the first place. Being in community with those you share culture, values, and history is empowering and brought me the utmost joy. This community poured into, fortified and restored pride in who I am. Being a part of the HBCU community brought a certain solace that felt familiar, it felt like a place where I could be comfortable to be

myself. It felt like home. The betrayal felt when values do not align with actions had been the trajectory of my experiences. I immediately thought about Sandra Bland and how I had observed other Black women at the university say things like, *"She deserved to die"* or that she *"brought that situation upon herself"* suggesting Black women somehow deserve this level of discrimination and invalidation. This was a place in which Black women were not believed, barely surviving, and being dismissed at the drop of a hat. A place where I once felt safe and protected, immediately felt unfamiliar and isolated.

Never have I ever felt so alone, afraid, and lost. I could not help having an overwhelming feeling of fatigue. The fatigue I have experienced from day one in the field of higher education. Fatigue from the unspoken competition that exists between Black people. I could not help but think about what Collins named about the "outsider within" concept of Black feminism. Collins (1986) asserts that an outsider is named so they, by nature of gender, ethnicity (in the case of Black women, both) and other factors regulate them to the margins of society, while at the same time they have the privilege to traverse and occupy spaces that allow them insider knowledge.

At first, I did not recognize it, but it began to show its ugly face via backhanded compliments and through disingenuous conversations. The kind of small talk during which you know someone is not even listening to what you say. It caused major confusion for my subconscious mind. I began to question my validity in terms of feeling as if I was not a part of the community, that I automatically assumed would be accepting of me. I began to take notice of so many red flags. I noticed how negative behavior between Black men and women was normalized and accepted. I thought about the inconsistencies that were apparent in the actions and behaviors between Black men and women. This was very reminiscent of what I had

experienced growing up. Being Black and a woman comes with a tension of finding ways to let your light shine while not allowing your light outshine others. This cognitive dissonance is a part of the long list of lessons formal education does not prepare you for. This was a lesson I had to learn from life experiences that no one could prepare me for.

I begin this study with a brief portrait of who I am as a Black woman scholar-practitioner and how I came to understand how race and gender have impacted my life's journey. Having worked at six historically Black colleges since I began my career in 2004, I have found my passion lies in fortifying and promoting Black students' quality of education at HBCUs. Although I am passionate about working at HBCUs and with HBCU students, my experiences were layered with a dissonance that came with being a Black woman.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore how Black women made meaning of their lived experiences with race and gender as they laid a foundation towards a pathway to the presidency at historically Black colleges and universities. Using critical race theory and Black feminist thought I focused on demonstrating how Black women have navigated and resisted the challenges presented by patriarchal leadership positions in the academy.

This portraiture study used Black feminist epistemologies to provide a critical lens to negotiate and problematize how Black women rose to the highest level of leadership. Black women have always been at the forefront of leading change and supporting education attainment in the academy. They have been the most significant hidden figures within higher education. This study strived to nuance the experiences of Black women presidents who are often overlooked and ignored. Utilizing a narrative approach to portraiture allows me to bring to life

the mosaic of Black women's journey to the HBCU presidential role. Black feminist thought and critical race theory was used to frame theoretical perspectives and provide an understanding that actualizes these stories and speaks truth to power.

Research Questions

Gasman (2006, 2011) outlines past research that addressed HBCU presidents' roles and characterized them as power-hungry, dictatorial, and incompetent. This negative connotation is why my study is essential. The unveiling of lived experiences that informs alternative perspectives. The main issue with the scholarship that exists is that it has a one-sided perception of how Black women show up in these roles. Assuming Black women in higher education are seen as a monolith, shortchanges their experiences and does not illustrate a full picture. The purpose of this study was to explore how Black women made meaning of their lived experiences with race and gender as they laid a foundation towards a pathway to the HBCU presidency. Thus, the study used tenets of CRT and BFT to connect how multigenerational trauma has had adverse effects on the Black community, particularly Black women in leadership at HBCUs. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. In what ways do Black women HBCU presidents make meaning of their lived experiences in relationship to leadership and their journey to the pursuit of the presidency?

2. How do race and gender play a role in pursuing the presidency for Black women presidents' at HBCUs?

   a. How do Black women HBCU presidents navigate the relationship between race and gender with a patriarchal culture within higher education?

These questions have been formed using the information gathered by the literature related to Black women that have led at HBCUs.

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) argued our system of white over-color ascendancy serves important purposes for the dominant group, making racism difficult to address or cure because it is not acknowledged. This lack of acknowledgement for Black women in higher education has become the norm. Black women's experiences have been marginalized and constructed through a lens of whiteness. The standard of whiteness being used as a benchmark or prerequisite for success upholds the ideals of white supremacy that remain constant in the ways Black women are socialized. Thus, the use of CRT to examine the effects of how power and privilege aided in the demise of the Black family. Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS) is a concept developed by Dr. Joy DeGruy (2004) to illustrate the adverse effects of institutionalized racism in the lives of Black Americans. have had in leadership. According to DeGruy one of the most insidious and pervasive symptoms of PTSS is our adoption of the slave master's value system. "This value system's foundation is belief that white, and all things associated with whiteness are superior and that Black and all things associated with Blackness are inferior" (p. 116). The adoption of whiteness has been institutionalized and embedded that Black people have been socialized to think about Blacks. PTSS was used to provide an understanding of how institutionalized and systematic injustices have been taught and enter woven in all aspects of our world. These multigenerational injustices have caused adverse consequences on how Black women are perceived in leadership and has a direct effect on the types of opportunities Black women are able to pursue.

Significance

A recent review of the extant literature on Black women college and university presidents revealed that very few Black women hold executive leadership positions in higher education in

the present day (ACE 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018; Clark-Holland, 2014; Gamble & Turner, 2015; Humphrey, 2012; Jackson & Harris, 2007; Jones, 2013; Walker, 2016). ACE (2013) noted less than 10% of all senior-level administrator positions at four-year institutions are held by women of color (p. 12). This small percentage is a true reflection of how Black women have been limited historically. Most of the HBCUs' research done about HBCUs has been written and analyzed by scholars who may have not ever attended or worked at an HBCU. Collins (2000) argued, "Individuals who have lived through their experiences are more credible than those who have merely read or thought about such experiences" (p. 276). While existing research has been well thought out, it neglects to include a perspective from a researcher that has attended and worked at an HBCU. This perspective is vital in telling the stories that HBCUs have produced historically. It was important to me as an HBCU alumnus, advocate, and administrator to add to the fabric of HBCU scholarship and tell the stories of Black women's journey stories at HBCUs. The focus on Black women presidents was simple. There is a need to amplify Black women's presidential stories because they are not being researched or told. White men and Black men have overwhelmingly been chosen as HBCU presidents for years. Until recently—within the last 20 years—women have rarely had the opportunity to lead.

Black women's liberation has traditionally been met with opposition and divisiveness. Lorde (1978) recounts, "There's nothing to be compared with how you feel when you're cut cold by your own. But we (Black women) refuse to choose between our cultural identity and sexual identity, between our race and our femaleness" (p. 102). The constant messaging that Black women are inferior or not worthy of leading is the narrative that history has taught us. Education has been used as a means to an end for Black people over time.

Choosing to attend college was a significant milestone in my life, and it meant the perception that success was automatically assumed for me. Many other Black students, specifically Black women, experience "high expectations" or "pressure to succeed." That pressure left no room for outlets. Music became my saving grace and provided an outlet for me to process the experiences that I internalized. So, I began listening to mixtapes. Within Hip-Hop culture, the mixtape was used to compile different music styles by various artists who collaborate on a project. Mixtapes allowed artists to bring multiple styles and energies together to tell an overarching story. My use of this technique is similar. Each president's story is illustrated by utilizing music as a backdrop to outline lived experiences. Each chapter (track) of this dissertation will combine co-constructed experiences of how Black women survive and thrive in a system not designed for them to be seen or heard. Realizing there is a void in the scholarship that actualizes the experiences of Black women leaders at HBCUs is the primary reason which informs this study.

The Problem of Inequity

Until recently, research on Black women presidents has focused on experiences of Black women attaining the seat of the president. These experiences for the most part, have not been specifically focused on admonishing the HBCU experience. HBCUs are the foundation of the Black educational experience. Historically Black colleges and universities began educating Black people when access was not granted to all institutions. HBCUs were created to provide access to higher education for African Americans when their participation in other educational institutions was limited (Palmer, 2010, p. 767). At the time of this study, there were 105 HBCUs located in 19 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (Department of

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Education, 2014; 2017). Of these 105 HBCUs, 51 were public institutions, and 49 were private non-profit institutions. Also, at the time of research, there were fewer than 30 Black women who held the position of president at an HBCU. Admission is the gateway to provide an opportunity for higher education, but that is not the only factor that aids in success. Herndon and Hirt (2004) asserted there are multiple forms of support needed for Black students to succeed in college.

Since the early 1990s, sixty percent or more of associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees were earned by women at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Hoffman, 1996). At HBCUs between 1994–1995, women earned more than half of the first-professional degrees, and in 1999–2000, women earned more than half of the doctoral degrees (Provasnik & Shafer, 2008). Although Black women have disproportionately matriculated college and obtained advanced degrees, Black men have a higher rate of being in administrative leadership than Black women at predominantly white institutions and HBCUs alike. According to Freeman and Gasman (2014), research about HBCU presidents is often left out of large research projects related to college presidents (p. 3). This gap in the literature pertains to Black woman presidents disproportionately. Black women have been persistently subjected to measures of value and achievement that have been set and monitored by the dominant culture (Royster, 2000). Black women are held to a different standard and passed over for leadership roles frequently in the academy, and more specifically at HBCUs. To better understand why these inequities, persist, a brief examination of the historical context from which Black women have navigated follows.

Centering Blackness

Labels are not new to minoritized[3] or Indigenous populations. Classifying and

categorizing have been common practices to which women of color have grown accustomed.

However, as normalized these behaviors have become; it still complicates the need to

compartmentalize and separate people based on their features. Naming and tagging have been

politicized actions since the start of colonization. From the onset of the slave trade, Black people

have had labels imposed upon them, such as colored, negro, nigga, and Black, to control and

define who Black people are. Defining Blackness early on was seen as a tactic to focus on

identification based on outward appearance. But in 1988, Jesse Jackson proposed the term

African American to disassociate with the identification of skin color and move towards more of

an affiliation of our connections to the continent of Africa. This proposal was met with much

dissent. For Blacks, this was not the first time that a call to consciousness was made to define

who Black people are and what Black people should be called. At the time, many prominent

Black leaders called for a shared governance model where Blacks would negotiate the sharing of

power with whites[4].

The phrase "Black Power" was a call to action asserting a rebellion against assimilation

and rejection of integration as it was defined in the 1960s. Martin (1991) claimed Stokely

Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton believed Black people had not suffered as individuals but

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[3]The term minoritized is used to describe individuals that identify as non-white. Use of
minoritized instead of the term minority suggests that we are underrepresented, less than or not
equal to, when in fact, we have been historically excluded.
[4]The term white is used to describe a social construct applied to human beings. Whiteness is a
constantly shifting boundary separating those who are entitled to certain privileges from those
whose exploitation and vulnerability to violence is justified by their not being white (Kivel,
1996, p. 19). With this being said, white will not be capitalized in order to remove the power and
privilege associated with this norm.

as a collective group; therefore, "our liberation lies in group action" (p. 85). Black was seen as confrontational and militant, quite the contrast to the imposed negro label put upon Black people through colonization. The Black Power movement was among the first to recognize Black women as being in the forefront for change and positively taking the lead. Women like Angela Davis, Assata Shakur, Elaine Brown, and Kathleen Cleaver set a new expectation that Black women had a voice to overcome the movement. Along with their voices, they brought perspective, a woman's right to choose, think on her own and make decisions freely has consistently been up for debate. The juxtaposition for Black women during the height of the movement, was reconciling with how to have allegiance to African heritage while still fighting for what is right and just.

The choice to refer to Black women as Black, instead of African American is a deliberate choice. These terms caused some much dissension among Blacks due to the effects of colonization on slavery. Being disconnected from your original homeland, and barred from understanding or knowing your cultural, traditions and history forces the question of identity. For Black women, it is important to be identified and affirmed for our greatness. Affirming Blackness instills pride and establishes a point of commonality where women can begin to organize and galvanize toward a cause collectively.

Summary

This study aimed to illuminate and deconstruct the racialized and gendered experiences that Black women have holding the position of president at various HBCUs. Recognizing the amount of literature published related to Black women in leadership is scarce, this study adds to the scholarship and inform the wealth of experiences that are systematically silenced at co-opted.

Using critical race theory from Delgado and Stefancic (2001) and Bell (2004) with Patricia Hill Collin's (1993) Black feminist thought I discuss how Black women have navigated and resisted the challenges presented by patriarchal leadership positions in the academy. DeGruy's (2004) theory of post traumatic slave syndrome will be used as an added layer of nuance to take a deeper dive into multigenerational trauma that has been caused for Black Americans.

Chapter two provides an overview of historically Black colleges and universities origin and historical context in how these institutions provided a pathway for Blacks to reach educational attainment. Chapter two also contains detailed history of the role of the college president in the academy while also highlighting the themes of cultivating Black women leaders, the perception of Black women's leadership and how Black women negotiate systems of power. These insights shed light on how Black women have forged a pathway to the presidency while navigating the lack of preparation, hurdling barriers to the presidency, and overcoming systematic patriarchy.

TRACK 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The following review of the literature will give insights into the Black women who built foundations of higher education and leadership at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). These women happened to have held one of the most prestigious positions in the academy, the presidency. Consequently, this study aimed to provide understanding as to how Black women have traversed the role of the president at HBCUs. Traditionally, women have not held these coveted positions within the academy which is why it is important to highlight the accomplishments and challenges that Black women have faced while navigating these positions. The theoretical perspectives used to frame the literature posited to show how power, cultural norms and privilege still show up in the academy. The review included a discussion about Black women's evolution and matriculation in the academy, subordinate behaviors to uphold Black manhood and pipeline and preparation, or lack thereof for Black women in the presidential role. This literature review outlines the history of HBCUs, the role of the president in the academy and the Black woman's trajectory in the academy at HBCUs. The discussion will entail a brief overview of HBCUs' history, while exploring Black women's pathways towards the presidency. Exploration around Delgado and Stefancic (2001) CRT and Collins (2000) BFT are the theoretical concepts that framed and informed this study highlighting how Black women leaders' development came about in the academy, while outlining the professional advancement towards the presidency. Commodore (2015) explained higher education has seen an uptick with Black women gaining opportunities to reach the seat of the presidency at HBCUs, but the question still

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begs what challenges and/or successes have Black women presidents experienced on their quest to do so? Research exposing the challenges and triumphs Black women endure to maintain or obtain these prestigious positions is outlined and examined. Subsequently, a discussion on the underlying competition interculturally will lay the foundation for the motivation for further research on their experiences. The following will outline a subset of major themes derived from a review of literature on the topic of Black women in leadership at HBCUs. From a review of the scholarly work on Black women in higher education the focus is on three themes including educational attainment, cultural socialization, and exploration of the pathways to leadership outlining how Black women have attained leadership status in the academy. The following questions guided this research study:

1. In what ways do Black women HBCU presidents make meaning of their lived experiences in relationship to leadership and their journey to the pursuit of the presidency?

2. How do race and gender play a role in pursuing the presidency for Black women presidents at HBCUs?

   a. How do Black women HBCU presidents navigate the relationship between race and gender with a patriarchal culture within higher education?

A final discussion on how Black women in leadership have been left out of the research establishes a sufficient cause for the motivation and further research on their experiences.

Historical Overview of Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Traditionally, higher education has been used as a tool or pathway to create opportunities for success. Our history informs us that higher education historically has not always been

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accessible for all people, mainly People of Color[5]. Commodore (2015) explained HBCUs have

proven to be important vehicles towards upward mobility of African Americans, first generation,

low-income students. The richness of the higher education system is reflected in the diverse

nature of how higher education can be attained. Historically, Black colleges and universities

added to the unique fabric of our higher education system in several ways. They are different

from Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) due to the nature of their founding. HSIs gain their

distinction due to the number of students that identify as Hispanic who enroll in the institution

(Strayhorn, 2008). HBCUs were established in a post-Civil War era to educate Blacks. HBCUs

were established during the era of Jim Crow discrimination, thus educating Blacks at a time

when access was not granted to all institutions. HBCUs were created for formerly enslaved

people to learn how to read and write and therefore provided access to higher education for

Blacks when their participation in other educational institutions was limited (Palmer, 2010).

Prior to the Civil War, few universities espoused the mission and goal of training and educating

Black people. Established in 1837, as an elementary school and high school for the education of

formerly enslaved people, Cheney State Training School now known as Cheney University is

coined as the first and oldest HBCU (Bennett, 1988; Roebuck & Murty, 1993). However,

Ashmum Institute (Harper, Patton & Woodsen, 2009) now known as Lincoln University of

Pennsylvania, was founded in 1854 and is noted for being the first baccalaureate degree granting

HBCU institution followed by Wilberforce College in 1856. These colleges were among the first

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[5]The term People of Color is used to refer to individuals who identify with being non-white. Referring to individuals as minorities or underrepresented equates with populations being thought of as less than or oppressed or deficient. The term is capitalized to empower those populations and center their existence.

to actualize the possibility of Blacks being formally educated in the United States. Previous scholarship demonstrates that HBCU research largely asserts that HBCU communities foster environments that allow their students to successfully integrate into the academic and social contexts of undergraduate student life through significant faculty contact, opportunities for campus leadership and collegial peer interactions (Mobley & Johnson, 2015). While strides were being established for the education for formerly enslaved people, most were men, while women still were fighting for educational attainment.

Black Women and HBCUs

Mary Jane Patterson is known for becoming the first Black woman college graduate from Oberlin College in 1862 (Harper et al., 2009). This event alone denotes progress, especially during an era of inadequate treatment of men and women, let alone women of color. Mary McLeod Bethune holds a unique place in the patchwork of higher education history. Bethune is coined as the founder and first president of Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls in Daytona, Florida in 1904 (McCluskey, 1991). Bethune remained the school's president and leader as it combined with the Cookman Institute for Men in 1923, later becoming Bethune Cookman College or Bethune Cookman University as we know it today. Bethune causes a wrinkle in the trajectory of higher education universities with this presidency. Up until her appointment, white men dominated as presidents and principals of all historically Black colleges and universities. White founders and financial supporters were reluctant to entrust control of the institutions to Black people, therefore the schools continued to be governed almost exclusively by white administrators and teachers until the 1930s and 1940s (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Anderson,

1988; Gasman, 2007; Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Access was specifically extended to Blacks through the passing of the Second Morrill Act of 1890.

Legislation effects on HBCU development

According to Brown and Davis (2001) recognized funding for HBCUs was made possible through the passing of the Second Morrill Act of 1890 sanctioning land grant use for the establishment of colleges that supported education for Blacks. This legislation legalized the segregation of Black and white public institutions and empathized a curricular focus on mechanics, agriculture, and industrial arts. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* court case of 1896 ruled states could continue the racial segregation of public schools if and only if accommodations and facilities were equal (Anderson, 1988). One would posit that HBCU institutions would benefit from this ruling, but unfortunately public HBCUs remained disproportionately underfunded. Sekora (1968) reported even after Plessy v. Ferguson, white land grant institutions were still receiving state appropriations at the rate of 26 times more than Black colleges.

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that racial segregation, including the operation of "separate but equal" facilities in public education would no longer be legal (Brown, Bertrand & Donahoo, 2001). This ruling did not immediately affect HBCUs, and Blacks until President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The act highlighted Title VI which provided that no person in the United States, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance (Malaney, 1987, p. 17). Title VI also restricted the distribution of federal funds to segregated schools.

The GI Bill and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were two other federally funded acts which created inroads for several Blacks to attend college (Wilson, 1994). As a result of this legislation and funding, the number of historically Black colleges and universities increased drastically. By 1960, 130 historically Black colleges had been established. Although not all of them have maintained accreditation over the years, currently there are 105 active and accredited HBCUs in the United States, representing 3% of all institutions worldwide (Anderson, 1988; Evans et al., 2002). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) survey reported there were 105 accredited HBCUs located in 19 states, including the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands (NCES, 2020). Of these 105 HBCUs, 51 were public institutions and 49 were private non-profit institutions.

The Role of the College President

Historically, formal education for Blacks was not a mainstream practice. The first Africans landed in Jamestown, Virginia in 1619, four centuries ago (Polk-Johnson, 2019), thus, beginning the enslavement of Blacks in the United States as we know it. Anderson and Stewart (2007) noted, "by the year 1750, slavery was recognized and sanctioned by law in all the American colonies" (p. 53). Formal education was not provided for formerly enslaved people because white Americans deemed it useless to educate individuals, they deemed inferior both culturally and intellectually (Jones, Dawkins, McClinton & Glover, 2012, p. 6). As a group, Black women were disadvantaged the most (Zamani, 2003). To be Black, a woman, and poor meant your life was not as valuable as others, such as the Black man.

Most authoritative leadership positions inside and outside of the home were meant strictly for men (Polk-Johnson, 2019). This was also the case with education. In the North, academies

and seminaries were the first postsecondary institutions established for women in the latter part of the 1700s and the early 1800s (Lucas, 1994, p. 154). They were predominantly attended by white women. However, Oberlin College admitted African Americans women equally with white men (Perkins, 2015). The Rev. Henry Dunster was chosen as the first president of Harvard College in 1640 (Schmidt, 1930, p. 43). Depending on the type of institution, "the chief executive of American colleges, though usually known as the president, might be styled rector, provost, principal or chancellor" (Schmidt, 1930, p. 43). HBCUs first presidents were a combination of white Christian abolitionist and white clergymen who split their time between teaching and presiding (Selingo, Chheng, & Clark, 2017). Between 1900 and 1944, the role expanded to more managerial professions as boards were formed to search for candidates with business training. The years 1945 to 1975 saw World War II, the passage of the GI Bill, and presidential roles that required individuals with abilities to oversee the construction of edifices that would hold an influx of students while simultaneously managing more federal assistance dollars (Washington Lockett, 2019).

Black Women in Leadership at HBCUs

Commodore (2015) recognized the HBCU presidential pipeline(s) played a major role in whether HBCUs continue to majorly contribute to creating an educated, globally competitive, diverse workforce and pool of leadership in the U.S. According to the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (Dillion, 2019), at the time of this research, there were 25 sitting woman presidents out of the 105 HBCUs in the nation (Dillion, 2019). Of those 25 sitting woman presidents, five were filling interim roles. That figure was still behind the American Council of Education (ACE) 2018 survey which revealed that 30 percent of sitting HBCU

presidents were women. HBCU advocates asserted this number should be higher given that women made up between 62 percent and 75 percent of HBCU student populations (Dillion, 2019). Although the numbers are low, Black woman presidents are at the center of national conversations as these positions are challenging the status quo, and many of these women are still the first women to hold this position after over 100 years of HBCUs existence.

According to the National Center for Education and Statistics (NCES) in 2018 there were 101 accredited HBCUs in the United States (NCES, 2020). Of the 101 HBCUs there were 27 Black women presidents, three of which were holding interim terms. Of the 27 Black women holding these prestigious positions, six of them held the title of being the first woman in the position. This information was not easy to find, due to the lack of scholarship that has been researched on Black women's leadership at HBCUs specifically. Howard-Vital (1989) noted the lack of research on African American women in higher education and further asserted "this society does not recognize, and denies, the importance of Black women's lives and contributions through racial, sexual, and class oppression" (p. 180). Recognition that Black women have proved to be dynamic and transformational the role of the president.

In the early 1900s, pioneer Mary McLeod Bethune saw a need and accepted the call to create more educational opportunities for Black students. With $1.50 and faith in God, she expanded her advocacy for civil and women's rights by founding the Daytona Literary and Industrial School for the Training of Negro Girls in 1904 (Polk-Johnson, 2019). Bethune served as a catalyst for Black women to serve in the role of the president during a time when Black women were seen as inferior and less than. Nearly 120 years later, Black women are still fighting to be seen as worthy and capable. Jackson and Harris (2007) chronicled five-time frames or

"waves" (p. 10) in which African American females served as presidents of four-year institutions: (a) 1903-1905, (b) 1955-1970, (c) 1970-1987, (d) 1987-1992, and (e) 1992-2002 (p. 10). Other Black women were not appointed to chief executive officer (CEO) positions until the 1950s (Jackson & Harris, 2007, p. 10). Black women served in university and college settings in support roles and were not seen as leaders, this was reflected in the home as well. For more People of Color to rise to the presidency, institutions need to groom minoritized and indigenous individuals in non-academic positions, such as chief diversity officers or chief student affairs officers, for ascension to the presidency, and/or campuses must find ways to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of those in the presidency (ACE, 2012, p. 8).

Theoretical Perspectives

To interrogate the true essence of the experiences of Black women's leadership at HBCUs, I used a few theoretical concepts and frameworks to help shape the design of the study and provided justification for the methodological choices made. The primary focus is on critical race theory and Black feminist thought. CRT and Black feminist thought theories center race as a profound component. It is important Black women shape the context in which the study is situated. Black feminist thought will add the intersections of gender and age as important factors in how Black women make meaning around positional power and authority. I added the additional layer of including DeGruy (2004) work that further examines Black Americans experiences with the effects of slavery. DeGruy's work exposes the impacts of slavery that have been reimagined, redefined, and reproduced to continue to oppress Black people, and more specifically Black women navigating the academy.

Critical Race Theory

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) defined critical race methodology as a theoretically grounded approach to research that foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process. Critical race theory is used as an analytical framework for this body of research. This race-based theory provides a lens by which to interrogate, critique and negotiate how power and privilege actively participate in the lived experiences that Black women have in spaces of leadership and in their professional career trajectories. CRT has seven tenets by which researchers have found common ground on providing context in defining its terms. For the bases of this study, I chose to focus on the following three tenants:

1. Racism is a normal part of American life, often lacking the ability to be distinctly recognized, and thus is difficult to eliminate or address (Delgado, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Solórzano, 1998). A CRT lens unveils the various forms in which racism continually manifests itself, despite espoused institutional values regarding equity and social justice.

2. CRT gives voice to the unique perspectives and lived experiences of People of Color. According to Solórzano (1998), CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of women and men of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education.

3. CRT recognizes interest-convergence, the process whereby the white power structure will tolerate or encourage racial advances for Blacks only when they also promote white self-interests (Delgado, 2000, p. xiv).

CRT uses counternarrative story telling methods to highlight discrimination and different ways to challenge interpretations of policies and university assumptions of minoritized and

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Indigenous populations. A critical discussion using these tenants as a foundation allowed the researcher to compare and contrast the experiences that Black women experience in the academy versus the experiences of majority administrators and other faculty.

Bell (2004) describes how Blacks have dealt with the struggle towards equity and equality in our civil rights. He states, "Black rights are recognized and protected when and only so long as policymakers perceive that such advances will further interests that are their primary concern" (p. 64). The concept of interest convergence was born out of this notion. The idea of Black rights being contingent on whether the return on investment was a benefit to those in the majority. History has shown this concept play out time and time again, and much is true for the Black woman who have been afforded the role of president. All things considered, Blacks have been fighting for not only equality, but the actual right to even protest. The Brown vs. the Board of Education trial decision is a good example of this. Even after the Brown decision, the government continued to consider criticism by Blacks as betrayal (Bell, 2004, p. 64).

The constant oppression and silencing of Black voices is congruent with what is going on today with Black women Presidents at HBCUs. Black women who push the envelope for change, a change that is wanted by the community, are shunned, belittled, scolded, put in their place, or ostracized for simply doing their job. The contradiction lies within times hires were meant to enact change, and as change happens Black women are the beneficiaries who promote the movement towards the goal, which does not further the interests of those who are in control.

The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This developed during the 1970s from the groundwork of radical feminism

sparked from the civil rights movement of the 1960s. CRT was established due to the realization that new strategies were needed to combat subtle forms of racism. CRT establishes tenants that help to assess the evidence of power and privilege dynamics that exist to further divide and keep voices silent. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) outline these tenants as the following:

(1) racism as an ordinary feature of society.

(2) interest convergence meaning that white people will support racial justice only when it benefits them.

(3) CRT gives voice to the unique perspectives and lived experiences of People of Color.

(4) the idea of storytelling and counter-storytelling; and

(5) the notion that whites have been recipients to civil rights legislation.

For the purposes of this study, I critiqued how these tenants help to analyze or deconstruct the majority narrative as being seen as the main perspective that is being investigated or heard. Counterstorytelling in CRT is used to challenge or mock the harmful narratives that are considered the majority thought. Stories can serve as giving voice to those populations that are usually silenced or made to be invisible in the literature. Historically, Black women's stories in the academy have been under told or completely erased from the fabric of our history. The dominant culture viewed Black women as possessions to be oppressed physically, mentally, sexually, and economically. Black women survived their maltreatment, yet maintained their roles as mothers, wives, and women in the slave community (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003). This mentality has been influential in the way Black women are understood or misunderstood in current times. Even today, the historical period of slavery in the U.S. still influences the potential and opportunities of U.S. Black women (McGlowan-Fellows & Thomas, 2004-2005). Collins

(2000) reports negative images of Black women have transcended the centuries in the form of controlling images which specifically highlight negative, gender and culturally specific depictions of Black women, tied closely to power relations of race, class, gender and sexuality. These constant and subtle forms of imagery are used to manipulate the experiences or Black women only continue to push the negative narrative and promote racialized and gendered discrimination in the workplace, and society.

Black Feminist Thought

An exploration of the dynamics of Black feminist thought (BFT) to provide context for how systematic discrimination infuses with identity development for Black women. Utilization of Black feminist theories deconstruct notions of whiteness and illuminate the challenges Women of Color face before they have the opportunity to show their skills. Feminism is one of the initial movements that included and addressed the concerns of women. Saunders (2007) stated feminist theories transpired with women placed at the center patriarchy was identified as central to understanding woman's marginalized experiences and sources of cultural and institutional forms of oppression were named and seem as valued. This study attempted to gain a better understanding of the specific aspects that lead to psychological and emotional effects as well as the types of encounters that women of color experience such as racial discrimination and bias.

BFT infuses aspects of intersectionality, and both are used to shape experiences seen from the point of view of a Black woman. Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality, and it was intended to address the experiences and struggles of women of color that fell between the cracks of both feminist and anti-racist discourse. Crenshaw argued theorists need to take both

gender and race into account and show how they interact and shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's experiences. Lewis (2004) demonstrates the intersection of race, gender and class is subjectively lived. Meaning that multiple aspects of a person's identity are part of a social structure and could potentially cause differential and/or discriminatory treatment. This subjectivity can show itself in many aspects of Black women's lives, the workplace is just one aspect that is explored this is study.

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome

With slavery only ending less than two hundred years ago, the effects of the act ring true in the daily lives of Blackness in the US and abroad. DeGruy (2004) suggested that Black people are suffering from what she has coined as post traumatic slave syndrome (PTSS). PTTS (2004) condition exists when a population of has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism. Multigenerational trauma combined with continued oppression with the absence of equal opportunity and access to benefits is the recipe for PTSS to flourish and remain relevant in higher education (DeGruy, 2004, p. 105). DeGruy & Robinson identified three categories associated with PTSS which are 1) vacant esteem; 2) ever present anger, and 3) racist socialization. For this study, I focused on how ever-present anger is used to shape the negative perceptions of Black women leaders. Ever-present anger lies dormant within us and is a byproduct of an emotional response to a blocked goal (DeGruy, 2004). Having goals continuously blocked over time, tend to build up anger and eventually feelings of failure. When we are fearful, we tend to lash out in anger, or try our best to look out for ourselves. Our anger is a form of rebellion and causes us to become distracted from the original goal that we had in the

first place. Typically, when the true target of a person's feelings is deemed to be out of reach, the person will take their feelings out on safer targets, usually those closest to us like family and friends (DeGruy, 2004, p. 113). Moreover, this emotional response can be manifested through competition, especially in the workplace. This manifests itself in various aspects in the role of the president. DeGruy (2004) explains:

> Even when we are feeling good, an ever-present anger resides just below our surface; anger at the violence, degradation, and humiliation visited upon us our ancestors, and our children; anger at being relegated to the margins of the society. (p. 19)

Black women are kept at these margins with the stereotypes that exist positing the "angry Black woman" persona being projected on all Black women. Black men and women are often pitted against each other for similar or even the same job. Given the circumstances, many Black women are more qualified for the position, but Black men are promoted and admonished in a way that allows them to secure the position of president more successfully than Black women.

Black Feminist Thought and Intersectional Research

Black feminism is a process of self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to actualize humanist vision of community (Collins, 1993, p. 39). Patricia Hill Collins (1993) coined the research behind the development of Black feminist thought from her study of Maria W. Stewart. In Stewart's 1833 speech, she challenged Black women to reject the negative images of Black womanhood that were so prominent at the time. Stewart (2014) asserted Black women's poverty was a direct result from the racial, gender and class oppression endured daily (Richardson, 1987). BFT demonstrates Black women's emerging power as agents of knowledge, confronting how intersections of race, gender social class, and many other forms of identities has

a major impact on how oppression is experienced. According to Taylor (2001), Black feminism includes four core themes: 1) legacy of struggle, 2) search for a voice as a Black woman, 3) independence of thought and action, and 4) significance of empowerment in everyday life. The ultimate goal of Black feminism is to create a political movement against capitalism while seeking to develop institutions to protect Black women's minds and bodies.

Collins (1993) used the matrix of domination to illustrate how several factors create a cumulative impact on a person's social standing. This concept was born out of the early 1980s when Black women scholars and activists called for a new approach to analyzing Black women's experiences. The matrix of domination (Figure 1) is a theoretical approach that explores the interlocking systems of oppression in terms of race, gender, class, and other social categories faced by minoritized people. It theorizes power in four domains: 1) structural; 2) disciplinary; 3) hegemonic; and 4) interpersonal. This notion has led to creating a dual reality for Black women making them privy to the inner workings of whiteness, making them "insiders" while simultaneously fostering a sense of "outsider" in their own world. Collins (1986) further explained the "outsider within" concept stimulates a certain sociological discourse for marginalized scholars, namely Black women who have navigated this duality of thinking for years. Exploration began with the (3) key themes to BFT that posit the theory of the "Outsider Within" concept, these themes are 1) the meaning of self-definition and self-valuation; 2) interlocking nature of oppression and, 3) importance of Afro-American women's culture.

Figure 1

The Matrix of Domination

   The matrix of domination introduces the multifaceted nature of how intersecting

identities have an impact on the way that Black women make meaning of their experiences.

Research on Black women as leaders is often subsumed within feminist literature (Stanley, 2009)

and does not contribute to the understanding, or lack thereof, of the effects of the intersections of

race and gender Black women face in their leadership development. The articulation of how race

and gendered identities inform Black women's leadership development experiences in academia

is needed to challenge the normal discourse. Yancy (2000) analyzed the structure of whiteness

(racism) and how it shaped the feminist movement, thus marginalizing the voices and political

concerns of Black women. Thus, the infusion of CRT to ensure the decolonization of race and

gender are apparent in this manuscript. Subsequently, Kimberle Crenshaw's (1989) work on

intersectionality explored this interconnected relationship explaining the effects of oppression on

Black women. Intersections of discrimination happen for Black women in terms of the following

social factors which include but are not limited to gender identity, disability, citizenship status,

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race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, and age. Crenshaw's work centers Black women's lived experiences to show the juxtaposition of how dominant theories provide only a single analysis of such multidimensional experiences.

Having Black women presidents as the focus, it becomes more apparent how dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140) especially because this population is already so small. This single axis framework contributes to the erasure of Black women by limiting the inquiry to the experiences of those privileged members of the group. For example, Black women's experiences are scarcely documented in research in higher education, along with being overlooked and discriminated against for equal pay, Black women are overlooked or not deemed "fit" for key leadership positions in the academy. Black women face hardships and endure stricter qualifications and standards their majority and even marginalized counterparts do not. Most studies focus on the barriers associated with equal opportunity or lack of career advancement, this study espoused the nuances of how Black women weather the challenges that intersectionality presents within culturally congruent oppressors (namely Black men) within the HBCU community illuminating another layer of gendered and cultural norms being enacted in the workplace.

Black women have ancestrally and historically taken a leadership role in Black families, during slavery and throughout the history of the civil rights movement. Embedded in Black women's lived experiences is how they come to leadership, which is characteristically different from the lived experiences of white women, Black and white men (Allen, 1997; Collins, 2000; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Black women like Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, Fannie

Lou Hamer, and Sojourner Truth are titans of the Abolitionist Movement. Their leadership

shaped, guided, and challenged the negative and oppressive narrative that permeated a

patriarchal system of dominance (Murray, 2000). The Black feminist movement was born out of

the abolitionist movement and the modern civil rights movement which peaked during the 1970s

with the implementation of Title IX and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Black women activist

developed a feminist consciousness that gave them agency to strive for empowerment on their

own terms (Oesterreich, 2007). This was key because until then, white women's agendas were at

the forefront of the movement. Taylor (2001) further explained the goal of Black feminism is to

create a political movement combating the interlocking systems of racial, sexual, heterosexual,

and class oppression, but as well as seek to develop institutions that protect Black women's

bodies and intellect (p. 18). Black feminist activist and scholar bell hooks (1994) defined

feminism as the belief that women are full human beings capable of participation in leadership

and a range of activities. Black feminism disrupts the inherent racism in presenting that feminism

is for white women only.

       There are not only differences among women, but also gender differences that exist

between men and women. Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani (1995) found women are more effective

in leadership roles that are stereotypically for men while also citing measuring leadership

"effectiveness" provided evidence to prove that gender roles are socially constructed. Brown and

Davis (2001) cited an article, "Advancing African American women in the Workplace: What

Managers Need to Know," which was published by *Catalyst*:

       The most common barriers that deter African American women from advancing in

       corporate America are not having influential sponsors/mentors; lack of informal

networks; lack of company role models of the same racial/ethnic group; and lack of high-

visibility projects. The biggest barriers faced are negative, race-based stereotypes; more

frequently questioning of their credibility and authority; and lack of institutional support.

(p. 46)

This exclusion and lack of access to organizational networks has been linked to challenges to

long-term success.

Consequently, Black women have a will to continue to persevere through gender, race,

and class discrimination. Use of Black feminist epistemology allowed me to have a lens to

decipher and dissect the experiences that encompass the multidimensional nature of Black

women's' lives in the academy. Utilization of this lens also created a more level understanding

of how Black women in leadership make meaning or contend with the discrimination and/or

challenges that are encountered in a conscious or unconscious way.

Black Women in the Academy

Black women have been ever present and sought out education to enact their own

freedoms. Education and both formally and informally have been used as an act to engage in and

prepare for political warfare. Evans (2008) contends the legal and social status of Black women

varied widely in different regions between 1619 and 1850; largely making the case that legal

status and social class, both played a large part in access to formal education (p. 27). Having

access to formal higher education began via historically Black colleges and universities

(HBCUs) and by way of missionaries who opened their homes to educate formerly enslaved

people in secret. Many HBCUs began in the basements of churches and were established through

high schools which then lead into post-secondary education. HBCUs were significant because

there was virtually no opportunity for Black students to attend predominantly white institutions (PWI) in the South (Evans, 2008). By 1910, 514 Black women had graduated from HBCUs in the South and only 114 from white colleges in the North or Midwest. HBCUs have tended to lead the way with giving opportunities for educational attainment for Black women. They have also provided a foundation for understanding the idea of what an ideal educational experience for Black women should be. Gender roles, or the establishment of cultural and hegemonic gendered roles were established as a byproduct of the religious and cultural norms espoused by the Black community. Power and privilege have a role in the imprint Black women have made in the academy. The following research outlines how Black women have forged a pathway of leadership in the academy despite the many challenges encountered.

Cultivation of Black Women Leaders

Historically, education was not seen as the most important aspect in a Black woman's life. The Black lady refers to the middle-class professional Black woman who represents a modern version of the politics of respectability (Shaw, 1996). "These are the women who stayed in school, worked hard, and have achieved much" (Collins, 2000, p. 8). Teaching and seeking out teachers for schools were early priorities for the sustainability of HBCUs. Albritton (2012) wrote teaching was such a skill that was important at HBCUs providing opportunities for newly freed Blacks whose previous status as enslaved people had no opportunities for them to receive formal education. Black women were able to fill the gap of serving as the first teachers which also provided them a pathway to further educate themselves through formal education.

Recently, several executive higher education doctoral programs focused upon preparing individuals for executive leadership have sprouted up in the established institutions during the

early 2000s; among them are the University of Pennsylvania, University of Alabama, University of Georgia, and Jackson State University (Freeman & Gasman, 2014). This resurgence of executive leadership programs has made access to education more attainable for marginalized populations to have higher degree attainment. Black women are exceeding their Black men counterparts at alarming rates in degree attainment (Harper, 2012; Lundy-Wagner & Gasman, 2011). Even with this statistic, Black women are more likely to still be overlooked and passed up for leadership positions, in the academy due to a focus on Black men higher education retention. Recently, there has been a focus and concerted effort to recruit, cultivate and prepare young Black men for leadership, specifically at HBCUs. Gasman et al. (2013) reports that leadership at HBCUs is overwhelmingly dominated by men with 70% of HBCU presidents identifying as men and 30% of this same population identifying as women. The national percentage of women identifying presidents is slightly lower at 26%, proving women have a better chance to be hired at an HBCU versus a PWI. This fact still does not account for the historical and cultural implications of the perception of having women at the helm of leadership in higher education. Years of racialized domination and cultural socialization are apparent factors that make it challenging for Black women to be seen as successful in these high-profile positions.

Perception of Black Women's Leadership

McLaughlin (1996) stated, "There is no one generic community college, college, or university in the United States. Likewise, the training for the presidency is varied" (p. 6). The variances of experiences and skill sets are vast for Black women in their pathway to the presidency. King and Gomez (2008) observed woman presidents were most common at community colleges, with the smallest number leading research universities. They also noted

women comprised almost half (45%) of senior administrators and 38% of top academic leaders.

Spelman College itself, considered the hallmark of Black women's education, did not have a

Black woman president until 1987 (Gasman, 2007). Just in 2016, two HBCUs (Alabama State

University and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University)—both well over 100 years in

existence—selected their first Black women presidents (Freeman Jr., Commodore, Gasman, &

Carter, 2016). Why is this the case? What is the perception of Black women's leadership style?

Much of the literature surrounding Black educational leadership focuses on the lack of and

experiences of Black leadership at PWIs (Waring, 2003). The perceived lack of experience

comes from a constant comparison to white women's experiences, or experiences from Black

men who have advanced as well. All in all, HBCUs aspire to be viewed as a marketplace for

growth and development for Black women to flourish from opportunities for advancement. Some

Black leaders felt that the Black experience, the sense of racial identity, should bond Blacks and

Black leaders together for the sake of united action (Pease & Pease, 1971). Due to many years of

socialization, dating back to slavery the bond between Black men and women suffers in the

workplace. Leaving Black women left to navigate their way through the academy, only relying

on other Black women to help them attain status and positionality. Black men see Black women

as competition, rather than allies.

Negotiation of Power

Historically, class background became an important aspect of Black leadership as the

Black bourgeoisie's loyalty had been known to oscillate between the majority and the interests of

their own race (Forsythe, 1972). Waring (2003) brought to light the social structure and

stratification of the Black community is quite different from that of mainstream American

society. This social structure that exists in society is illuminated in the academy especially within HBCUs. There is a good chance the issue of class, respectability, suitability, and authenticity concerning Black leadership has permeated the mindset, consciously of numerous generations of African American leadership (Commodore, 2019). Both conscious and unconscious biases exist in choosing leaders, or people who are deemed as leaders in the Black community. These leaders will need to establish credible and prestigious personas in the Black community, which will aid in garnering support (Gasman, 2009; Gasman, Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010).

The issue becomes how do people discern between which leaders are authentically leading and which leaders are leading with hidden agendas. HBCUs seem to be more susceptible to charismatic styles of leadership, from leaders who have romanticized working at these institutions. HBCUs, however, must be able to be effective and skilled in this area while attempting to inform and work through historically constructed lenses of their institutions being inferior and outdated (Gasman, 2011). Many Blacks believe this inferiority complex and it hinders movement towards leadership in spaces taken up by majority leaders. The struggles Black communities and the prejudice they encountered kept Black leadership from exercising their talents and abilities in the larger white community (Pease & Pease, 1971). Therefore, HBCUs are seen as havens for the Black educator. The establishment of these schools was supposed to foster a greater sense of autonomy while fortifying a deeper understanding of culture, being surrounded by people who share salient identities. It would be assumed institutions within the Black community would be spaces where Black women would not have to deal with these controlling images (Freeman et al., 2016). In fact, HBCU environments have more men in senior leadership, while Black women assume other key leadership positions in middle

management. Some said Black women needed to be submissive to reestablish Black manhood (Commodore, 2019). The idea of a woman being submissive in the workplace adds to the mixed message of how she is shown in the Boardroom. Black women should be seen as viable, capable, and equal to their men counterparts, but the reality is social norms are acted out daily through antiquated processes and gender specific requirements that are not applied across all positions.

Black Women's Pathways to the Presidency at HBCUs

According to an American Council on Education (2016) survey, only 30 percent of women are serving in presidential positions in the academy. With many, approximately 78 percent of these women serve as a first-time president, and approximately 59 percent only serving in this role for an average of one to five years. These statistics include women of color that serve at HBCUs and PWIs, but the research did not provide specific statistics on women in leadership at HBCUs solely. There is limited data as to the number of women who identify as Black or African American who serve as president or interim presidents at HBCUs. I began by viewing websites to gather data on current sitting HBCU presidents. The data revealed there were 25 Black women currently in president roles at HBCUs in a full presidential or interim role out of 101 accredited historically Black institutions. Roughly 30 percent of HBCUs had Black women culpable and making decisions as the chief officer. Black women's journeys to the presidential seat are varied and nuanced depending on the individual experiences of each person. In general, women did not historically have many leadership roles and opportunities in higher education (Commodore, 2015). Collins (2000) claims the submissive, supporting roles Black women have been subjugated to within Black organizations have stifled Black political empowerment. The following outlines the aspects of Black women's trajectories towards the

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presidential seat. Factors such as pipeline and preparation, a need for more research on HBCU presidents and having a voice and access to positions of influence and power have allowed Black women to begin to bring their own seat to the table.

Pipeline and Preparation

The pathway to the presidency in higher education generally includes an academic background. Although presidential vitaes often document years of service as a professor, department head, dean, or academic vice president (Travis & Price, 2013). This is not always the case for women that have been led to the presidency at HBCUs. Waring (2003) study captured that Black woman presidents were "drafted" into the presidency by being identified as having leadership potential. This is an important detail to recognize due to the role it plays in ensuring Black woman leaders have access and identify pipelines to the presidency. Many women who sit in the presidential seat may or may not come from the academic side of the academy, some have risen through the ranks of the student life division. Freeman et al., (2016) asked participants what skills they thought HBCU presidents had to possess to lead HBCUs successfully into the future. Some of their answers are consistent with the literature on presidential leadership; however, much of their commentary was specific to HBCUs, and the unique culture and circumstances that they believe exist at these institutions.

Although there has not been a lack of individuals who are interested in serving as presidents at HBCUs, questions remain regarding the preparation of aspirants (Freeman & Gasman, 2014). Preparation stems from a lack of mentorship and guidance for women in these key leadership roles. Freeman et al., (2016) asserted men HBCU presidents tended to groom men and women tended to groom women for the job. This siloing of training and development is a

direct byproduct of the way Black men and women have been socialized to work together in the workplace. Researchers suggest the tendency for HBCUs to recycle presidents as well as disproportionate presence of long-term leaders was problematic (Freeman et al., 2016). Not having an adequate number of women being trained and prepared for senior administrative positions inherently contributes to high turnover and short-term leadership at HBCUs. Research states those successful tenures come from individuals who have multiple skill sets. HBCUs, whether private or public, must have leadership that can both advocate and generate funding. Leaders cannot focus on one skill over the other (Freeman et al., 2016). Mentorship and preparation are key characteristics for development of these specialized skills. Literature echoes future HBCU leadership needs to be innovative and entrepreneurial in nature (Gasman, 2009; Gasman et al., 2010; Nichols, 2004).

Studies show Black women are making strides in the areas of fundraising and innovation for HBCUs specifically. Dr. Johnetta B. Cole, former president at Bennett College and Spelman College, is a prime example of how her fundraising efforts have contributed to the sustainability of these private, single gender HBCUs. Stories like Dr. Cole lack in written research, due to lack of empirical research that has been published on Black women in leadership at HBCUs.

Barriers to the Presidency

For decades, women have had a limited presence in leadership positions in the academy. Most women were seen in middle to lower-level management positions, but rarely at the board table. Increased attention has been paid to this position in recent years as many presidents in the baby- boomer generation are expected to retire within the next decade (ACE, 2012; Burton,

2003). The graying of the academy is a phenomenon causing our leaders to become more and more seasoned in age. Much like the rest of the higher education landscape, HBCUs are experiencing the challenge of the maturation of the presidency (ACE, 2012). However, presidents at HBCUs tend to be older than their predominantly white institution (PWI) counterparts; they also experience turnover at a quicker rate (Freeman & Gasman, 2014). What does this graying say about the trust and development that may or may not be happening for the next generation? Black women also find more success in reaching the college presidency at HBCUs than at PWIs (Gasman, 2012).

Consequently, it is harder for Black women to break through the stereotypes projected on them to be successful in the position. Researchers contend it is impossible to effectively lead HBCUs if a president does not intrinsically invest in the mission of HBCUs (Commodore et al., 2020). This investment can only be present when full confidence is given to a leader to lead. Jean-Marie, Williams, and Sherman (2009) examined the leadership experiences of Black women and the intersection of race and gender in higher education. They noted the chilly and hostile climate Black women often experience due to discrimination based on race and gender. Unfortunately, Black women have a tougher time with likeability and trust. Clark-Holland (2014) described this as double jeopardy – biases based on race and gender and contended that neither Black men nor white women face this barrier. Furthermore, researchers identify racism, sexism, isolation, and lack of trust as barriers that interfere with Black women's full participation in academia (Lloyd-Jones, 2009, p. 607). This information calls for a closer examination of Black women's equitable access to upward mobility prospects within the academy.

Nichols (2004) highlighted the unique characteristics that are needed for HBCU leadership and governance. In order to effectively lead as president, there are specific characteristics successful candidates should have in their toolkit. HBCU presidents must have the ability to be change agents and visionaries (Freeman et al., 2016). This is a powerful trait for a president to use to leverage relationships and relations within the surrounding community invested in the college. These leaders will also need to establish credible and prestigious personas in the African American community, which aid in garnering support (Gasman, 2009; Gasman et al., 2010). Establishing integrity in a leader is needed to build trust among the constituent base. Freeman et al. (2016) expounded "Presidents of HBCUs need to be visionary leaders, people who can begin to see what the future holds, prepare the institution for it and be able to get others to buy into that vision" (p. 581). If Black women are excluded from attainment of key leadership roles, and are left to middle management level positions, it is a challenge for them to own their seat at the proverbial board table.

Paucity of Scholarship

Recently appointed presidents have come from a diversity of backgrounds including public and private sectors, with an increasing number being women (ACE, 2012, 2003; Brodie, & Banner, 2005). Modest research has been collected and documented on the experience of HBCU presidents. In fact, HBCU presidents are often left out of larger research projects related to college and university presidents (Mbagekwe, 2006; Nichols, 2004). HBCU research has a long-standing stigma in the academy that comes from more of a deficit perspective. In the past, HBCU presidents suffered from stereotypes of being autocratic and rigid (Gasman, 2011; Hamilton, 2002; Wagener & Smith, 1993; Whiting, 1991). While this assertion may be true, in

some cases, there is a missing voice of Black women presidents in the conversation. The inclusion of voices of women presidents at HBCUs in research studies has been a challenge for various researchers. One of the reasons for this limitation could be a lack of trust of outside researchers and how the data that is collected is used (Freeman & Gasman, 2014). This limited access to participants caused a gap in the literature as it relates to informing the experiences of Black women in leadership at HBCUs. The idea of women making decisions at that level, is not far-fetched, rather it tends to happen more often at community colleges, Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) or small private colleges that are interested in giving women a chance to be considered for chief leadership positions, such as University president.

Patriarchy in Higher Education

Allen, Epps, and Haniff's (1989) research adds an important layer to the argument that Black men evidenced advantage relative to Black women on HBCU campuses. Their study found Black women at HBCUs felt more anxiety in competition than their Black men counterparts and those women felt less competent and tended to be less assertive compared to their male peers (p. 30). Allen et al. (1989) further maintained Black woman students at HBCUs were more willing to take on roles that made them seem less competent to appear less threatening to men. Under these circumstances, patriarchy tends to show up to reinforce cultural and social norms taught in Black culture. Patriarchy is used to define the power dynamics which exist between men and women and that uphold subordinate behaviors. Bonner (1992) found women faculty members and administrators at HBCU campuses in the mid-Atlantic region were reluctant to discuss issues of climate, mentoring, parity in employment, and educational and professional development at their institution. Many of the respondents noted they were afraid to

answer some questions in fear their answers may reveal their identities (Bonner, 1992). The fear and intimidation Black women endure daily manifests itself in the following ways. Patriarchy shows up for Black women through the stereotypes of Black womanhood, respectability politics and the parity that exists in the workplace.

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Stereotypes of Black Womanhood

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Collins (2000) argued controlling images portrayed by the media have been used as an oppressive tool for Black women. The dominant society has used various measures to reinforce and instill racist and sexist stereotypes into societal consciousness for years (Commodore, Washington Lockett, Johnson, Googe & Covington, 2020). The maintaining of this narrative continues the historical construction of Black women through a lens of pontification and negativity.

Media portrayals of Black women center on four stereotypes-mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas (Collins, 2000). Within Collins' four stereotypes, 1) The mammy is represented as "the faithful, obedient domestic servant" (p. 55); 2) the "matriarch is typified as the aggressive and emasculating mother figure in Black homes; 3) the welfare recipient manifests as the "poor, working-class Black women who make use of social welfare benefits (p. 78); and 4) the hot momma is the "[Black] woman whose sexual appetites are at best inappropriate and, at worst, insatiable" (p. 83). Additionally, Walley-Jean (2009) defined the "Sapphire," also known as the "Angry Black Woman," is overly aggressive, iron-willed, loud, emasculating, and contemptuous of Black men, angry, and often engages in verbal assaults. For example, Black people commonly see these comments surface when Black women presidents are critiqued on their tenures at HBCUs. These examples provide evidence gender and race is being

weaponized against Black women. Research suggests heteronormative socialization knowingly used the media to influence thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and treatment based on concepts that were fundamentally founded as social constructs.

The foundation of these stereotypes is rooted in the ideology of hegemonic whiteness aiding in the understanding of social existence, providing a way of making sense of the world (Lewis, 2004). Whiteness and patriarchy have been embedded in the fabric of the history of higher education seeking to erase the legacy Indigenous and minoritized individuals built in this nation. Hall (1990) posited ideologies are most effective when they are invisible, commonsense understandings that naturalize the social world and justify the status quo. To be most effective, Black women constantly have to balance between speaking up and battling the stereotypes assumed about them or staying complacent and not speaking up as a survival method. To thrive in the academy, assimilation and giving into notions of respectability politics are tactics that underpin heteronormative behaviors, but Black women must contend with other People of Color who espouse and uphold this course of actions as the only means of self-preservation. Black women who push back on these set of standards are often vilified and seen as radical. The element of speaking truth to power has a risk attached to truth-telling that not all people experience in congruence with Black women.

Respectability Politics

Inquiry into the construction of Black womanhood-the behaviors and practices associated with being Black and a woman has shed light on the complex issues of race, gender, and class faced by Black women (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Dill, 1979; hooks, 1997, 1989, 2000). Moreover, Black feminist scholarship has problematized several topics related to constructions

of Black womanhood, including respectability (Higginbotham, 1993; White, 2001). Ironically HBCUs historically were put in place as safe space for Black people to grow and develop as people. Dr. Willa Player believed at HBCUs Black women are supposedly granted a retreat from a world of prejudice that is capable of robbing her of the belief in her own innate capabilities, of shattering her ambition and destroying her self-confidence (Player, 1947, p. 365).

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (1993) coined the phrase, "politics of Black respectability" (p. 45). Respectability politics promote cleanliness, polite manners, self -restraint, sexual purity, and frugality to disrupt negative perceptions of Black people (Njoku & Patton, 2017). Black respectability appeases two audiences: Black people who want to be respected and viewed as respectable, and white people who need evidence of educated, civilized and hardworking people (Harris, 2003). Black people commonly see this enacted and played out during hiring processes on search committee's selecting Black women for positions, specifically the role of the president. For Black women, respectability politics are rooted in heteronormative femininity and a desire to be viewed as respectable (Njoku & Patton, 2017). Certain expressions of Black womanhood promote the politics surrounded with respectability while also buttressing restricting stereotypes and heteronormative expressions of femininity.

Harper and Gasman (2008) found some HBCUs exhibited highly conservative environments in which sexuality, sexual orientation and dress were governed through policies requiring "professional" dress and behavior. According to Collins (2000), Ward, Hansbrough, and Walker (2005) and White (2001) African American institutions (i.e., churches, families, and schools) created for and maintained in Black communities also transmitted racist and sexist images of Black women and girls. These entities foster the subordination and objectification of

Black women. Evans (2008) claims that Christianity is central to Black American life, culture, and thought. Therefore, the discussion in Black education is of great import; how religion is discussed is of great controversy. Through enacting or resisting respectability politics, Black women confront and disrupt controlling stereotypes by redefining their own versions of womanhood (Collins, 2000). Acts of interrupting these limiting stereotypes dispel the stereotypical cliches such as Mammy, Aunt Jemima, Jezebel, Black matriarch, and Sapphire (Collins, 2000). Lorde (1978) associates these acts of self-definition to acts of liberation. Liberation can change the narrative of Black women's struggle from victimization to having agency over acting in their own authority.

Parity in the Workplace

Colleges and universities are known for being the battleground for equality, justice, and equity allowing for spaces that transform racist and sexist ideologies, policies, and practices (Valakati et al., 2014). Racism and sexism are everyday realities for Black women as they attempt to navigate acceptance and enter majority spaces. These spaces often determine whether women of color will have access to resources and the support needed to be successful (DiNitto, Martin, & Harrison, 1982). Kennedy (2012) explains while African American women routinely outnumber African American men on historically Black college and university campuses, the Black woman's voice is usually relegated to the margins within social and academic frameworks. This suggests although Black women are in the majority, they are still not treated equally to their counterparts: Black men.

The statistics reflect an increased number of women of color that are pursuing higher education (Valakati et al., 2014). Universities continue to increase the number of women

students that are admitted into college. However, allowing women of color, particularly Black women, to gain positions of leadership and power remain inconsistent. In 1984, women presidents were few and far between at HBCUs. Spelman College and Bennett College, all women's colleges, both had men presidents that year (Stewart, 2014). By the mid 1990s there was an increase in Black women who have assumed roles as presidents at HBCUs. By 1999, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education reported that women presidents at HBCUs had reached a record 19 percent. More recently this gap has remained steady between 16 to 20 percent at any given time. Even though African American men and women frequently share racially oppressive experiences, the African American female, because of her gender, has traditionally been "exploited, punished and repressed in ways suited only for women" (Davis, 1983, p. 6). Collins (2000) further distinguishes because of this inequity the knowledge construction process of African American women is drastically different from African American men. Thus, education is being used as a practice of freedom. hooks (1994) refer to the phrase "education as a practice of freedom" in her book *Teaching to Transgress*, to the liberatory character of education - a way of teaching anyone can learn (p. 13). Liberation fosters giving voice to the educators that have been silenced due to cultural oppression.

Cozart (2009) brings specific clarification to the lacking dialogue of race and racism in the classroom connecting to the miseducation of cultural silence. Cultural silence can be interpreted by women not permitting themselves to center their personal knowledge in academic settings (Cozart, 2009, p. 23) believing this knowledge only has value in personal communities. Professors and administrators maintained a cultural silence of their lived experiences due to the perceived need for social separation of one's cultural voice given white patriarchal norms that

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emphasize a mind/body split (hooks, 1994, p. 18). Having a cultural voice has been regulated to more private interactions and settings as a form of protection and self-preservation. There is a discomfort associated with crossing the lines of advocacy in higher education that is not present for all people. Black women—specifically Black woman presidents—have been fired, put on notice, harassed, and ridiculed for speaking truth to power. Gubrium and Mazhani (2009) indicated discomfort can create an air of resistance and silence (p. 460). Many Black woman administrators have had to toe the line with how fiercely an advocate they are allowed to be, with the confines of power, privilege, and patriarchy. Research reveals Black women strive to gain access to increasing higher levels of the academy despite constant mental, psychological, and physical pressure. This striving, however, is often done in a historical vacuum (Evans, 2008, p. 210). Until Black women liberated from these historical and institutional ideals the ambiguity of our position on these experiences are tokenized, left out or silenced.

Lorde (1984) offers sexism is not limited to the actions of white men, but it is implemented within Black communities as well. Burke, Cropper, and Harrison (2000) contend there are different levels of power relationships that exist not only between the academic community and Black community but also the internal divisions of each community are made visible. Which suggests the infighting and discrimination that exists within the Black community is just as, if not more harmful for Black women's pursuits of acceptance and understanding. Reflexivity becomes important in the process of understanding how Black women are being perceived. It is vital that Black women are cognizant and aware of their position, perspectives, and values because it has direct influence on the relationship and how colleagues and peers perceive their leadership. It is important to engage in liberatory action (Freire, 2000), so

opportunities for change at both personal and structural levels are developed and maximized resulting in the development of a more inclusive and empowering academic environment. When liberation happens for Black women in the academy liberation will cascade for all Persons of Color.

Summary

Motivation for this study came from the absence of asset based empirical research done on Black women in the academy as it relates to HBCUs. HBCUs have played a pivotal role in the preparation of global leaders. Degree attainment for low-income, first-generation, and Black students, and the dearth of scholarship on HBCU presidents are just some reasons it is important to investigate this important subset of college and university presidents (Freeman et al., 2016, p. 570). The telling of the stories of how HBCUs are growing and sustaining themselves, is much attributed to the work Black women do despite the barrier that exists to attain the role of the president. Barriers like lack of preparation, negotiation of power and patriarchy have deep roots in marginalizing the experiences of Black women in the academy. The major gap in the research is that Black women's lived experiences in the academy are documented in more of a supporting role rather than as the leading chief administrator role of the president. Currently, there are less than 5% of women of color sitting as college or university presidents (ACE, 2015). While the tide is changing for leadership, HBCUs play a crucial role in providing access to low-income, first-generation students as well as being among the top producers of Black graduates (Freeman & Gasman, 2014).

Chapter three focuses on the methodological design for the study. Portraiture was chosen as the vehicle to illuminate the storied experiences of each Black women president. CRT and in

congruence with Black feminist epistemology informed the data collected and reviewed from each Black woman president's perspective. As a critical qualitative scholar chapter three assists in seeking to understand and disrupt systems that maintain whiteness as normative. The philosophical assumptions lay the foundation for how to interpret findings and how to explore the research approach utilized. The chapter further describes the makeup of all participants while reviewing data collection and data analysis procedures used in forming the argument that Black women have been navigating from the margins of higher education. Trustworthiness criteria, and researcher positionality are detailed along with an explanation of the limitations that are evident in this study. Chapter three serves to provide a map of how the researcher organized the data that resulted from the study seeking to expose and validate Black women's experiences in serving as the first in the role of president at an HBCU.

TRACK 3: METHODOLOGY

An exploration of the literature indicated the need to illuminate the experiences of Black women in higher education because of the absence of their voice in history. Patton (2016) suggested scholars in higher education have begun to incorporate critical race theory (CRT) to expose hidden and blatant inequities (p. 316). It is the blatant erasure that exists today in higher education that contributes to the silencing of these hidden figures. Utilization of Black feminist theory from the work of Patricia Hill Collins (1989) and bell hooks (2003) as well as critical race theory work of Delgado and Stefancic (2001) continues to inform the framework of this study. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) used critical race theory to inform the work of breaking down racial injustices that take place in the academy. Bhattacharya (2017) described the premise of CRT is that racism is a persuasive part of American culture, and it is not an aberrant occurrence. Instead, the reason racism may feel absent or normalized is because of how common it is in so many aspects of people's lives (Delgado, 2000) in a large way. The purpose of this study is to explore how Black women made meaning of their lived experiences regarding race and gender as they laid a foundation towards a pathway to the HBCU presidency at historically Black colleges and universities. This chapter illustrates how Black women HBCU presidents navigated and resisted the challenges presented by patriarchal leadership positions in the academy. This study looked to answer the questions:

1. In what ways do Black women HBCU presidents make meaning of their lived experiences in relationship to leadership and their journey to the pursuit of the presidency?

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2. How do race and gender play a role in pursuing the presidency for Black women presidents' at HBCUs?

   a. How do Black women HBCU presidents navigate the relationship between race and gender with a patriarchal culture within higher education?

Upon the review of the literature, two gaps became clear. The first was the lack of research about Black women who have served and worked in the historically Black college or university environment, specifically targeting Black women's direct experiences navigating gendered and racialized bigotry, misogyny, and discrimination. Statistically, Black women HBCU presidents make up a small niche population, resulting in their experiences becoming co-opted and overlooked and their voices silenced. Although the research acknowledged the presence of racism, sexism, and perceived discrimination (Brown & Tylka, 2010; O'Connor, 2002; Utsey, Bolden, Lanier, & Williams, 2007), there remains a severe lack of a critical perspective to making sense of the experiences of Black women.

The second gap discovered was the small number of Black women who have served in the position of president at HBCUs. Since the inception of HBCUs in the early 1890s, there have been fewer than 100 women to serve in the role of president. In 2017, Prairie View A&M University installed its very first Black woman president, Dr. Ruth Simmons, in its nearly 142-year history as a university. There is not even enough research collected from the 101 HBCUs in the nation to account for this unknown history accurately. Currently, there are only 25 HBCUs with Black women in the president or interim president role.

Methodological Approach

This study gained a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences and how they made meaning of racialized and gendered experiences, qualitative research method is appropriate. Bhattacharya (2017) offered qualitative research is not only diverse but there is no one correct way of designing or conducting a qualitative study. Qualitative inquiry was used in this study to illuminate the experiences of Black women who have achieved the role of president at historically Black colleges and universities, which is not the norm. Lieblich, Tuval–Mashiach and Zilber (1998) used stories and narratives interchangeably to claim the stories or narratives as revisited, told, retold, reinterpreted are a part of one's storied life and reveal's people's identity. The retelling of these stories assists participants with coming to understand their own journeys through retelling and interpreting their experiences (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 93).

Qualitative inquiry allows for the researcher to be used as an instrument in the study allowing their human side to be considered as a form of strength as well as challenge the research process (Patton, 2002). As a Black woman who has worked in the field of higher education for the past 17 years, I have observed little to no other Black women who have assumed the role of the presidency at several of the colleges and universities which I have worked and/or attended. This is even less common at HBCUs due to the dynamics that involve Black women's successes in these high-profile positions. Qualitative research is measurable; statistical data cannot describe or explore all the nuances of human experiences and relationships (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

Qualitative research focuses on meaning-making and gaining understanding of the lived experience of the study's participants. This type of research is particularly helpful when there is a lack of theory regarding a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Juxtaposing Black women's

experiences in these roles provides insights into which factors contribute to the success or demise in each situation, due to the research is lacking in this niche area. Patton (2002) asserted qualitative research through a critical lens not only addresses the gap in the literature for hearing women's voices but by enabling an understanding of how society functions for them open up to finding methods which disturbing aspects of their experiences can be changed. It is my hope my study is used to compel change in the way Black women are seen in these roles. Sara Lawrence–Lightfoot's portraiture approach was selected as it is designed to "capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 3). Portraiture in consort with narrative inquiry are the approaches used to explore and gain a better understanding of each participants lived experience.

Portraiture

Jessica Hoffman Davis and Sara Lawrence Lightfoot (1997) asserted portraiture as a methodology that seeks to illuminate the complex dimensions of goodness and is designed to capture the attention of a broad and eclectic audience (p. xvi). The idea of goodness suggests a different perspective that is absent from the research. History has shown that Black women are often portrayed and described as challenging, negative, or combative. Portraiture pushes the portraitist to ask the question, "What is good here?" to absorb a different reality than a researcher on a mission to discover sources of failure (Davis & Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997). Development of a complete portrait required exploration around understanding how participants made meaning of their experiences and the world around them.

There are five essential aspects of portraiture that allowed for participants to capture the essence of their story. They are *context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and the aesthetic whole*. Context is a dynamic force that influenced how each individual perceived and experienced their environment. Portraitist must consider not only how the context shapes the individual but also how the individual shapes the context (Davis & Lawrence–Lightfoot, 1997). Portraiture permits the voice of the researcher to be everywhere present in the inquiry "overarching and undergirding the text, framing the piece, naming the metaphors, and echoing through the central themes (Davis & Lawrence–Lightfoot, 1997). Voice is an exercise of the paradoxes where the researcher is vulnerable but at the same time disciplined. The researcher's voice was positioned from several standpoints: as a witness distant to the action, an interpreter making sense of the data, a listener paying attention "for a story" rather than to a story how cadence and tone shaped messages and meaning (Davis & Lawrence–Lightfoot, p. 99). Relationship came from a co-construction of individuals in a reciprocal way designed to find the goodness in each person's story. There is a presupposition that the individual possesses "goodness," and their knowledge, experience and perspectives are valid and have authority (Davis & Lawrence–Lightfoot, p. 141). Emergent themes came about as the portraitist had the task of using the data as source material to construct coherent portraits from themes that the participants (actors) experienced as unrelated or incoherent (Davis & Lawrence–Lightfoot, 1997). Lastly, aesthetic whole is the combination of context, voice, relationship, and budding themes like how lines, shapes, texture, and color combine to make a visual composition.

Davis and Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) share portraits are designed to appeal to a wide audience of readers, with the intent to "deepen the conversation" and "inform and inspire"

readers (p. 10). The writing is designed to promote intellectual understanding as well as invoke

and emotional response (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983, p. 8). This line of inquiry fit well with my

question, as I sought to understand my participants in the context of the unique experiences of

Black woman presidents as being the first with those identities in the role. Portraiture, if done

correctly, enhances meaning making opportunities for both the participant and the researcher to

engage critically with their experiences and topics thus establishing a process for liberating

(Freire, 2000) and enhancing understanding of their lived experience (Lawrence-Lightfoot &

Davis, 1997).

Portraits were created through thematic, in-depth interview with the participants, with a

primary methodological goal of seeking the "holistic, complex, contextual descriptions of

reality" (Lawrence–Lightfoot, 1983, p. 13). I used both CRT and BFT frameworks as a guide in

the development of my interview questions, research design and analytical approach. A portrait

is much more than a picture of a person, its goal is to depict the nuances of each personality and

physical appearance, and the artist brings their own style and personality into that portrait,

creating an image that speaks more to the experience of creation that the work of art itself (Davis

& Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997).

Using critical race theory (CRT) and Black feminist thought (BFT) as the foundation for

interrogating these experiences through a perspective that is not a part of the dominant culture.

BFT gave voice to Black women's experiences that are often silenced or left out. Pinnegar and

Daynes (2007) coined the term "relational inquiry," in which the storyteller (participant) and the

story listener (researcher) are in a dynamic relationship that promotes growth and learning for

both. Lawrence–Lightfoot (2005) discussed how portraiture serves to unmask the paradoxes

which exist within our lives, that may be important to our story. The unmasking or centering of these said paradoxes allowed them to be made explicit for an analysis to occur. Converging opposites occurred between the voice of the portraitist and the motivations and purposes the portraiture. Portraits were created from the depth in which the data is scrutinized allowing for the story to materialize. The portraitist must be strategic with development of themes that arise from the data emphasizing a rhythm adding shape to the story. Information that gets left out is just as important as the information that is included. It is the difference between listening to a story versus listening for a story.

This co-constructed experience of creating a narrative portrait allowed the reader further insight into their own stories and prevented me as the researcher in limiting the experiences of the participants. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) believed the concept of reflexivity was used to improve the rigor of the qualitative process. The main goal of reflexivity allowed the researcher's the opportunity for critical reflection during the research process. This would include processing and reflecting on what sorts of factors might influence the role that the researcher plays in the research process. Because I am both an interpreter and a reflexive participant in the process, I created in depth portraits of each participant's story. Music lyrics were used to take a deeper dive into the reflexivity role that I played as the narrator to each participant's story. Davis and Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) stated the researcher is indebted and should devise ways to give time, feedback, attention, flattery, and other appropriate gifts show the commitment to reflection and appreciation of the sharing relationship (p. 154). As I interpreted each participants data, I chose songs that reflected the most accurate depiction of the total arch of their storied lives. The songs served to pay homage to the beauty of each woman's

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individual journey. Davis and Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) describes the unification of data centered around the balance of voice, articulation and portrayal forms a cohesive aesthetic whole. Synthesizing their lived experiences with music lyrics served to offer another unifying experience to articulate each participants unique lives. Development of the aesthetic whole for each participant's story required the use of critical qualitative methodologies grounded in the frameworks of CRT and BFT to decolonize and deconstruct Black women's experiences with race, gender, and misogyny.

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Research Approach

When designing this study, I engaged in a deeper exploration of CRT to situate and interrogate the experiences Black women face in leadership roles. I draw upon the tradition of Black feminist thought (Collins, 1989) which is grounded in explaining ideologies about how Black women experience oppression. CRT allows for a deconstruction of the dynamics of power and privilege that co-construct our experiences with race, gender, class, religion, and all other social identities. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) employ critical writers use counterstories to challenge, displace, or mock these pernicious narratives. The use of counternarrative storytelling aligns with these methodological stances in that counter storytelling seeks to give voice to the non-dominant culture who is being suppressed and oppressed by white dominant experiences. Counternarratives are used to illuminate and situate lived experiences through the eyes of the participant. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) introduced counterstorytelling for education research to challenge current researchers to find a more effective way to understand those that are

marginalized in society. I focus on using personal counternarrative storytelling for this study using the following tenants of CRT:

1. Racism is a normal part of American life, often lacking the ability to be distinctly recognized, and thus is difficult to eliminate or address (Delgado, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000: Solórzano, 1998) A CRT lens unveils the various forms in which racism continually manifests itself, despite espoused institutional values regarding equity and social justice.

2. CRT gives voice to the unique perspectives and lived experiences of People of Color. According to Solórzano (1998), CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of women and men of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education.

3. CRT recognizes interest-convergence, the process whereby the white power structure will tolerate or encourage racial advances for Blacks only when they also promote white self-interests (Delgado, 2000, p. xiv).

CRT used in this research disrupts white supremacy, provide theorical perspective, conceptual framework, methodology, and strategies for data collection and analysis (Leonardo, 2004; Matias et al., 2014; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Personal stories or narratives are autobiographical accounts of an individual's experience with various forms of racism and sexism using a critical race analysis (Solórzano et al., 2000). Concepts of interest convergence are used as a tool for interrogation of how systems, policies, and practices work to uphold white supremacy and oppression. Harper (2009) pointed out the goal of counternarratives is not to

focus on convincing the white mainstream that racism exists but to reflect on the lived experiences of racially and socially marginalized People of Color. Bell's (1995) work suggests CRT assists with the narrative voice, the teller, is important to critical race theory in a way that is not understandable by those whose voices are deemed illegitimate and authoritarian. Voice is important for telling, retelling, and exposing resistance and care. In CRT, voice reiterates what kind of power is feared most: the power to commit to change. Using personal counternarrative storytelling, I used CRT as a tool to give voice to Black women's experiences that are not a part of white dominant experiences. Centering Black women's voice and retelling their experiences allows for oppressive and systematic guidelines to be situated within the context of power and privilege.

Black Feminist Epistemology

Black women have ancestrally and historically taken a leadership role in the black family, during slavery and throughout the history of the civil rights movement. Embedded in Black women's lived experiences is how they come to leadership, which is characteristically different from the lived experiences of white women, Black men, and white men (Allen, 1997; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Solórzano, 1998, Collins, 2000). Black women like Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, and Sojourner Truth are titans of the Abolitionist Movement. Their leadership shaped, guided, and challenged the negative and oppressive narrative that permeated a patriarchal system of dominance (Murray, 2000).

The Black feminist movement was born out of the abolitionist movement and the modern civil rights movement which peaked during the 1970s with the implementation of Title IX and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Black women activists developed a feminist consciousness that

gave them agency to strive for empowerment on their own terms (Oesterreich, 2007). This was key since up until then, white women's agendas were at the forefront of the movement. Taylor (2009) further explains the goal of Black feminism is to create a political movement combating the interlocking systems of racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, but as well as seek to develop institutions that protect Black women's bodies and intellects (p. 18). Black feminist activist and scholar bell hooks (1994) defined feminism as the belief that women are full human beings capable of participation in leadership and a range of activities. Black feminism disrupts the inherent racism in presenting that feminism is for white women only. There are not only differences between women, but also gender differences between men and women. Eagly et al. (1995) found women are more effective in leadership roles that are stereotypically for men while also citing that measuring leadership "effectiveness" provided evidence to prove that gender roles are socially constructed.

Consequently, Black women have and will continue to persevere through gender, race, and class discrimination. Use of Black feminist epistemology will allow a lens to decipher and dissect the experiences that encompass the multidimensional nature of Black women's lives in the academy. Utilization of this lens created a more level understanding of how Black women in leadership made meaning or contend with the discrimination and/or challenges encountered in a conscious or unconscious way. There are three tenants that guide for this theorical concept:

1) *placing value on concrete experiences as criterion of meaning*

2) the *use of dialogue in the use of assessing knowledge claims*

3) *the ethic of caring* and 4) t*he ethic of personal accountability*.

For this study, I focused on tenants one and two. Collins (1989) pointed out valuing the concrete African American women may be invoking Afrocentric traditions, while other theorists suggest women are socialized in complex relational nexuses where contextual rules take priority over abstract principles in governing behavior. These tools are used to disrupt the white feminist narrative that leaves a gap for the nuanced experiences of Black women in power. BFT used in research can shape theoretical perspective, methodology, and strategies for data collection and analysis.

According to Saulnier (1996), feminist theory generally advocates for the breaking down of a patriarchal system to allow equality among women and men. Feminist theory delivers raced and classed outcomes that promote European – American women personal and professional benefits than any other group (Valakati et al., 2014). Scholars argue wealthy white women experience the greatest gains from the feminist movement (e.g., hooks, 2003). The largest criticism of the feminist perspective is that it fails to recognize socioeconomic, class, culture, race, and other social factors that are salient to the lived experiences for women of color. The disregard for these complexities perpetuates vulnerability to racism and sexism that exists in higher education (hooks, 2000). Thus, scholars such as hooks (1989) offer a womanist perspective of Black women where race and culture are integral aspects to feminism and the gender experience (Hamlet, 2000; Littlefield, 2003). At the core of who we are as Black women lies the many intersections of race, gender, class, ethnicity, etc. Black feminist epistemology centers this research within my cultural context. To properly reveal this perspective, the worldview of Black women is painted through words that have been untold.

Finally, intersectionality was used to leverage the participants' mosaics and illustrate the multiple aspects of nuance that affect the outcome of each Black woman's journey to the role of president.

Intersectionality

Crenshaw's (1989) work on intersectionality explored this interconnected relationship explaining the effects of oppression on Black women. Intersections of discrimination happen for Black women in terms of the following social factors which include but are not limited to gender identity, disability, citizenship status, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, and age. Crenshaw's work centers Black women's lived experiences to show the juxtaposition of how dominant theories provide only a single analysis of such multidimensional experiences. With Black women as the focus, it becomes more apparent how dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). This single axis framework contributes to the erasure of Black women by limiting inquiry to the experiences of those privileged members of the group. For example, Black women's experiences are scarcely documented in research in higher education, along with being overlooked and discriminated against for equal pay, Black women are overlooked or not deemed "fit" for key leadership positions in the academy. Many Black women face hardships and endure stricter qualifications and standards their majority and even marginalized counterparts do not.

This idea led me to interrogate my experiences more thoroughly. I studied W.E.B Du Bois concept of double consciousness. Du Bois (1903/1999) contended because of slavery, Blacks struggled with the internal conflict of colonized groups in an oppressed society while

measuring self-worth through the eyes of racist white society while also being judged by a dominant culture that looks at you in disdain. Du Bois stated double - consciousness is this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, measuring one's soul by the tape of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity (Du Bois, 1903/1999). This measuring happens both consciously and unconsciously to Black women for the most part in being admired and feared at the same time by white men and women.

Black feminist research suggests Black women experience what has been coined as a triple consciousness, which states Black women not only have to examine their Blackness through the lens of privileged whiteness but also an added layer of patriarchy. King (1988) wrote the dual and systematic discriminations of racism and sexism remain pervasive, and yet for many, class inequality compounds those oppressions. The intersections of race, gender, and class create a complicated dichotomy of both internal and external conflicts for Black women. Being a Black woman means 1) living as an "outsider" within your "in group," 2) sharing your racialized experiences for the people who identify in the majority to not listen or believe your experiences are valid, and 3) surviving and thriving most times alone. The experiences of Black women are assumed—though never explicitly stated—to be synonymous with either Black men or white females and since the experiences of both are equivalent. A discussion of Black women is superfluous (King, 1988, p. 45).

Several factors contribute to Black women having a subordinate status. Each factor has had its independent effect on status. The trauma passed from generation to generation contributes to the way Black women are socialized to think, feel, and act. My life experiences working in the academy have reinforced both negative and positive stereotypes associated with being a Black

woman. I find it difficult to cope with this notion as it has become a way of life, more like a

survival technique. Given all Black women endure to be considered half as good, working twice

as hard the statistics show that no matter how much my educational attainment, Black females

will still earn less than our white counterparts (King, 1988).

Research Approach

The research design utilized Black feminist thought and critical race theories in tandem with portraiture practices to uncover the unique journeys Black women have while holding the office of president at a college or university. The Black woman's voice from the perspective of a HBCU president has not fully been told. However, the narrative that informs the stories of women holding the role of president has been highlighted more often has provided an imbalance. My goal was to research this phenomenon while balancing my voice as a researcher and the voice of my participants.

Finding a balance of the researcher's voice in the collection of data was the most important factor. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) maintain an overly dominant researcher voice could be accused of the abuse of subjectivity while a weak researcher voice runs the risk of not thinking through. In this study I investigated how race and gender play a role in the pursuit of the presidency for Black women presidents at HBCUs. I was also interested in how Black women HBCU presidents navigated the relationship of race and gender to patriarchal norms presented in higher education.

To adequately tell these stories, I used portraiture to co-construct each participant's story. For the purposes of this study, I found participants that are women who identify as Black or African American, have served in the role of president at an HBCU for at least two years either presently or formerly, and are the first Black women to hold this position. The criteria presented allowed for participants who were the best fit for my study to expound upon their experiences navigating as the first.

Connelly and Clandinin (2004) posited thinking narratively involves living in the research field, collecting data through observations or participant observations. Doing fieldwork and interviewing are core methods that were utilized to collect data to saturation. Using BFT and CRT tenants construct methods that maximized understanding of experiences while allowing for data saturation.

Participants

Convenience sampling was used to select the final participants for the study, and it allowed the sample to produce robust participants. Convenience sampling is a non-probability nonrandom sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability are a given time, or the willingness to participate were included for the purpose of the study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Alternatively, convenience sampling methods proved to be effective when only limited numbers of people can serve as primary data sources due to the nature of research design and aims and objectives. Creswell (2013) suggested persistent selected participants are chosen based upon how well they may be able to answer the research questions. Through sampling, a list of characteristics essential to the study was compiled to guide recruitment. Being there are only 25 current Black woman presidents at HBCUs at the time of the research, it was easy to determine eligibility for this study. Eligibility was determined by compiling a list of current and past HBCU presidents that identified as Black women. A list of all current HBCU presidents was compiled to develop the sample (Appendix B). This list was gathered by researching HBCU college and university websites and use of NCES data to determine which HBCUs were officially accredited and who the current president was. For this study, two to four participants were deemed to be

sufficient. A brief description of each participant follows in the next sections to introduce each participant to the study.

Hattie. Dr. Hattie Jean Sells was born in 1953 in the southeastern part of the United States. She was born into a working-class family with a single mother who took care of her and her siblings after the unexpected passing of her father. Hattie attended undergraduate Newsome College a popular HBCU in her hometown, where she graduated with honors in 1974. She went on to get her master's degree and pursue a doctoral degree in 1998. Dr. Hattie Jéan Sells served as the first president of Richmond College. Working at Richmond College was her first position at a HBCU. While she was a proud HBCU graduate, she only had experience working in a PWI environment. Hattie presently works as an independent consultant. She is divorced with two children.

Christine. Dr. Christine Clark is originally from Memphis, Tennessee. She was born in 1969 to a working class, biracial family in the south. Christine's mother was white, and her father was Black. This dynamic caused lots of dissonance for Christine growing up. Christine often found herself trying to make meaning of who she was as a person in terms of her varied identities. Christine attended Praline University an HBCU in her community from which she received a full ride scholarship to attend. Being that Christine grew up in a working-class environment, she was not planning on attending college originally. Christine graduated college in 1991 and went on to pursue her master's degree and then her doctorate. Christine has had experience with being the president at multiple HBCUs. She presently serves at the president at Mirepoix College. She has a husband and two kids.

Addie. Dr. Adison (Addie) Derouselle is a native of the Midwest growing up during the civil rights movement, she has an activist posture to her leadership style. She was born in 1957 to working class parents who both are still alive today. Addie came from a large family that was well known in her community. She graduated in 1980 with her undergraduate degree is in Information Systems (Technology). While she did not attend an HBCU for her undergraduate career, she quickly moved into a position at a local HBCU that afforded her the opportunity to learn more about the HBCU environment prior to being chosen as the president at Breaux Bridge University. Addie has been the president of Breaux Bridge University since 2015. She is married with two adult children.

Joan. Dr. Joan Walker was born in 1950 at the height of discussions around segregation and integration. She was raised in Richmond, Virginia where she grew a love and passion for education. Her parents allowed her to pursue her passion for education by attending a local HBCU near where Joan grew up. She graduated in 1971 and went on to continue to pursue two master's degree followed by her doctorate degree. Like Addie, Joan was gifted in the field of the sciences. Joan started her career working primarily in the pharmaceutical industry as she is a trained scientist. Once she obtained her doctorate degree in 2004, she began exploring leadership in higher education. She is currently president at Martine University where she has been since 2017. She is windowed and has no children.

Each participant had varied identities that were identified as commonalities because of the initial data collection. These shared identities center not solely around gender and ethnicity, but also included class, geographic region of birth and educational pathways. These shared identities are further explored in chapter eight.

Recruitment

After gathering contact information via university websites, I sent email invitations out to all eligible participants to invite them to participate in the study (Appendix D). Due to my existing relationships working for HBCUs in the past, I utilized my personal network and previous work connections to identify potential participants. Once participants were identified, each potential participant was emailed and called via telephone to confirm their participation in the study and sent the participant demographic survey (Appendix E) to fill out. Upon receipt of the participant demographic surveys, each participant was given informed consent letters (Appendix C) to confirm their level of comfort with the study and the timeline outlined for commitment to the process.

Site

All sites were distinguished as historically Black colleges and universities. The universities were a combination of four-year public and private HBCU institutions. Of the sample, the women were at a majority at four-year private institutions with populations between 2,000-11,000 total students.

Data Collection Process

The first step was for each participant to complete a participant demographic survey (Appendix E) and meet the outlined criteria for the study. Demographic information sheets were also collected during the first interview session to organize and inform questions asked of each participant. The demographic sheet allowed establishment of interest and commitment to the study. Since university presidents have limited time, commitment to this study was of utmost importance. Once participants were confirmed, an initial discussion took place to establish

myself as the researcher and begin development of the relationship and go over the informed

consent (Appendix C) documents.

Due to COVID-19, this study was conducted while living through a pandemic. Safety

was taken into consideration to ensure safety of all participants. Interviews were conducted

utilizing Zoom web services. Next, I began to schedule three (3) semi-structured interviews

which will lasted between 75-90 minutes per interview. Each participant had a minimum of three

sessions, refer to Table 1.1 for the completed data collection process.

The first session consisted of a review of the study and signing consent forms before each

participant is interviewed. The first interview focused on the participant's life story. The purpose

of this interview was to provide context and better understand the past and present experiences

and shed light on the future. The next two interviews focused on how their lived experiences

related to how race, racism and misogyny impacted their daily lives. The purpose of these

interviews was to provide tangible life experiences that related to how each participant came to

understand how race and gender related to their daily experiences. The third set of interviews

explored how each person navigated the role of the presidency specifically. The purpose of these

final interviews was to make connections to how race and gender is situated within a patriarchal

culture in higher education.

After each interview was completed, I participated in reflexive journaling reflecting and

connecting similar themes and concepts. The third interview also covered themes conceptualized

from the previous two interview. I developed initial questions based on the participants previous

reflections in combination with my reflective journaling. Each participant was asked to review

transcripts from each interview to provide transparency and accuracy for member checking

purposes. This also allowed me as the researcher to ensure I documented their stories in the most accurate manner. All data was kept in password protected files stored on One Drive file storage systems to protect and ensure security.

Table 3.1

Data Collection Process

Data Method	Constructs	Means	Timeline
Participant Demographic Survey	Personal Demographic	Survey	March 2021
Intake Discussion	Informed Consent	Zoom	March 2021
First Interview	Life History & Lived Experiences	Zoom	March 2021
First Interview Reflection 1	Life History & Lived Experiences	Journaling	March 2021
Second Interview	Identity & Role - Race, Gender	Zoom	April 2021
Second Interview Reflection 1	Identity & Role - Race, Gender	Journaling	April 2021
Third Interview	All themes in relation to Patriarchy	Zoom	April 2021
Third Interview Reflection 1	All themes in relation to Patriarchy	Journaling	April 2021

Reflexive Journaling

Reflexivity is "an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially to the effect of the researcher, at every step of the research process" (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, para. 2). Reflexive journaling allowed me to document and organize my methodological choices along with the rationale behind each decision made. Reflexive journaling assessed the development of themes that became evident as to assist the reader with clear understanding of the story. This journal also served as a place for me as the researcher to reflect on the research questions, biases, or enlightening comments that are expressed.

Additionally, the reflexive journal was a place where my thoughts, feelings, fears, desires, and needs were captured allowing me to better understand how the self of the researcher impacts the interviews and the project (Ortlipp, 2008). I continued dialogue with these facets of myself and noted how they impacted the research process.

Prolonged Engagement

During this study, I spent a considerable amount of time with each participant with the goal of remaining in the field until the data and apparent themes felt saturated (Merriam, 2009). Creswell (2013) believed prolonged engagement allows the investigator time to develop and test alternative hypotheses. I looked for variations in the data and/or looking for data that supported or challenged my original assumptions or developing themes. The pairing of time sufficient and time spent with actively searching for alternative hypotheses built validity for this study.

Consent and Confidentiality

I used pseudonyms for the participants and the participants' universities to protect identities and ensure proper confidentiality. During each session, each participant was interviewed in a place identified by the participant as both comfortable and accessible. Each participant was asked about their life history, career path, and past career and life experiences to provide context to the study.

The study proposal was submitted through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for formal approval by the Higher Education Leadership program at Colorado State University after preliminary defense of work was approved. Upon receipt of IRB approval, research began. Due to currently living and working through COVID -19 travel restrictions, it was not feasible to meet with participants in person. Keeping safety in mind, I asked each participant to be

interviewed via Zoom technology. A letter introducing the study's purpose (Appendix C) was given to study participants to read both via email and in person, before the first session. I shared my personal story and explained the purpose of the study to help give context to the study, and it also gave the participants a sense of ease. Before the first interview session, a participant demographic sheet (Appendix E) was given to be completed by study participants to obtain demographic and historical information. The participants signed the informed consent form (Appendix C), and one copy was given to each participant for their records, and I kept one for their files. An interview question guide was used to organize the flow of questions (Appendix F).

Data Analysis

The portraiture methodology guided my data analysis employing impressionistic records and analytic memos. Lawrence–Lightfoot and Davis (1997) defined an impressionistic record as "a ruminative, thoughtful piece that identifies emerging hypotheses, suggests interpretations, describes shifts in perspectives, points to puzzles and dilemmas (methodological, conceptual, ethical) that need attention, and develops a plan of action for the next visit" (1997, p.188). Impressionistic records allowed for iterative (or repetitive) and restrained analysis of data. It allowed the portraitist to contemplate on ideas that seem to surface from the data, while their repetitive nature helps to either solidify or refute these early analyses.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data was collected and analyzed using *Dedoose* assessment platform using the encryption service. All data were stored under a password protected One Drive to which only my committee chair and I had access. I reviewed each transcript and reflection and outlined future questions for discovery of themes and codes. Journaling allowed me to reflect on the most salient aspects of each interview while also

allowing for organization of themes to form from observation of the participant. I coded the data to look for consistent themes found from each participant. Thematic coding was used to identify themes and formalize follow up questions for each participant. These thematic codes were particular to the stories told by each participant and assisted in shaping the narrative portrait (Maxell, 2005).

Writing impressionistic memos served as a tool to deepen insights to development of completed portraits. While impressionistic records, codes and analytic memos are useful tools, the process of analysis is about "deep contemplation and probing insight" (Lawrence–Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 189). I practiced listening to the story and listening for the story through data collection and analysis. The story was developed by constructing rising themes through listening for repetitive refrains, resonant metaphors, cultural and institutional rituals, through using triangulations and by searching for patterns in contrasting and dissonant perspectives (p. 193). The purpose of this listening was to shape what Lawrence–Lightfoot and Davis called aesthetic whole. The aesthetic whole is composed of the following elements conception, or overarching story; structure, or the elements that provide scaffolding or support to the resonant themes of the story and metaphors; form, or elements that made meaning of the structure; and coherence or "the unity and integrity of the piece" (p. 247). In addition to utilizing analytic memos and thematic coding, I used song lyrics from various songs to further analyze each participant's lived experiences. The main premise of the song's utilized were grounded in Black people's life experiences. Situating these lived experiences with the frame of lyrics from various songs allowed me as the researcher to use songs as a backdrop that further unpacked the narrative of

each participants portrait. Songs were carefully chosen based on theme's developed while also triangulating the researcher's perspective as the portraitists.

My reflexive journal was coded using thematic coding solely for triangulation purposes. Additionally, I triangulated the data by referencing my journal notes and themes, participant transcripts, song lyrics and impressionistic memos to ensure that I was accurately portraying each participant.

Once I completed the full data analysis, each portrait was constructed. Each portrait was reflective of their lived experiences navigating and deconstructing racism, misogyny, patriarchy, and bias. Participants reviewed each portrait for accuracy and interpretation. Portraits were used in two major ways: 1) as lived experiences, interpreted by me, ensuring that each participant's story is shared, illuminating the challenges that Black women faced in higher education, and 2) portraits were analyzed as the data set for chapters eight and nine of this study. The process flirted with the traditional style of data that is presented to allow for a reimagination of leadership experiences from an HBCU perspective.

Thematic codes gave insight into making connections and links between different participant experiences. This juxtaposition allowed for each portrait to have nuanced experiences while also highlighting shared challenges. Through the collection of data and discovery of significant themes. The four themes that materialized from the data include: 1) the placation of whiteness as a standard 2) operating at the margins of Blackness 3) the surveillance of Black bodies and 4) resisting systems of patriarchy. I nuanced the sources of support or influencers that have played a role in racialized and gendered experiences for Black women. I exposed how

Black women HBCU Presidents' journeys have been impacted and/or informed the philosophies on how they navigated patriarchal norms.

Ethical Considerations

Riessman (2008) declares the credibility of an investigator's representation is strengthened if it is recognizable to participants (p. 197). To achieve this, several ethical factors were taken in consideration to establish trust and to maintain the integrity of this study for all participants. Since the criteria set for this study yielded a smaller sample, certain considerations around member checking, masking institutions and use of pseudonyms for each participant was done to promote confidentiality and privacy. The use of informed consent, anonymity, and member checking allowed me as the investigator to build up a trusting relationship and allowed for rich data to be exposed.

Trustworthiness

Establishing trust with the participants in the study elevates the integrity of the research. It was essential to me to make sure each participant felt at ease with sharing intimate aspects of their lived experiences without feeling judged or misrepresented. Trustworthiness is the "quality of an investigation and its findings that make it noteworthy to its audiences" (Schwant, 2001, p. 258). The four criteria considered for maintaining a trustworthy qualitative study are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Before each interview, I made sure each participant was comfortable with revealing their identity by sharing their stories and being recorded.

After each interview, I used member checking for participants to view their transcripts for accuracy and authenticity. Triangulation was used as an additional method to ensure objectivity

and forced the researcher to interact closely with participants. Patton (1999) suggested triangulation referring to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop comprehensive understanding of phenomena. I also engaged in peer debriefs to review transcripts and to offer feedback on how I documented each story. This process spoke to the importance of using the researcher's lens of reflexivity. The participant's lens can become clouded by the researcher's positionality. It was essential to ensure these checks were made to prevent any misinterpretation of a participant's experience.

Positionality

As a researcher my positionality is vital to the success of this study. As a Black woman, I acknowledged I am privileged to have these conversations with other Black women, while simultaneously understanding that our experiences differ based on varied factors. I may have related to similar challenges but considered that all encounters have different circumstances. While I share a common bond with being Black and a woman, I understood that these identities assisted me in building rapport for my participants to share their personal experiences. They are the people who knew their experiences authentically. This was important to me as a researcher due to the nature of the lived experiences and trauma many Black women have endured. It was equally important I shed light on their experiences, without forcibly having each participant relive challenging times. I implored the practice of reflexivity and field notes to enhance the integrity of the research process. Patton (2002) refers to the use of field notes and reflexivity as ways to improve the quality of the study and holds the researcher more accountable for the data that is collected.

The other aspect important to this study was my identity being directly affiliated with attending a HBCU and having years of professional experience working at several HBCUs. HBCU scholars doing research on historically Black colleges is not the norm, many scholars who write about HBCUs research from an outsider perspective, lending opportunity for validity and reliability of sharing lived experiences with the lens of common experiences. Having a shared understanding of how HBCU culture and politics will add to this study in highlighting asset-based research at HBCUs. This shared perspective ensured that my interpretations do not veer too far from the participant's experience.

Limitations

When utilizing the counter-narrative technique for data collection, a small group of participants is customary. I selected a sample size of four participants for all phases of the data collection process. Due to the sample of participants being small, I began this study with having roughly 40 potential participants both current and past Presidents. This was the first limitation. The literature supported that access for Black women in higher education attaining senior administrative positions such as serving as the president, especially at HBCUs, is difficult. This small size of Black woman presidents cannot be generalized to every Black woman president. Another limitation was the challenge to prevent researcher bias. I took strides to ensure reflexivity to check researcher bias; however, there is still the possibility that instances of bias occurred because of preconceived notions and unconscious bias about racism and sexism that surfaced in the data. Researcher biases were monitored by actively listening to each participant's answers and repeating back responses for clarity to avoid misinterpretation of what the participants meant.

Summary

Chapter three provided the methodological framework used in this study. Specifically using a critical-based framework of Black feminist theory and CRT to guide the research design. It was important to highlight the rationale for utilizing portraiture as methodology to appropriately tell the stories for each Black woman president. As Davis and Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) described the art of using voice as interpretation. The idea of the portraitist as the master choreographer to stimulate coherence between the data being collected and how the portraitist interpretation of the data presented (p. 111). Creation of coherent portraits allow the reader to take a deeper dive into how systems of oppression and standards of whiteness continue to plague the role of president within the academy. Portraiture research fits well with this research study because of the ability to nuance the data to engage in multiple forms of exploration.

The following sections detail the portraits of each one of the participants studied. Each portrait gave insight into the four themes that were developed in concert with telling the stories of how each woman has been able to navigate gender bias, systematic racism, and a constant surveillance of Black women's bodies. The four themes that were developed are: 1) the placation of whiteness as a standard 2) operating at the margins of Blackness 3) the surveillance of Black bodies and 4) resisting systems of patriarchy.

"Free" - Written by: Denice Williams, performed by: Hattie Jéan Sells

"But I want to be free, free, free…. And I just got to be me, yeah, me, me."

"Free" by Susaye Greene, Hank Redd, Henry Redd, Nathan Watts, and Denice Williams

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Setting the Scene

As I began to prepare to log in for my first meeting with Hattie, I grew increasingly nervous because I could not believe I was about to speak to her. I found out quickly she was a rather timely person, because I heard a "*ding*" from an email on my computer informing me she had entered the zoom meeting 15 minutes ahead of time. I began to get nervous, palms sweaty, throat dry, and immediately began doubting the relevance of every question I was about to ask her. As I came on the zoom call, she was not sitting in the chair, I breathed a sigh of relief. But within the next seconds, she appeared filling the screen. She was dressed business casual, hair pulled neatly into a beautiful afro puff, but I could tell she took pride in the way she looked and wore nice things. I smiled and she immediately smiled back, which helped me to calm down a bit. I immediately thanked her for her time and informed her of how much I was looking forward to talking and getting to know her. She was calm and poised, she reminded me of my mother, her demeanor was cool, calm, and collected. She seemed prepared and ready to answer my questions.

As I started to introduce myself and get to know Hattie, I noticed her surroundings. Her collections of books on the bookcase behind her, her notebook and pen, placed next to her on the desk. It looked as though she was talking with me from her home office in which she possibly spent time, working on projects, or just catching up on work. I told her I noticed she popped on, so I decided to pop on a little early as well. She stated, "Yeah, I am an early riser, I got up, had my coffee, read the paper, and already got my workout in." As she was recounting all she had done before our interview, I started to think of all the things she had accomplished in her career as an HBCU president, and I quickly concluded, she was a go-getter! Her nature came across as straight to the point and matter of fact, but I quickly realized her demeanor was very even kilter and positive. She had a sense of humor while I was still somewhat in awe, I was speaking to her, she made me laugh and it helped break the ice and calm me down. I would quickly see her down to earth personality is what kept her grounded and able to accomplish as much as she did. Once I began to ask questions to get to know her, words such as private and introverted were the ways she tended to describe herself. But when it came to getting down to the business of discussing higher education, I could tell immediately she was knowledgeable, intelligent, and always thought two steps ahead of everyone she encountered. Hattie talked about the influence her mom had on her life, and I could not help but think to myself, "Wow, she is just like her mom."

As she described how strong willed and nurturing her mother had been in her life, all I could do was think about how I saw the values her mother instilled in her coming to life as she recounted her experiences. It was then I knew I was really going to enjoy this interview. I sat up in my car as if I was watching a documentary film unfold about her life, at each turn I was anxious to hear what would happen next. As I began to lean in, I immediately felt a calmness and

comfort level start to set in, it felt as if I was talking to an old friend, rather than someone I admired and looked up too.

It Takes a Village

Hattie Jéan Sells was born in the Jim Crow south in the middle of segregation and the civil rights movement. She grew up in a two-parent working class household. Her father passed away while she was very young. Her family was strong, loving, and grounded her in the foundation of putting God first and education second. Growing up in a segregated south, Hattie shared with me she attended all Black schools her whole life until she attended graduate school. Hattie stated,

> I guess we went to a local school, all Black elementary school because schools were segregated back in 1960. I went through the Civil Rights Movement in 1964 and these are all things that helped shape who I am today. Having the experience of being segregated really resonated with her and stuck with her throughout her life. It's important because I went through the whole Civil Rights Movement. I went through standing at the lunch counter as a child not being let on the back of the bus. And all of that was not told to me, I didn't read it in a book, I lived it every day as I grew up.

Hattie attended an all-Black high school that was an integral part of her community. Her mom was a stay-at-home mom and maid, while her father worked as a truck driver for a tobacco factory. Both were hardworking individuals who instilled in her the value of education and hard work. She grew up in a very traditional old school home. Her parents took her to church and instilled the teachings rooted in Christian values, like learning the 23rd Psalm and the Lord's Prayer. Her mom cooked Sunday dinners and she recalled her father taking the family on Sunday

drives, every Sunday. They were active in church activities as well as in their surrounding community. Before the passing of her dad, Hattie recalls having dinner together, eating all three meals together as a family, all nine of them. I visualized what a beautiful scene that must have been, I could see a certain bit of nostalgia come across her face when she spoke of her family. Those were happy days for Hattie. She truly was raised in a community where the adage "it takes a village" was truly being lived out. She stated,

> So, it was a very disciplined environment where you had to respect your elders, you
> didn't talk back, children were seen not heard. If anybody saw us getting out of hand, you
> would rather for them to see you do it, and not go tell your parents because it could be
> worse.

Hattie had a great childhood. She had a typical family life that consisted of reading books, playing board games, and interacting with her brothers and sisters. When her father passed away, Hattie began to assume duties to help with the family. The family eventually moved to a predominantly white neighborhood, which started to change her environment.

"Don't Let it Touch You"

The value of education was instilled in Hattie from day one with Hattie's family. Prior to the ninth grade Hattie had only one white teacher that she encountered. Hattie recalls in 1971, how forced integration happened in her hometown. Students had to go to the school closest to where you lived, the only way you did not have to participate in integration, was to enroll in a course only being offered at all Black school, so she took tailoring to stay at all Black school where she felt most comfortable. Her parents were very protective of her and her siblings at the time, due to all the racism that existed. Hattie explained a lot of planning happened to try to

keep from dealing with racism or violence. This notion of planning around racism led her to

decide about what college she would attend to obtain her undergraduate degree. Hattie's mother

was afraid for her to attend a predominately white institution (PWI), for which she applied and

was admitted. The violence and fear that surrounded racism was enough to cause her pause

being away from her child. For this reason, Hattie was influenced to attend an HBCU. HBCUs

provided a sense of home and familiarity for Blacks in the 1970s, they also provided a

foundation for learning that was interesting and taught self-love for her.

Hattie began her college life at Greenwood University, a small public HBCU where she

majored in geography because of her love of all things environmental. She went on to graduate

school where she double majored in Public Policy and Public Administration with dreams of

being a change agent within urban and regional planning and development. Hattie had always

been involved in voter registration and activism at a young age, which is what influenced her to

want to empower those in her community. After graduate school, she went on to work as a state

planner for resources and resource management in a town in which Black people were few and

far in between. While her social life was exhausting, but she enjoyed the job, so she stayed five

years. At this point, I thought about how it must have felt to be one of "the only" Black people

living in a town in which you were truly treated like an outsider. Thriving and striving in spaces

where you are not in the majority is exhausting and felt oh too familiar. I began watching for her

verbal and nonverbal responses to see how she was telling her story. At times it felt as if she was

transported back to things that she would describe. Her wonderful nature of telling her story,

made me recall how she was treated as a child in all white spaces. She grew up navigating how it

felt to be "the only" Black but triumphed and did not let it break her. Which is a skill that she learned from her mother.

After her five years stay, she was ready for a change, so she moved back home and took a job at the local university. The university was experiencing some financial hardship and Hattie was chosen to come in and bring about some organizational change. Organizing had quickly become her area of expertise, making her somewhat of a fixer like Olivia Pope. I pictured her walking up wearing an all-white suit and coming into spaces commanding presence and dominating rooms. With this new position she was chosen not only because of her organizational skill set, but also, she was able to work on developing her skill set around strategic planning and visioning.

> I can look at a situation and I could see it. My faculty members used to say, 'You know, you can walk it all the way to the end before we start.' I need to know what's going to happen, I need to know the end, then I can plan to get to it.

Hattie advanced quickly and made some major changes at the university, so much so, she began getting offers from several universities and colleges that needed her expertise. One thing about Hattie I love is that she is the definition of a humble brag. She doesn't boast about what she does, but she is confident in knowing that she can do a job, any job. She has a gracefulness about her but is introverted.

Moving on for her meant that she was afforded the opportunity to work for a university that allowed her to strategize and make changes that assisted with operational excellence. The university had begun going through some major challenges and needed someone to come in and turn the situation around, little did Hattie know, they really wanted someone to come in and take

the fall for their declining endowment. Little did the university know that Hattie was sharper than they gave her credit for. Hattie made sure she was transparent with communication and informed all stakeholders of the current state of the university. The university planned to have a Black woman come in and take responsibility for a situation that she inherently had no part in causing, but because she was Black, they assumed she would not be savvy enough to navigate the challenges presented to her. Hattie created some cognitive dissonance around the information that she was able to bring forth, which would force the university to change their habits. The university was resistant to the change but could not reckon with the fact that a Black woman had intelligently delivered the message of a huge paradigm shift versus the fact they had been mismanaged for years, prior to her arrival. This situation was commonplace for Hattie, and she treated the situation like a duck and let the challenges roll off her back, like water. Hattie's strength is she learned how to navigate spaces in higher education because she understood how to lead. From her perspective, being her authentic self was the most important to her. Knowing who you are is extremely important to being in leadership. She recounted one of the most valuable lessons her mother taught her was accepting herself and not relying on others' opinions of who they thought she was. Hattie stated:

> And I used to tell people that my mom told us when we were young, there's two things
> that you don't do. You don't let people run you off your job, you leave when you are
> ready. And on your own terms, and the hateful stuff, you don't let it touch you.

After this experience Hattie's motto became be prepared. She never wanted to allow herself to be caught in situations or spaces, where she was not prepared and as knowledgeable as she could be. She decided that no matter what the circumstances would be, lack of preparation

would never be the reason that she would fail. Preparation allowed her the freedom to be confident in decision making and audacious in her goal setting to set a foundation for becoming personally free.

"I Need to be Free"

One of the most influential people in Hattie's life was her cousin who was 17 years older than her. She spent summers with her cousin, and they travelled the world taking her places she had never been and exposing Hattie to a host of new experiences. These summers expanded her horizons and allowed her to think about what she wanted out of life. Her cousin allowed her to break away from the everyday reminder of the violence and hatred toward Black people for just being Black. Hattie recalls a story of being young and going to pick peaches, pecans and blackberries from trees that had fallen near her home. White neighbors would call the police on them just because they were picking the fruit from the ground. Hattie said,

> That was when I really understood how insidious hate can be. At a very young age, we went to the store to buy shoes. We couldn't sit down and try on shoes. The person would measure our feet, go back, and get the shoes and my mom would have to take them and we hoped that they would fit.

Forced integration and difference began to become trending topics in her life. From that point on, being treated differently was something to which Hattie became accustomed, becoming something that followed her for the rest of her life. Fear was instilled through the power dynamics of authority from the police. These types of interactions stayed at the back of her mind and had a tremendous effect on the types of choices she made and her morals.

The idea of learning about being a woman was taught through determining if you got pregnant or not. Most of her teachings about what it meant to be a woman began through physical education classes or from family members giving their opinions about being responsible with raising children. Conversations about becoming a woman centered around child rearing and references to what not to do, to have children. Although she was close to her mom, her mother had a very disciplined approach to raising Hattie. Hattie looked up to her mother as a provider, guide, and wise council due to the way that she took care of her family. One of the things she attributes to her mother's teaching, was learning about belief in self and believing something greater than yourself. Nothing is worth sacrificing your peace or freedom. "Self-confidence can be masked as self-defense, rather than fighting people, I learned how to be silent. I learned to let the Lord fight my battles."

This sentiment is common for Black people, especially for women. As children growing up in a Black household you are taught to be seen and not heard. Our spirituality serves as a foundation to deal with all problems. So, it was not lost on me that Hattie was raised this way. I could tell Hattie had a solid foundation in her Blackness as well as her spirituality, she referenced this often. Hattie is simple and very deliberate about her thoughts and actions. Her humbleness comes across in how she thinks and in the way she serves. She talked a lot about being driven to do her best, and always seeking to overcome evil by doing good by others. This was evident in her approach to her work and her life. She is no one to celebrate often, she would rather just accept a thank you, and be ready to move to the next obstacle or task. To her, learning how to play "the game" and how to defeat the opponent is one of the most important skillsets you can develop. As leaders, Black women need to understand the system in which Black people

are a part of, to overcome it and ultimately defeat it. Hattie is a catalyst for change that firmly

believes that as Black people we always can grow and do better.

Another important aspect to being a leader is the journey to becoming your most

authentic self. While Hattie truly believed being knowledgeable and prepared was important, she

also stressed the importance of knowing who you are, and not relying on others' opinions of who

you are. Hattie states, "My mother always told me, you leave a job on your own terms." This was

critical, because it allows you the autonomy to let your reputation and work speak for itself. She

was determined to always be prepared and knowledgeable, she never wanted to be perceived as

not being prepared or lacking knowledge or content to do her job. With that type of discipline

and intellect, she became a force to reckon with and powerhouse in the field of higher education.

In her mind, having knowledge gave her freedom. Being able to be knowledgeable and have

access to resources made it possible to fight for her personal freedom. Hattie said, "I just realized

that I need to be free. For me to be my authentic self, I cannot let what people think about me,

sway me, or direct my path." This idea of freedom resonated with me so much, I could not stop

thinking about it. When Hattie told me, "I decided a long time ago, that I was free" it felt as if

she was giving herself permission to be comfortable in who she is, and comfortable in all the

decisions that she has made in her life.

The Presidency

Hattie had been successful in her tenures as an administrator at different institutions and

was content in her work life balance. She had many successes with coming into university

environments and assessing financial situations and providing recommendations on better ways

to facilitate business. The idea of working as an HBCU president was not on her radar and came

as she was recommended to participate in a search. Since diversity, equity, and inclusion was being put in the forefront of higher education, she was asked to participate in the search to make the pool more diverse. While Hattie was not originally interested in participating in the pool of applicants, she decided she would participate just to get some practice in the process for interviewing for a presidency. As a result of her participation in the process, she kept being advanced forward as a powerful candidate, and ended up receiving an offer for the role. Hattie explained from the interview process, it seemed as if the university was onboard with wanting a change agent, to come in and lay some foundation for some major cultural changes that needed to happen within the institution. There also seemed to be some significant financial challenges that needed to be dealt with.

Hattie had significant experiences with change management and fiscal realignment, she looked at the role as being a challenge that she was willing to embark upon. Her love and affinity for historically Black colleges also played a role in her decision to take the job. She felt that with her background and experience, she would be able to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the institution. While her rationale was clear and genuine, many of her peers and colleagues thought she was crazy to accept the role. In her mind, she understood why they felt that way, but she also felt as if because she was a proud HBCU graduate many people did not understand the plight of HBCUs in the ways that HBCU alumni do. Therefore, she looked at taking on the role of the presidency at an HBCU as an honor, not a liability.

Hattie began and hit the ground running within the first six months to a year she knew she had to work fast, to make some significant changes quickly. She was able to come in and assess the climate by talking with various government officials, community partners, alumni, and

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donors this gave her a great sense of where the campus was, both fiscal and environmental. She engaged a consulting firm to help assist her with doing an environmental scan with the faculty and staff of the university, while additionally allowing for listening sessions to occur to get a pulse on how employees were feeling at the university. After gathering all this data, she was able to assess and really come to the Board of Trustees with clear goals. Her focus was simple there would be a focus on educational excellence and providing quality education at the institution. From the initial environmental scan, it seemed as though there were lots of inequities that did not match up with outcomes. In her mind the brand was being portrayed for the institution did not align with the return on the investment that was being presented. She also found a strong sense of apathy around the faculty and staff that work there. Many of the faculty and staff were good people, but many were not committed to the work. She set standards that were reasonable but came with years of business acumen and were strategic. Her energy and zest for organization was met with dissension and push back from every angle. At first, she recalls someone objecting to her workstyle and choices because she worked at a predominantly white institution (PWI) in the past. They made mention that Hattie was not "one of us" meaning that she was not of the HBCU culture. This was shocking to Hattie, being that she was an HBCU graduate, she did not feel as though she was considered an outsider. Although she did have experience working at PWIs in the past, she did not understand why she was being made to feel like an outsider.

As she kept moving forward, she kept finding out more and more about the challenges that the institution was having, not only with day-to-day operational items in addition she had to figure out how to navigate some of the more interpersonal interactions that would occur because of her being in this role of president. Hattie spent a lot of time in the year learning about the

homosocial reproduction that had been taking place, realigning organizational charts, and making sure she could assemble a strong team and navigating loyalties people had that formed alliances against her. She encountered many obstacles she could not have forecasted. Being that she was advocating for a shift in the culture, many people including Board of Trustee members, were resistant to the change, which oddly enough was the change that she believed that they hired her for. Hattie quickly saw there was an overwhelming sentiment from the institution that did not want to change, and quite frankly the community would reference the work of other previous presidents and chastise her for not doing the same things as they once did.

Despite feeling defeated at times, Hattie stayed the course and was committed to setting attainable goals for the institution that would move the needle and provide a return on investment. Hattie started to try to combat the challenges that she was facing head on and made several meaningful changes that began to move the needle on making changes that would benefit students, so much so that she was doing tasks that many other HBCU presidents wouldn't normally be responsible for. Hattie recounted, "I was met with resistance from many people. They seem to be of the notion that the 57 Chevy knew best." Hattie often referred to the notion of resistance that came from the old guard of a previous president's tenure. The reference to a 1957 Chevy truck is an analogy for old thinking. While Hattie was trying to establish herself as the leader and visionary for the institution, she would be met with pushback or constantly be questioned as to why she wasn't making choices or decisions as he would have. This was most important being she was the first woman in this role. She was constantly being challenged and received pushback because she was a woman.

The challenges and pushback continued through her first year in the role. There were several instances where Hattie encountered racism, gender bias, sabotage, and flat-out disrespect. Hattie's attitude and professionalism remained true, she recalls, "The harm was happening, but it did not change what we had to do, it just changed the way we had to go about doing it." Even while enduring challenge after challenge, Hattie remained focused on the end goal. She had a knack for being strategic, and always staying prepared. Once the institution and the naysayers could see that despite all their efforts to damage her and derail her progress, she persisted, the harm became personal. They began taking personal attacks on her character trying to discredit who she was and what she stood for. Many began trying to paint her as an "outsider" to the HBCU culture noting she had never worked in an HBCU environment prior to this experience, they took issue with where she chose to worship and they criticized her to the point where they thought, she believed she was better than, or what some would term an "Uppity Negro." Hattie emphatically, could not understand these sentiments because it was naturally in her nature to be somewhat of a loner, she did not realize at first the community was trying so hard to make her an outsider. Little did they know, she was ready for a change.

Epiphany

After enduring multiple incidents of interruption and undermining behaviors, Hattie had gotten to a point at which she felt she had done all she could do. Once she saw everything she was doing was being met with opposition, she decided she would quit while she was ahead. Hattie did not stop working, although she had experienced pushback and strife, she still pressed through and remained resilient to the end of her presidency. In Hattie's experiences she spoke about the double standards that exist to hold women, especially Black women, back from being

seen as equal and respected. She expressed that at times, being in the role of president felt like you still needed to be invited to sit at tables where decisions are made, when in fact the table is in the president's conference room. Men in leadership seem to believe Black women in leadership are expected to take heed to advice or to take direction from men, even when women know better. While listening to Hattie lament about her last days at the university, I could do nothing but feel an under tone of feeling betrayed. Hattie was so humble in her approach, she constantly put the ideals and goals of the university before her personal feelings or agenda. In fact, she used silence as her weapon of choice, citing prayer and resilience as her main choice of discourse. Hattie recounted, "People always see the lashing, but they never see the first hit." She was so thoughtful and careful in her approach she made sure was careful to react so that she would not do anything she would regret or that would be taken out of context. She reached her tipping point when she was trying to schedule a meeting with the Chair of the Board, and she noticed he kept avoiding her. On a weekend business trip, she happened to run into the Chair and as he was trying to avoid her again, she asked him frankly why he had not scheduled the meeting to discuss the plan. He rushed her off and went on his way. At that point, Hattie knew that she was done. Hattie realized that the Board was not in alignment with what they said they wanted in this presidential role. The Board expressed they wanted a change agent, someone who could serve as a catalyst for change, but the institution was not ready for change.

Hattie's time during her presidency taught her so much about herself. Even after all she endured, when asked if she would do it again, Hattie replied she would. She did admit she would have handled some situations differently, but what I found most shocking was how she put her love for HBCUs at the forefront of what she did, despite how she was treated. Hattie said, "Even

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when I saw the bad, I still tried to find the good in some of the most hateful things." It was a lesson learned. The lesson made her really look at what she endured.

Albeit this experience had her questioning whether higher education was the best fit for her. Her reflection exposed the fact that she felt that the institution not only tried to ruin her reputation, but they also try to damage herself worth. Hattie resoundingly pronounced, "I am free. A weight has definitely been lifted from my shoulders, and I felt free." By design, HBCUs have been set up for challenges, systematically. The higher education system was not designed for HBCUs to thrive. Being that Hattie had experiences that lent to her successful tenure at several higher education institutions, her main goal was to make influential and impactful change at the institution. Hattie made a huge impact, in her short tenure, and while it was a heavy lift, she still pushed through. Hattie's desire for freedom resonated with me so much, I immediately thought of the song "Free" by Deniece Williams. The song states, "But I just got to be free, free, free. And I just got to be me, me, me" (Williams, 1976, Track 5). Hattie's story was a blueprint for what it means to be unapologetically yourself, living, leading, and marching to your own beat. Her story is not only inspiring, but hopeful.

Track 5: CHRISTINE

"Ex-Factor" - Written by: Lauryn Hill, performed by: Christine Clark

The Miseducation of Christine Clark

"Tell me who I have to be, to get some reciprocity" *"Ex-Factor"* by Alan Bergman,

Marilyn Bergman, Robert Diggs, Gary Grice, Ghostface Killah, Marvin Hamlisch, Lamont

Hawkins, Lauryn Hill, J. Hunter, Inspectah Deck, Russell Jones, Method Man, Ol' Dirty Bastard,

RZA, C. Smith, and Corey Woods © Sony/ATV Music Publishing Ltd.

It was an early April afternoon when I got ready to speak to Christine on zoom. I had

thought about what I would say to her for the past couple of days. Christine did not know, but I

was so nervous to speak with her because she is someone that I admire, from afar. I sat anxiously

waiting for her to log on. While I was overwhelmed with excitement, I also felt a sense of

imposter syndrome come over me. *"What will she think of me?"* *"Will I ask the right*

questions?" Being that Christine was who she was, I wanted to make a good first impression.

She logs on and comes onto the screen, poised and very calm, not smiling much.

Christine joined me from her office; her hair was pulled back in a neat bun, white pearl necklace

and her glasses sat right on the rim of her nose. She is regal, intelligent, fashionable, and smiles

at me, and it feels as if she can tell I am nervous, so her smile lets me know she is harmless and

open to share. I quickly try to break the ice and jump right into getting to know her. I notice her

slight southern accent while she tells me about being a mother, wife, pretty good girlfriend, and

HBCU president, that I see her differently than I expected. Many folks described her as rigid and

stern, but I found her to be easy going and lighthearted. So much so, she found humor and sarcasm as ways to break the ice and let me into her world.

Developing Workarounds

Christine grew up in the south in an environment that was low wealth. Her family life was somewhat dysfunctional as her mother was white and her father was a Black man. There were instances of domestic violence Christine can recall, but the most intriguing moment for me, was when she discussed being biracial. From first glance, one may not guess Christine has a bi-racial identity, her skin is Black, and she falls in the category of passing for Black. She made it clear to me she considered herself Black, and had I not asked her about her family life, that she wouldn't have disclosed this information. I understood more and more why she felt this way, as we discussed her home life. Her parents struggled with domestic violence issues and her mother was treated like an outsider within the majority Black community where they lived. Even though her parents did not have the best relationship, Christine recounts how great her mother was about making sure her, and her brother were educated. Christine's mother encouraged learning in their home, she read to them often and stressed the importance of getting an education. College was not something Christine thought about because of the costs and affordability, but later down the road, college would prove to be in the cards for her.

Growing up in the south, as a child with a white mother was not easy. She and her brother went to an all-white school, as biracial kids, who looked like they did not belong to their all-white mother. "When you don't look mixed, no one knows," she stated. But there are certain things about being Black that only Black parents know how to do, like hair. A Black woman's hair tells so many stories. Black woman's hair is an important part of who Black women are, and

to grow up with someone who does not know how to style it, can provide challenges especially for a child who is biracial. In Christine's case, her hair was unruly, and her mother was not well versed in how to style her unruly curls. Christine recounted many times where she encountered being seen as different. To not stand out, or be seen as different, she created "workarounds" to not stand out or be seen as different. She shared:

> I remember, you know sitting outside with friends, all white people. And having my legs straight out in front of me and somebody making a comment., like 'Why are your knees Black? What's wrong with you, your knees are darker than the rest of your legs.' After that just consciously I always sit crisscross applesauce because you kind of train yourself right, do not be different, do not stand out, and that was noted as something different and I do not want to stand out.

Workarounds are common for Black women and girls, especially when you are talking about going to the pool. Black girls commonly came up with excuses like, "I have cramps" or "I am not feeling well" to avoid getting our hair wet. Christine went on to discuss many times she had weird workarounds Black people had to endure to fit into a culture that was not designed for Blacks. It was interesting hearing Christine talk about how she had not really thought about these types of workarounds, until recently. She noted her feelings around these issues had been put into a box and sat on a shelf for a while, but recently they have become more triggering for her. For Christine, growing up in a mostly homogenous world having two minoritized identities was difficult for her to manage. She was not only a woman, but also a different kind of Black. You see, being biracial meant that at times, you were not white enough for white people to accept you, but still not Black enough to feel accepted amongst people who looked like you the most.

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Black people can develop an outsider within culture that can allow you to feel like a stranger amongst people that are supposed to be the closest to you.

The concept of being an outsider within her own community was a common theme in her household. Christine watched as her mother was ostracized by other Black women in the community. Christine's mother was not made to feel welcome in an all-Black community. The women in the community treated her mother like an outcast, because she was with a Black man. No one helped her with grooming her children or assisting with exposing them to anything to do with Black culture. Christine's mother did not know anything about being Black, and because the relationship between her mother and father was strained, many women in her neighborhood turned a blind eye to helping them out. Being left out really influenced Christine. Watching her mother be isolated from her family and friends led Christine to look for workarounds to learn more about not only being a woman but being Black as well. As a teen Christine developed relationships with friends in the neighborhood, but she was befriending them to try to observe their mothers to learn things like cooking, and how to dress. Christine had to learn to 'be Black' because she was not taught anything about Black culture in her house. Even as an adult Christine was intentional about learning how to cook soul food which was not food that she had experienced prior to going to college. The reality is that as Black women are socialized and taught certain things like how to cook, how to maintain our hair and many other things that are unique to being a Black woman. If you are not taught these rituals, then you feel like an outsider, within, and revealing you do not know allows a certain vulnerability that only privileged people will see.

You see, there is an unspoken code that if you do not know how to cornrow, cook grits, or dance, somehow you could be considered not Black enough, and that is unacceptable. To have your Blackness questioned, is the ultimate form of disrespect, but also can make you feel vulnerable like an exposed wound. Christine explained how she had to grow into the sisterhood that is Black women. Learning to cook, play spades, and understand the nomenclature of Black culture opens the door of acceptance and belonging that we as people all long for. Belonging to the sisterhood that is Black women, is a rite of passage that allows Black women as women to have a safe place. A place where what is understood, does not have to be explained.

Taking Our Blackness for Granted

While being Black, or more specifically a Black woman, is not a monolith. There are major commonalities Black women all share which bind Black women into this unique sisterhood. These ties at times are seen as defining aspects of culture that aid in defining who you are as a woman. Christine recalls making the decision to attend college and how she came to learn more about her Blackness as well as being a woman. College was not an automatic thought or choice for her. Coming from a low wealth background, education was seen as important, but the financial implications of an education forced Christine to take initiative to figure out pathways towards affordable education. While she applied for colleges, she also signed up to join the military. Days before she was set to sign her confirmation papers to join the military, she got a call from Praline University (PU), an HBCU in her community, informing her she had been awarded a scholarship to attend. While she did not know much about HBCUs, the college was affordable and close enough to home where it would not cause any financial burdens on her or

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her family. And just like that, Christine was enrolling in Praline University and thus began her HBCU story.

While attending PU, Christine was heavily engaged in her studies as well as campus life. Christine excelled in the classroom but was also seen as the go-to student leader, doing campus tours, serving as an ambassador for recruiting as well as being named as Miss Praline University, one of the most prestigious positions. Christine and I talked more about her time at Praline, being that this was her first encounter with an HBCU. When asked about her experience, she shared how HBCUs are environments in which Black people are allowed to be their unapologetic selves while also having an assumption that all Black people have the same experiences, and all are raised to understand their Blackness equally.

I think the challenge with HBCUs is that we [Black People] take Blackness for granted. So, for people like me who are sort of figuring that part of themselves out, there are no conversations that really help you. I was an imposter, I look Black, but I did not know anything about being Black. I mean, I would watch and observe quietly how my friends would talk about how their moms taught them different things and I thought to myself, I haven't learned any of these things. My mom didn't ever come to the campus.

This is a great example of how imposter syndrome shows up within communities of People of Color. Rather than be seen as an outsider within your own community, you are silent and choose to go along with the group. In the Black community our culture is very nuanced and multifaced. Especially with holidays, rituals, and celebrations. Take Thanksgiving for instance, we prepare foods that may or may not be seen as traditional, but usually have our own cultural spin. Christine gave an example of how People of Color are primarily eating "dressing" for

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Thanksgiving, while white people may call it "stuffing." There are similar dishes with cultural nuances. She went on to explain the experiences that Black people take for granted at times, is the dressing versus stuffing debate. The assumption is made at Thanksgiving all Black people are having "dressing" at our house, when in fact, some are having "stuffing."

As a result of Christine attending and thriving in her HBCU, she gained self-confidence and the lessons learned in the HBCU environment helped her to think and be more intentional about the way that she chooses to lead. Christine graduated early and went on to graduate school to pursue her law degree. She got married and began a family right out of college. After she successfully passed the Bar, she worked for a law firm for about 10 years, before she was asked about teaching an introductory-level class at a local college. Teaching was not on her radar, but she took the opportunity to try it out. Christine ended up being one of the only Black teachers in the program, and after her class was complete a student left her a note that said, "You changed my life." For Christine, the idea that you could change someone's life in the classroom, changed her perspective on her purpose in her career. As Christine began to think about her impact, she thought about how connected her experiences were and how they have shaped the leader she has come to be. After thinking about her life, she noticed her leadership style is directly related to how she was raised and how she navigated challenges. As a leader Christine grew to be pragmatic in her approach, intentional in her decision making, resilient, graceful and can spot an imposter from a mile away, because she used to be one. These are all traits she felt could be used to help others understand that there is more than one way to be Black. Her purposeful and resourceful outlook to dealing with issues led her to believe that college may be the career where she could make the most impact.

Christine began to work at college full time doing various positions. Her mentor suggested she pursue a doctorate degree to continue to grow her higher education career. Christine informed her mentor that she already had a JD which is a Juris Doctorate. Her mentor quickly informed her she would need an earned doctorate degree, and that higher education did not consider a JD an earned doctorate. So, she began a PhD program while working full time and managing a family life. Christine continued to excel and was promoted to working in different areas like development and advancement which allowed her to gain exposure that laid the foundation for her to become a generalist, which is ideal for university presidents.

I asked Christine to tell me about the defining moment when she knew she was prepared to begin applying for presidency appointments. Christine came to a point where she was overseeing a program that was experiencing some challenges academically for the college. Christine recommended to the president that the program needed to be closed. The president responded to her, *"When you're the damn president, you can make the decisions."* As a result of that conversation, the program ended up losing its accreditation and Christine felt as if the president had just listened to her, then the program would not have closed. At that moment, she felt confident she could be a president.

Heavy on the Grace

As Christine began in her first presidency, she went into the job with a sense of what she would encounter as a president but did not know everything. She likened the experience of being a quarterback playing in the Superbowl. As the quarterback you are anxious to play, but everyone is looking at you for the play, and you must call the play. This analogy was so sobering and relatable to me because I could relate to this feeling. Feeling as if you cannot fumble because

everyone is looking to you to make the play. As the new kid on the block, she took the viewpoint of becoming familiar with the university and university environment. On her first day, she was met with resistance. Upon trying to get moved onto campus, she called the previous acting president to see about moving some items into her office early. The interim president denied her request to bring some items to campus earlier. This took Christine aback, not expecting to receive this type of resistance, but rather a smooth transition of power. The acting president told her to bring her items on Monday, which was Christine's first day. This set a precedent with Christine and the interim president. Later Christine found out the acting president was in the candidate pool for her position and did not receive it. What made matters worse, the acting president happened to be a woman. With this negative interaction, Christine was not able to glean information from the acting president that could have aided her in her success as the president. This was just the beginning of the many obstacles that she would endure trying to transition into the presidency.

As a woman president you are seen in the duality of the role. Women have traditionally been seen as the first lady of the university due to women historically excluded from the presidency. Now Christine is met with breaking down the stereotype of being seen as the president and leader of the university, while also holding the expectation of being gracious and hosting events in support of the university. Christine shared about being "heavy on the grace" to create inroads with building relationships with university and community partners. It is an expectation Black women in leadership roles should be kind and gracious; this is in direct opposition to the "angry Black woman" persona that is perceived by many. What is most challenging is balancing between giving grace versus having to make hard decisions. The double

edge sword for Black women: giving grace or being gracious can be perceived as being weak and kindness is confused with being stupid or having a lack of knowledge. Christine stated, "Don't get it twisted, I will fire you. Just because I ask you about your family, and show concern for you as an employee, that doesn't mean that I will not hold you accountable. Grace, yes. Stupid, no."

I could clearly see by her body language this was a tough perception for her to navigate. Christine comes across as a president that knows how to command a space. She is knowledgeable and gets straight to the point, but at the same time she has a heart to serve. Christine tends to deal with negativity with humor or sarcasm. Her witty sense of humor could be misinterpreted or land wrong, humor has a funny way of either adding to the conversation or masking how we really feel. The harsh reality is that men are allowed to be decision makers absent of judgements being made about their character or emotional response. Men are seen as being decisive and audacious, rather than emotional and angry.

In addition to finding ways to show your humanity while in leadership, Christine mentioned another interesting paradigm that plagues the Black community. She spoke about Black people having a scarcity mentality due to years of systematic racism and oppression. Scarcity mentality speaks to Black people feeling as we never have enough of anything. Not enough opportunity, access, and resources. So, in response to this feeling then whenever Black people receive anything Black people hoard everything, in fear of being without. The inverse response to this concept is that white people operate from a mindset of plenty. Plenty mindset suggests because of white supremacy and privilege, white people always have enough, more opportunity, access, and resources to share, so there is no worry they went without.

Christine further explained the story in the Bible, Exodus 16: 13-36 of the manna in the desert. In this story, God instructs the Israelites to gather enough manna to last them for the day, and do not gather more than what can last for the day. Manna can be described as an edible substance God provided for the Israelites as they travelled in the desert. Some would assert that manna could be liken to bread. Despite receiving directions to not gather more than what was needed, the Israelites gathered more manna and it ended up going rotten and there was not enough manna to feed them all. This could have been avoided if they would have trusted God and not hoarded all the mana for themselves. As I was listening to Christine make connections to the story of the manna and scarcity versus plenty, I understood how this concept related to being a Black woman navigating higher education spaces. Leadership positions for Black women seem as if there is only room for one, when in fact seats must be created at the table to show others there is room for us all.

Christine described how important it was to her to mentor and give knowledge to other Black women who are navigating the ranks of leadership, to break the "mean girl" stereotype. She named a handful of presidents who were Black women who helped her navigate challenges. There are only a few Black women that have served in the role of HBCU president as a Black woman. So, with the sample being small, it's important to her to share her experiences to mentor or sponsor the next generation of Black woman HBCU presidents.

Critical Tactical Errors

As Christine got her swim legs with her first presidency she began to get noticed from other colleagues and recommendations began coming her way for open presidencies at other HBCUs. She received tons of encouragement from other colleagues advocating for her to

consider other president positions at larger schools. She decided to explore her options and apply for some open positions. She made the mistake of not discussing her career exploration with the current Board of Trustees and they found out about her becoming a finalist for a position via a leaked story to the media. This complicated her relationship with her current Board, causing her to lose the new offer at the new college, and her current Board was not interested in discussing contact extension. This forced Christine to go on the market to look for another presidency before her contract would end. Christine explained this situation as a critical tactical error. She allowed unsolicited statements of support and encouragement to convince her to apply for these positions, without discussing her intentions with the Chair of the Board first. All of this could have been avoided if she had guidance and mentorship along the way. I could see the frustration in her face as she recounted this story, I thought about all the times I felt the similarity. I also thought about how supportive men are of each other, especially Black men. Christine further explained to survive, she learned how to info trade the "boys club" of Black men presidents at HBCUs. Christine said,

> The only way I was able to find out that they [Black men presidents] were looking out for each other was because I overheard them talking to each other comparing salaries and other areas of compensation that were able to be negotiated. Then they ask me 'Christine, do the Sista's, get together and do this too?' To which I responded 'What Sista's?'

I do not believe it resonated with them that she did not have a circle of sister presidents like the men did, due to the number of Black women presidents that were sitting at that time. Christine became a member of the boy's club of Black men presidents to gain the knowledge of the presidency that she had not been privy to before. She learned about salary negotiating, deferred

compensation and navigating bonus structures. The knowledge she was able to acquire helped her with her next presidency.

Heavy is the Head

Being the first Black woman to hold the role of the presidency comes with many responsibilities, mostly the responsibility to get it right. Black women hold the burden of not wanting to mess it up for the next person. Which relates to the scarcity versus plenty model. Another aspect of being the first Black woman to hold the position of president brings lots of attention for women in this role. Everything Christine does and says is amplified and targeted. It is almost as if Black women have a spotlight shined on all the good, bad, and ugly that happens to their lives. This can be seen as positive or negative depending on who the audience is. Christine noted,

> The reality is you must be careful about everything you do, all your mistakes are amplified, and everyone is watching you all the time. I do even ask for the attention, other people bring up my status before I do. But the assumption is that I am self-promotion versus thinking about how others can contribute to spotlighting my status.

As Christine explained how Black women are caught in a catch 22 of trying to be the best they can be while at the same time they are expected to dim their light to preserve the comfort of toxic masculinity. The perception from many Black male presidents that Black women have an "unfair" advantage because they receive attention being the first in these roles.

Gendered roles and cultural norms continue to plague the academy. Conservative religious norms affiliated with many HBCUs limit the ability for women to be seen as equal. For instance, Christine explained how when visiting churches to speak, women are not allowed to

speak in the pulpit, but men are allowed. Institutions are less receptive to Black women being in leadership many are challenging tenures like Gwendolyn Boyd at Alabama State University, whose contract outlined she could not have guests of the opposite sex in the president's house, a rule that was not instated for previous presidents who were all male. Christine discussed how at times there is no regard for her time. Especially during this pandemic. Doing business virtually only compounded Christine's workload, requiring her to attend more meetings, often finding herself double booked. When I asked Christine if she believed in work life balance, her response was,

> There is no such thing as work life balance but there are choices. I make choices daily based on my priorities. What are my priorities? Whatever is most important to me now. What does that mean? It sucks. I end up missing some mom moments, due to my role. And of course, there is judgement attached to choices. Men do not get forced into making these choices. Black women sacrifice a lot and pay a heavy price for being in these roles.

> It was so hard for me to hear her discuss having to make choices that men do not have to do. Her body language illustrated the heaviness that reminded me of carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. The thought of what she was explaining seemed heavy as if it had weighted on her mind.

I Ain't Never Scared

While Christine has endured challenge after challenge, she remains successful in all her presidencies. I asked her to discuss some of the double standards that exist for Black women in this role, that do not exist for Black men, and she named several inconsistencies. Some of which are most Black women who are selected for presidencies must serve in interim capacities before

they are hired on permanently, suggesting Black women must audition for the role before they are hired, while men are just hired. Black women's salaries are consistently lower than men's salaries. In 2021 we are still fighting for equal pay. Many Black women are fired for no reason and/or contacts are not extended with little explanation of why. Black women's tenures of service are shorter due to many of the issues we discussed the whole interview. These are just a few of the double standards that exist for Black women that do not exist for men in the same role.

Along with these challenges, Black women must learn how to protect their images both physically and publicly. Christine expressed frustration because at times she must assimilate to be accepted in the role of the president. An example of this occurs around hair, and hair maintenance. Christine mentioned how a Board Chair commented about her having curly hair, asking her 'Do you think that [her hairstyle] looks presidential?' Suggesting that her curly, natural hair was not acceptable or presidential enough for her image. Christine explained changing her hair, dialect, and code switching are things she has mastered being that she grew up in mostly white spaces. She is good at code switching, so much so, that it works in her favor for her to get business done. Conversely, she also pays the "pretty girl penalty." The "pretty girl penalty" refers to being 'girled' or assuming you have compromised your integrity to be successful, for instance suggesting you may have been intimate with people in authority rather than being successful off your own merit and intellect. She observed how differently she is treated based on how she dresses or how she talks. The most difficult aspect that comes along with assimilation is thinking about how her actions land on those who look to her for mentorship.

Christine paused as we discussed this topic. She asked great questions I had to ponder as well. Christine asked,

> What is this teaching my students? Other Black women? My daughter? I mean I have benefited from code switching and the pretty girl penalty, but am I perpetuating these stereotypes? Does my success with these behaviors mean that only women who look like me will be successful in the role of president? What message does this send? Am I creating a safe space for Black women or am I deepening the chasm that Black women already deal with?

All questions had me stumped. I thought about how performative our work is at times in higher education. It reminds me of the swimsuit competition in a pageant. Everything comes down to likeability and our ability to dim our light to fit into constructs of whiteness, power, and privilege. Christine advocates for being your authentic, unapologetically Black self, with the understanding that at times Black women are faced with these choices that prove to be difficult to traverse. Lauryn Hill's song Ex-Factor fits well with this narrative. In the song she says, '*Tell me who I have to be, to get some reciprocity.*' This line fully explains the conundrum Black women face daily. Basic acceptance, sense of belonging and understanding of who Black women are in exchange for that same grace. It is a reciprocal relationship that at times feels like a one-way relationship.

Overall, Christine has a proven record of successes despite undergoing the challenges that come along with being a Black woman sitting in this seat. Currently at Mirepoix College, she has been pivotal in stabilizing and advancing the campus and benefited the students, faculty, and staff for years to come. Many of her accomplishments will allow for ripple effects on both

local and national levels of legislation for HBCUs and Students of Color nationally. When asked

what she has learned from her experiences as an HBCU president she offered the following

lessons. Christine learned preparation was key to her success, making sure she continues to learn

more about college trends, fiscal management, and being a generalist in the field. She stressed

the importance of being knowledgeable about all facets of the university from academics,

enrollment, budget, institutional research, advancement, and student affairs. Having a grounded

understanding of these areas is critical to your success as a president. When I asked her if she

could sum up her experience in a couple of words, she lamented on the fact her experiences can

be defined on a day-to-day basis, the job is so ever changing, so her expression could vary. She

concluded by saying she could some up her feelings about the role in the phrase *"I ain't never*

scared" (Harris et al., 2003, Track 2), meaning no matter what comes her way, she is going to

meet each challenge head on not backing down to fear.

TRACK 6: ADDIE

By the time I began preparing for my interview with Addie, I had some time to think about the different experiences each woman had previously disclosed to me in our meetings. I was not as nervous to meet Addie; however, I was curious to hear more about her and understand her journey as a Black woman HBCU president. I had not previously met her or knew much about her story, so I was anxious to listen learn about her personality. As I waited for her to join our first zoom session, I reviewed my questions and reread some of the information I had previously learned about Addie. While I was glancing at my notes, Addie Derouselle popped in with the warmest smile and greeting. She apologized for being a tad bit late citing a meeting had run long. At first look she favored many of the women in my family. I noticed her beautiful, natural hair textured in a short, tapered cut with a salt and pepper color hue. She was beautiful, and her voice was soft and endearing. I quickly responded, 'No worries, I totally understand Dr. Derouselle. I am sure your schedule is very demanding'. She agreed with me and went out to explain how busy she was. I could listen to her talk all day. Her voice was comforting and gentle,

she reminded me of my grandmother. As I began to ask her questions, I found her approach to be nurturing and kind. She seemed to have a way with words. While she answered questions with conviction, she still took her time answering. I could see her processing each thought really thinking about her answers in a purposeful way. Addie grew up in the Midwest in an all-Black neighborhood. She was most proud of her family informing her of how fortunate she felt to have both her mother and father still living to this day. I could tell from the way she described her family she came from a strong foundation and very close-knit Black family.

She grew up as a child of the 1960s during the time of the Civil Rights Movement which she remembers very well. Addie's father did not attend college, but rather went to serve in the military at the age of 16. Addie's father and his twin brother were run out of town because they were defending their grandmother who was assaulted by a white man. In fear for their lives both brothers faked their ages and enlisted in the military. Addie's mother was a key punch operator and housekeeper. Addie fondly remembers all the women in her family being working class individuals, but she believed if her parents had the opportunity to attend college, their lives would have been different. Addie's parents did not attend college, making her a first-generation college student. Addie's reverence for her parents was apparent, so much so, that she stated *"Their plateau is my platform"* meaning that her parents laid the foundation for how she has been successful to this day. This would be the start of several repetitive refrains Addie would offer as she likes to use words and analogies to explain herself.

There's No Such Thing as Thin Love

Addie came from a close-knit, working-class large Black family of entrepreneurs. Her parents instilled a strong work ethic in her that has benefited her to this day. Addie's parents'

motto was that worked until the job was complete. While this was a strength, it also meant

Addie's parents worked long hours while Addie spent lots of time with her grandmother. At her

grandmother's house is where Addie learned how to sew, cook, and play scrabble. Addie's

grandmother's house was the anchor of her family. Like many Black families, Addie's

grandmother's house hosted the family gatherings, reunions, and all her fond memories. It was

Addie's grandmother who fostered her love for learning. Her grandmother taught her to be

hardworking and to never settle for less. Addie recounted how her grandmother helped her to

become so good and math and reading. Each time her grandmother went to see the neighborhood

butcher, she would ask for extra butcher paper. Addie would then use the butcher paper to write

her times tables repeatedly. While her grandmother would cook, she would have Addie recite

them repeatedly until she memorized them. Addie smiled and laughed as she recalled playing

Scrabble with her grandmother. Addie said,

> My grandmother likes to have two boards playing at one time, so when we played, she
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> would have two boards and so would I. That is how I became a good speller. I remember
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> playing by myself at times when she was unable to play with me.

One of Addie's most cherished memories was going to the drive-in with her family. She

mentioned it was a rare occasion her whole family, including her father, ever got to go on

outings together. But when they did, she remembers her mother frying chicken and packing up

food for them to go to the drive-in for a movie. As she closes her eyes to tell the story, I can see

her painting this picture for me. Addie stated:

Sometimes I can smell the popcorn and all the smells of the drive-in, and it takes me right back. I don't ever recall making it to the end of the movie, but what I do remember is the way it felt. I never felt more loved than in that moment.

The nostalgia of the moment made me think of home and how important family is in the Black community. Addie had such a warm and loving childhood, and it shows in the ways she chooses to lead the present day.

Addie went on to talk about her summers as a child. Addie's mother, who worked non-stop, would make it a point to take time off in the summers to spend with her family. Addie recalls going to museums, parks, and the zoo. She said at the time, she did not realize these trips to in-town locations were in lieu of taking vacations or family trips. At the time her family did not travel like that due to safety but also because they could not afford too. Even though Addies' family did well, they were still considered working class. Addie realized early on how her mother was teaching them and exposing her children to learn about different people, places, and things. Her love and passion for all things comes from her mother. Addie shared,

My mother once told me that there is no such thing as thin love. And that always suck with me. She meant that to really love someone, you must love them unconditionally, through the good, bad, and ugly. That always stuck with me, and I try to use that in all aspects of my life.

This idea of thin love stuck with me for the rest of the interview. I could not stop thinking about how warm her life felt. Addie seemed to have grown up in such a nurturing and supportive environment, so like the Cosby's. For many Black American families, the Cosby Show was such an inspirational life to live and experience. Many Black families are stereotyped as living such

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hard daily lives, many of which stem from living in poverty or in the ghetto. What was inspiring about Addies story, was that she was painting the picture of what the Black middle class looked like, showing that Black families and lives are not lived in a monolith, but are multifaceted with nuanced experiences and involved a lot of love. Addie radiates love and that is a direct by product of the love that was poured into her.

It was expected Addie was going to attend college but being that she was a first-generation college student her parents knew nothing about college or how to begin the process of applying. Addie's uncle had a white girlfriend who took a particular liking to her and helped her to get into college. At the time, Addie knew nothing about HBCUs or college to be frank, so she just went along with the idea of going to college, because she loved learning. Addie got accepted to a predominantly white institution in Missouri. It was close to home, affordable, and allowed her to really explore her passion for learning. Addie entered college as an Electrical Engineering major. She thrived in this field because she was very good at math and science. Her first summer she opted to do a co-op, which was the early term for internship programs. Addie did her co-op work at a coal mining field with all white men. It was such a negative experience for her she changed her major that fall to Systems Engineering. Addie's boyfriend at the time was an engineering major as well. They studied together and Addie would often find herself doing his homework. One of her first experiences with bias happened while she was in college. As she would turn in both of their homework assignments, having completed the same work, when Addie received her paper back, she would get a B, while her boyfriend received A's. Addie realized in this moment, she could put in the same work as he did, but she could and would be treated differently because she was a woman. She could not even make light of the situation with

her professors because technically they were both cheating by her doing her boyfriend's homework. When she told me about her experiences with engineering it made me think of the movie Hidden Figures. In fact, Addie explained after she watched the movie Hidden Figures, she had a different perspective on her life as an engineer. "The movie Hidden Figures showed me how important I was and what type of impact that I had being that I was a Black engineer."

Before she watched the movie, Addie felt as if she was owed something for her Blackness. But after she watched the movie, her perspective changed and shed light on how impactful it was to be a Black woman engineer. It was at times like these during which her Blackness was seen in a different light, making her prouder to be a Black woman who has persevered.

Learn Backwards to Move Forward

As time passed, Addie recalled many instances in which racism was visible and apparent, but there were instances when she did not realize or recognize racism was apparent and part of her daily life. She spoke about a memory of when her grandmother passed away.

> I remember when my family was traveling to my grandmother's funeral. All my uncles and aunts met early at our house and caravan down south to attend the funeral. I did not realize it at the time, but they met and travelled early in the morning for safety. Caravanning and traveling together was a method they used to make sure everyone arrived safely and were not harassed by police.

Many Black Americans practiced this same methodology with travel. Many would road trip packing fried chicken and snacks to eat while on the drive because stopping in small towns where Blacks were not prevalent proved to be a safe hazard especially with the onset of sundown towns. Addie also spoke of how she knew of the "Green Book" practice for Blacks as well. She was not sure if her family had used the Green Book, but she knew the significance and need for the resource to travel safely. The Green Book was created for People of Color. This booklet would have hotels, restaurants and rest stops that were safe for Blacks to find safe refuge while traveling. HBCUs played an integral part in this resource, being that some HBCUs allowed People of Color to find refuge on their campuses as travel prevailed. As time progressed Addie began to have more interactions with dealing with her Blackness and race in general. After she graduated, she ended her relationship with her college boyfriend and started working as a systems engineer. Shortly after beginning her career, she met her soon to be husband while attending homecoming at Morehouse College. Attending homecoming at Morehouse was one of Addie's most cherished pastimes.

Her exposure to HBCUs began by attending homecoming events with friends and associates in her hometown. Addie and her husband got married and began to travel the world due to Addie's husband being in the military. In the early 1990s Addie's husband retired which allowed her to think about changing careers. She had always been good at math and science, but Addie felt as if engineering was not her passion. Addie began working at a community college to feed her love for education and working with people. She began to really enjoy her work, excelling in positions at the community college. Addie quickly got noticed and was offered a Vice President of Institutional Technology position at an HBCU in her hometown. She

immediately jumped at the offer to be able to return closer to home, while also being able to serve at her first HBCU. She began working at Breaux Bridge University in 1999 as the Vice President of Institutional Technology. Because of her extensive knowledge around information systems, her expertise stuck out as an asset to the leadership team. So much so, the president asked her to serve in the interim CIO role until they could fill the role. So, she began working as the Vice President for Finance and Administration while also holding the position of Vice President for Information Technology. Addies jumped at the opportunity to serve, but quickly realized that she was doing a lot. Her predecessor, who happened to be a man, was making more money than she was offered, while she was doing twice the work. This would prove another example of how bias showed up in her everyday life. At this time, Addie contemplated whether working at the HBCU was worth all the hard work she was putting out. She stated,

> One of the aha moments I had was when I realized that I needed to advocate for myself at Breaux Bridge University. See, working at a small community college with all kinds of resources gave me a different perspective. I am grateful that I was trained in a smaller environment to help me with decision making at Breaux Bridge University. I learned backwards to live forward. Working at the community college prepared me for the challenges that I was able to navigate successfully at the HBCU.

Navigation of challenges would prove to be something that Addie became stronger and stronger at. Addie became well respected and savvy to working in higher education. She attributed her years working in corporate settings to laying the foundation for her success as a higher education professional. At Breaux Bridge she held multiple roles and did everything. Addie exclaimed,

Working at a HBCU was so different. I was the help desk. So, when people came to complain about the help desk, I was like, I am the help desk! At HBCUs you must get used to managing multiple roles. I cooked the chicken, caught the chicken, and cleaned the chicken. I did it all.

After working 15 years at Breaux Bridge University, one of Addie's mentors reached out to her to inquire about an interim vacancy back at the community college where she previously worked. Her mentor asked her if she had her doctorate degree. Addie did not have her doctorate degree at the time, but because of her accepting the interim president role at the community college, she returned to school at the age of 55 to obtain her doctorate degree. Addie found herself back at the community college as the interim president, she originally planned on being chosen as the president at Breaux Bridge University since she had spent so many years there serving in key roles. As she reached the concrete ceiling at Breaux Bridge, she knew having the doctorate degree coupled with the experience of being an interim president would prepare her for her next role, hopefully at a HBCU. Addie began her doctorate program at the age of 55 completing the program and receiving her doctorate only two years later. Shortly after completing her doctorate degree, Addie was then offered another president role at an HBCU, which had been a goal of hers. She was nervous but took the job. Because she was not an HBCU graduate she had her fears and doubts, but the one thing Addie knew confidently, is that she was ready.

The Navy is More Important Than the Sailor

As Addie began her tenure at her first HBCU she was met with lots of opportunities and challenges. When she interviewed for the position, she was not actively trying to find another

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job, she was practicing for interviews for presidencies and impressed the Board of Trustees, so much so, they offered her the position. Coming into the position she had times during her insecurities and doubts got the best of her. Being unsure of yourself creates moments of imposter syndrome and she started to ask herself questions about her appearance, including her hair. Right before she was offered the role of president, she began to let her hair grow out. Addie had long natural hair but living in a state that was mostly humid, made it difficult for her to maintain unruly curls. Addie began to let her hair grow while she was working on her doctorate degree, so at this point her hair was long enough for a large afro. She got her hair straightened because someone suggested it would look more presidential. Addie admitted she was not good at hair maintenance, it was just not in her skill set. Addie explained,

> I came to work with my hair straightened and it rained right before I had a meeting to
>
> attend on campus. I was devastated. I was sitting there looking at my hair and I thought,
>
> 'what am I doing?' Why am I pretending to be someone I am not?

> At that point Addie decided to be her most authentic self, she had to start by loving

herself first. She realized she was not living in her truth but living up to a beauty standard that was not realistic for her to live in her truth. When she cut her hair in the short cut, she had many people ask her if she was doing the right thing, but in Addie's mind, the right thing was not assimilating to what the majority felt was "acceptable" and "professional." Addie went on to say,

> I do see other presidents that have longer hair and smaller body frames being accepted
>
> more than the chunkier president, who is older with natural hair. If you are not a woman

that is comfortable in her own skin, you could become more susceptible and fall into the pressure of fitting into that stereotype. Fortunately, I am comfortable in my own skin. Addie chose to live in her truth despite the world showing her a standard of beauty jaded by white supremacy and heteronormative behaviors.

As time continued, Addie saw major differences within working at a PWI versus working at a HBCU. The HBCU culture can be both a gift and a curse meaning that the environment has positive attributes that contribute to the close family feel, while at the same time, the family feel and be somewhat intrusive and hindering progress across the board. Addies stated during trying times she had to rely on trusting her moral compass to make decisions. Decision making has been a challenge in the past three years. One of the most challenging decisions she had to make involved deciding to visit the White House with other HBCU presidents in 2017. This event sparked such controversy because of Donald Trump being the president of the United States at the time. Many of Addie students, faculty, and staff questioned the motivation behind why Addie chose to attend this meeting. Quite frankly, I also wanted to better understand the reason why these HBCU presidents decided to attend this meeting. Addie took a deep breath, before she recounted the story.

Everyone wanted to better understand why we felt it necessary to attend the meeting. I explained to my campus that most of our funding for education came directly from federal funds. It was a part of my obligation as the president to attend that meeting to protect those funds. The other reason was simple. We had a plan and an agenda for Mr. Trump, and it was to get him to sign the executive order from the Department of Education to the White House. A task that we wanted to get done under the Obama administration, but it

did not. But the fact that we were able to leverage this important initiative, was a double-edged sword. It was bittersweet, but we got the job done. Sometimes the navy is more important than the sailor.

As I listened to Addie tell me about the White House visit my heart softened and I began to understand the sacrifices that not only Black women face in these roles, but it was clear to me that in this moment in time, all HBCU presidents stood in the gap for HBCUs to create sustainability and longevity for these institutions. As a result of this visit, Congress signed into law the Cares Act 1 & 2, qualifying as the largest piece of legislation for Historically Black Colleges and Universities in our nation's history. From this one visit, HBCUs have been given a platform over the last five years to be showcased and affirmed in a manner we have not seen before. The exposure that HBCUs have gained from this moment in time has benefited the community for the better.

As I sat and thought about all the challenges that Addie shared with me, I also thought about all the triumphs. Addie and many others participated in a monumental moment for HBCUs that I was able to witness in my lifetime. She demonstrated what I know to be true. It takes a combination of passion, loyalty, and resilience to do what is right for our (Black) people. Addie went on to say,

HBCUs do not need to be saved, they need to be promoted, invested in, and poured into. We need people who can bring their genius to the table to make HBCUs even better than they are currently. There should not be a mindset of scarcity and they cannot equate their poverty with their intelligence level.

All I could think about were the words to the song, Wake Up by Harold Melvin, and the blue notes. The words are "Wake up everybody, no more sleeping in bed, no more backwards thinking time for thinking ahead." Addie's energy and passion for this work was infectious and it gave me a call to action. Her outlook and experiences have laid the foundation for other Black women who aspire to lead and make their mark on this world. The song goes on to say, "The world won't get no better, if we just let it be. The world would get no better, we must change it now, just you and me" (Carstarphen et al., 1975, Track 1). Addie is a perfect example of what Aristotle meant when he said "*The whole is greater than the sum of its parts*" meaning to see the bigger picture while understanding that doing what is best for the team is always best.

TRACK 7: JOAN

Hands were clammy and my stomach was turning flips. Why? I am not sure, but I was so

nervous to talk to President Walker. I spent extra time reviewing my notes and gathering my

thoughts, but I had an overwhelming sense of nervous excitement preparing to speak with her.

Joan appeared on the screen quickly and I instantly smiled. Joan Walker had lovely silver and

gray long hair, eyeglasses that rested on the brim of her nose while wearing a fresh string of

pearls around her neck. She looked presidential, regal, and down to earth all at the same time.

Her style reminded me of my grandmother who was soft spoken, but when she spoke, she always

gave nuggets of knowledge. Her style was simple and demure. Her resemblance of Nancy

Wilson was so uncanny I took a double take at her to make sure that I was not seeing things.

Nancy Wilson who is a famous jazz singer, they favored each other with her silver

frosted hair curled and laid so nicely with her white pearl necklace. When she spoke, her voice

was strong, soft, and dainty. We exchanged pleasantries, and I could feel my voice start to shake.

Why was I so nervous? I began to introduce myself and break the ice to get to know Joan better.

Whenever I feel myself getting anxious, I lean on trying to make the other person laugh. president Walker and I had a mutual acquaintance, so I leaned into this relationship which got her talking and laughing easily. Joan has a perfect resting face while at the same time her words are straight to the point and inviting. She began to pull me into the conversation as we talked about mutual friends and acquaintances that she shared being a part of the HBCU world. The bond that HBCU alumni and administrators share is indescribable. The bond is reminiscent of the phrase *"what is understood, does not need to be explained."* I began to ask about familiar locations and common experiences that we shared, only saying one word, and President Walker would finish my sentence like we were old friends.

As I began to get more comfortable, I eased into learning more about Dr. Walker's childhood. She smiled and started reminiscing about her life as a child. Joan grew up in the south as the daughter of a coal miner and a stay-at-home mother. Her father was hardworking, and her mother emphasized the importance of getting an education. Joan was fascinated with learning so much so, she skipped grades in middle school. Her love for learning and reading would end up paying many dividends for her career.

Create a Way Out No Way

Joan attended all-Black schools her entire life for grammar school through high school. Her senior year of high school was the year of forced integration in schools. It was a traumatic experience for her to switch to an all-white school for her senior year of high school. For many, senior year is the year you look forward to celebrating milestone events. However, Joan's senior year lacked the excitement, but was layered in experiences that left her with much to be desired.

While senior year was challenging, Joan continued to excel in her studies. As a young child Joan aspired to be a scientist.

Her grades proved to launch her into a competitive program at a local HBCU where she majored in Biology. Joan was excited to get back to being amongst her culture and to be in an environment that fostered her personal and professional growth. As she completed her undergraduate degree, she went on to complete her master's degree in Biological Sciences. Upon graduation she immediately went to work in Diagnostic Medicine for four years. Simultaneously she began to teach Chemistry and Biology classes at a local community college. As she continued to work her way up, she found herself being promoted into more administrative roles versus more science focused jobs. Due to her promotions, she returned to school to obtain her MBA, curious if business education was like science philosophy. She was inherently a scientist by trade, but her experiences kept her in the realm of administrative and supervisory practices.

After working in Diagnostic Medicine, she continued to rise through the ranks to become a leader in Quest Diagnostics. Joan was one of three women that achieved this level of achievement. She was the only Black woman to rise to leadership after working at Quest for 25 years. Working in the sciences as a Black woman was not easy. Joan explained, "I learned how to create a way out of no way. When there were no resources, I created my own. I learned how to do things the hard way, which taught me to be resilient and how to overcome."

Realizing she had something special, Joan decided to transition into the academic world to teach other young people and pay it forward to make it easier for people who looked like her. To switch into the academic world, she would need to get another degree. This time she enrolled in a PhD program. Joan did her research on prostate cancer in men of African descent. Upon

completing her doctorate degree, she had the opportunity to move closer to home and got offered a position at Martine University, a local HBCU in her home state. This opportunity allowed her to move closer to family as her parents were aging. At Martine, Joan began teaching anatomy, physiology, and biology. Within 18 months, she was promoted to department chair and then a year later to the dean of the college. The following year, Joan was then promoted to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Joan continued to excel in her position and as her president unexpectedly transitioned to another college, Joan was asked to step in and fill in as the interim president for the university. Joan was not expecting this, but the Board appointed her because they were impressed with her work and work ethic. Joan stepped up and stepped into the job.

They Have a Problem with Black Women

Joan's experiences with racism varied but came about in subtle ways. As she was exploring options for attending college, she originally wanted to attend Tuskegee University. Joan admired George Washington Carver, which fueled her desire to attend and learn more about STEM education. Her parents did not allow her to attend Tuskegee because it was too far from home, and they were concerned for her safety.

Most decisions made regarding racism had to do with maintaining safety. Joan grew up in a very nurturing environment in an all-Black community with all Black teachers. She was influenced and introduced to HBCUs because all her teachers all graduated from historically Black colleges and universities. Her teachers had a profound effect on how she viewed the world, but more importantly how she viewed herself. Most of her teachers happen to be women, who changed dramatically when she began to get more into science and math courses which

were mostly taught by white men. Her instructors were very matter of fact and taught her to think in decisive ways. The Black woman who taught her instilled confidence in her and as a result she was not intimidated by the other men that were in her classes and eventually in her field. Joan recalled, "I always felt as though I was supposed to be in the room. My experiences with learning and making mistakes in the science and technology world really prepared me for the job that I have now."

Her confidence did not come through as being cocky or overbearing. Rather she has a humble confidence clearly is displayed in her work and work ethic. I gathered from the way she explained her experiences that her focus was figuring how she could leave her mark on students and leaving her job better than when she found it.

Joan was not a stranger to racism despite her having such a positive upbringing and childhood. She talked to me about one of the first times she knew her family and she were different from others. Being the daughter of a Coal Miner, she recalled how her dad would use script. Script was a form of payment that was given to Coal Mining families that could be used as money. Script could only be used for company-affiliated businesses, doctor's offices, etc. Joan's father would receive his paycheck and whatever script used for the month would be deducted from his paycheck. Script was used as a form of payment like a credit card account. The biggest issue with this practice was that for a Black family many of the services and servicers were affiliated with white people or white businesses.

Having access to Black doctor's and Black businesses was a privilege Joan did not have. She was taught at an early age to stay close to family and not to wander far from home. At home, Blackness was related to keeping yourself safe. She was raised to be proud of her Blackness but

staying close to family was important so that she would not compromise her safety. The ironic thing about her family upbringing is she was not taught to be ashamed of her Blackness, but rather if people did not like you because you are Black, then it was their problem. Joan said,

Most of what I learned about my Blackness was positive and affirmed who I was. My mom used to tell me all the time, if someone doesn't treat Black women fairly because we are Black, we are not the problem. They have a problem with us.

This really resonated with me. As I sat and thought about Joan's perspective on how she was taught to love herself. I wondered how different our world would have been if all Black people had been taught this way? This one change in perspective created a ripple effect of confidence and self-awareness that was admirable and inspiring.

Growing up in the middle of the Jim Crow South would prove to be challenging not only for navigating racism but Joan dealt with conflict from her own people. Joan was groomed to be strong and confident, at time her insecurities about her darker skin tone presented her with the problem of colorism. Colorism in the Black community was a byproduct of assimilation to standards in which white was seen as better than or superior. Lighter skinned Blacks were given preferential treatment in spaces where darker skinned Blacks were looked at like second class citizens. Joan saw her mother, a darker skinned individual, be treated differently by white and Black people alike. Hearing phrases like you don't have "good" hair or you sound "white" when you talk, was a reality Joan faced. These sentiments plague the Black community in a way that assumes to fit in or belong, that you must assimilate to a standard of whiteness.

Listening to Joan share about her struggles with colorism and acceptance made her feel more real and authentic. To know that even as an HBCU president she dealt with issues of

feeling good enough or worthy, made her more real, unapologetic, and extraordinary in my eyes. Joan was such a trailblazer having to endure being a Black woman rising through the ranks of a male dominated field, with few in any Black women to serve as mentors. As an HBCU president, Joan, explained, you accept a calling when you become an HBCU president. This calling is unique in that you play a role. There are certain expectations of the presidential role that are unspoken but are vital to the success that a Black woman will have while employed as a president. The role of the president has aspects of assimilation, compromise, and sacrifice. Joan posited.

> It is not for the faint of heart. As a woman you must be self-aware and confident in your morals and values because they will be tested. At the end of the day, you will have to make a choice. You can be judged for the choices that you make so it's imperative that you make the right decision. Black women rarely get a second chance, to make a first impression.

Joan was exactly right. Black women HBCU presidents walk a fine line of being judged at higher standards than their peers. The role of the president historically being held by mostly men poses an interesting outlook on how men are perceived as successful and thriving versus women. Women are judged from a very heteronormative and white standard it causes me to think about the performative nature of the role. Even as Joan's confidence was built and nurtured, she still struggled with how to balance the role of the president in concert with her authentic self.

Imagine What I Could Have Achieved

In early 2017, Joan accepted the title of interim president at Martine University. The Board felt Joan was the most appropriate fit for this role for many reasons. Her appointment was in alignment with how her career had been trending over the years. Joan was reliable, strategic, deliberate, and very well connected in the community. Joan knew there was work to be done and she was a "dive right into the work" type leader. These were attributes the Board was heavily invested in and proved to be in Joan's favor as the ideal candidate. Joan accepted the job under the impression she would just fill in for a short time and prepare the next person for the presidential role, to her surprise that was not the case. Although Joan was not seeking the role of president and had no aspirations to be a president, she ended up being in the role for a year, and no one was found to replace her. So, it became clear to her she would be assuming the role of the president when the Board stopped searching altogether.

Joan's tenure has been a positive one. She has managed to grow a relationship with her Board in which they trusted her to make decisions. There are times when Joan and the Board disagreed on issues, but at the end of the day, Joan keeps the mission and vision of the university at the forefront of all her decision making.

Joan had no mentors or hardly any guidance during her tenure as a HBCU president because there are not many women who fit these criteria. This lack of mentorship caused her to rely on the way that she was taught to be a leader while working in the field of science, medicine, and technology. As a scientist, you are taught to be decisive and pragmatic. Since Joan's reframe of reference for leading came from the STEM fields, that is what she leaned into to form her style of leadership. Joan was very adamant that she was chosen for the president role because she was not looking to further her career or add to her resume. But because of her

accepting the role she began to experience discrimination in different forms. Joan expressed that, "I am not looking to extend my career or get another president's role. I am at the end of my career, and I am looking to leave Martine University better than I found it."

She went on to say,

> I experienced some challenges along the way, but I maintained good relationships with the folks around me to limit my negative experiences. I do think about the barriers and roadblocks that I have been up against, and I cannot help but wonder, if I wasn't a Black woman I probably could have achieved so much more. Imagine how much more I could have achieved.

> When Joan made this exclamation, I was stuck. Stuck on the fact that what she posed as a statement I heard as a question. *"Imagine how much more she could have achieved?"* If she was not dealing with challenge, after pushback, after opposition, after attack. These are the realities she endures as a Black woman in leadership. All I could do is think about the courage and steadfastness it took for her to remain humble and vigilant as a leader. Her demure personality exudes intelligence while also a touch of a feisty lioness. Her fierce convictions in who she is as a leader convinced me she knew exactly what she was doing.

> The conversation shifted a little to discuss what kinds of support systems exist for Black women in these roles. Joan was straightforward with me and said she had a very supportive cast of individuals that kept her sane and on the "straight and narrow." Joan is active in her church community and has some church friends who keep her honest. She and her sister are close, and she looks to her sister for inspiration most times. Joan has a 21-year-old niece who keeps her young and in tune with all the trends and issues that college students feel are important. We

talked for a while about her relationship with her husband. I could tell he and Joan were kindred spirits. Joan is a widow; her husband passed away some years ago. She admitted if her husband was alive, she was not so sure she would have accepted the interim role and eventually the role of president. "This role takes so much time, and you must have not only the passion but the time to fulfill the duties. If my husband was alive, I would have wanted to spend as much time with him as possible."

Watching Joan talk about the people in her life who support her made me think of how lonely the role of the president may feel. She explained at times she does miss her family and friends but all the while she does make time to spend with them and it was important for her to prioritize this time.

As we began to wrap up, I asked Joan about what lessons she felt she learned that has benefited her in the role of HBCU president as a Black woman. She immediately lamented,

> Well, you must know who you are. Be confident in your right to be where you are as
> well. You must respect another person's perspective, but you do not always have to
> agree. Separate who you are from the issues that you are dealing with. If you can do this,
> then you will be a master in this role.

Recognizing plans may not go your way but there is context and some history to why a decision was made is something that Joan said that I will never forget. It really resonated with me she talked about the importance of being a lifelong learner. In her opinion doing the deep work of learning requires that you learn forever. Joan said, "Lifelong learning is not a cliché. It is what one must do in a world that is constantly changing and evolving. The only way to adapt and survive is to be a constant learner." Joan's idea of leading is creating a pathway and a legacy of

taking good care of the university and not allowing it to fall apart on her watch. Her approach to learning and education is through being a good example and giving back. It is because of her servant leadership that she has been able to thrive in an HBCU environment. The HBCU is a better place because Joan left it better than she found it.

Summary

Chapters four, five, six and seven provided in-depth portraits of each Black woman who served in the role of the president at a HBCU. Each participant gave an account of their lived experiences navigating racism, gender biases, and various challenges to their personal and professional leadership journey. Several examples were provided that gave insight on the plight of the Black woman in leadership, particular to HBCUs. In this study the research questions explored how racialized and gendered experiences with implications on how Black women making meaning of the world while being the first woman to hold the office of president at an HBCU. These chapters gave an intimate look at how each woman traversed instances of microaggressive behaviors, surveillance of Black women's bodies as property and exposure to operating at the margins of Blackness.

Chapter eight details the themes that emerged because of in depth personal counternarrative portraits that informed the participants' lived experiences. There were four themes that came about from the data:

1) The placation of whiteness as a standard.

2) Operating at the margins of Blackness.

3) The surveillance of Black bodies.

4) Resisting systems of patriarchy.

Each theme is analyzed using the frameworks of CRT and BFT centering Black women's experiences and struggles. Many of the examples given helped to interrogate how whiteness continues to be prioritized and promoted.

TRACK 8: FINDINGS

Findings - The Paradox of it All

"Develop a negative into positive picture"- Lauryn Hill

"Everything is Everything" by Lauryn Hill and Johari Newton © Sony/ATV Music Publishing

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This chapter presents the research findings, which were developed by conducting a thematic analysis of the participant data which have been formed into portraits. The portraitist is active in selecting themes used to tell the story, strategic in deciding on points of focus and emphasis, and creative in defining the sequence and rhythm of the narrative (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). Using a lens of CRT and BFT to interrogate the findings presented in this chapter. CRT and BFT in concert with Portraiture provide a unique but paradoxical account of human nature experiences. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005), "The most powerful characteristic of portraiture is its ability to embrace contradictions, its ability to document the beautiful / ugly experiences that are so much a part of the texture of human development and social relationships" (p. 9). The four themes that unfolded from the study were:

1) The placation of whiteness as a standard.

2) Operating at the margins of Blackness.

3) The surveillance of Black bodies.

4) Resisting systems of patriarchy.

A discussion using the frame of CRT and BFT is woven into the lived experiences of Black women who are the first to hold the office of president at a HBCU. The research questions that are guiding the study were:

1) In what ways do Black women HBCU presidents make meaning of their lived experience in relationship to leadership and their journey to the pursuit of the presidency?

2) How do race and gender play a role in pursuing the presidency for Black women presidents at HBCUs?

    a. How do Black women HBCU presidents navigate the relationship between race and gender with patriarchal culture within higher education?

Lawrence–Lightfoot (2005) explains in portraiture paradoxes can focus on the motivation and purposes of portraiture work that hopes to produce both analytic rigor and human connection, both inquiry and intervention. The duality that exists in portraiture can cause a cognitive dissonance depending on the subject matter being researched. The findings presented show the unique relationship between lived experiences that presented paradoxes for multiple contexts considering political events, personal histories, societal norms, laws, and policies that affect an individual's lived experiences. The following sections present the study's emergent themes and my interpretations of the contradictions in how Black women's lived experiences are manifested through the frameworks of critical race theory and Black feminist thought.

Theme 1: The Placation of whiteness as Standard

The placation of whiteness as a standard described how participants defined experiences that centered around how racism is embedded in our daily lives. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) suggest if racism is embedded in our thought processes and social structures as deeply as many

crits believe, then the "ordinary business" of society—the routines, practices, and institutions that we rely on to affect the world's work—will keep minorities in subordinate positions (p. 22). The idea of scarcity is defined by feeling like you are without enough substance (Sankaran, 2004) became an apparent theme that arose in my discussions with participants. Oddly, this was not a concept that is foreign to me when Black women discuss race and gender. Christine discussed the story of manna as one that explains the concepts of having a mentality of scarcity.

In Exodus 16:16 – 32, the Israelites are told to take only enough manna for what they need, and do not take any to last into the next day. While they did not follow the directions, the Manna began to mold, stink, and go sour. The moral to the story is God will provide to us what we need, when we need it. We as people do not have to hoard things to ourselves, there is plenty of manna for us all.

Within the Black community, this concept has been challenging due to lack of trust and need for protection. Many People of Color lead with the mentality there is never enough. Enough money, resources, access to all things which allow Blacks to prosper. While on the other hand, white people lead from a place of plenty. They have been given the space, resources, and agency to have more than enough. So much so, white people give and share at times relentlessly. This theme caused me to think deeply about how Black women show up in the world as leaders. Black women are faced with the mystery of trying to navigate both who they are as leaders and how they are being perceived through the lens of whiteness in a leadership role. Therein lies the contradiction. How are Black women leaders grappling with this paradoxical stance? Each participant discusses the challenges that stem from leading with a scarcity mentality stigma has affected their tenures.

Giving into Racial Oppression

In each of my conversations, participant shared experiences interacting with some form of a scarcity mindset as a part of their leadership journey. Christine felt as if Black people systematically have never had enough. She said,

> There's this fear that if I give you some, then there will not be enough for me. White people operate from a different perspective. For them there is always enough, Enough land, money, opportunity, access, resources, everything. There has always been enough for them, and for Black women there has not.

Christine explains how the difference between the haves and the have-nots causes a dissonance that feels awkward to articulate. This dissonance influences the building relationships and explains the lack of trust that Black women struggle to cultivate when trying to lead from the presidential seat. Not having enough trust from people, you lead feels as if you are constantly the new staff member in the office trying to build rapport with a new team not interested in ever getting to know you in the first place.

Christine expressed the thought there is only room at the table for one Black woman when there is a seat for all Black women. The fear of failure or competition against Black women can lead to instances where 'fight or flight' perspective is being observed because the people feel threaten. Helping and supporting each other as Black people is a learned behavior, and Black people must be intentional about unlearning negative behaviors that foster these fears for Black women to not constantly be seen as a threat.

Exposing Hidden Conflicts

Another aspect that fosters these fears is the concept of infighting that exists within HBCU culture. According to Hattie, for her as a leader she was not just judged based on her Blackness, she was also judged because she was a woman. Hattie spoke to her experiences in leadership how she felt vilified. She stated, "At an HBCU, they want to destroy you. Because it's not enough to try to take the person's job, they want to make sure that you don't ever get employed again at any other university." Hattie expressed based on her experiences in leadership working at PWIs that when a person was not well liked, or had to be removed, that for the most part individuals would be moved to another department or given a demotion of job responsibilities. Hattie exclaimed, "The person's livelihood is never at stake when they are white, however when this happens to Black women, we become scapegoats for issues and challenges that we did not cause." Judgement and preconceived notions show up in meetings and in the ways that folks choose to challenge the things that Black women say. Hattie talked about how colleagues and direct reports voiced their concerns about working for her. "People did not want to work for me because I was Black. Because I was Black, they felt like it's an embarrassment in their lifetime to say that their boss is Black." Not only did this scenario play out in the workplace but also during social events and settings. This type of behavior is an example of the 'crabs in a barrel concept' which refers to the idea that 'If I cannot have it, then neither can you.' When crabs are placed inside a bucket the visual image is that of crabs climbing over each person physically to get out of the bucket, or to get to the top. This notion is prevalent when it comes to Black women in leadership. Oftentimes it feels as if the thought is that if all Black women cannot be successful, then no one deserves to be successful.

A similar sentiment was echoed by Joan. Joan spoke of how Black women are treated. Joan said, "I always knew I was Black because of the way people treated Black people." Black people for generations have experienced difference. From birth, a Person of Color experiences hardships and challenges before they even understand what it means to have hardships and challenges. There is a conscious understanding that because you are Black that you are different. This difference forces Black women to be more aware of our Blackness both consciously and unconsciously. This awareness guides our choices and decision making. Having to always have an awareness of your Blackness can present a unique perspective to navigate the world. Christine explained how it felt for her to be aware of her Blackness,

> As Black people we must think about everything. Black women are always aware. I am aware of what I wear, how I wear my hair, when and where I enter and how I am perceived as a Black woman. Am I angry? Am I aggressive? Am I mean? It's like we constantly must be aware. So, I think to be Black is to be an exposed nerve in America. It is to always be aware of your Blackness, your place and your position while constantly navigating. Black women do not get to take anything for granted.

The visualization of an exposed nerve painted a clear picture of the way many Black women feel. I related to this feeling, but I could never articulate it until now. The careful thought and planning put into thinking and preparing for racism can be overwhelming. Black women in leadership must plan and think about every move they make whether is a conscious or unconscious one. There can be no missteps because having another opportunity is not guaranteed.

Navigation of Black Codes

Arranging your life and devising plans around being Black also comes up when People of Color think about not only their image, but their safety. The idea of safety came up as a subtopic when the concept of a scarcity mentality was discussed. Protection and safety of the Black family steam from practices that originated during slavery. The effects of slave mentality set up a power dynamic that remains subconsciously to the present day. Each of the participants spoke about how safety and protection were paramount reasons in decision-making from their youth to adult life. Joan suggested,

> At home I think it was more about being safe. I remember my maternal grandma would always tell us to stay together as a family and that outsider did not mean us [Black people] any good. You never were to stay too far from home without someone you knew. That was her way of assuring that we were safe.

Conversations around their homes about Blackness also were infused in making decisions about attending college. Addie added,

> I wanted to go to Georgia Tech and my mother was like 'You are not going there!' I had to choose a college that was close to home and that we could afford. Thankfully I got scholarships. In my mother's mind going to Atlanta was like going to another world and it was too far from home.

As reflected in these quotes, the navigation of Blackness and Black codes offered shared understanding and solidity with respect to values. Christine's parents shared a similar perspective, "As a low wealth family, think about the logistics of going to college. I only could attend somewhere that was close to home and I was able to afford." Hattie commented in relation to the same topic, she said,

My mom was scared for me to attend a PWI with lots of white people. My mother was

protective of us and protective of the racism that existed. And we all knew it and had to

plan our lives around the danger associated with race in education and everything else.

As you can see from Christine's statements, class and race were driving factors in decision

making when it came to considering safety. Black codes provided a common language for all

Blacks to understand and communicate without allowing non-Blacks to be privy to what was

being discussed.

Many Black parents were concerned about proximity to family and affordability. Joan

further explained,

I was fascinated with George Washington Carver so much so, I wanted to attend

Tuskegee University and my parents were like, 'Are you crazy?' you are not about to go

to Alabama. That would have been too far from home.

Having conversations about race and racism were important to teach young adults. Making sure

an understanding about the importance of being safe is a direct implication of leading from a

scarcity mentality. Scarcity invites an overarching "fear of" which is taught through learned

behavior. Joan lamented, "Many conversations about race centered around strategizing on how

you get back home alive?" Living in survival mode contributes to the fear that the scarcity

mentality fosters within the Black community. Hattie posits,

It was always about how to protect yourself and how to survive. You talking to a child that

would walk to the soda shop on Sundays with a stick in hand because white people would

drive by and throw stuff at you out the window. Black women were taught not to walk

alone, and we would have rocks in hour hands ready to fight back when somebody threw

something out the window at us.

Even as a child, Hattie understood she had to protect herself. These examples provide clear proof

that Black families intentionally raised children to make wise decisions, but it seems as though

decision making was skewed or nuanced through a lens of scarcity.

Economic Violence

Scarcity mentality not only infiltrated the Black home, but it also shows its ugly face at

our HBCU institutions. As participants, they shared how scarcity mentality showed up in their

individual lives, but also within the inner workings of the college. Hattie explained while she

was in leadership oftentimes, decisions were made from fear. Main decisions where she received

the most pushback happened due to folks comparing different university experiences. Hattie

shared, "Black colleges don't have to be the big great whale in a pond, we can swim in the ocean

with the rest of the fish." Meaning that HBCUs have a uniqueness needing to be owned and

celebrated versus trying to be something we are not. Oftentimes, this imitation is juxtaposed

against a PWI, which is not comparing apples to apples. Hattie suggests HBCUs have the power

to write their own histories and control their own narrative. Christine agreed with this sentiment;

she commented,

> Black colleges need people to bring their genius and no mind set of scarcity to the HBCU
>
> environment. No mindset of Black children is dumb or equating levels of poverty with
>
> their intelligence because there is no correlation. Black colleges need folks who really care
>
> about our schools and are ready to take them to another level.

Both women clearly realized scarcity is a mentality counterproductive to the goals of our community. There is a clear call to action each participant identified as a possible solution to penetrate the scarcity mentality.

Each participant pointed out aspects of scarcity mentality that contributed to how race and gender dynamics show up in the role of president. The fear of not having or being without has been embedded in our psyche so much so that it both consciously and subconsciously influences the ways Black women lead. Considering your safety, being aware of our Blackness as well as understanding that HBCUs do not have anything to prove. The paradox lies within the contradiction that as Black people we are not enough rather Black people need to qualify and explain our experiences to fit within a model that is steeped in white supremacy, power, and privilege. The next section of this chapter discusses the second theme exploring the idea of Black women being seen as outsiders within their own community.

Theme 2: Operating in the Margins of Blackness

Operation of Black women's bodies being forced to the margins of Blackness became clear as each participant described their experiences of integrating with in HBCU culture. Bazen (2018) explains Black feminist scholars who participate in oppositional knowledge production emphasize the importance of how interactions within and outside of their communities socialize and affect their quality of life (p. 3). The idea of being an outsider surfaced as a theme with each participant revealing instances of feeling like an outsider within their own culture. Collins (2000) coined the term "outsider within" defined as a person who has a particular knowledge/power relationship, one of gaining knowledge about or if a dominant group without gaining full power according to members of that group (Harrison, 2008). The power dynamic between a person who

is a member of a dominant group can be defined by the members of the dominant group. In the following examples, each participant describes instances which created moments of dissonance in respect to being Black.

Black culture as a movement has been imitated and co-opted by various groups both dominant and auxiliary. Affiliation to identity groups mostly happens by means outside of an individual's control. The paradox happens when an individual feels they are a part of a group, but most of that dominant culture may disagree and shun them or made the individual feel like an outcast. One of the most common traits of working in higher education centers around people finding a sense of belonging or community. HBCUs are known for fostering a sense of belonging by having a strong affiliation to the community. This sense of community stems from the foundation of how HBCUs came about. There was a time when Blacks were only allowed to attend HBCUs to attain education and the autonomy to live our lives. The pride associated with attending and being affiliated with an HBCU creates an ingroup and outgroup of sorts. Many people believe one must have a shared understanding of what it means to navigate an HBCU to know how to navigate an HBCU environment.

Racialized Harm

The following examples provide some context around how Black women show up as leaders in the context of the HBCU environment. Themes focus on specific instances where Black women leaders experienced an outsider within culture within the role of president. The paradox of identifying as a part of a dominant culture that dismisses your affiliation due to the level of power the dominant culture has over deciding this is paramount. This behavior has been normalized and accepted as if the dominant group has the right to determine the rules of

engagement. Each participant saw the outsider concept manifest in forms of harm, jealousy, homosocial reproduction, and code switching. Homosocial reproduction, a theory promoted by Rosabeth Moss Kanter in the late 1970s, is the tendency for people to hire and promote people who came from a similar background, went to similar schools, and share similar political or religious beliefs (Reed, 2011, p. 226). The 'good ol' boy network is indicative of this practice and exists in all types of organizations (Patton & Hayes, 2014; Worsley & Stone, 2011) in which Caucasian males are the inferred privileged in group whose characteristics invite entitlement and a clear path to authority for similar others. Christine discussed her experiences with starting her role as president,

> One of the biggest mistakes a Board can make is placing someone in an acting or interim role that wants the job. It was clear that the acting president was not interested in giving up the chair. I was scheduled to start on a Monday, and I got into town on a Thursday and wanted to bring a few boxes by the office. And she said no, 'I'll be out on Monday, tell her she can wait until Monday.

This was a clear example of how the sabotage began. Christine went on to say,

> I mean she let me walk into wall after wall and she refused to help. She did nothing, in fact she obstructed. It was a trying and contentious first year because you are busy trying to learn to be a president as well as building relationships in the community. And to have the closest person to you are not on your team is a huge issue.

Having individuals who are working in a role and have institutional knowledge is something any new person would want to take advantage of. A willingness to want to help a new person adjust must be present for collaboration to work.

Hattie talked about how racialized harm and undermining showed up during her

presidency. She said,

> I was taken to lunch one time after a state meeting, and I was told that I was going to be
>
> sabotaged. The person told me they had seen other people do it. He even asked me if I
>
> would be ok financially so that I could prepare. That was the kind of atmosphere I was in.

Addie had a similar thought,

> At times there were things done to prevent me from getting the right people in place to
>
> help make change. Like not giving a full professor tenure, those kinds of things were
>
> undermining my ability to get the people in place.

Christine, Hattie, and Addie's responses align with how intentional barriers are systematically

created to hinder People of Color. At times these barriers are caused by other Blacks. Harrison

(2008) says while Black women work to attain equal visibility, they have performed and

developed creative methods of research have become trademark of Black feminist anthropologist

and the content of their ideas have influence. Western traditional models of analysis that assume

some social hierarchy that standardizes whiteness to maintain a system of dehumanizing

racialization by attacking the legitimacy of their cultural of the other (Harrison, 2008;

McClaurin, 2001 & Mullings, 2000, p. 7). These are instances that were common everyday

challenges and added to the navigating the fabric of working a job. Racialized harm and

undermining were not the only ways challenges came about. There was a sense certain

individuals were protected and given preferential treatment based on the longevity that was

associated with their tenure on the job.

Maintaining the Status Quo

Maintenance around upholding ideals of whiteness have been plaguing the Black community since slavery. DeGruy (2004) talks of how racial socialization was one of the most insidious and persuasive symptoms of post traumatic slave syndrome. At the core of what Dr. DeGruy teaches about racial socialization is the adoption of whiteness as superior to all things, while the counter is that Blackness is and remains to this day as inferior. We see this concept evidence itself in many ways today. Born out of this notion is fear, more specifically fear of the unknown. While we as Blacks were being intentionally looked over, left out and passed by, we created ways to support and uplift each other by creation of community standards that engender Blackness as priority. We see this play out both positively and negatively with nepotism or homosocial reproduction. Homosocial reproduction was a common occurrence that each participant highlighted as an aspect of maintaining the status quo. Homosocial reproduction within higher education is a common symptom to larger issues that contribute to emotional labor.

When I discussed work life with the participants, one of the first things discussed was how the homosocial reproduction that existed in the HBCU environment was both a gift and a curse. Bazen (2018) describes that Black feminist academic spaces thrive in multi-social spaces that welcome, embrace and celebrate diversity (p.10). While many of the HBCUs were diverse in their student populations, the staffs tended to have extended tenures, many of which had jobs which they obtained from someone with power or influence at the university. Hattie spoke about her experiences with homosocial reproduction, and she seemed to have the most visceral reaction to this topic. She talked a lot about "the ships" that existed to cause her obstacles. "The ships" refer to personal and professional friendships and relationships that were formed in the workplace prior to her tenure. These alliances created unspoken competition or challenge for her

as she tried offer her vision for the university. She was constantly fighting against the personal and/or professional agendas were underling "the ships." Hattie said,

> I got objections to improving the conditions around campus because folks were so used to the ways that had been done 40 and 50 years ago. My attitude was stop telling me what you did 50 years ago. My daddy drove a 57 Chevy, but I am not going to drive one. Life has changed students are on the internet and see what other campuses have available to them, we are going to upgrade, and we are going to change.

When Hattie referred to the '57 Chevy, she is speaking to a common theme many colleges and universities experience. The mentality of 'this is the way it's always been done.' This mentality usually shows up when homosocial reproduction is involved because it is tied to a person or to a tradition that has been around for a long time. Addie expressed how she experienced homosocial reproduction in a different way, "There were people who did not want to hire me because I did not go to an HBCU, but they could not find anyone else that was as qualified as I was for the job." Joan spoke to this as well,

> I continued to have an open-door policy so that I could understand the concerns of the community. Some of the complaints were 'she's not one of us' to which I never understood. How am I not one of you? So, I just dismissed it and kept focusing on the goals that we had for the university.

As mentioned in both Hattie and Addie's comments, even though each participant identified as a member of the dominant cultural group and dominant group of belonging around attending an HBCU, they were still treated as pariahs and outed for their difference or perspective. DeGruy (2004) stated many of us have been socialized to believe in the illusion of the American Dream.

This is a clear example of how the illusion of what we have been taught is in direct conflict with what is justifiable and makes sense. Hattie's situation relates to Addie's in that they are both having to prove themselves as worthy mainly because they are Black women.

Blackness as a Monolith

The final aspect of the concept of outsider within that was explored is. Blackness as a monolith. The assumption has been made that the Black experience is the same for all Blacks. According to Frank Snowden, a scholar of Black classics and history, there is no evidence of any civilizations that delineated social hierarchy based on physical attributes or behaviors, these concepts appear with the rise of Western domination (Smedley, 2006).

This further problematizes the theory that Blacks are inferior to whites, but also suggests there are varied experiences that which to the Black identity. Christine discussed growing up in a household having a mother that was white and a father that was Black. Having a bi-racial identity caused her and her mother to experience times where they felt as though they did not belong. Christine discussed how her mother was viewed by other Black women in their neighborhood. There were many times during Christine's childhood where she felt like a stranger in the Black community. Although Christine did not present as a biracial person, due to her darker skin, her mother was categorized as an outsider. Christine observed Black women in her community treating her mother differently, not offering to help her as Christine would have hoped. She specifically said,

> And there is certainly this sense that she took something away from Black women. She
>
> has this Black man, they were not nice to her, they did not speak to her, and they did not
>
> engage her. They allowed me to walk around like buckwheat, nobody offered to help.

Instead, they thought it was funny to peek behind the curtain and watch her struggle. I am

glad that you thought it was amusing, but didn't hurt her, you hurt me.

Blackness can be used to weaponize and divide. Christine was able to "pass" as a Black person,

without having to reveal her white identity. Bell (2004) exploration of the persistence of passing

as related to the historical and continuing pattern of white racial domination and economic

exploitation has given passing a certain economic logic. Becoming white meant gaining access to

privileges that allows for critical control over one's quality of life. In this case, Christine is

allowed to leverage her identities to improve her life by way of cultural capital.

Taking Blackness for granted was something I continued to think about after Christine

brought it to the forefront. As I asked the other participants, they agreed. Addie brought up

another perspective she explained,

I think the challenge with an HBCU sometimes is that Black people take our Blackness

for granted. I was an imposter within my own community because I didn't know anything

about certain Black experiences that I was expected to know.

As reflected in this quote, participants illustrated how being treated as a visitor within the

dominant culture has caused them hardship and challenge. These challenges came because of the

dominant culture going out of their way to make each woman feel as if they did not belong.

Mullings (2000) said anthropology matters because theory, methodology, and praxis give

scholars the intellectual tools to either expose or perpetuate established power dynamics that

drive how the human condition is understood. When I asked each woman about how they felt in

each situation. Hattie's response was,

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None of it had to happen because all you had to do was tell me. You did not have to

destroy me, hurt me, or break me for me to leave. Instead, you did everything you could

to try and make it my fault when all you had to do was say this is not a good fit.

Addie continued,

Even after all the tension that was created, naively I thought, ok I have been in these

situations before. As an institution Black people all move together no matter whether you

like the person or not, it is not about like. Boy was I wrong.

Finally, in addition to exploring how Blackness has been weaponized as a survival tool. Both

Addie and Hattie illustrated being Black does not have to fit into ideals of oppression and bias.

Collins (2016) recounted there is no one Black community, no one standard of Blackness is

dominant. However, there are some universal Black experiences that connect the diaspora and

consider representations of Blackness. The diversity of experiences provides for the robust

learning that continues to happen for all Blacks.

Each woman's attitude towards the outsider within concept was rooted in upholding the

integrity of the role that they agreed to as the president. As illustrated above, there is evidence

Black women persevere despite the circumstances that they are being met with. The outsider

within mentality of thinking seeks to set up a power dynamic that puts an outed person at a

disadvantage. In a leadership position such as a president of a university, a main goal is to foster

community that centers around belonging. The next section of this chapter examines the third

theme of assimilation and role playing.

Theme 3: Surveillance of Black Bodies

The title of president comes with heavy implications that can impact Black women in both positive and negative ways. Cultural and structural biases in organizations are barriers to gender equity that also affect institutions of higher education (Jones, 2013). The gender gap will continue to increase if Black women's bodies are being scrutinized. Bell's (1995) research proposes becoming white meant gaining access to a whole set of public and private privileges that materially and permanently guarantee basic needs and therefore survival (p. 906). Addie emphatically stated,

> I don't think that people fully understand that as a college president you have a role to
> play. There are differences between men and women and there are just different things
> you must do to show up because that's the expectation.

Addie's perspective not only shred's light on the unrealistic expectations for Black women to assimilate to but it also questions the standards set by whiteness. Gendered organizational systems, in which biases toward women and policies that exacerbate the limiting effects of women's upward career trajectory, are endemic throughout organizations based on organizing norms that support and promote male leadership (O'Meara, 2015).

In a field dominated by men, Black women are compared by their image, personality, and their ability to get the job done. Image can be anything from body size, skin color, hair, and personal style. Hattie discussed her experiences with colorism growing up. She said, "Yeah I was smart, but I was dark skinned with coarse hair." Meaning Black girls who have darker skin and coarse hair do not fit the standard of beauty using whiteness as a standard of beauty. Joan adamantly stated, "I suffered more from colorism within my own community. If you were dark skinned, you were treated differently within your own community. Having darker skin and

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coarse hair meaning you know you couldn't be a cheerleader, queen, or majorette." Colorism and the standard of what is defined as beautiful has plagued the Black community since we arrived on American soil.

What each woman is describing is the part of assimilation that has come along with the role of the president. You must look the part and confirm to the ideas of whiteness that have been socialized in us as people. Christine discussed this same point but looked at it from the perspective of code switching. She said,

> There is more than one way to be Black and that's not being inauthentic or fake, it's being honest. There's nothing wrong with taking little pieces every experience, every interaction and using that to help you move to where you need to go. So, if I need to smile with the governor today or deal with a mom who is mad about something I have the tools in my kit to break it down to the mother Black woman to Black woman or speak professionally to the Governor.

Christine's standpoint further acknowledges what Bell studied on code switching. Code switching is common in a discussion when Blacks people are being told that they are not "Black" enough or that they may be "acting white." Whiteness being used as a standard for beauty, behavior, morals, and values is a clear paradox to the realities of the world that Black women exist in.

Heavy on the Grace

Diming one's light can be a sign of showing you are humble while at the same time could be perceived as giving into the standards that Black people have been taught to believe are true. Another aspect discussed was grace or graciousness. Christine made a good point: Black women

HBCU presidents are expected to be the president and the First Lady of the university, while Black men do not have that same expectation. The expectation of the role when a woman occupies the seat, is that she is both gracious and strong. She must be a good follower although she is the leader. Christine explains,

> Heavy on the graciousness, heavy on the 'I'm so honored to be here. I'm so pleased to be in this community. I can't wait to learn from you.' I mean you're just heavy on the grace because that's the only way to disarm people enough to let them let you in.

Hattie commented in a similar fashion,

> Silence is golden. To not say anything that I will regret or let them see me lash out. They want you to lash out. Everyone sees the response, and then you must explain it. So instead of giving into what they want, I remain silent.

Addie offered the following thought,

> People mistake the grace that Black women are required to show as kindness. And if you show your maternal side people will try to see how far they can push. How much more can we get out of her? They take your kindness for weakness, and I call those critical tactical errors because I will pull up on you.

Eagly's (1987) germinal work on social role congruity, which grew out of Schein's (1978) theory on sex role stereotyping suggested men and women are reared from childhood to assume roles appropriate to their gender. As Christine, Hattie, and Addie mentioned the roles for Black women in the seat of the president present a duality of expectations. Eagly and Karau (2002) stated when men and women perform in roles incongruous to social role expectation, they create uncertainty withing their social groups. The disconnect here is that Black women are not

allowed to be their authentic selves when it comes to the role of the president. However, they must bend to the standards set by people who do not look like they do. Christine commented about how real this struggle is,

> And then there's India Aire moments where I am questioning, 'Am I enough?' Am I giving the wrong impression to these young black girls? Am I being a standard bearer for Black women? Or am I just a big ass fake? Am I assimilating?

There is a balance that Black women presidents are trying to forge between living up to the expectations that others have of them while aspiring to be true to their own ideals. Joan talked about this,

> "But the reality is when you break the glass, where does it go? It falls on your head. Breaking the glass ceiling still leaves you with shards of glass that rain down on you."

Christine commented about this same sentiment,

> So, you are the quarterback, and you want to play so bad but when the coach puts you in, it's the Superbowl. You get in the huddle, and everyone is looking at you. 'Oh, I am supposed to call the play? Well, what did y'all run last time?' The assumption is that you know everything when the truth is you know nothing.

As described in these quotes, Christine and Joan were suffering from the negative effects of the glass ceiling. Glass ceiling effects include gender-based hiring and promotion practices; lack of mentors and network accessibility; the apportioning of insufficient resources; and assignment to unstable, high-risk positions amongst others (Patton & Haynes, 2014). As the leader you are expected to have the knowledge you need to be successful. In this case, Black women Presidents are expected to "build the plane as they are flying it." Navigating your image, looks, the way you

talk, and what you wear are things that should not take precedence over how much experience and intelligence that you bring to the job.

Herrbach and Mignonac (2012) assert when organizational members act outside the prescribed or described behaviors, gender discrimination is often the outcome. These are the realities Black women presidents face. Having their lives examined and reexamined for potential flaws and imperfections that they have little to no control over. In the next section, the final theme of resistance to systems of patriarchy will be discussed. Although having barriers to obstruct their journey, the next section will explore the ideas in which Black women presidents have been tenacious with their approach.

Theme 4: Resisting Systems of Patriarchy

Contingency leadership theories assume there is no one correct method of leadership, and leadership is contingent upon the situation and contextual factors (Nahavandi, 2006). The idea of situational factors helping to define leadership assisted in teasing out the final theme. Throughout my conversations with each president was a consistent perspective of how each had to overcome. Examples of resilience, tenacity, and grit despite the circumstances presented became apparent in the ways each choose to navigate their challenges. No matter how it was brought up, the enigma of it all was shown in the ways each woman survived their respective situations.

According to Jackson and Harris (2007) despite African American women experiencing similar barriers to career advancement as their Caucasian peers, including gatekeeping, glass ceiling bias, lack of encouragement, lack of networking, incompatible relationships with trustees, and work-life balance, these women have attained the height of executive leadership. Resilience

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is defined as the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties or to spring back into shape from a tough situation. In each of these examples Black women weathered the circumstances that they were given. This section looks at resilience from the perspective of resistance against systems of patriarchy. Survival techniques, overcoming adversity, having exposure to the right resources, and ultimately having a support system that allowed each woman to thrive prove to serve as examples that Black women presidents at HBCUs are catalyst leading the way and defining the future of HBCU leadership.

Survival Techniques

Women and ethnic minorities encounter multifaceted barriers in their pursuits of organizational leadership (Roberson-Saunders, Smith & Goel, 2014; Worsley & Stone, 2011). The idea of survival was instilled in each of them early on as a means to an end. Addie talked about how her family dealt with racism and coping techniques to stay alive. She states,

> I have survival in my genes. My father and his twin brother were running out of town after an altercation with a white man who kicked my grandmother. Because they feared for their safety, they both faked their ages and enlisted into the military, which helped save their lives at the time.

Joan spoke about experiencing racism at an early age as well. She mentioned,

> At a very early age when we went to purchase shoes we could not sit down and try on shoes. The person would measure our feet, go in the back, and get the shoes and my mom would have to take them and hoped that they would fit.

Understanding the environment in which they were raised but having to find ways to negotiate your Blackness is overwhelming. Hattie vocalized a particular experience she had,

I remember behind my house there were these pecan trees, blackberry, and strawberry

bushes. As kids we would go and pick up the pecans from the ground and pick

blackberries and strawberries the white people in the neighborhood would call the police

on us. Kids.

Christine described this notion of survival as "workarounds." Being that Christine was a biracial

child, she did not present that way. She was able to pass as a Black person dealing with the

issues of being Black while having a mother that identified as white. Her goals were to survive,

she recounts, "Do not be different, and do not stand out." Although this was mentioned

previously, the thought of a workaround as a double meaning takes into consideration using this

methodology for means of survival. Methods of survival are choices that were made between

life-or-death situations. The action of having to plan out your time or map out your day based off

safety and survival.

Overcoming Adversity

Adversity came into each participant's perspective in a different way. Black women who

are the first in a role like the presidency must maneuver in a way that does not show all their

cards, they must be purposeful and intentional in all the decisions that they made. Christine

describes how being a woman in a male dominated field has her feeling as if she is a part of the

"boys club." At times, she can glean best practices or "tricks of the trade" just by being accepted

as a member of their inner circle. However, she was also made aware of how some Black men

view Black women in these seats, Christine noted, "There is an undercurrent of the perception

versus the reality of what is really happening." She continued,

We [Black women] don't look like what we've been through. From the outside looking in they [Black men] feel like I have an unfair advantage. *'She gets all kinds of media because she's a woman, and she's the first woman.'* They hate it. These titles don't pay my bills or get me a raise or stop you from still discriminating against me. It doesn't make people respect me more, in fact it makes it twice as hard for me.

The contradiction is a perception that Black women in these roles are given more agency, praise, and attention, then they obviously have an unfair advantage in the role. When in retrospect they are still playing the same game, with no cheat code or extra assistance. In fact, they are playing catch up to Black men, having lower wages, and higher standards for the same work. Joan explains it as such, "There's no time to recover, no time to be down for the count. You are always having to be on." She continues, "Taking all the little pieces, every experience, every interaction and using that to help you move to where you need to go." Hattie took the approach of being as humble as she could during times of strife, "I learned to deal with covert and overt hate because society is that way. You learn to let it roll off your back like a duck and keep it moving." Learning to keep moving through a tough situation, really shows what type of person you are. Christine stated it simply, "The crisis does not make you a better leader, it shows you what kind of leader you are. It really reveals who you are."

Support Systems

The last piece of being resilient involves learning and leaning on others to help you to traverse difficult situations. Each participant talked extensively about the need for support systems that not only fortified who they were as president, but most importantly, as a person.

Addie discussed her first conversation as she accepted her job as a president. She recalled the important advice she received from a mentor,

> And he said, 'These jobs will kill you. I know you, and you work hard, but you can't let it
>
> kill you.' And in my head, I was like, well that's a downer. It was not what I wanted to
>
> hear at that moment because I was on such a high. But it stuck with me. He said, 'You're
>
> in a marathon, not a sprint.' Just excellent advice because I was sprinting when I began.

> Support looked different for everyone; Joan discussed how she originally got into her

master's program. She said, "A professor introduced me to medical technology and said I could do a four plus one program that would help my career move forward." Having someone promote your skills and lift you up helped Joan to be exposed to a new life. Exposure proved to be an outlet for these women to get their foot in the door to leadership. This exposure started at various times in their lives, Christine recalled,

> And then there are kids like me who were exposed to language, books and reading. It is
>
> an advantage however I am not better or smarter, I was simply exposed in a way that
>
> allowed me to develop a skill set. Then I was amplified, encouraged and that caused me
>
> to do more and more.

Exposure happened for each participant in multiple ways, through mentoring, education, or even family members. It was this intentional pouring into which allowed each person to explore the possibilities awaiting them in their future careers. Although they all expressed having little to no preparation for the president role, each woman did talk about how important a support system was to influence their values, beliefs, and leadership journey. Addie spoke about owing her knowledge of HBCUs to her husband. She states,

I used to attend my husband's homecoming every year and I used to say 'God, I can work

somewhere like this one day.' All the fine Black educated people and just the good

energy. I felt unapologetically Black. It reminded me of how my parents raised me to have

a fierceness to be proud of who you are. I was raised in the "Say it loud, I'm Black and

I'm proud era" so I claimed that. I was convinced I needed to be in this environment on an

everyday basis.

Having her husband bring her into the environment of HBCUs opened a host of opportunities for

her to learn more about the fabric of these institutions. It was not just people who served as a

support system, but each shared different life lessons that they used to help them to be steadfast

in their tenures as presidents. Joan commented, "I've come to appreciate that lifelong learning is

not a cliche. It is what one must do. I think that I've come to appreciate that learning is forever.

To constantly exist in a world that's changing, learning is forever." Hattie offered another

perspective,

Do I feel like I have accomplished everything? I should not, I am an evolution too. The

campus has been there before me, I am just a moment in time. The presidency is not a

glorified role, but a moment in time that adds to the fabric. I am just a moment in time. It

is my hope that I took part in advancing and making it better while I was there.

Christine added this idea,

I believe that we [Black people] will always triumph, and I believe that no matter what

you throw at us you cannot kill us, we are still gonna be here. Being Black is so precious

because all life came from us. They gave us all the junk and each time Black people

restored it and brought it back to life. All Black people are doing is growing stronger. So,

if you are coming in with an attitude that you are trying to save someone, that is the

wrong attitude. Our schools do not need to be saved, they need to be promoted, invested

in and they really need to be poured into.

The paradoxes were apparent to me in the development of this final theme. To learn how humble

and tenacious each woman was despite the trials and tribulations that each one of them had

endured.

Summary

In this chapter, through aspects of portraiture four themes came to light from this study.

The four themes include: 1) the placation of whiteness as a standard, 2) operating at the margins

of Blackness, 3) the surveillance of Black bodies, and 4) resisting systems of patriarchy. These

four themes began to interrogate the challenges faced by Black woman presidents at HBCUs

who have served as the first woman in the role by addressing the varied experiences contributed

to navigation of race and gender as constructs that seek to problematize and made sense of

everyone's lived experience. These findings converge with BlackChen (2015) who indicated

African American women took longer to enter the leadership pipeline than their male colleagues.

Chapter nine explores these four themes and the relationship of those four themes

scrutinized with related literature. A discussion of how the implications that impact each Black

woman president disrupt systematic racism, privilege, and power. In addition, I explored

potential areas for future research that include, and examination of why Black women are not

thriving as leaders within the HBCU community as systems, policies or structures have been put

in place to hinder their progress. Finally, a presentation the limitations of this study as well as a

personal reflection of how I envision Black women presidents in leadership at HBCUs

TRACK 9: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND

PERSONAL REPRISE

"As long as you keep your head to the sky - you can win"

"Optimistic" by Gary Hines, Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis © Flyte Tyme Tunes Perspective

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The purpose of this study was to explore how Black women made meaning of their lived experiences with race and gender as they laid a foundation towards a pathway to the HBCU presidency at historically Black colleges and universities. This chapter includes a critical discussion of the four thematic refrains as related to literature on Black women presidents at HBCUs and the implications that higher education will need to consider promoting just and equitable tenures for the future. Also included in this discussion is a connection to the frameworks and theories that helped guide and shape the interrogation of this study. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations, areas for future research, and a summary.

The chapter includes a discussion and future research possibilities to help answer the research questions guiding the study:

1) In what ways do Black women HBCU presidents make meaning of their lived experiences in relationship to leadership and their journey to the pursuit of the presidency?

2) How do race and gender play a role in pursuing the presidency for Black women presidents' at HBCUs?

a. How do Black women HBCU presidents navigate the relationship between

        race and gender with a patriarchal culture within higher education?

Theories related to what motivates Black women to pursue presidencies at HBCUs is

multidimensional and consists of four central themes:

1) The placation of whiteness as a standard.

2) Operating at the margins of Blackness.

3) The surveillance of Black bodies.

4) Resisting systems of patriarchy.

All factors relate to how Black women have navigated and endured racism and gender bias while

being the first Black woman leading institutions that have historically been led by Black men and

in most cases white men. All these factors contributed to environments in which Black women

were challenged but continued to thrive.

Interpretation of Findings in Relation to the Literature

During my interactions with each of my participants, it was made apparent that each

woman, regardless of how they were raised, where they were from or their depth of knowledge

and education, that they all experienced challenges as it relates to race and gender by just being a

Black woman in leadership. Collins (1989) asserted, to be sure, African Americans share the

legacy of struggle and have commonalities in their experience because of living in a race and

class-conscious society. How they go about perceiving these commonalities is based on their

individual lived experiences.

I asked each participant what advice they might have for any other Black women who

wanted to follow in their footsteps in becoming an HBCU president. Even though, Harper

(2012), and Lundy – Wager and Gasman (2011) report that Black women exceed their Black

male counterparts at alarming rates in degree attainment, but do not out pace Black men in

receiving opportunities to advance. Each participant spoke to the idea of always being prepared.

Being prepared for all circumstances so that as a woman you are not excluded from opportunities

based on circumstances that you could have prevented. Freeman and Gasman (2014) suggest

although there has not been a lack of individuals who are interested in serving as presidents at

HBCUs, questions remain regarding the preparation of aspirants. The paradox to the idea of

being prepared lies in the irony of not being in control of the circumstances that could affect your

preparation. Many of the findings connected to the literature surrounding these contradictions.

Even though each woman had a different lived experience, they all still had a common

understanding of what is needed to thrive in the role of president as a Black woman. The

following sections will discuss these contradictions in relationship with the literature.

Battling the Effects of Appeasing whiteness

The placation of whiteness was demonstrated through the metaphor of scarcity. Scarcity

mentality surfaced as a part of the findings of this study. As discussed in Chapter 2, Freeman et.

al. (2016) report that Black women just began to be given access to the presidencies at colleges.

BFT continues to highlight that opportunities for Black women were limited due to generational

stereotypes that are upheld within the Black community (Pease & Pease, 1971). Subtopics that

surfaced because of this theme were centered on giving into racial oppression, exposure of

hidden conflicts leading to the 'crabs in the barrel' metaphor, navigation of Black codes and

economic violence. Patton (2016) discusses the systemic devaluing of people of color in higher

education as unjust and contributes to a dominant narrative in which stereotypes are promulgated

absent redress. Stewart (2017) also provides insight into higher education's appeasement of upholding whiteness. Stewart goes on to say whiteness has been used as a means of preserving white people's wealth and status within a capitalist system.

Never Enough. As evidenced in the findings, Black woman presidents are disproportionately held to different standards than Black men in the same position. Black woman Presidents traditionally receive lower wages, strict contract negotiations and are chosen to hold interim statuses as Presidents, if they must prove themselves worthy of leadership as opposed to their male counterparts. Sankaran (2004) asserts when a scarcity mind dominates it is marked by a sense of helplessness, feeling of victimization and throwback to top-down controls to achieve order. My original assumptions conclude competition between Black women and men is bred as a sense of competition felt from the opposite gender, when there is a collegial relationship that has been fostered. Scarcity mentality has the tendency to breed an environment of competition, due to the inequity of resource distribution. Culturally, Black women still have been able to humbly forge relationships with Black men Presidents out of a shared understanding of an "all boats rise" mentality. The reality is still apparent that Black men in higher education are still afforded privileges Black woman presidents are still fighting for.

Internal Racial Harm. In chapter two, the literature revealed how pervasive stereotypes still exist for Black women leaders are directly attributed to race and gendered norms. Freeman et al. (2016) assumed institutions founded in the Black community would be considered safe spaces where Black women would not have to deal with challenge. The findings of the study illuminated how personal biases and assumptions made on the part of those subordinate administrators made unnecessary barriers for Black women presidents. Thompson (1973)

specifically claimed, ''Black college presidents are, overall, extremely capable people who would rank very high on any scale of administrative ability and should have no need to be afraid of subordinate administrators'' (p. 242).

The study's findings prove this statement must take into consideration Black women Presidents may have a different experience. The statement fails to consider the nuance of Black college Presidents benefitting from the privilege of gender. Jean-Marie, Williams, and Sherman (2009) proved the interaction of race and gender in higher education provided climate that puts Black woman on the defense and more like to experience discrimination. Micro-aggressive behaviors, man-splaining, and undermining authority became issues that prevented the progress of meeting the strategic goals that each president set out to accomplish in their jobs. Distractions and barriers became prioritized over meeting the daily operations of their jobs.

Navigating Black Codes. As noted in the literature, Evans (2008) stated education has been used to an end. Blacks have utilized education to engage in both political and environmental warfare. Safety and protection arose as a subtopic regarding forging a path to the presidency. Each participant described how racism was a factor in all their choices and being safe was not only important to their success, but their families as well. The choice to attend college to pursue an education was an easy one, but the reality was that affordability and safety were major factors in making this decision. Pease and Pease (1971) assert HBCUs were created as safe havens for not only Blacks but for Black educators. Naturally Black families wanted their students to attend a Black college mostly due to location, affordability, and comfort with their safety and protection with being around their own community.

In the Margins

Imposter syndrome is defined as those individuals that have an innate fear of being discovered as a fraud or non-deserving member of the dominant group. Cozart (2009) spoke to the effects of how cultural silence can create silos within communities. In this case, the study yielded findings as to how the dominant group can foster feelings to divide or ostracize an individual resulting in cultural silencing. Subtopics found include elements of racialized harm undermining authority, discovery of how homosocial reproduction aids in fostering an in-group and out-group mentality professionally and as well as taking for granted that all Black people have monolithic experiences in identifying as Black.

Racialized harm. Pease and Pease (1971) felt as if a shared racial identity should bring those of like identities together for a shared vision. The findings presented a slightly different perspective of how Black women experience working with those with whom they share identities. The participants shared racialized harm and undermining of their authority became commonplace which aided in their outsider within status. Many acts of harm happened from other Black women. According to Clark-Holland (2014), Black women in leadership roles must contend with the notion of double jeopardy, where they experience bias based on race and gender. Even with established credibility and community support, there is a sort of professional "hazing" or expectation of likeability expected of Black women to garner support and acceptance. Not being able to enlist trust from a community that you share both cultural and gender identity with makes this a tough battle for Black women who hold these positions. Having to question and suspect the personal and/or professional agenda of every person or interaction is mentally and physically exhausting. It also halts progress towards the completion of strategic goals and initiatives, which is the premise of the presidential job.

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Status Quo. In addition to racialized harm, homosocial reproduction was identified as part of the root cause of sabotage occurring in the academy. Gasman et al. (2010) discuss how credibility helps to garner support and prestige in the Black community. However, HBCUs have been notorious in fostering hiring practices that support homosocial reproduction. Homosocial reproduction breeds shared perspective and at times can paralyze a community from diversity of thought or skill set. Many participants were forced to make staffing decisions based on having to fire or replace staff or faculty who had been there for years. Each president then became the 'scapegoat' or were blamed for replacing problematic employees who should have been fired long ago. Homosocial reproduction fosters an environment that encourages stagnant thought without progressive movement. At times, people adopt a "that's the way Black people always do it" versus keeping up with national trends and developing innovative ways to stay current.

Surveillance of Black Bodies

Freeman et al. (2016) offered successful HBCU presidents can provide vision and effect meaningful change. While these traits are aspirational and beneficial, being able to effectively influence the community is just as important. The findings of this study suggest Black women presidents are given unrealistic expectations to assimilate to for the community to digest her as the chosen leader of the community. Other subtopics found suggest colorism, image, and graciousness were aspects that are expected of Black women presidents. Patton (2016) discusses the systemic devaluing of people of color in higher education as unjust and contributes to a dominant narrative in which stereotypes are promulgated absent redress.

Image. Participants discussed how image and perception of their image was a major factor in how accepting the campus community was of them and their leadership. As mentioned

in chapter two, the politics of respectability promote the ideals which uphold standards of whiteness and are rooted in heteronormative ideals for femininity and a desire for white approval (Njoku & Patton, 2017). Each participant gave clear examples of how acts of code switching, colorism, and even how they wore their hair had tremendous effects on how digestible their presence was for the campus community.

Harper and Gasman (2008) discussed how conservative HBCU environments are when it comes to sexuality, behaviors and even dress. These values and ideals trace back to our roots in the Black church. As previously noted, Collins (2000), Ward, Hansbrough, and Walker (2005) and White (2001) posit how traditional Black institutions (churches, schools, etc.) shape our understanding of gendered and racialized depictions of Black women. Holmes (2004) states educated men of all races are lauded for being ambitious and aggressive (e.g., go-getters), they are often envied for having positions of power and authority and recognized as leaders. Black women on the other hand and all women in general are viewed as the opposite. The fact that body image and hair styling were consistent themes each woman discussed as barriers to navigating their leadership roles. As noted in Chapter 2, Oesterreich (2007) stated that Black women activist of the Civil Rights and Abolitionist movements developed a feminist consciousness that allowed them agency to strive for what was right. In this respect, Black women defining what it means to show up authentically in spaces that have traditionally been held to standards of whiteness. Black women are expected to embody whiteness pertaining to body size, hair styling and ideals connected to "professionalism." Addie and Christine explicitly spoke about how they had experiences with their Board of Trustees questioning the validity of their choice to wear their hair natural (or curly) instead of straightening their hair to look more

"professional." White standards for beauty are what are thought to be beautiful continue to invade predominantly Black spaces. Taylor (2001) referenced that Black feminism was created to provide space for Black woman to combat systems of oppression that exist, but Black feminism was also created to protect, and develop institutions that support and promote these experiences as valid, meaningful, and worthy.

Grace. Portraits also revealed the idea that Black women HBCU presidents must play dual roles of being seen as the president and first lady of the university. Holmes (2004) concludes it appears men have the luxury of making career "decisions" because they often have wives who "pick-up the slack" as one president indicated, but women are forced to make career "choices." These choices often leave Black woman presidents having to miss irreplaceable family time and moments. There was a clear indication each woman was expected to attempt to juggle career and personal commitments, while men are typically allowed to navigate these challenges without consequences. Within the experiences Black women and men illustrate, there are significant gender differences and consequences for people who aspire to senior-level roles in higher education (Holmes, 2004).

Resisting Systems of Patriarchy

Freeman and Gasman (2014) show despite the lack of interest that has been presented for the role of the president, women are still not being mentored or prepared adequately for the role. Freeman et al. (2016) also stated men HBCU presidents tended to groom other men for the role. Despite these stated facts, Black women have persisted towards the role of HBCU president; in most cases are thriving despite the odds set against their survival. Eagly, Karau and Makhijani (1995) previously stated that women have been found more effective and successful in

leadership roles that were stereotypically designed for men. Participants in this study discussed various ways they were able to navigate spaces that have been both culturally and systematically designed to cause them hardship and challenge. Each participant gave examples around survival techniques utilized, how they overcame adversity and what support systems were beneficial to their success. Gendered roles that have been socially constructed to fit within the margins of whiteness continue to create barrier for Black women in the academy. CRT allows us to critically think about the systems around race, gender and class that have been strategically created to keep Black women specifically from attaining access and opportunity to key leadership roles. It's as simple as Black women being asked to give credentials, show proof of worthiness that they can perform in these roles, when in reality, they are more qualified than their male counterparts to do the same job.

Overcoming Adversity. Lloyd-Jones (2009) identified several barriers including lack of trust that prevent Black women's progress toward success in higher education. As a result, Black women are forced to find workarounds and ways to overcome adverse situations. As presented in the findings, the participants found different ways to find was to work around racist and sexism that continue to plague the role of president. Freeman et al. (2016) states some researchers feel as if Black women's submission is the answer to establish a balance between womanhood and manhood professionally. But like Freeman, I disagree. The study proved whether Black women show up bold and assertive, versus meek and humble, there is still an overwhelming perception that Black women are being given special consideration or attention. This is truer for Black women who are first in the role. The focus and attention are given to the accolades but not to all the hard work and challenges that are rarely seen.

Support Systems. Allen, Epps, and Haniff's (1989) research pointed out Black women felt anxiety and competition from Black men. As I was able to ask my participants about how competition shows up between Black women and Black men in these roles, my initial assumptions were in alignment with what the literature suggested. However, through analyzing the data competition is found to be collegial. There are stark differences in salary, contract negotiations, and terms of service, but all the participants named other Black man presidents who were a part of their support systems and helped and guidance to their careers.

Participants also named other Black women presidents who have become a part of a sister circle of support. Being they are serving as first in the position, mentors were found in other peers who happened to be serving as presidents during their terms as well. Gasman (2009) and Nichols (2004) mentioned how important mentorship and preparation contributes to the success and longevity of HBCU leadership, but as evidenced in this study, many of the Black women presidents lacked mentorship and proper preparation for these roles. Many of them recount feeling as if they are "building a plane as they were flying it" to suggest an absence of formal direction. Family, former coworkers, and friends were named as main support systems and used as a sounding board or for advice for decision making. Although there were varying levels of connection with Black man presidents, I was surprised to find the sense of competition was not as prevalent as was hypothesized.

All in all, the literature provided a backdrop to help to outline the main findings of this study. Sowell (1973) describes this as the "tragic irony" in Black women's realities in the academy

The tragic irony is that there are already—at this moment—enough competent black scholars and able black students in the United States to create several good black colleges. But Black people are unlikely to see even one within our lifetime. It is the old story: incompetents have been put in key positions—where they not only do their job badly, but they create an atmosphere which repels the competent people who are so desperately needed. (p. 304)

Summary of the Study

As addressed in chapter one, this study aimed to deconstruct racialized and gendered bias that Black women encounter because of being in leadership as the first woman president at historically Black colleges and universities. To remove the barriers in inequality that exist in the academy, Black women need to be admonished and their experiences promoted as worthy of the caliber that comes along with the seat. The research questions guiding the study were:

1) In what ways do Black women HBCU presidents make meaning of their lived experiences in relationship to leadership and their journey to the pursuit of the presidency?

2) How do race and gender play a role in pursuing the presidency for Black woman presidents at HBCUs?

   a. How do Black woman HBCU presidents navigate the relationship between race and gender with a patriarchal culture within higher education?

In what ways do Black women HBCU presidents make meaning of their lived experiences in relationship to leadership and their journey to the pursuit of the presidency?

Many Black women take non-traditional pathways towards the presidency that add to rich lived experiences that aid in their preparation. These nontraditional pathways add to the richness of experiences that are coupled with the knowledge acquired via higher education. The participants in this study were not only trained in the academy but gained their business acumen from training in STEM and law industries. This additional perspective gave each participant a unique skill set that allowed them to have both a business savvy and higher education mentality. Having this duality certainly proved to be beneficial when it came to navigating the pacification of whiteness.

According to Peterson (2016) institutional crises are points at which women are appointed into positions of leadership to rectify failings or assume blame for them. Even as each president 'inherited' issues or challenges, each had the skills and expertise in order help the institution to be successful. The challenges were not anticipated were having to deal with likability and imposter syndrome. The findings exposed several key factors to being the first Black woman president. However, none of the factors related to the skills, expertise, and knowledge it takes to do the job. These insights made it clear that HBCUs have a call to action to admonish and continue to promote Black women into leadership. Black women have been able to not only survive but serve as catalyst leading the way in executive leadership. Black women made meaning of their experiences by understanding who they are in relationship to the work of the president. The research provided various reasons how Black women navigate, interrogate, and disrupt anti-racist behaviors to survive and thrive in the seat of president.

While my initial assumptions may have guided my inquiry into beginning this study, the initial assumptions led to engage in interrogation of each Black woman's presidential

experiences. Holmes (2004) shares issues of race, gender identity, and class are the salient factors perpetuating the underrepresentation of African Americans in executive leadership. The participants experience in this study support this research and overall validated some of my initial assumptions.

One of my initial assumptions that was not supported was the idea stark competition exists between Black women and Black men in the academy who seek the president role. Gender roles and gender socialization proved to be a larger issue than Black women feeling competition from their counterparts. All in all, the participants reported having a collegial relationship with other Black men who are HBCU presidents, however the data reported a need for Black men to promote and support Black women in their pursuits of the presidency. Black men still benefit from gendered privilege have a leg up in being trusted, admonished, and considered for roles of this caliber.

How do race and gender play a role in pursuing the presidency for Black women presidents' at HBCUs?

Each participant's portrait was consistent with pointing out how racialized and gendered norms dictate the ways Black women presidents are perceived in the role of the president. Jackson and O'Callaghan (2009) describe the phenomenon in which hidden and artificial impediments exist barring women and minorities from leadership positions despite their qualifications. Instances of respectability politics and image were prominent factors in excluding Black women from persisting as successful presidents at HBCUs. The study revealed how homosocial reproduction produced implications of maintenance of the status quo, racialized

harm, and infighting that fosters jealous and competition. Black women are unfairly being held to a standard that is not being met by anyone other than other Black women.

Another perspective to consider is the relationship between presidents and boards of trustees. Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) report women presidents who were the first to serve in their institutions trustee boards expected them to be both docile and compliant. They further explain male dynamics embedded in organizational culture are invisible to men and create challenges for women inconsequential to the male-gendered workplace environment. The expectation for Black women to serve in this duality supports patriarchy and maintaining systems of whiteness. The male dominant culture of board leadership continues to perpetrate the invisibility of Black women and establishes a power dynamic that is remanence of slavery.

DeGruy (2004) espouses vacant esteem is being transmitted from generation to generation through family, community, and society. One of the premises of building community is building relationship. While the board of trustees and the president have a close working relationship, the relationship should be contingent on wanting to do what is best for the institution, and ultimately the community. Often, boards can treat Black women presidents who serve as the first in these roles as a subordinate versus dominant relationship. This practice mirrors respectability politics which support heteronormative gendered roles and do not equip Black women with the autonomy needed to be confident leaders. Instead, these women are made to feel inferior and having less confidence in decision making and discernment.

HBCU culture is used as a major influencer for this type of behavior for its hyper focus on traditional models of Blackness which are rooted in the old school ideals and guidelines of the Black church. Conversely, presidents who receive little backing for their leadership decisions can

easily began to grow weary of the role, thinking they have failed, when ultimately, they were not postured for success in the first place.

How do Black women HBCU presidents navigate the relationship between race and gender with a patriarchal culture within higher education?

The higher education system is laced with systematic racism, privilege and power structures that guide how policies are shaped and formed. Through the findings of this study, we see how the effects of power, patriarchy, and privilege manifest through the role of the president. Data proves less than 25% of HBCUs have even had a woman in the role of president. This means HBCU institutions must create inroads that foster and properly prepare Women of Color for these important roles. Not only do these institutions need to assist in the preparation, but to maintain Black women the surrounding community including faculty, staff, and Board members must move away from having a scarcity mentality.

Scarcity mentality focuses on competition and comparisons. Black women cannot be held to a higher standard than their male counterparts. Black men are typically not judged on their levels of graciousness, body image, or how they participate in assimilating to the culture. Black women are expected to play a dual role of assertive leader and demure first lady, which is unrealistic and unacceptable. Black women should be given the agency to lead unapologetically, and authentically Black men are allowed. However, this is not the case.

Gallant (2014) found gendered workplaces fostered gendered thinking about characteristics attributed to male (i.e., hard) and female (i.e., soft) leadership skills; and Parker (2005) who indicated male dominated boards perpetuated the male ideal worker in gendered work environments. The results supported this notion around having to building resistance to

systems of patriarchy. Black women compete not only to be accepted, but to be treated fairly at the Board table. The stark inequities of salary, length of tenures held in presidencies, and placing Black women in interim status prior to being placed as a full president were obstacles uniquely placed on Black women Black men were do not experience. Survival became the lifeline allowed Black women to break through the glass ceiling and infiltrate systems that have been historically designed for People of Color to fail.

Davis and Maldonado (2015) share one aspect critical to Black women's success was the ability to exhibit confidence and competence in every aspect of their professional lives. This is consistent with the findings that examined how overcoming adverse situations was done with poise and dignity. Black woman presidents who experience public strife and humiliation did so without compromising who they were as a person. Even when the community counted them out, they continued to do what was best for the university and the students. They exhibited the selflessness needed to make HBCUs a place of solace, comfort, and access for those who seek better lives. There is a selflessness Black women bring to the role of the president that is otherwise lacking in our current structure. To restore community and balance other People of Color need to see Black women positively begot in the role of the president.

Implications for Theory & Research in Practice

The literature provided a foundation for how Black women made meaning of their lived experiences while navigating race and gender challenges in the role of president at historically Black colleges and universities. Kennedy (2012) provides evidence while Black women outnumber Black men in the academy, their voices are still thwarted and limited to the margins of academic framing. CRT and BFT were the two theoretical perspectives used in problematizing

Black women's experiences in leadership at HBCUs. Portraiture was used to paint a literary canvas showing a complete picture of how Black women have traversed higher education to hold the seat of president. Utilizing portraiture as a vehicle to interpret these experiences, CRT and BFT served as the lenses develop a deeper understanding of how each picture was formed. Although each story was not new, each portrait provided another perspective into the agency that is needed to negotiate and resist systems that prevent authentic leadership from prevailing.

The study was framed in critical race theory and Black feminist epistemology which allowed for the centering of Black women's experiences and voices to invoke a call to action (Delgado, 2000). This approach allowed for the establishment of an environment of trust for participants to openly reveal experiences that dealt directly with racialized and gender instances. Fordham (1996) discussed the duality Black women feel because of their multiple identities. Black women know that our identities intersect and exist both consciously and subconsciously causing Black women to be reflexive in their response. Burke, Cropper, and Harrison (2000) gather that sense the academy is inherently racist,

> It is essential to be clear about one ideological perspective, how one may be perceived by others outside the academy and how one can work effectively and honestly with Black communities. Thus, in working with communities of difference there needs to be an ongoing dialogue which accommodates shared agendas and the needs of both groups.

Being reflexive requires individuals to acknowledge their own role and position in all social interactions. Collins's (1993) matrix of domination illustrates how several factors made an impact on an individual's understanding of these interactions. The matrix of domination explores oppression through race, gender, and class as experienced by minoritized individuals. The four

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domains of the matrix include 1) structural; 2) disciplinary; 3) hegemonic; and 4) interpersonal. Black women existing in the realms of multi-consciousness fosters the need for resilience, fortitude, and diligence to face daily challenges.

<div align="center">**Black Feminist Epistemology & Portraiture**</div>

The study was guided by Black Feminist epistemology which allowed the centering of Black women's voices in the portrayal of their lives. Crenshaw's (1989) work informs those heteronormative theorists only provide a one-sided view of Black women's experiences. Portraiture allows Black women's experiences to be molded and shown as multidimensional as a true form of art. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) approach to storytelling gave life to the depth and scope Black women endure in the academy, especially in the role of the president. It was critical to forge an environment of trust for myself as the portraitist to truly engage with leaning into my own cultural understandings. It was at this juncture I was able to co-create beautiful tapestries that gave voice and life to each woman's tale.

Hine (1997) states discussions of racial and sexual oppression without intense grounding in the complexities and realities of class exploitation and inequities have led to misplaced emphases. She further goes on to say if we as researchers truly intend on doing intersectional analyses of Black women, we must give class as much attention as we do race and gender identity.

Each portrait revealed just that. Each woman discussed the impact of how growing up in a lower/working class family shaped their realities while also instilling in them and understanding of who they are and when and where they enter. The matrix of domination reinforces how Black women do not lived siloed lives. Each life is woven together interlocking

identities like a woven quilt. Exploration of these concepts was shown in the emergent themes. Taylor (2001) broke down the four core themes of Black feminism which include: 1) a legacy of struggle; 2) the search for voice; 3) independence of thought and action; and 4) empowerment of everyday life. For Black women presidents to continue to make their way to the presidential seat these four core themes will serve as a starting point in learning more about how to support them in this endeavor.

Collins (1993) coined the term "*outsider within*" relating to the phenomenon that Zora Neale Hurston termed "*double vision.*" An outsider is related to the margins of society while at the same time having the privilege to occupy spaces that give them insider knowledge. Participants illustrated this in various intersections of their identities. It was never enough that these women shared multiple identities with the dominant group, they still experienced being excluded by nature of them being a Black woman with perceived power. Christine spoke candidly about how the inequities between Black woman presidents and Black man presidents was apparent and part of the norm in the academy. A "leveling of the playing field" is needed to justly evolve from the dissonance created by the "haves" and "have nots." As I further delved into each participant's story, I gained a better understanding of how these inequalities have lasted this long. Hine and Thompson (1999) concluded,

> The most powerful, respected woman is the one who finds a way to feed, clothe and educate others. The history of Black women teaches that every life belongs to the community and to throw away life is to cheat the community. (page #?)

Honoring Black women in spaces that promote the ability to show up authentically as their whole, unapologetic selves is the only way for Black women to survive in positions of

power. Having their experiences validated as worthy and important will model to the world they belong to the community. Interrogation of racist and gendered policies that center on respectability is dated and counterproductive to the forward movement happening on HBCU campuses. When Black women are given the agency and autonomy to authentically lead, they prove to lead with tenacity, grace, and compassion. Skills that are needed to affect transformative change.

Audacious Movement, Fighting to Thrive

As stated, Black feminist scholarship reflects the diversity and holistic nature of the Black woman's experience while constantly redefining what it means to be both Black and a woman. Bell (1995) suggests laws and/or guidelines cannot be written from a neutral perspective, neutral perspectives do not exist. We all speak from a particular point of view that is a *positioned perspective*. The problem is not all positioned perspectives are equally heard, valued, or included. In the case of Black women their viewpoints have been oppressed, co-opted, commodified, and at times erased from consideration. Deconstruction of Black woman presidents at HBCUs revealed the ever presence of the first tenant of CRT that espouses how racism is a normal part of life. It has been normalized to have Black women serving in the seat of the president having to deal with graying Boards of Trustees that seek to control and manipulate the role of the president. Those Black women who must endure the likes of a man-identifying Board of Trustees Chair, will encounter ways in which gendered and cultural norms for Blacks are still present in the workplace. Holding board members accountable for their negligent ways could serve to be beneficial for those holding these offices.

CRT as an act of revolution does so through storytelling. Bell's (1995) viewpoint is the narrative voice of the storyteller is important to CRT in a way not understandable by those whose voices are deemed legitimate and authoritarian. Voice exposes, tells, and retells, signals resistance and caring and reiterates what kind of power that is feared most - the commitment to change. Black woman presidents at HBCUs embody this stance. As Black women are called to do the transformative work that is required in the academy, simultaneously Black women are held accountable for being the catalyst for the change that folks wish to see. It is contradictory that Black women are expected to make change, but not supported in higher education regarding "being the change" that is required. CRT exposes the paradox of higher education's perceived want for change, while concurrently resisting change when the messenger is a Black woman.

The final aspect considered was through the lens of interest convergence. As mentioned, interest convergence implies racial policies sacrifice Black interest to benefit the dominant group. Hair, image, code switching, passing, and colorism arose as many Black woman presidents are negotiating standards of whiteness that do not benefit Black women directly. Bell (1995) talks about how becoming white means gaining access to a whole set of public and private privileges that materially and permanently guarantee basic needs, and therefore survival.

Addie spoke about her hair journey and deciding if she would look "Presidential" if she decided to wear her natural hair. Christine spoke of how code switching and passing were survival techniques used to be seen as equal. This just reinforces that becoming white increased the potential of controlling critical aspects of one's life rather than being the object of another's domination (Bell, 1995, p. 906).

An exploration of Black women's experiences centering their voices, examining said experiences while at the same time deconstructing the system's that were designed to hold them complacent is the audacious. To understand Black women HBCU presidents. it is critical to unpack the audacity and fight that is required to thrive in this role. Utilizing CRT and BFT allowed for the framing of Black women's experiences holistically and authentically. Black women holding the seat of HBCU president are thriving. Black women showing up as their happy whole selves in the role of HBCU president is an act of resistance.

Future Research Recommendations

This study sought to illuminate Black woman HBCU presidents' experiences by giving voice to each participant's lived experience. Race and gender had a huge impact on the level of experiences that each woman was able to have. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explains how Portraiture captures the complexity of an individual to capture the reader's attention. To continue to captivate and honor the truth of their storied lives, more research needs to be considered. The following outlines future research recommendations for the following areas: 1) Black women seeking the role of president; 2) historically Black colleges looking to employ Black woman presidents; and finally, 3) higher education institutions that are influential in setting overarching policy and guidelines.

Recommendations for HBCUs

Historically Black Colleges have a legacy rooted in pride and distinction. Many of the people trailblazed the way for HBCUs to thrive and survive were Black women. Women like Mary Church Terrell, Ida B Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Mary McLeod Bethune. Black women have been serving and rising among the ranks working in literally all roles in the

academy. But where are the pathways for Black women to be trained for the role of the president? When will HBCUs step away from gendered policy development, laced in respectability politics and acknowledge that Black women have built the foundation for learning at Black colleges? For the glass ceiling to be shattered for once and for all, HBCU communities and campuses must be open to change. Hine and Thompson (1999) resolve Black women want and need liberation, but they are more likely to define that word in terms of power and rights. Collaboration and support from the collective community can change this perspective. Black women's success is nurtured when there is unified support and genuine care. This care can come in many forms including mentoring of former HBCU presidents, sponsorship, and promotion of Black women to take on these jobs and supporting positive images of Black women as worthy, valued, and valid.

HBCUs have a unique opportunity to set the trend for supporting and promoting Black women to the seat of the president. Having a modest number of Black women to serve in the role of president has been the norm but HBCUs have been at the forefront allowing Black women to serve in president roles more often than PWIs. Having HBCUs model the way and set the tone for how Black women embody the mission, vision, and values of what an HBCU president should have only adds to the positive narrative of uplifting Black voices and experiences. As HBCUs continue to reinvent and reengineer educational experiences for People of Color their strategic direction and visions should be to promote Black women's experiences by offering pathways toward the presidency through mentorship, training and development and opening key leadership positions that offer diverse leadership experiences and exposure to key stakeholder in the campus and surrounding communities.

Recommendations for Black Women Seeking the Role of President

Black women who aspire to lead in the role of president at a HBCU have a unique opportunity to in most cases be the first Black woman to hold that title. While this is an enticing thought, it also comes with a large commitment. While there is much to gain, there is much to consider. Hine and Thompson (1999) expound the values that have helped Black women survive are entirely communicable; they also came at a time when the problems of our society seemed insoluble and insurmountable.

All things considered, Black women interested in the role should prescribe to the following:

1) *Be Prepared.* Being prepared proved to be a vital technique for success for all the participants in this study. The more information that you know, the better. Knowing information about the campus, the community, government officials, fiscal spending, and fundraising development along with town and gown relationship building proved to create large returns on investment for each president within their career pathways.

2) *Support System is key.* Each participant discussed how the importance of key support structures aided in their survival for navigating the president role. Support looked different for each participant but there were various combinations of former HBCU Presidents, family, friends, and community advocates that may reside outside of higher education. It's important to have a tribe that can help maintain a sense of normalcy with such a high-profile career choice.

3) *Lead Unapologetically.* Successful Black woman presidents "lean in." They show up as authentically and genuine as possible. Recognizing there are consequences and

reactions for every action you emit into the ethos, but if you are sincere in your

approach, you will inspire other women to do the same.

Recommendations for Boards of Trustees

Higher Education institutions can influence change on a macroscale. Systematic gender

bias and racism continue to plague our education systems causing barriers for Black women to

excel in the academy. These barriers exist most prominently in how our Boards of Trustees

govern and uphold systematic racism and whiteness. Board of Trustees need new term limits that

allow for older members to roll off the Board, and newer outside perspectives to roll on. Having

reasonable term limits allows for consistency and pursuit of the current strategic goals, while

simultaneously encouraging new perspective and thought to influence the strategic direction of

the institution. To only allow the president to change, keeps the Board stagnant.

Cultural and structural biases in organizations are barriers to gender equity that also

affect institutions of higher education (Jones, 2013). The current climate of the academy requires

the institution to serve as a movement rather than a monument. Gone are the days where HBCUs

can thrive off just the historical significance of its roots. While it is important to understand a

preserve the historical pride of the institution, its equally important that enrollment remain steady

and consistent to continue to serve. HBCUs must remain competitive with PWIs in

infrastructure, academics, and return on investment. Black women have a proven track record of

making influential changes resulting in growth and sustainability for HBCU institutions. Boards

must recognize this positive trajectory and get on board, or the HBCU will suffer. Trust and

autonomy need to be established from the first interaction so that at times of strife, the president

know the Board supports them and their goals.

Boards could also benefit from taking a hard look at the inequities in salary for Black women presidents. The disparity in the pay gap for Black men and women show up during contract negotiations at the Board level. Women, especially Women of Color, have historically experienced pay inequities when it comes to comparing pay with Men of Color. Boards must set the standard to pay Black women equitably for their experiences and expertise they are bringing to the job.

Recommendations for Black Men Presidents

Black men have the opportunity to create a paradigm shift in academia by publicly and authentically supporting Black women as viable and capable leaders within the academy. According to O'Meara (2015) gendered organizational systems in which biases toward women and policies that exacerbate the limiting effects of women's upward career trajectory are endemic throughout organizations based on organizing norms that support and promote male leadership. Higher education has been the main promoter of Black men ascending to leadership within the past 10 years, with a focus on retention of Black male students. However, Black men have been touted as being such transformational leaders while benefiting from the labor of Black women. College populations are made up of most women students. Executive level leadership exclusive of women and minoritized individuals fail to provide woman students and Students of Color the reality of a diverse workforce that embraces (Teague, 2015). It also engenders in entry level female faculty that believes they cannot attain top leadership positions (Jones & Palmer, 2011).

This is a call to action and furthermore, I am putting Black men on notice. It is time for Black men to show up and stand in the gap for Black women in the role of president at HBCUs.

The time has come for atonement and collaboration. DeGruy (2004) suggests healing is the start to breakdown years of generational trauma that set out to break down the structure of the Black family. Slavery, Jim Crow, mass incarceration, and currently police brutality are ways that slavery and dominance continue to reinvent itself keeping a wedge between Black people. Connection to our heritage reveals that Black people are deeply rooted in the ideals of community and collective work and responsibility. Re-establishment of authentic backing and promotion will provide a strong foundation of mutual trust and expectation.

Limitations

This study offered insights as to how Black women have used their lived experiences to navigate race and gender dynamics while in the role of president at HBCUs. While the study was able to illuminate several areas in which Black women's lived experiences are examined, their experiences varied. One of the limitations to this study is there are not many Black women who have been afforded the opportunity to fill the role of president. As stated in chapter one, Black women make up less than 25% of HBCUs have women that are currently sitting as a president, to which most are serving in an interim capacity. Having a small pool of participant aided in the process of gathering rich data, while at the same time limited the amount of information that was able to be gathered from Black woman presidents. Adding the nuance of being the first Black woman to serve in the role of president at a HBCU adding another layer of limitation to the study. The study would benefit from learning from as many Black women who have been the first to serve in the role of HBCU president. Given the climate of higher education and its ever-evolving atmosphere, it would be interesting to study the changes in the next decade.

Another limitation to this study is related to method. While portraiture was used to capture the essence of each president's story from the lens of Black Feminist Epistemology. As the findings were revealed it was found there was more information related to salary inequities, tenure of services and interim appointments. I believe this study could have shed more light on the challenges that Black women face from a mixed method perspective gathering qualitative and quantitative data to make a stronger argument.

Personal Reflection - Reprise

"As long as you keep your head to the sky - you can win"

"Optimistic" by Gary Hines, Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis © Flyte Tyme Tunes Perspective

Records, Inc.

Music has always served as an outlet for me. Music has a way of connecting to my thoughts and helps to articulate my emotions in ways that are creative and multidimensional. As I began to really think about this study, I experienced a range of emotions.

I felt excitement as I was eager to learn more about the role of the president at HBCUs. I was also excited about the possibility of meeting women whom I had admired from afar. I felt nervous as I am passionate about the work done at HBCUs, and it was important to me to put forward the best body of work that not only speaks truth to power but contributes to asset-based scholarship related to HBCUs.

I felt angry as I listened to each woman recount and explain the triumphs and challenges that they endured to just merely survive and thrive in higher education. It was triggering for me in so many ways. Although I have never been a HBCU college president, I could relate,

empathize, and sympathize with almost every experience and emotion discussed through this study.

Music has always been an outlet for the many thoughts, feelings, decisions, and instances that occur in my life as a Black woman that few can relate to. I utilized this same technique to sort through and analyze the storied and complex lived experiences of these dynamic women. I used the metaphor of a mixtape to show how a compilation of experiences can define a story. Musicians used mixtapes to compile songs from various artists at times to tell a uniformed story. Unlike an album, a mixtape lacks the structure of how the story is told, however a mixtape is a group of songs that have similar themes and come together to tell a story. This method allowed for me to be creative in my approach while also taking the stories and making them more relatable to the audience. Portraiture as a methodology includes you and the researcher as both a narrator and character in the story. My role as storyteller was to not only tell the story from the perspective of each participant, but also give my thoughts on aspects of their lives. This was the most difficult aspect to think though. I struggled with honoring their stories, without being too judgmental of how they choose to honor their choices. Experience is the teacher of all things, so I was careful not to be too judgmental to the choices that each of my participants made.

Writing about Black women's experiences as they pertain to race and gender throughout the last two years has been one of the most challenging and exhausting things I have done. Writing about racial injustices while racial injustices are happening in real time took a toll on my energy and spirit. Navigation of a pandemic, the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breanna Taylor, watching the January 6 insurrection, dealing with the racist rhetoric of the

Trump Administration and today as I am writing this, the guilty verdict has been announced in the McMichael/Bryan case for the senseless murder of Ahmaud Arbery.

There were several days where I gave up on this study and on pursuing this degree. I could not make sense of the world let alone how I would be able to articulate these Black women's experiences when I was watching the bigotry and hate the present day. Much of what has happened in the world recently tends to imitate or reflect what has been happening in Black lives for centuries. Specific to Black women, our struggles have been consistent and contemporaneous.

Black women's lives are constantly being put up for auction or sell as if the return on the investment does not procure assets. Folks tend to co-opt, exploit, and trivialize Black women's lived experiences to make it seem as though they are not as important or of value. The work of Crenshaw (1991) on intersectionality demonstrated in the fight for basic civil rights. Black women are forced to campaign for you to *#SayHerName* for the world to recognize and value our lives.

Don't get me wrong, in the past two years, there has also been a slight change in focus to shine a light on the Black woman. Social media has been a gatekeeper for the #MeToo movement as well as the *#BelieveBlackWomen* and *#ProtectBlackWomen* campaigns. Where has this energy been? Where has the effort, intention, and policy reform that has been neglected over the 400+ years that Black women have been living in the United States? By far, Black women have been the most excluded population, next to Black men in the world. I saw this blacklisting manifest itself as I began to work my way up the professional ranks in the academy. There has been a clear promotion of Black men in leadership while I have seen Black women be criticized

and critiqued for the ways in which they lead. The HBCU environment was particularly hard for me. I saw many Black women in middle management positions or even serving as vice presidents, but rarely did I see a Black woman as a HBCU president. That is where my motivation began.

Being a part of this research has been a gift. I have learned so much about myself as a Black woman, and I have learned about how Black women are perceived in higher education. Before I took on the responsibility of doing this study, I wholeheartedly believed I was going to be a HBCU president one day. Now that I have done the research, I still believe I can do the job, but now I have a different perspective of what it takes to execute in the role of the president. One of the major takeaways I have taken away from this study is an overwhelming sense of pride. Pride in not only who I am, but from whom I came. Interacting with such remarkable woman leaders helped me to see the potential I have in myself.

I chose several songs I felt embodied the devotion and care each president conveyed in their stories. Some songs spoke to their struggles, while others opened you up to how kind, loving and passionate each woman was about the role of the president. I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude just to have been able to spend the short amount of time that I was able to with each participant. I choose songs to help me to give voice to and invoke emotional connection to each participant's lived experiences.

Another takeaway I experienced is that the while role of the president seems glamourous, it comes with sacrifice and learning to manage time wisely. I had to keep asking myself whether I was willing to give of my time, energy and focus to put everything that I have into the role of

the president? Although, I am sure I would be able to do the job successfully, I am not sure whether I would feel comfortable while doing the job.

Once I began to reflect on my own process, I was able to think about how I have been able to persist with the challenges and issues I have faced that were like each president. The song that came to mind was about being optimistic. The words of the song state *"As long as you keep your head to the sky, you can win, Be Optimistic"* (Hines et al., 1991, Track 2). This song is a reminder to me if I stay focused on the bigger picture, and not get caught in the white noise that is sent to distract you from the end goal, I will win. As I mentioned in chapter one, the duality that comes with being a Black woman requires you to constantly think about when and how you enter.

Christine said it best when she talked about the *"exposed nerve"* of being Black. To be a Black woman in America is to be constantly aware. You must be aware of who you are so that you will not be distracted by the way others perceive you. You must be knowledgeable about from where you came to speak truth to power about Black women's legacy and contributions. Finally, you must be able to do it all with an emphasis on purpose, intentionality, and grace so the world does not chew you up and spit you out daily. You can confidently stand in your greatness and unapologetically keep your head to the sky.

It is my hope through the tapestry of these layered stories someone is inspired to continue to fight for what is just and right. Through the course of this project, it was my goal to illuminate Black women presidents at HBCUs and edify the positive work that is being done at HBCU institutions. The goal was to also reveal the biases that exist in the academy around racialized and misogynist practices that impede the positive progression of Black women leaders. While at

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times this work is exhausting and taxing, I am committed to using my voice, scholarship, and agency to continue to disrupt, interrogate and decolonize acts of racism and gender bias that exist within HBCU environments, because to change the narrative of the past a commitment to laying the foundation for the future is critical. I believe this work is just the start, I am prepared to "*keep my head to the sky and - Be Optimistic*" (Hines et al., 1991, Track 2).

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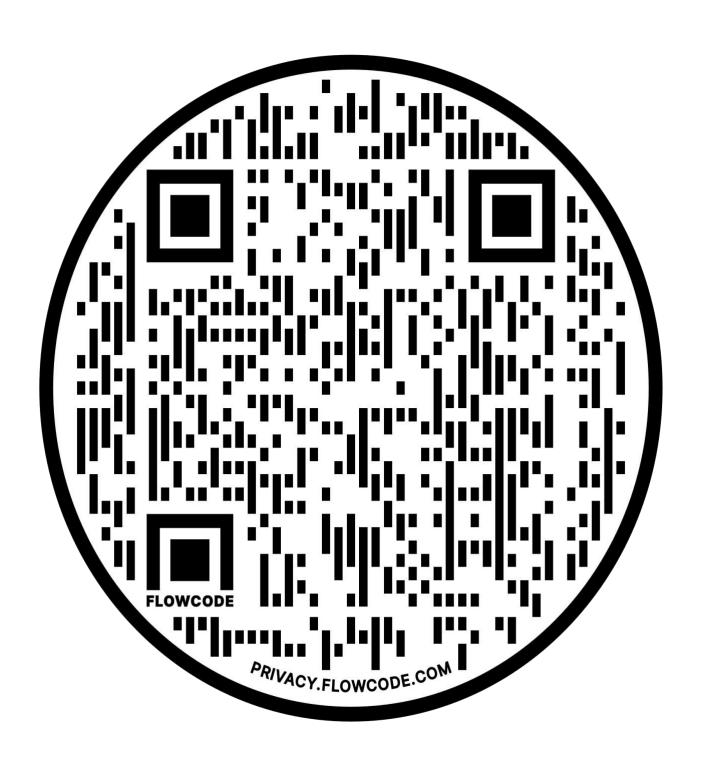
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APPENDIX A: MIXTAPE PLAYLIST

FLOWCODE

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APPENDIX B: HBCU PRESIDENT DATABASE

	HBCU	State	President	M/W	Dates in Office	Public/Private
1	Alabama A&M University	AL	Andrew Hugine, Jr	Man	2008 - Present	Public
2	Alabama State University	AL	Leon C. Wilson (Interim)	Man	2016 - Present	Public
3	Albany State University	GA	Marion Ross Fedrick	Woman	2018 - Present	Public
4	Alcorn State University	MS	Felecia M. Nave	Woman	2014 - Present	Public
5	Allen University	SC	Ernest McNealy (Interim)	Man	2016 - Present	Private
6	Arkansas Baptist College	AR	Joseph Jones	Man	2016 - Present	Private
7	Barber Scotia College	NC	Melvin Isadore Douglass	Man	2019 - Present	Private
8	Benedict College	SC	Roslyn Artis	Woman	2017 - Present	Private
9	Bennett College	NC	Suzanne Walsh	Woman	2019 - Present	private
10	Bethune-Cookman University	FL	Edison O. Jackson	Man	2013 - Present	Private
11	Bishop State Community College	AL	Reginald Sykes	Man	2016 - Present	Public
12	Bluefield State College	WV	Robin Capeheart	Man	2019 - Present	Public
13	Bowie State University	MD	Aminta H. Breaux	Woman	2006 - Present	Public
14	Central State University	OH	Jack Thomas	Man	2020 - Present	Public
15	Cheyney University of Pennsylvania	PA	Frank Pogue	Man	2014 - Present	Public
16	Claflin University	SC	Dwan Wormack	Man	2019 - Present	Private
17	Clark Atlanta University	GA	Ronald A. Johnson	Man	2015 - Present	Private

18	Clinton College	SC	Lester A. McCorn	Man	2017-Present	Private
19	Coahoma Community College	MS	Valmadge T. Towner	Man	2013 - Present	Public
20	Concordia College	AL	William James Craft	Man	2011 - Present	Private
21	Coppin State University	MD	Maria Thompson	Woman	2015 - Present	Public
22	Delaware State University	DE	Tony Lee	Man	2010 - Present	Public
23	Denmark Technical College	SC	Leonard McIntyre	Man	2014 - Present	Public
24	Dillard University	LA	Walter M. Kimbrough	Man	2012 - Present	Private
25	Edward Waters College	FL	Zachary Faison, Jr	Man	2018 - Present	Private
26	Elizabeth City State University	NC	Karrie Dixon	Woman	2019 - Present	Public
27	Fayetteville State University	NC	James A. Anderson	Man	2010 - Present	Public
28	Fisk University	TN	Vann Newkirk, Sr. (Interim)	Man	2017 - Present	Private
29	Florida A&M University	FL	Larry Robinson (interim)	Man	2016 - Present	Public
30	Florida Memorial University	FL	Jaffus Hardrick	Man	2018 - Present	Private
31	Fort Valley State University	GA	Paul Jones	Man	2015 - Present	Public
32	Gadsden State Community College	AL	Martha Lavender (interim)	Woman	2014 - Present	Public
33	Grambling State University	LA	Rick Gallot	Man	2016 - Present	Public
34	H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College	AL	Samuel Munnerlyn	Man	2007 - Present	Public
35	Hampton University	VA	William R. Harvey	Man	1978 - Present	Private
36	Harris-Stowe State University	MO	Corey Bradford	Man	2020 - Present	Private

37	Howard University	DC	Wayne A. I. Frederick	Man	2014 - Present	Private
38	Huston-Tillotson University	TX	Colette Pierce Burnete	Woman	2015 - Present	Private
39	Interdenominational Theological Center	GA	Edward L. Wheeler	Man	2015 - Present	Private
40	J. F. Drake State Community and Technical College	AL	Patricia Sims	Woman	2019 - Present	Public
41	Jackson State University	MS	Rod Paige (Interim)	Man	2016 - Present	Public
42	Jarvis Christian College	TX	Lester Newman	Man	2012 - Present	Private
43	Johnson C. Smith University	NC	Ronald L. Carter	Man	2008 - Present	Private
44	Kentucky State University	KY	Aaron Thompson (Interim)	Man	2016 - Present	Public
45	Lane College	TN	Logan C. Hampton	Man	2014 - Present	Private
46	Langston University	OK	Kent Smith, Jr	Man	2012 - Present	Public
47	Lawson State Community College, Birmingham Campus	AL	Cynthia T. Anthony (interim)	Woman	2020 - Present	Public
48	Le Moyne-Owen College	TN	Carol Johnson Dean (interim)	Woman	2019 - Present	Private
49	Lincoln University of Missouri	MO	Jerald Jones Woolfolk	Man	2018 - Present	Public
50	Lincoln University of Pennsylvania	PA	Richard Green (Interim)	Man	2015 - Present	Public
51	Livingstone College	NC	Jimmy R. Jenkins, Sr	Man	2006 - Present	Private
52	Meharry Medical College	TN	James E. K. Hildreth	Man	2015 - Present	Private
53	Miles College	AL	George T. French, Jr	Man	2006 - Present	Private
54	Mississippi Valley State University	MS	Jerryl Biggs	Man	2017 - present	Public

55	Morehouse College	GA	David A. Thomas	Man	2017 - present	Private
56	Morehouse School of Medicine	GA	Valerie Montgomery Rice	Woman	2014 - Present	Private
57	Morgan State University	MD	David Wilson	Man	2010 - Present	Public
58	Morris Brown College	GA	Kevin James	Man	2019 - Present	Private
59	Morris College	SC	Luns C. Richardson	Man	1974 - Present	Private
60	Norfolk State University	VA	Javaune Adams-Gaston	Woman	2019 - Present	Public
61	North Carolina A&T State University	NC	Harold L. Martin, Sr	Man	2009 - Present	Public
62	North Carolina Central University	NC	Johnson O. Akinleye	Man	2016 - Present	Public
63	Oakwood University	AL	Leslie Nelson Pollard	Man	2011 - Present	Private
64	Paine College	GA	Samuel Sullivan (interim)	Man	2014 - Present	Private
65	Paul Quinn College	TX	Michael Sorrell	Man	2007 - Present	Private
66	Philander Smith College	AR	Roderick L. Smothers	Man	2015 - Present	Private
67	Prairie View A&M University	TX	Ruth Simmons	Woman	2017- Present	Public
68	Rust College	MS	David L. Beckley	Man	1993 - Present	Private
69	Saint Augustine's College	NC	Everett B. Ward	Man	2015 - Present	Private
70	Saint Philip's College	TX	Adena Williams Loston	Woman	2007 - Present	Private
71	Savannah State University	GA	Kimberly Ballard Washington	Woman	2019 - Present	Public
72	Selma University	AL	Eddie Hill, Jr	Man	2020 - Present	Private

73	Shaw University	NC	Paulette R. Dillard (interim)	Woman	2017 - Present	Private
74	Shelton State Community College	AL	Cynthia T. Anthony (interim)	Woman	2015 - Present	Public
75	Shorter College	AR	O. Jerome Green, Esq	Man	2012 - Present	Private
76	South Carolina State University	SC	James Clark	Man	2016 - Present	Public
77	Southern University and A&M College	LA	Ray Belton	Man	2015 - Present	Public
78	Southern University at New Orleans	LA	Lisa Mims - Devezin	Woman	2016 - Present	Public
79	Southern University at Shreveport	LA	Ray Belton	Man	2015 - Present	Public
80	Southwestern Christian College	TX	Ervin D. Seamster, Jr.	Man	2018 - Present	Private
81	Spelman College	GA	Mary Schmidt Campbell	Woman	2015 - Present	Private
82	Stillman College	AL	Cynthia Warwick (interim)	Woman	2016 - Present	Private
83	Talladega College	AL	Billy C. Hawkins	Man	2020 - Present	Private
84	Tennessee State University	TN	Glenda Baskin Glover	Woman	2013 - Present	Public
85	Texas College	TX	Dwight J. Fennell, Sr.	Man	2008 - Present	Private
86	Texas Southern University	TX	Austin A. Lane	Man	2016 - Present	Public
87	Tougaloo College	MS	Beverly Wade Hogan	Woman	2002 - Present	Private
88	Tuskegee University	AL	Lily D. McNair	Woman	2019 - Present	Private
89	University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	AR	Laurence Alexander	Man	2013 - Present	Public

90	University of Maryland, Eastern Shore	MD	Heidi Anderson	Woman	2019 - Present	Public
91	University of the District of Columbia	DC	Ronald Mason, Jr.	Man	2015 - Present	Public
92	University of the Virgin Islands	VI	David Hall	Man	2009 - Present	Public
93	Virginia State University	VA	Makola M. Abdullah	Man	2016 - Present	Public
94	Virginia Union University	VA	Hakim J. Lucas	Man	2017 - Present	Private
95	Virginia University of Lynchburg	VA	Kathy Franklin	Woman	2016 - Present	Private
96	Voorhees College	SC	W. Franklin Evans	Man	2015 - Present	Private
97	West Virginia State University	WV	Nicole Pride	Woman	2020 - Present	Public
98	Wilberforce University	OH	Elfred Anthony Pinkard	Man	2018 - Present	Private
99	Wiley College	TX	Herman Felton, Jr	Man	2018 - Present	Private
100	Winston-Salem State University	NC	Elwood L. Robinson	Man	2015 - Present	Public
101	Xavier University of Louisiana	LA	Father Michael J. Graham, SJ	Man	2001 - Present	Private

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: She Begat This - A Black Girl Mixtape: Exploring Racialized and Gendered Portraits of Black Women Presidents at Historically Black Colleges & Universities

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Susana Muñoz, PhD, Higher Education Leadership in the School of Education, Office Telephone: 970-491-6812, Email: susana.munoz@colostate.edu

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTOR: Ebony Ramsey. Doctoral Student, Higher Education Leadership in the School of Education, Telephone: 336-392-9893, Email: ebonyramsey@gmail.com

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?
You have been identified as a Black woman who is a current or former HBCU president. You have also been the first Black woman to serve in the role of president at a HBCU. Your experiences on the journey dealing with racism, bigotry, and bias while in the role of president are of interest to this study.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?
I along with my doctoral advisor will be conducting this research as part of my doctoral program dissertation requirements.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
The purpose of this study will be to explore how Black women make meaning of their lived experiences in regard to race and gender as they laid a foundation towards a pathway to the HBCU presidency at historically Black colleges and universities. I will attempt to illustrate how Black women have navigated and resisted the challenges presented by patriarchal leadership positions in the academy.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. In what ways do Black women HBCU presidents make meaning of their lived experiences in relationship to leadership and their journey to the pursuit of the presidency?
2. How do race and gender play a role in pursuing the presidency for Black women presidents' at HBCUs?
   a. How do Black women HBCU presidents navigate the relationship between race and gender with a patriarchal culture within higher education?

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The study will take place in the St. Louis, Mo and the researcher will conduct data collection procedures via Zoom technology due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and overall safety conducting research during a pandemic. The study will commence in February 2021 and conclude no later than June 2021.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?
If you agree to participate in this study, the investigator will ask you to participate in the following activities:
- Fill out a Participant Demographic Survey
- Participate in (3) individual interviews: 75-90 minutes each
- Review interview transcript to check for accuracy
- Review final themes I identify through analysis of your interviews

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?
The study poses minimal risks. Educational institutions and individual participants will not be identified, individual, organizational, and institutional identities will remain explicitly confidential unless the research participant provides consent to publish identifying characteristics.

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
Participation in this study will result in positive contributions to the study of experiences of Black women in leadership at HBCUs within higher education. Potentially leading to continued research in the area**.**

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?
Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled**.**

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?
We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

For this study, we will assign a pseudonym to your data (i.e., Sara = Your real name) so that the only place your name will appear in our records is on the consent and in our data spreadsheet which links you to your code. Only the research team will have access to the link between you, your code, and your data. The only exceptions to this are if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee, if necessary. When we write about the study to share with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
No forms of compensation will be issued to participants.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Ebony Ramsey at ebonyramsey@gmail.com or via cell: 336-392-9893. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?
Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document.

_____   _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____   _____
Name of person providing information to participant   Date

_____
Signature of Research Staff

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Hello, my name is Ebony Ramsey, and I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program at Colorado State University. I am conducting a qualitative dissertation study, under the mentorship of Dr. Susan Muñoz, on how Black women presidents make meaning of their racialized and gendered experiences while holding the seat of the president at an HBCU.

My study is motivated by my own experiences within the education system. The lack of asset-based research on Black women and HBCUs was concerning to me and as I traversed my own path towards a doctorate, I came to realize why. I was most drawn to understanding how Black women have navigated and persevered through the glass ceiling in higher education. While there is research related to experiences of Black women in higher education, very few studies focus upon how racialized trauma has informed or assisted with being the first in these roles. It is my hope that through this study, we identify and share these concepts with all women who are interested in pursuing the presidency.

I will conduct my research beginning in spring 2020, by sending you the participant demographic survey to fill out and then begin conducting individual interviews. The time commitment involved will be at least (3) interviews that will be facilitated via zoom that will last between 75-90 mins.

With your consent, I would like to begin the process of connecting with you via phone call, as well as schedule our first individual interview as soon as most convenient for you.

Your response to this email will commence the process for informed consent process, which will outline the timeline, confidentiality, and process for this study. Please do not hesitate to contact me via email, ebonyramsey@gmail.com and/or my cell at 336-392-9893.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ebony Ramsey

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Please answer all survey questions to the best of your ability. This will be used to identify potential participants and inform the study. If you have any questions please contact Ebony Ramsey, ebonyramsey@gmail.com for more information. If you are selected for the study, you will be contacted via telephone and email to confirm your participation. At any point you no longer want to be a part of this study, you can choose to no longer participate.

All participants will fill out this form prior to the first scheduled interview.

1. What is your first and last name?

2. For the purposes of this study, you will be given a pseudonym for confidentiality, do you have a desired name you would like to be referred to?

3. What are your preferred gender pronouns?

4. What is your preferred email?

5. What is your preferred phone number?

6. How do you identify racially/ethnically?

7. How do you define your gender identity?

8. What is your full birthdate? (MM/DD/YYYY)

9. How would you define your socio-economic status?

   a. Working Class

   b. Middle Class

    c.   Upper Class

10. What is your highest level of educational achievement?

11. What is your mother's highest level of educational achievement?

12. What is your father's highest level of educational achievement?

13. What college are you currently a president? If you are no longer in a president role, what was the length of your last term?

14. What year did you begin your presidency at your first HBCU?

15. What other HBCUs have you worked at? Years of Employment?

16. Were you ever a faculty member?

- If you are a current faculty member, please note whether you are tenure track or tenured

17. What type of institution are you currently employed? (Size, type, describe as you see fit)

    a.   If you are not employed at an institution, where do you do for a living currently?

Study

The purpose of this study will be to explore how Black women make meaning of their lived experiences in regard to race and gender as they navigated the presidency at historically Black colleges and universities. I will attempt to illustrate how Black women have navigated and resisted the challenges presented by patriarchal leadership positions in the academy.

Research Questions

1. In what ways do Black women HBCU presidents make meaning of their lived experiences in relationship to leadership and their journey to the pursuit of the presidency?

2. How do race and gender play a role in pursuing the presidency for Black women presidents' at HBCUs?

    a. How do Black women HBCU presidents navigate the relationship between race and gender with a patriarchal culture within higher education?

Date	
Interviewer's Name	
Participant's Name	
Location:	
Time of Interview:	

Instructions for Data Collection Process

Begin by sharing the purpose of the study with the participant and an overview of the study. Inform the participant how the data is being collected and how the data will be used for the study. Ask each participant if they have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study of how the data will be used. Inform them that their information will be kept confidential and give them an idea of the amount of time that the interview will take. Make sure you have the participant's permission to be recorded and have them read and sign the consent form. Start the recording device and begin the interview.

Introduction Script

I am a doctoral student at Colorado State University taking part in a qualitative research course. I am interested in exploring how Black women presidents make meaning of their racialized and gendered experiences while in the role of president at HBCUs. I would like to gather additional data to help inform my research. You have been chosen as an eligible participant in the aforementioned study. I am conducting this interview in an attempt to collect data that will inform me of any current or emerging trends related to this topic. It is my goal to make sure that all information collected will be kept confidential. I will be recording this interview via, tape record and/or video so that I can make sure that I obtain accurate information. I will also be willing to share with you the results of the study, if interested. If you are in agreement with participating, thank you for your participation, and let's get started.

Interview #1 - Life History Interview (75-90 mins) (RQ1)

1. Where are you from? Where did you grow up?

2. How would you describe your family? What was your family life like?

3. Describe your earliest experience of how you came to understand that you were black? What is your earliest memory of realizing that you were Black?

4. What were you taught about what it meant to be Black?

5. What were you taught about what it means to be a woman?

6. Where did your ideas about self-confidence or self-worth stem from?

7. Who was your biggest inspiration growing up?

8. Tell me about an experience that you had where you were made aware of your status as a black woman?

9. What were you taught about the value of education?

10. How did you know you wanted to pursue education?

11. If you can, in detail, tell me about your family's reaction when you announced that you wanted to attend college?

12. What was your experience like in school? Talk about a person or situation that inspired you to want to pursue education

13. Did you attend an HBCU for your undergraduate or graduate degrees?

    a. What were some factors that influenced your decision to attend an HBCU?

    b. How do you feel about attending an HBCU versus attending a Predominantly White Institution (PWI)?

14. How do the effects of generational trauma show up in your daily life? In the way that you lead?

Interview #2 - Race, Gender and Patriarchy and the presidency (75-90 mins) (RQ2)

Race & Gender

1. What does being black mean to you?

2. Talk about your journey towards the presidency. In detail, how did you become the president at your first HBCU?

3. Discuss your salient identities and how they have impacted your journey towards the presidency

4. Talk about your experiences growing up and how it relates to how you participated or not participated in conversations about race?

5. What inspired you to want to become a university president? A university president at an HBCU?

6. How did you first learn about historically Black colleges and universities?

7. Tell me about a time where you felt discriminated against because of your race and/or gender?

8. What are some of the major differences that you see between working at a HBCU vs a PWI?

9. What are some challenges that you faced while attaining and/or acting as an HBCU president?

10. Tell me about a time where you felt discriminated against because of your race and/or gender?

11. How have you navigated these challenges?

12. Talk about a time where you resisted challenges that came your way because of being the first to hold your position?

13. In what ways have you compromised or negotiated your character in order to survive?

14. What are your support systems that you used to motivate you and keep you striving for excellence?

15. What does serving as the first Black woman in the role of president at an institution mean to you?

16. What are some of the stereotypes that you have/had to contend with being a woman in this role? How did you handle these stereotypes?

Patriarchy – (RQ 2A)

1. How have the constructs of whiteness and patriarchy impacted your pathway to the presidency?

2. Do you feel as if you can be your true authentic self while doing the job of the president?

3. What double standards exist in the role of the president that exist for women that do not pertain to men who hold the position?

4. Talk about an experience where you felt you were being discriminated against due to being a woman in a man dominated field?

5. In what ways were you able to navigate your frustrations or anger? How did you navigate advocating for what you felt was right?

6. Describe an experience where you felt challenged in your role?

7. Do you feel a sense of competition from other Black men in leadership roles?

8. How has patriarchy shown up in your journey as a HBCU president?

9. What advice do you have for other Black women who aspire to the role of president at an HBCU?

10. What lesson did you learn or are learning from your role as president?

Interview #3 - All Themes (75 - 90 mins) (RQ2 & 2A)

1. How do you see cultural norms playing a role in how we are socialized to be Black in higher education?

2. Did you ever feel that you had to assimilate to be successful in your role? In what ways did you compromise? Do you regret it, or would you do it again?

3. What are some of the biggest lessons that you learned from the role of the presidency?

4. What are some of your biggest life lessons you had to unlearn?

5. If you could pick a song that defines your life's experience, what would it be? What is your theme song?

Thank the participant for their participation in the study and set up time for another interview.