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The Triple Burden: Black Women Leaders In Predominantly White Institutions Of Higher Education

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THE TRIPLE BURDEN:
BLACK WOMEN LEADERS IN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Black women face greater challenges than their white female, Black male, and white male colleagues within predominantly white institutions of higher education (PWIs) because institutional and systemic oppression encourages ideologies that promote white supremacy culture. As such, Black women remain severely underrepresented in positions of leadership in PWIs. This narrative inquiry reports the stories of five Black women's experiences as leaders in PWIs in the northeast region of the United States and sheds light on the factors that impact their empowerment and sustainability.

Black women leaders navigate a number of issues in PWIs. The burden of taking on additional work unrelated to their job functions, issues around accessing proper care and support, and adverse treatment of Black women were themes that surfaced while uncovering the stories of the study participants. These themes were present throughout the study though exacerbated by both mass racial violence towards Black people and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) global health pandemic that disproportionately harmed Black people. The overlapping of these greater societal circumstances created a public health crisis for Black people that carried over into work compounding the issues the study participants faced creating a Triple Burden. Collectively, the tapestry of their stories demonstrated the very real threat to the empowerment and sustainability of Black women leaders in PWIs.

DEDICATION

To Black women and girls everywhere. I love you.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Tracing the evolution of leadership discourse unravels a map of leadership theory that centers and explores white men as the dominant perspective. These widely recognized leadership theories have broadly impacted leadership practice across organizations and institutions of higher education for decades. As hegemonic leadership practice deeply permeates our institutions, values and beliefs of what constitutes successful leadership excludes those whose life experiences do not align with dominant culture. For Black women, dominant leadership discourse and practice leaves them marginalized as these theories are formed by the experiences of white men and women (Parker, 2005).

Ambitious and educated Black women leaders remain severely underrepresented in positions of leadership in our institutions of higher education and our world (Gamble & Turner, 2015; Jackson, 2004). According to a 2018 survey of women in the workplace, for every 100 men promoted in the workplace, 60 Black women are promoted (Hunter-Gadsden, 2018). To bring balance to the field of leadership, it is essential to study, understand, and include Black women experiences, voices, and perspectives. Failing to include diverse voices silences and marginalizes some groups while further privileging others (Alston, 2012).

Within the workplace, Black women face discrimination due to the intersection of their gender and race; a phenomenon that has been coined in the literature as “double jeopardy” (Carter et al., 1987; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Mosley, 1980) or “double whammy” (Harvard, 1986). There are a multitude of factors hindering the success of Black women leaders within predominantly white institutions of higher education (PWIs)

(Collins, 2001; Guillory, 2001; Moses, 1997; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Wolfman, 1997). Black women face greater challenges than their white female, Black male, and white male colleagues because systemic oppression within institutions uphold ideologies that promote white male dominance (Guillory, 2001; Wolfman, 1997). While white women benefit from white privilege and Black men benefit from male privilege, Black women face increased adversity because they do not benefit from either (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

As the challenges Black women leaders face in the workplace remain unrecognized, they are further marginalized, and their voices and experiences are silenced (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). This has made it nearly impossible for Black women to feel empowered in their roles and even harder to sustain as leaders (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). As workplaces uphold white male hegemonic values, they do not sustain and empower Black women leaders. Black women are coerced to behave as leaders in a way that upholds hegemonic ideals, if they want to experience professional success and growth (Hague & Okpala, 2017).

Allowing space for the diversity of perspectives that Black women leaders bring to the table would counter hegemonic ideologies in PWIs. Until this happens, the voices and perspectives of Black women leaders will remain marginalized, and they will face increased burnout which in turn threatens their future success. It is for these reasons that it is vital we investigate this topic.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative study is to report the stories of Black women's experiences as leaders in predominantly white institutions of higher education and to shed

light on the factors that impact their empowerment and sustainability. For this study, I investigated:

1. What are the experiences of Black women leaders in predominantly white institutions of higher education?
2. What can we learn from the experiences of Black women leaders to create more sustainable and empowering environments within predominantly white institutions of higher education?

Significance of Proposed Work

There have been a multitude of leadership theories developed over time that influence modern perspectives on leadership practices in the workplace. Bass (1991) identifies the "better-known theories and models of leadership" (p. 37), including Great Man theories, trait theories, and situational theories. Komives et al., (1998) discussed a similar evolution of leadership theory stemming from Great Man theory, trait theory, behavioral theory and others. They explained how these theories have been conceived by white men and thus have a limited white male hegemonic narrative (Alston & McClellan, 2011).

Researchers have explored the impact of gender on leadership experiences in many settings including in educational settings (Astin & Leland, 1991; Guido-DiBrito et al., 1996). While these studies began to expand the body of knowledge on leadership beyond a white male perspective, they still largely constructed studies centering whiteness (Astin & Leland, 1991; Hegelsen, 1990). These studies lacked meaningful or practical theory regarding the impact of race and gender in leadership and therefore exclude BIPOC women from the ability to benefit fully from the leadership literature.

Parker (2005) states that to "advance a model of feminine leadership based on White women's gender identity essentially excludes Black women's experiences in constructing gender identity and, therefore, excludes Black women's voices in theorizing about leadership" (p. 10). Consequently, the systematic exclusion of the perspectives of Black women from the development of leadership frameworks makes it impossible for Black women to thrive where dominant leadership theory and practice is present.

Black women have their own realities of leadership that remain deeply ignored in the literature. This neglect perpetuates misinformation about the factors that affect the success of Black women and prevents a full understanding of their existence as organizational leaders. Unfortunately, the voices of Black women have been ignored as well as their contributions to education and society as a whole (Alston & McClellan, 2011; Henry et al., 2013). This study expands the quantity of research on Black women leaders in higher education and specifically focus on factors that impact empowerment and sustainability. This is an area where there has been limited research in the literature (Alston, 2012).

This study uplifts the experiences of Black women leaders to provide increased insight into the opportunities for elevating and retaining them as important members of the leadership of PWIs. Elevating the stories of Black women serves to disrupt the status quo in scholarship by creating space for the stories of a traditionally marginalized population to produce new knowledge (Canagarajah, 1996). Without the inclusion of the perspectives of Black women, dominant voices perpetuate a singular narrative while contributing to the marginalization of Black women leaders' voices.

Chapter two of this dissertation explores dominant leadership theory and how wide adoption of these theories encourages hegemonic leadership practices. These practices often create environments that make sustainability and empowerment difficult for Black women leaders. This is because hegemony in PWIs uphold white supremacy culture which has dire consequences for Black women. The Transformative Leadership model is explored as a pathway to deconstruct this culture and dismantle the systems of oppression discouraging Black women from thriving and surviving. Three theoretical frameworks, Intersectionality, Critical Race Theory, and Black Feminism are explored to make meaning of race and gender on the experiences of Black women in PWIs. Finally, my unique concept of the Triple Burden is introduced which describes the distinct way that the experiences Black women face outside of the workplace carryover and have impact on their lives within these institutions.

Chapter three of this dissertation outlines the qualitative research methods used in this narrative inquiry. Additionally, a transformative research paradigm was applied as a way to encourage co-creation of knowledge by the study participants and ensure the greatest opportunity for bringing forth new knowledge. Chapter four details the surrounding social and cultural events and sets context to ground the study, bringing my own experience as a Black woman leader in a PWI into the story. Chapter five provides a summary of the study findings and chapter six concludes the study by offering implications for future research, institutional policy, and leadership practice.

Use of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the definitions and descriptions of key terms should be applied as followed:

Black woman or African American woman. The United States Census Bureau (2020) defines Black or African American as a race category where people self-identify as having "origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa" (n.p.). The term Black is used to describe African American people who do not appear or claim to be exclusively white, Asian, or Hispanic, and who have a skin tone that reflects African descent. The author notes that Black women do not all have the same culture, nationality, or other characteristics due to diaspora. Further, Black women's' views on American culture, history, and societal norms may also vary. Despite this, society typically considers women who do not appear white, Asian, or Hispanic, and those who appear multi-racial with a darker complexion to be Black. For the purpose of this study, the author uses the term Black to describe people of African descent regardless of their nationality. Throughout the literature review and this study, the term African American is used as well, therefore the terms Black and African American are used interchangeably.

Leader. For the purpose of this study when referring to the study participants, the author defines leader as senior-level employees who hold positions with significant responsibilities. Positions consist of both faculty and staff roles and include titles such as Vice President, Dean, Director, or Department Chair.

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, or other People of Color) or People of Color or Person of Color. The term people of color or person of color is used to describe any person who is

not considered white. The terms highlight the common experiences of systemic racism among these communities. The acronym BIPOC specifically separates out Black and Indigenous from other persons of color in order to highlight the oppression historically faced by Black and Indigenous people. For the purpose of this study, the author uses the term BIPOC however, since the terms people of color and person of color are used throughout the study as well, the terms will be used interchangeably.

Woman of color. Woman of color is a phrase used to describe female people of color. At times the study participants use the term woman of color to describe themselves or other groups of non-white women. At times in this study the study participants use the term interchangeably with the terms Black woman and African American woman and at other times it represents a broader group of non-white women.

White. The United States Census Bureau (2020) defines white as a race category of people who self-identify as having "origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa" (n.p.). The author recognizes this definition for the purpose of this study.

Predominantly white institution of higher education (PWI). According to Lomotey (2010) the term *predominantly white institution* is used to define institutions of higher education

that traditionally excluded non-white student populations prior to 1964 and where more than half of the student population currently consists of white students.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The Encyclopedia Britannica (Stefon, 2019) describes historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as "institutions of higher education in the United States founded prior to 1964 for African American students" (n.p.) and asserts that "the term was created by the Higher Education Act of 1965, which expanded federal funding for colleges and universities" (n.p.), in order to create educational opportunities for Black students who were experiencing racial discrimination at other institutions.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Leadership theory does not accurately reflect the experiences of Black women in leadership (Alston, 2012). Privilege and power often ignore diversity, marginalizes groups and diminishes the potential for creativity, adaptability, and resilience (Kolan & TwoTrees, 2014). To bring balance to the field of leadership, it is essential to study, understand, and include Black women experiences, voices, and perspectives. Failing to include diverse voices silences and marginalizes some groups while further privileging others (Alston, 2012).

Researchers (Byrd, 2009; hooks, 1984; Parker, 2005; Parker & Oglivie, 1996;), have slowly begun to explore the ways gender and race impact leadership styles and how leadership theory works when applied by Black women. There are broad societal dynamics at work that perpetuate the systemic oppression in organizational structures that stem from the historical treatment of Black women. Black women have been considered inferior and less competent and thus have faced multiple challenges in their professional lives where white male behaviors are most recognized and celebrated (Allen, 1997; King & Ferguson, 2001; Marble, 1990; Rosser-Mims, 2010). As organizations remain dominated by white male behavior and style, hegemonic norms that maintain the beliefs and values of white men are reproduced, further challenging the empowerment and sustainability of Black women leaders.

This literature review is organized such that it demonstrates a layering effect in which dominant leadership practices, situated as a foundation for understanding hegemonic leadership values, impacts the unique challenges that Black women face in the workplace due to their race and gender. The Transformative Leadership model, which

centers social justice in leadership practice, is investigated as a potential pathway to achieve empowerment and sustainability for Black women leaders. Intersectionality, Critical Race Theory, and Black Feminism are then highlighted as theoretical frameworks that provide the backdrop for this study. This review highlights the ways in which these theoretical perspectives have collective impact on Black women which, coupled with the unique challenges that Black women face outside of the workplace, creates a "Triple Burden" effect. Finally, a conceptual framework is provided to illustrate the relationship of these concepts to each other.

Dominant Leadership Theory

Early in the 20th century, scholars focused their studies on determining what made a great leader. Theories such as "great man theory" were conceived after white men studied other white men in positions within the military and with political and social rank (Bass, 1990; Northhouse, 2010; Parker & Ogilive, 1996). At that time, this was the reigning ideology perceived to provide an accurate understanding of the makeup of great leaders. Later, many studies proceed to uncover differences between male and female leadership traits and characteristics. Traits such as individualism, which emphasized competition and rivalry as a strong trait often recognized in these military and political men, was now being juxtaposed to more collaborative leadership traits seen in women where partnership and working together were more pronounced. (Helgesen, 1990; Loden, 1985).

More recent discussions of leadership styles considered the concepts of transactional and transformational leadership where transactional leadership style focuses on supervision, organization, and daily progression toward goals and transformational

leaders focus on motivation, engagement and shared vision (Fisher & Koch, 2001). Transformational leaders in particular have been regarded as setting exceptionally higher expectations and achieve higher performance. When considering others, transformational leaders often raise the effort, commitment, maturity, and satisfaction of those whom they lead as opposed to transactional leaders who succeed by delineating the expectations to be accomplished and emphasizing the reward to be achieved once conditions are met (Avolio & Bass, 2002).

In recent years, there has been an increase in literature focused on women as leaders, however women of color remain severely underrepresented and ignored (Bell, 1992). There have been few studies that address the impact of race and gender on Black women's leadership development (Waring, 2003). While Black women have most closely aligned their leadership style in studies to transformational leadership, specifically where the emphasis is on social change and emancipation (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Parker, 2005; Walker, 2009), understanding the leadership development of Black women is imperative to challenge traditional notions of leadership and shift the paradigm of knowledge.

Hegemonic Leadership Practices

In modern workplace environments, double standards persist where the gender of leaders are considered. Male-dominated organizational cultures define success, leaving women to adapt to these cultures (Carli & Eagly, 2001). These corporate cultures perpetuate policies and practices that maintain the status quo including white men in positions of power within organizations (Carli & Eagly, 2001). Stereotypical perspectives on gender have created circumstances that have oppressed the growth of women into senior leadership positions because organizations equate strong leadership with the ability

to be masculine, strategic, assertive, and organized while women leaders have been characterized as having contradictory qualities such as sensitivity, compassion and nurturing (Fisher & Koch 2001).

Ransford and Miller (1983) suggested that feelings towards women continue to be greatly impacted by racial oppression both past and current. In a study by Parker and Ogilvy (1996), Black women reported that the greatest barrier to their opportunities within dominant cultural organizations was racism rather than sexism. As workplaces uphold white male hegemonic values, they do not sustain and empower Black women leaders, which causes adversity and anguish. This is because Black women are forced to behave as leaders in a way that upholds hegemonic ideals if they want to experience professional success and growth (Hague & Okpala, 2017). Authentic leadership is less attainable for Black women because they must forgo authenticity and perform leadership styles that are most rewarded in white male dominated environments (Hall et al., 2012). This behavior marginalizes Black women leaders as they hold back their authentic methods and implement the more favorable dominant styles (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Rosser-Mims (2010) sums up the issues when she says, "these theories based on white male experiences attempt to generalize leadership characteristics and as a result do not reflect and devalue Black women and other disadvantaged groups' leadership experiences (p. 6)."

Transformative Leadership

According to Shields (2010), transformative leadership "begins with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others"

(p.559). Shields (2013) states that transformative leadership courageously calls attention to and disrupts systemic and structural inequities that oppress marginalized and disenfranchised groups and involves "moral purpose, intellectual and social development, and a focus on social justice" (p. 14). Shields (2011) describes transformative leadership as being comprised of seven core components. They are: (a) acknowledging power and privilege and their impact; (b) focusing on moral purposes that are related to equity, excellence, public and private good, along with individual and collective advancement; (c) deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge frameworks; (d) seeking to balance critique and promise which involves developing strategies to address inequities; (e) Bringing about deep and equitable change; (f) working toward transformation (which includes liberation, emancipation, democracy, equity, and excellence); and (g) demonstrating moral courage and activism (Shields, 2011).

Bonaparte (2015) invites us to examine transformative leadership through the works of three prominent Black women leaders in history: Sojourner Truth, Harriett Tubman, and Mary McLeod Bethune. She presents their work as a strong example of the transformative leadership model in action by highlighting their advocacy work, efforts to bring about deep and equitable change, work to dismantle and reconstruct knowledge frameworks and demonstration of moral courage and activism. Positioning these women in this way is important as Black women leaders have historically been ignored and devalued.

Historically, Black women have stood at the forefront of movements against oppression yet as leaders they have frequently been relegated to the back. This behavior over time helped to establish the regressive opinions of Black women as leaders in that it

did not support the idea that Black women could lead. Bonaparte (2015) provides evidence of the fact that these Black women, through their activism, demonstrate the epitome of leadership. This in essence changes the narrative on Black women as leaders by challenging the definition of leadership.

Bonaparte's article not only shares the great contributions of transformative Black women leaders, but it also serves as a great example of how transformative leadership can improve the ethics, values, and practices of a society.

Impact of Race and Gender

In her 1991 article, M*apping the Margins*, law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), described how people who are both a woman and a person of color experience marginalization because the discourses are largely designed to address one facet of identity and not both. For example, a heterosexual white woman and an LGBT Black woman may both experience discrimination due to their gender, however this discrimination will not be the same. The white woman is protected by her whiteness from racism and homophobia while the Black woman experiences this added burden.

Black women face greater challenges in the workplace than their white women, Black male and white male counterparts due to the combination of racism and sexism (Hall et al., 2012). Black women navigate a plethora of challenges in these environments that do not uphold them as Black women leaders to be successful. These include but are not limited to harsher criticisms (Hague & Okpala, 2017; Hall et al., 2012; Mosley, 1980; Rosser-Mims, 2010), minimal upward mobility (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hall et al., 2012), limited support and mentorship (Hague & Okpala, 2017; Hall et al., 2012;

Harvard, 1986), and threatened authenticity and burnout (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hall et al., 2012).

Harsher criticism

Black women face criticisms and experience bias in the workplace due to their race and their gender (Hague & Okpala, 2017; Hall et al., 2012; Mosley, 1980; Rosser-Mims, 2010). Oftentimes, white environments view Black women in stereotypical ways, which often treats them as less capable than their white male, white female, and Black male counterparts (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hall et al., 2012). Perceptions that Black women only exist in work environments as a result of diversity practices has led coworkers to view them as leaders less capable of contributing to the success of organizations (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Dixson & Dingus, 2007). Consequently, when Black women attempt to take on characteristics that are more celebrated in the workplace, they run the risk of being considered too independent or aggressive, both historically problematic depictions of Black women that dates back to slavery (Alston, 2012). An example of this is the common stereotype of the "Angry Black Woman". While white men are expected to demonstrate both assertive and aggressive behavior in the workplace, Black women, who have traditionally been relegated to more subordinate positions due to hegemonic leadership practices and dominant leadership philosophy, are not typically rewarded for demonstrating a similar quality and in fact might experience backlash.

The experiences of Black people in the United States originates with hundreds of years of oppression and enslavement that dismantled families and established norms for labor among men and women (Jones, 1982). Gender roles among Black people were

dictated by slave masters due to the denial of citizenship and freedom (Jones, 1982). Black women were laborers, caretakers, mothers, sex objects, and spouses. While there were some women who were regarded as leaders among slaves, they were forbidden from demonstrating any independence (Jones, 1982).

For the 100 years between 1860 and 1960, Historically Black Colleges and Universities emerged and Black people earning a college education meant that socioeconomic status differences became prevalent (Collins, 2001). Eventually, Black women who opted for a college education found their way into the labor market, especially into the 1970's, when racial disparities and hardships surged in the Black community. This oftentimes left Black women to take on an unprecedented amount of work upholding their families (Childs, 2005). The irony is that while Black women demonstrate significant resilience through personal and historical hardships and have been documented in the literature as holding an ever-present role of "Superwoman," or what has been coined "Strong Black Woman" (Woods-Giscombe, 2010). This strength and independence counter the expectations that society has for them to remain subservient, vulnerable, and dependent (Crawford & Unger, 2000). These harsh criticisms are a burden for Black women and are ever present as they navigate the workplace.

Limited upward mobility

Regardless of the ambition and preparedness with which Black women enter the workplace, they quickly begin to see their success will be impacted by the effects of white male dominated organizations (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hall et al., 2012). While Black women work to actualize upward mobility, this oppression and other obstacles

contribute to the further immobility of their careers (Hague & Okpala, 2017). In a study that examined factors impacting the career advancement of Black women leaders, one retired leader with over 30 years of experience reflected on this idea stating:

> My experience has not been an easy one. It is one that is marred with discrimination based on my gender and race. Although I can say that I happily retired as a leader, I cannot forget that I interviewed for one leadership position that perfectly matched my training and experiences but did not get it. The position was given to someone with a masters' degree from another institution. That was when I realized that I could never advance into those top leadership positions because of my race and gender. Therefore, I retired (Hague & Okpala, 2017, p. 5).

This incident is a clear example of the ways in which Black women leaders can experience oppression in the workplace regardless of the number of years of experience and commitment to the industry. It also provides an astounding account of the consequence of losing talented Black women not only from experiencing the challenges of growing within organizations but also from the blatant halting of growth when approaching the very top opportunities for leadership.

Limited support and mentorship

As Black women leaders are severely underrepresented in the workplace, Black women professionals from seasoned leaders to young professionals lack the support from others as they develop professionally (Grant, 2012; Hall et al., 2012; Harvard, 1986). Mentoring relationships provide invaluable access to industry knowledge through education and networking. When Black women access support systems in the workplace, they are able to access key information that contributes to their professional development

as well as career advancement (Davis, 2009; Hague & Okpala, 2017; Harvard, 1986). Without mentoring relationships, the journey to the top is almost impossible because mentoring relationships support vital networking that provide the connections and knowledge needed for professional growth (Harvard, 1986).

Cultural similarities are significant in mentoring relationships as identifying with another individual with regards to language, interests, aspirations, and obstacles can contribute to success in the workplace (Athey et al., 2000; Welch, 1996). However, with the limited number of Black women in the academy, it is nearly impossible for them to access other Black women as mentors. When they do have access to mentors in the academy, these frequently are white men and women. To obtain Black women as mentors, these women often must pursue mentoring relationships external to the academy (Patton, 2009).

Black women navigate challenging academic settings with regards to their identity and in isolation as most are typically one of only a few Black women on their campuses (Gregory, 2001). These settings are particularly difficult to experience success within since they are dominated by the "old boy" system that maintains white male hegemonic ideologies and practices (Allen et al., 1995). It is critical that Black women acquire strong supports in the academy to encourage not only emotional and advisory support, but also to access opportunities for career development and advancement.

Threatened authenticity and burnout

Behaviors that are traditionally associated with whiteness and masculinity are those that are most celebrated leaving Black women challenged with maintaining their authentic self as a leader. In addition, Black women navigate racial microaggressions in

the workplace, are assumed to have a universal experience as other Black people, are treated as invisible, and are excluded in a variety of ways (Holder et al., 2015). They also experience marginalization, covert discrimination, racism, challenges with students, and gender based discrimination (Turner et al., 2011). They have sometimes felt the need to downplay their authentic personality traits for fear that they might be perceived negatively in the workplace such as being less serious or unprofessional (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). These same characteristics are ones that might allow a white male to build relationships helpful for professional growth.

Black women experience stress navigating inappropriate and offensive behavior from colleagues when contemplating whether to speak up or bite their tongue for fear of seeming “angry” or “sensitive”. The issue of whether to speak up or not is also an ethical dilemma for Black women leaders because while fighting oppression by speaking up is a burden, not speaking up contributes to maintaining this oppression. This not only threatens the sustainability and empowerment of future Black women leaders (Hall et al., 2012), but also deters the innovation and creativity Black women bring that is vital to solving institutional and world issues.

Black women also experience stress and burnout as their authority and intelligence is questioned more frequently than their colleagues and they face oppression as their intellectual contributions are undervalued. Burnout is a racialized and gendered experience for Black women because the issues that cause the burnout are directly related to marginalization due to race and gender (Hall et al., 2012). As Black women attempt to share their perspective or give voice to issues, they face in the workplace, they are met with dismissive attitudes working to uphold despotic standards. These attitudes make it

nearly impossible for Black women not to burnout because combating oppression in the workplace is exhausting and unsustainable. The suffering that Black women face is unjust, unethical, and accelerates the burnout and departure of Black women leaders (Hall et al., 2012).

Theoretical Frameworks

Three theories form the backdrop by which this study is shaped: Intersectionality, Critical Race Theory, and Black Feminism. These frameworks approach the study of Black women in considerably different ways than traditional methods. Intersectionality is a relevant model for understanding the harmful effects of the cross inequalities stemming from patriarchy and racism. As Black women navigate society and predominantly white institutions, they navigate and mitigate these inequalities. Critical Race Theory provides a valuable perspective into the experiences of Black women in predominantly white institutions of higher education while Black Feminism is an avenue for uncovering the unique qualities of Black women both inside and outside of the academy. It allows for a counter-narrative to dominant culture ripening the opportunity for Black women to produce knowledge based on their experiences.

Intersectionality

Coined by law professor Crenshaw (1989), Intersectionality is a key concept in the work of Black feminists that moves the dialogue to an analysis of systems that oppress some while privileging others. Intersectionality exposes how feminist and antiracist policies have excluded Black women since they do not address the overlapping identities of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989). These multiple forms of discrimination must be considered together to gain a full depiction of the unique burdens that Black

women face. Crenshaw (1989) defined the experience of multiple oppressions as intersectionality.

Crenshaw describes how, unlike white women, Black women cannot simply be in opposition to Black men because racism is a greater issue to sexism. She stresses the interdependence of Black women and men, which is important because Black women describe that they share the struggles associated with the greater societal issues in the same manner that Black men do. Further, she explains that although patriarchy exists among the Black community, racism is a greater threat and therefore requires Black women to raise issues that are also negatively impacting their male counterparts which is harmful to the entire race.

Crenshaw (1989) argues that any analysis that ignores the intersectional relationship between race, gender, and class is inadequate in fully representing and understanding the challenges Black women face and in particular, the ways in which they are relegated to a subordinate role when compared to white women and Black men. She says, "problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism, classism, and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 58).

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in the 1970s through the work of Bell (1980), Freeman (1978), and Delgado (1995) as a reaction to the slow moving progress since the civil rights movement (DeCuir-Gunby & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billing, 1998).

It examines the existence of race and racism in dominant culture and uncovers the systemic oppression that is ever present in American life and deeply ingrained in our society (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Solórzano (1998) identifies five elements that describe the use of CRT in educational research: a) the importance of transdisciplinary approaches; b) an emphasis on experiential knowledge; c) a challenge to dominant ideologies; d) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination; and e) a commitment to social justice.

Critical Race Theory is a theoretical framework that is useful in taking a critical look at the experience of individuals within a research study. It considers forms of discrimination such as racial isolation for BIPOC people in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano et al., 2000). It allows issues of race and racism to be front and present in a study while challenging reigning ideologies and uplifting the experiences of the participants (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Therefore, my research study focuses on uncovering the stories of Black women leaders in predominantly white institutions of higher education. The elevating the personal experiences of the study participants is of the utmost importance and protecting them requires resisting hegemonic ideologies that privilege objectivity for the sake of preserving this experiential knowledge. Acknowledging oppression, racism, and sexism in the experiences of the study participants reinforces the shared stories further validating the importance of race and gender as central to this study. CRT allows researchers to challenge hegemonic norms and dominant ideologies by situating Black women leaders as holding wisdom and producing valuable knowledge that calls out and challenges oppression. Using a narrative inquiry advances the CRT framework in the study and

resists any perspective that devalues and ignores untraditional and culturally informed research methods.

Black Feminism

Introduced by Hill-Collins (1989, 1998, 2000), Black feminism decenters white, male-dominated power and centers the voices and experiences of Black women. It asserts that Black women have a "self-defined" perspective and have the ability to assert this perspective as a valid truth. As Black feminism embraces social justice and Black consciousness, it pushes toward the deconstruction of oppressive systems.

In 1993, Cleage defined Black feminism as "the belief that women are full human beings capable of participation and leadership in the full range of human activities—intellectual, political, social, sexual, spiritual, [and] economic" (p. 28). Hill-Collins (2000) highlighted issues specific to Black women and distinguished Black feminism from traditional ideas of feminism. Hill-Collins achieved this by uplifting the long history of Black women focusing their feminist actions on the well-being of Black people while contending with oppression due to racism and sexism (Hill-Collins, 2000).

Hill-Collins (2000) highlights how the historical failure of the feminist movement to fully include Black women and their issues in their agenda was a catalyst that helped to grow the Black feminism. As feminism was entrenched in racism and only concerned itself with the issues impacting middle-class white women, Black women directed their efforts to highlight the issues they faced into a new movement.

As Black women were excluded from the feminist movement, corresponding feminist theory cannot be widely applied to Black women. hooks (1989), considering the

fact that western theories are often steeped in racism and sexism, states that Black feminism takes a different position and challenges these systems and ways of knowing.

Hill-Collins (2000) explained that Black feminism is concerned with "reclaiming Black women's ideas and discovering, reinterpreting, and, in many cases, analyzing for the first time the works of individual U.S. Black women thinkers" (p. 407). Reclaiming these ideas and knowledge means new epistemological rules can be developed challenging current intellectual discourse. This is critical as we shift to recognizing the contributions of Black women in discourse and positioning them as critical holders of knowledge.

Triple Burden

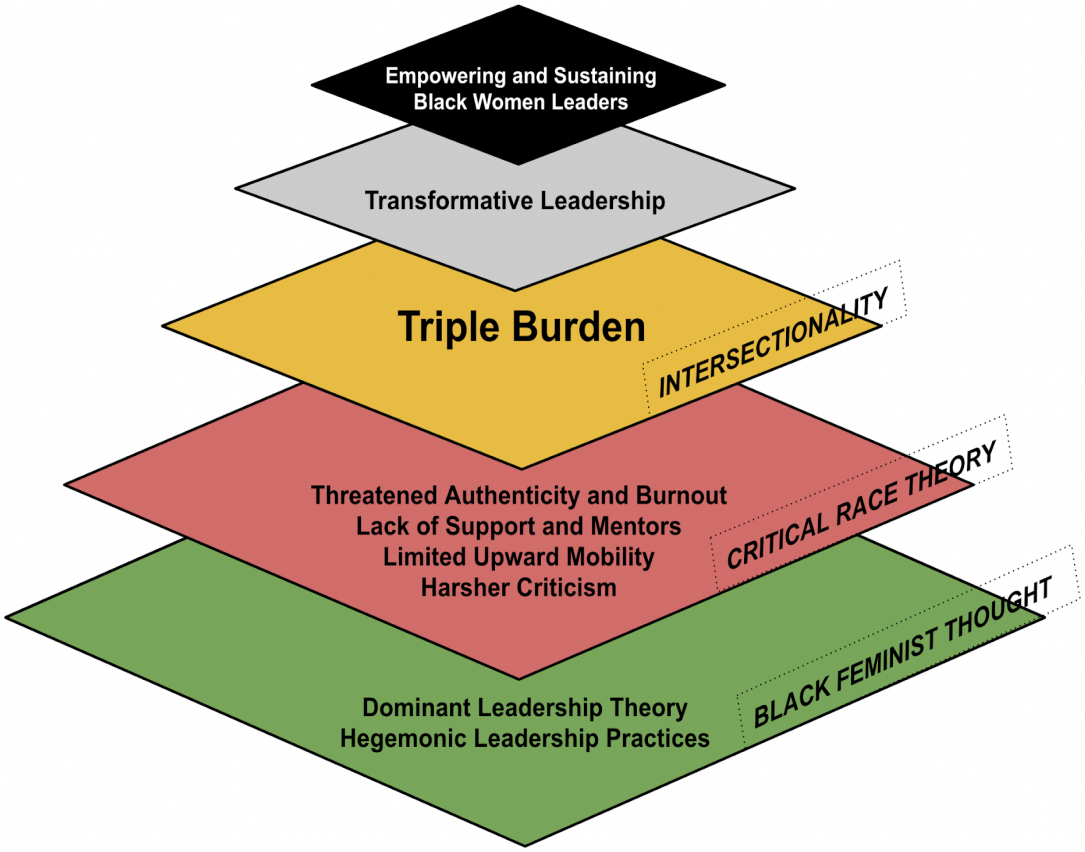
The terms "double jeopardy", "double barriers" (Beale, 1970) and "double whammy" have been used in the literature to describe the intersectionality of race and gender in the workplace and particularly the discrimination that Black women face when entering the workplace (Carter et al., 1987; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Harvard, 1986; Mosley, 1980). Black women leaders face unique challenges in their personal lives where they not only face discrimination and outright racism, but they bear the burden for their children and families as well. These challenges carryover into the workplace where they must navigate additional discrimination. Thus, I describe the plight of Black women leaders as facing a "Triple Burden" where the unique challenges they face in their personal lives carry over into the workplace where there is additionally negative impact due to both gender and race. This Triple Burden is a phenomenon that describes the state of being for Black women leaders as they navigate their lives within the workplace. This state of being is a persistent logistical and emotional weight and distraction.

Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework, developed for this dissertation, displays the interplay of factors that impact the ability to empower and sustain Black women leaders in the workplace. At the base is the hegemonic dominant leadership theory and practices that exclude Black women's voices. The overlap of gender and race have produced negative outcomes for Black women in the workplace including lack of support and mentors, limited upward mobility and harsher criticisms. The resulting effect is a Triple Burden that Black women experience where they bear the weight of these dynamics as well as the added pressures from their lives external to the workplace impacted by their positionality as a Black woman. Intersectionality, Critical Race Theory, and Black Feminism form the backdrop for understanding the interaction of these factors.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework. The components and layers that build and influence empowering and sustaining Black Women leaders



CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

As a Black woman with my own experiences as a leader in a PWI and as a doctoral student in educational leadership and policy, I have been disturbed by the lack of Black women in leadership roles in the academy. My observation has been that Black women are underrepresented in positions of authority; however, this is not always an issue of recruitment. The academy appears to be a revolving door for Black women. While they may find their way into leadership positions, retention has sometimes eluded them. My own experience struggling to maintain within these environments as a Black woman informed my understanding of the potential factors at play impacting the ability for Black women leaders to survive and thrive. This phenomenon, as well as the pervasiveness of white supremacy culture, sparked my interest in examining the factors and forces impacting the sustainability and empowerment of Black women leaders in PWIs.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative study was to report the stories of Black women's experiences as leaders in predominantly white institutions of higher education and to shed light on the factors that impact their empowerment and sustainability. For this study, I investigated:

1. What are the experiences of Black women leaders in predominantly white institutions of higher education?
2. What can we learn from the experiences of Black women leaders to create more sustainable and empowering environments within predominantly white institutions of higher education?

Critical Theoretical Framework

Considering that the participants in this study are members of two marginalized groups, women and Black people, I considered more deeply this intersection as I applied Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black feminism in the research process. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) applied CRT to educational research because it created a space to welcome marginalized voices into research studies. I found it useful to consider the tenets of CRT when contemplating the experiences of Black women. Black women hold truths that are often quite different from Black men and other people of color as well from white women. At the same time, Black women are not a monolith and so it is important to maintain care when examining their stories so not to clump them together too quickly.

Counter-storytelling

One tenet of critical race theory, counter-storytelling, is a useful way of "exposing and critiquing normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes" (DeCuir-Gunby & Dixson, 2004, p, 27). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) describe story-telling as a way to uplift stories of people whose experiences are often untold. They challenge power and privilege in discourse and minimize dominant voices while creating space to uplift marginalized voices (DeCuir-Gunby & Dixson, 2004). In this study, I allowed my participants to impart their counter-stories to the dominant reality humanizing their lived experiences.

Research Design

I employed narrative inquiry for this study in order to uplift the distinct experiences of Black women leaders as told by themselves to provide a new opportunity for meaning making. A narrative inquiry seeks to uncover how study participants make sense of their experiences and provides an opportunity to hear the stories "from the

viewpoint of the participants" (Roberts, 2004, p. 113). The first-hand knowledge of the feelings and interplays of the participants is possible through narrative inquiry and allowed the study to uncover the very personal perspectives of the study participants.

Narrative inquiry is the study of experiences told through stories and honors the lived experiences as a means of gaining knowledge and understanding (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 1998; Creswell & Poth, 2018). It goes beyond simply telling and hearing stories to examining the underlying assumptions that enlighten us. Narratives also function as a counter to the elite structure that exists in scholarly discourse by offering an opportunity for underrepresented groups to "participate in knowledge construction in the academy" (Canagarajah, 1996, p. 327). As people make sense of their lives according to the stories available to them, a narrative inquiry in this study not only uncovers the unique and oftentimes ignored stories of Black women leaders but helps us to consider new realities that can shape our perspectives.

Transformative Research Paradigm

The transformative paradigm is a framework that engages researchers in diverse communities where their work centers social justice (Mertens, 2009). It highlights the tensions present when there are unequal power dynamics within a research context (Greene, 2008). The transformative research paradigm views knowledge as a social construction shaped by individual experiences and seeks to empower mutual recognition of this power. It also allows the parties involved to define both their issues and solutions (Greene, 2008). This study provides opportunities for co-creation between me as the researcher and the study participants and empowers participants to co-create knowledge including the research methods process.

Site and Participant Selection

This study targeted participants who self-identify a Black women and work at various predominantly white institutions of higher education (PWIs) in the northeast region of the United States. Participants for this narrative study were purposefully chosen due to their positioning as senior level Black women leaders who hold roles of authority such as Vice President's, Deans, Directors, or Department Chairs. I accessed these participants using a purposeful sampling technique (Miles et al., 2014). I worked with colleagues within these institutions to access those individuals who could be potential participants and contacted participants by email to invite them to participate in this study.

Study Participants

Five Black women were selected and agreed to participate in this study. Centering this study on the stories of just five subjects allowed me to focus my attention more deeply on their stories and uncover a broader range of experiences. The names used in this study are pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

Adorah

Adorah is an Associate Dean for Administration at a small college where she worked for the past four years. Prior to this position, she served as a Dean, Department Chair, and faculty at a Historically Black College. Adorah holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from a predominantly white institution. She is married and has one daughter who recently graduated from college.

Agnes

Agnes holds a master's degree and a law degree and is a former Department Chair and a tenured faculty member at a small college. She has served in academia for over 20

years. Prior to this position, she worked in corporate environments. Agnes is a single parent with a high school aged child and spends much of her time serving in a variety of community service capacities including an executive leadership role in a national organization.

Betty

With over two decades of experience in higher education, Betty currently holds a position as a Dean of Admissions. She holds a master's degree in higher education from a top Ivy league institution and has worked at six PWIs throughout the course of her career. Betty is married and has one school aged daughter. She enjoys traveling, reading BIPOC authors and attending music festivals.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a dynamic leader with over twenty years of experience at the intersection of higher education administration and people management. Her expertise in higher education reaches across areas to include student affairs, advancement, academic affairs, and administrative leadership within a President's office. She holds a master's degree in higher education and student affairs, is married, and has two dogs.

StarAnn

StarAnn is an accomplished professional who, among her various institutional responsibilities, leads diversity, professional development, and engagement activities for her division. She holds a master's degree in higher education and student affairs and offers her expertise as a lecturer within her current institution's higher education and student affairs program. StarAnn is actively engaged in her community and serves as a

Board Trustee for another PWI. She is married and her spouse is a senior level leader at her PWI.

Data Collection

According to Glesne (2011), it is important to detail descriptions of "people, places, events, activities, and conversations," as well as "ideas, reflections, hunches, and notes about patterns that seem to be emerging" (p. 71). Over the course of this study, I interviewed each participant three times. I conducted three semi-structured interviews with each study participant regarding their experiences as a Black women leader in PWIs. For each participant, I conducted an initial interview following a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A). I then followed up with a second interview to revisit the questions asked in the initial interview and aligned each interview by asking additional questions that may have come out through the interviews for consistency (Glesne, 1999).

The semi-structured questions served as a guide in the interview and allowed interviewees to provide feedback on the scope of the questions. Interviewees also had the opportunity to elaborate on any questions to expand the knowledge they shared. Allowing room in the interview process for participants to elaborate on questions and freely formulate new ideas allowed for study participant engagement in co-construction of knowledge. This directly encouraged the sharing of power in the collection of research data.

Finally, I conducted a third interview in order to member check the data collected, review the findings and discussion (Glesne, 1999). In advance of the third interview, I provided a version of chapter five as a shared google doc with full editing rights to each

study participant, highlighting where their names emerged throughout the story. Participants were invited to make comments and suggest edits on this document. During the third interview, I reviewed chapter five and collaborated with study participants to make any edits to the write up and discussion. This was done to ensure the participants had an opportunity to deeply understand the content and analysis of the content, to vouch for the content, and to emphasize, elaborate, or discard any content they felt did not accurately reflect their stories. Four of the five study participants met with me to conduct a third interview; however, Betty was not available to meet and so she decided to provide her feedback on chapter five without meeting to discuss.

Interviews lasted for approximately one to one and a half hours and were audio recorded. According to Glesne (2006), interviews allow a process for listening to respondents to learn directly from them about their experiences. As this study seeks to uplift the unique voices and stories of Black women leaders, semi-structured interviews were an appropriate method for collecting data. At the start of the interviews, I assigned participants a pseudonym and referred to them by this pseudonym throughout the interview to help ensure that personal identifiers were not revealed during the recording, analysis, and write-up of findings. I also redacted any additional identifiers that I felt compromised the ability to maintain confidentiality in this study.

After conducting the first and second interviews, I prepared a memo to myself about the data collected. Miles et al. (2014) explains that writing memos helps to track idea development and uncover broad themes. I also drafted memos to capture my reflections on the interview experience to highlight the ideas, questions and interesting items that arise during the interview. I captured salient points from each interview and

any thoughts that I had about the process that I felt might influence how I would proceed. I also share these notes and the entire individual participant data file with each study participant so that they had access to all data and notes pertaining to my interviews with them. Some study participants weighed in on the data in the files including the interview transcripts and this feedback directly impacted the data that was included in the study findings. This sharing of information was an additional way I was able to create balance in the power dynamics between myself as the researcher and the study participants.

Data Analysis

After conducting the initial two interviews with participants, I managed the data by transcribing all of the interviews and importing them into NVivo 12, the data management software used in this study. This first step in the data analysis process is what Creswell (2013) called the "first loop in the spiral" (p. 182). Once the cleaned data were imported into NVivo, I read it over to gain a general sense of the contents. Then, I reread the data over multiple times, capturing notes to myself on things that I noticed or had questions about. Creswell and Poth (2018) indicate that this method of analysis helps the researcher to build a sense of the data without getting bogged down with the coding process. This process of reading over the transcripts multiple times engrosses the researcher in the details to gain a broader sense of the information (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I then created codes from my review of literature (a-priori codes) (Miles et al., 2014) and codes that emerged from the data (in-vivo) (Creswell, 2013). I made a list of these codes along with a description of their meanings using what Miles et al. (2014) referred to as descriptive coding. The process summarizes the data using short words or

phrases. After creating the a-priori and in-vivo codes, I went back over the data and officially assigned codes to the ideas that arose. After transcribing the data, reviewing the coded data and consulting my notes in the margins, I again reviewed specifically to ensure that I coded the data appropriately and to look for any "drifting" in my coding process. I then summarized my initial thoughts in a second memo to myself.

After a thorough review of the coded data, I clustered the codes around ideas and categories that emerge and classified them into themes. This method of describing and classifying codes into themes in a narrative inquiry study outlines the patterns across the participant's objective experiences and records the stories in a chronology (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Clustering the codes around themes allowed me to make sense of the findings and refine the themes further into sub-themes.

I interpreted and made sense of these findings, described the themes and categories, compared the data, and related all of the aforementioned to the conceptual framework where possible. This was done to locate revelations within the stories, identify circumstances that form the data, and parse the larger meaning of the story (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Throughout the entire process, I reviewed, reexamined, and repeated these steps, which allowed me to refine the themes further.

In an effort to maintain participant voice throughout the process, I created checkpoints for participants to review the raw data, coded data, and interpretation of the coded data. This offered multiple opportunities for the study participants to co-construct the knowledge that emerged from the study.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability as the four areas that can increase trustworthiness of a qualitative research study. They further describe reflexivity as an important part of ensuring the transparency and quality of qualitative research. I maintained reflexivity through ongoing journaling and reflective writing post interviews with the resolve to examine my personal biases and assumptions. The strategies I used to establish credibility included conducting two initial interviews with each participant, and then a third interview to member-check and establish internal validity.

Triangulation is the collection of information from various sources used to determine the validity of data (Glesne, 1999). For this study, triangulation was facilitated by conducting in-person interviews and remote interviews via video conferencing with the participants. Most importantly, the study participants' own data and process checking throughout provided the most important input on the appropriate sources of data collection. Conducting member checks is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility and involves sharing interview transcripts and the findings with the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is done to ensure accuracy of their stories as well as to solicit feedback on the preliminary findings of the study (Glesne, 1999).

To ensure accuracy and completeness of these data, member checking was conducted after each interview and after writing the findings. At the completion of the initial interviews, I emailed a copy of the transcript to the participants requesting they review the document to confirm that I have correctly documented their responses. Additionally, I shared a copy of the findings chapter with all study participants and met with them to review the chapter, get their reactions, and collaboratively make any necessary edits.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the outcomes of a qualitative research study can be applied to other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An important way to establish transferability in a research study is to detail the backdrop, the participants, and the concepts of a qualitative study in rich detail. According to Denzin (1989), "thick descriptions are deep, dense, detailed accounts…Thin descriptions, by contrast, lack detail, and simply report facts" (p. 83). The purpose of a thick description is that it generates a feeling in readers "that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). I established transferability in this study by detailing the stories of the study participants with depth and breadth and encouraged study participants to provide rich details in the interview process.

Dependability and confirmability refer to the ability for research study to track the process from start to finish so that the trail to knowledge is reliable and accurate. Documenting the research steps from start and throughout ensures that, in the end, the outcomes are derived from the data and backed by the literature. I established dependability by keeping a clear audit trail of my process and encouraged confirmability by grounding my process in the literature with frequent checks by the study participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Limitations

This study has potential limitations. The data were based on the individual personal accounts of the study participants. In particular, this study focused on the lived experiences of five Black women leaders in PWIs located in the northeast region of the United States and set out to uncover the specific stories as they navigate leadership in

these institutions. While the stories of these Black women leaders are profound and may hold similarities to the stories of Black women leaders across the country, they should not automatically be generalized to a larger population.

It would be important to study more Black women in other regions of the United States, such as the more overtly racist deep south because regional context would likely impact study findings. It would also be important to investigate the experiences of Black women leaders in other industries outside of higher education to glean similarities and differences in their stories.

Researcher Identity

The researcher in a qualitative research project is the instrument for data collection and interpretation (Creswell, 2002). As a result, it is crucial that I identify myself within the study to discuss the lens through which I made observations and related to participants (Creswell, 2013). I am an educated, Black, woman who has felt the challenges of advancing as a leader in professional spaces. I recently worked as a leader at a PWI and have my own experiences as a Black woman with a collective eight years in higher education.

I approached this work with my own biases and assumptions about what the participants may share and name this to bring awareness and counter any influence I may have over the research. I maintained a self-reflexive journal as a way to mitigate these potential influences and prevent my own expectations from permeating the study. I relied on my methodologist to support the cross checking efforts to ensure that the findings as I write them are reflective of the study data and not my own thoughts, opinions, or assumptions.

Black women infrequently represent authority over their own stories in the academy. This study uplifts and centers the voices of Black women by interweaving the principles of the Transformative Research paradigm throughout the study from the data collection process through to the analysis of the findings. In doing this, I capitalized on my own positionality as a Black woman to enhance knowledge in this process. Winkle-Wagner (2010) describes that in essence, "one's culture can act as [currency] in social, settings where one can exchange cultural knowledge skills, abilities, norms, references, or mannerisms for social rewards such as acceptance, recognition, inclusion, or even social mobility" (p. 5). Applying this perspective, I assert that my lens in this particular study is capital.

CHAPTER 4: CONTEXT

In order to provide a comprehensive picture of the environment within which this study is situated, this chapter traces the social and cultural context to shed light on the factors impacting this research. As I situate myself in this research study as an equal participant to the study participants, I wanted to also demonstrate the trajectory of my life over the span of this study, especially as a Black woman impacted by global and national events.

This chapter first discusses the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) global pandemic providing an understanding of the disease which rocked the entire world in the middle of this research study. Next, I highlight the increase in protests due to racial violence against Black people that was ignited after the murder of George Floyd by police on May 25, 2020. I then discuss the ways the COVID-19 global health pandemic and the attempt to reckon with racial violence overlap, shedding light on the significant disparities experienced by Black people. I discuss these disparities by addressing economic, and health disparities and the impact of the political environment. I delve into my personal experience as a Black woman leader in this time, addressing factors including my role as a mother and as a Black woman leader within a PWI. Finally, I address my experience with the Triple Burden, and my journey to regain my grounding despite the challenges.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Global Pandemic

The coronavirus disease, an infectious disease spread from person to person through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose from coughing or sneezing causing respiratory illness, was first identified in December 2019 in China. By January 30, 2020,

with 7818 cases across 19 countries, the World Health Organization declared a public health emergency and then a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 when Italy, Iran, South Korea and Japan all reported rapidly growing cases (World Health Organization, 2020). Eventually, on March 26, 2020, the United States led the world with the highest number of cases.

Throughout the spring and summer, the United States remained mostly locked down and as the country grappled with the severity of cases and deaths. Many restrictions were put in place including lockdowns, the bans on large gatherings, stay-at-home-orders, and travel restrictions. Eventually states began to relax restrictions and another rise in infections ensued. Additionally, many schools remained closed while some went to hybrid learning models. By November 2020, there were more than 13,200,000 confirmed cases and 266,000 deaths in the U.S., the most of any country (World Health Organization, 2020).

Reckoning with Racial Violence in 2020

On May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, a police officer knelt on the back of the neck of George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man for 9 minutes, which ended his life. Floyd's murder came on the heels of countless others at the hands of police include Breonna Taylor who was asleep at home when police raided her home and shot her, Atatiana Jefferson who was at home when police responded to a call by her neighbor reporting her front door was open and shot her through a window in front of family members, Stephon Clark who was standing in his grandmothers back yard holding a mobile phone, Botham Jean who was sitting on his sofa eating ice cream when his neighbor, an off duty officer, entered his apartment confused and thinking it was hers and

shot him, Philando Castile, who was pulled over for a traffic stop, Alton Sterling who was selling CD's and DVD's and was confronted by officers outside a shop before being tased, pinned to the ground, shot and then repeatedly badgered with profanities while his body lay dying, Freddie Gray who has been arrested then shackled and improperly restrained in a police van causing his body to sustain a nearly severed spine killing him, Eric Garner who was placed in a chokehold for allegedly selling loose cigarettes and murdered as he pleaded saying "I can't breathe" 11 times, Tanisha Anderson who was handcuffed, slammed to the ground by police and left without medical attention for over 20 minutes after her family called for help because she was experiencing a mental health crisis, and 11 year old Tamir Rice, murdered while playing with a toy gun in a park.

The murder of George Floyd sparked protests across the globe and ignited a national movement that placed the atrocities of racial violence against Black people on a national platform. In the United States, people began to reckon with racism in policing and in communities. The routine deaths of innocent Black people in the United States became a reality that was finally shocking and disturbing to a larger portion of the population, including more white people. It became clear that it is not safe for Black people to simply exist in this country not only because of the threat of racial violence but also because of the heinous disparities that exist pertaining to COVID-19 death rates.

COVID-19, Racial Violence, and Black People

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated health disparities accompanied by the escalation of racial violence and discrimination against BIPOC people, created a public health emergency for Black people. In the United States, the mental health and general well-being of Black people has been gravely impacted by these

occurrences happening simultaneously. Black people grappling with the realities of both COVID-19 and racial violence are reconciling the fact that they are just as likely to die from police brutality as they are to die from contracting the coronavirus. As protests broke out across the country, many people had the awareness that they could be risking exposure to the disease in order to come together with their communities to speak out about the crisis of racial violence at the hands of police. Systemic racism became as big an issue as police violence and Black people who are bearing the brunt of the public health emergency recognize the interconnectedness of the crises. Black people recognize that the inequalities they continue to face in this country are playing out both in the violence they are experiencing due to racism as well as the disproportionately higher rates that Black people are suffering from COVID-19.

Economic Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified systemic economic racism against Black people and has highlighted the enduring racial disparities due to centuries of institutional and structural oppression towards Black people. Black people are disproportionately negatively impacted financially by COVID-19 because Black people not only lag significantly behind white people with regards to average income and wealth (Bhutta et al., 2020; Snowden & Graaf, 2021) but the wage gap between Black and white workers is worsening as well (Gould, 2020). Additionally, with regards to wage earnings, Black women are penalized twice and experience a doubled negative impact on their wages due to their race and gender (Gould, 2020). Systemic economic disadvantage established and maintained by those with political and economic power can be traced back to redlining, a practice in which banks prevented Black people from amassing wealth through real estate

by labeling the neighborhoods in which they lived high risk and then denying them loans to purchase homes. This practice directly caused the persistent wealth gaps that exist today between Black and white people as well as a plethora of other structural inequities such as less funding for public education which perpetuates the school-to-prison pipeline and increased incarceration rates for Black people.

The 2019 Federal Reserve Board Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF) produced staggering data on the changes in the financial outlook for families in the United States between 2016 and 2019 (Bhutta et al., 2020). The findings demonstrate that a significant and persistent wealth gap exists across racial and ethnic groups, and especially between Black and white people. In particular, the survey data reveals that white families have eight times the amount of wealth of a typical Black family (Bhutta et al., 2020).

There is a long history of occupational segregation that produces differences in the access Black and white people have to the labor market and disproportionately relegates Black people to lower paying front line positions. Today, BIPOC people hold more jobs classified as essential such as store associates, public transit workers, healthcare practitioners, building and grounds cleaners and personal care attendants (Gemelas et al., 2021). All of these positions have had concerns about worker safety and protection being on the front lines interacting with the general public during the COVID-19 global health pandemic (Hawkins, 2020). Unfortunately, the need to maintain critical income means that Black workers are more likely to remain in these positions despite the risks. Further, without higher wealth Black people are less likely to make the choice to leave their jobs to protect their health.

The 2019 Federal Reserve Board Survey of Consumer Finances data uncovered that white people hold over four times the liquid assets that could be accessed in an emergency compared to Black people (Bhutta et al., 2020). Specifically, white people on average have about $8,000 available compared to Black people who only have an average of $1,500 in liquid assets (Bhutta et al., 2020). During the COVID-19 global health pandemic, these liquid assets mean that many white families faced with job loss have a way to weather the economic downturn, are less likely to fall behind on bills, and are better able to stay afloat. Unfortunately, Black people did not benefit from generational wealth at the same rate as white people, and so are more likely to have a harder time navigating these challenges with such minimal liquid assets.

Health Impact

Black people are dying from COVID-19 at higher rates than white people due to deep and lasting health disparities caused by the systemic and structural inequities plaguing our society (Marrett, 2021). The cumulative impact of denying Black people equitable access to not only health care but other social determinants of health such as education, housing, employment, and justice is a vast range of health risks and outcomes (Centers for Disease Control, 2020; Snowden & Graaf, 2021). While it is true that these preexisting conditions are factors that have increased the chances of death in COVID-19 cases, in particular, we know that Black people are more likely to have asthma, diabetes, and hypertension than white people and are less likely to have health insurance to address these conditions and access treatment for COVID-19 (Wakeel & Njoku, 2021). The existence of these pre-existing conditions in Black people directly correlate to the systemic oppression and they persist because systemic racial disparities remain in the

United States such as poor living conditions, or the higher rate of apartment dwelling among Black people making the opportunity to come in contact with COVID-19 greater.

For many Black people, they have lost family or friends due to the coronavirus. Some Black patients did not get tested due to a reluctance to see a doctor or a lack of availability of testing (Marrett, 2021). There is a history of Black people not having their medical concerns taken seriously or worse, like with the AIDS epidemic of the 90's, not having access to healthcare and medicine to combat the disease (Laurencin, 2021). Additionally, there is a fear of stigmatization as has historically been an issue in which Black people with a disease are less likely to access resources as quickly as white communities. Black people are more impacted as a whole because disparities in health have persisted for decades due to systemic oppression.

The public health emergency due to both the COVID-19 global health pandemic and racial violence is taking a heavy psychological toll on Black people. Racism alone can ignite depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and substance abuse disorders and can lead to the development of stress related diseases such as cardiovascular and other physical diseases (Paradies et al., 2015). Coupled with the global health pandemic, Black people are experiencing a crisis that has dire health consequences.

Political Environment

In the midst of the overlapping crisis of racial violence and the COVID-19 global pandemic, there has been a multitude of misinformation and dangerous rhetoric from the office of the President of the United States which has exacerbated the issues. Not only has misinformation amplified by the 45th President and other political elite led to increased racism and discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities, including Black

people, they have had huge health consequences. In particular, many people believe that there was a concerted effort by the 45th President's administration to conceal early information about the public health emergency on the horizon which many feel directly impacted the exponential growth of COVID-19 in the United States. Additionally, the 45th President's administration has actively worked to roll back protections that provided significant protections for Black Americans such as eliminating the Affordable Care Act, an act that would deny health coverage to many Black people.

My Experience as a Black Woman During the Public Health Crisis

Prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, my life was already impossibly overwhelming and busy as a mother, wife, professional, doctoral student and very active member of my community. My days were consistently filled with routine schedules, around drop off and pick up from school, meetings, classes and home life. I was the epitome of the "strong Black woman" trope that is often talked about. While I was thriving for the most part, I do recognize that there was an unhealthy balance happening where I would take on more and more without stopping to consider my physical, mental, and emotional well-being. In early March as I navigated a major family transition, stay at home orders were announced, calls to shut down non-essential establishments, and schools went to a fully remote format. The COVID-19 global pandemic was hitting hard, and I was grappling with the new reality.

Being a Black Mother During the Public Health Crisis

Between March and June 2020, I was navigating working from my home office while simultaneously homeschooling my 10 year old son who is in fifth grade and my 13 year old daughter who is in eighth grade. While schools were making drastic moves to

pivot into remote learning, families were trying to figure out how to navigate this new reality. At the onset of remote learning, there was no plan so while school districts worked to put together a plan, families including ours scoured the internet for remote learning resources and social media was inundated with every conceivable idea for how to manage homeschooling routines and curriculums. I worked tirelessly to keep up with the barrage of information, feeling inadequate and failing consistently, until I finally gave up. Soon the schools came up with plans and our family settled into a bit of a routine, discombobulated as it was. As the kids navigated traveling between two households, and their father and I worked to collaborate on best practices for this new reality, everyone struggled and rejected much of the plans. Just as we got into enough of a stable rhythm, we were rocked by the death of George Floyd. Like Black people across the country, it was the occurrence that sent us spiraling into a dark and heavy place.

The emotional toll of the death murder of George Floyd was immense for all of us but especially for my daughter. Navigating remote learning as an extrovert was already tortuous but this made it essentially impossible. Following the curriculum outlined by her teachers quickly came to a halt as we worked every day to manage our mental health and well-being. It was also clear that the schools were not adequately addressing the issue of racial violence and so the curriculum as outlined felt frivolous and out of touch for Black students. My daughter focused her time on learning that helped her to address the issues she felt were pressing which led to her not completing schoolwork. She consistently felt this pressure and it all came to a head in June when her social studies teacher sent an email, blind copying students and their parents who had not satisfactorily completed the

final quarter of remote learning. At this point I decided it was time to step in to advocate for her, so I sent a message to her teachers. It read:

> Hi School Team,
>
> Thanks, Jane, for this email. I will talk to her to see what she can do but to be honest I'm not sure how much she will be able to accomplish.
>
> I just wanted to share that these past few weeks have been pretty difficult for my daughter. It's a scary world and she literally fears for her life. She is hurt and angered by racism she's seeing on social media, has nightmares about family dying, crys a lot, etc. The other evening riding in the car she heard loud noises coming from another vehicle and ducked down in her seat afraid something bad was going to happen to her. In the middle of the night, she is waking up and coming to sleep with me (something she never does).
>
> She's been extremely stressed and anxious because she desperately wants to do good in school yet can't wrap her head around schoolwork to get it done. She has expressed the pressures she's feeling from the teacher expecting her to do better because she is capable, and that hasn't helped. I have worked to counter these ideas with messages that it is ok not to get it all done and with straight A's. Quite honestly so much of the schoolwork feels frivolous at a time when I am fighting for her to just be ok. Completing schoolwork with a clear mind and without personally being impacted by the trauma of people like you dying in this country IS a privilege for some students.
>
> I am trying to support her whole self and well-being so that often is in conflict with the schoolwork because she is holding so much as a Black child. I'm sharing this all with you so that you have awareness of this for her and likely many other students who you may not have heard from. It was difficult for me to listen to the video outlining the document of work for the week because there are just so many other emotions impacting me. I can't imagine what it must be like for students where it doesn't appear there has been an opportunity to pause and reflect as a group and to uplift and support Black students. They are traumatized and Black families are in deep pain and really struggling.
>
> I just wanted to share this lens as you wrap up the year. Thank you for what you have been able to do in this incredibly difficult time and I hope you all remain healthy.
>
> Best,
> Nadia

While the response from her teachers was mostly positive, I sent a follow up email in response to the Principal of the school's message clarifying the grading policy. I wanted to advocate for the fact that my daughter had done more than enough to not only earn a passing mark but one that reflected she had actually exceeded the requirements. I wrote:

> Thank you, Jane and Laura, for your emails.
>
> I wanted to respond earlier but couldn't quite put into words what I was feeling until I just read Mary's email regarding fourth quarter grading. Here is the section I am referring to:
>
> *Q1-Q3 grades will be averaged as usual. Teachers will add points to the Q1-Q3 average as follows:*
> - ***Not yet making satisfactory progress:*** *average for Q1-Q3 remains as is.*
> - ***Making satisfactory progress:*** *Students showed growth that is consistent with previous quarters; teachers use discretion in leaving the average for Q1-Q3 as is, or "bumping" up to ⅓ letter grade (example: from B to B+).*
> - ***Making exceptional progress:*** *Students making exceptional effort and growth relative to previous quarters; teachers use discretion adding up to 1 letter grade (example: from B to A).*
>
> I was struck by your last comment Jane that you supported whatever decision we made around completing her schoolwork. She actually has done plenty of work that is not reflected back to you because it isn't part of your curriculums. However, there are many ways in which she has exceeded my expectations and has done exceptionally well with regards to culturally relevant and timely learning. To name a few, she has:
> 1. Engaged in the social justice group and had discussions around riot, tear gas, and general feelings,
> 2. Called out racism on social media platforms and has engaged in dialogue around learning,
> 3. Started an Instagram page called "our young voices" to talk about social justice, Black lives matter etc.,
> 4. Written many pieces including a very powerful poem to help process and journal her feelings,
> 5. Asked me for access to books about Black history which I provided her with a series (see photo attached), and she has been sifting through for the past couple of months, and
> 6. Begun a project with my close friend around learning about her rights including Miranda rights and free speech.

> I'm not sure how many other folks can say that they have engaged in this level of learning around these issues, but she has and has been committed to it. It has been her way to navigate and process this really difficult time.
>
> I believe that she has done exceptionally well and should be rewarded academically for it. That is equity and that is justice.
>
> Thank you for your consideration.
>
> Nadia

This interaction highlights the constant need for Black mothers to be deeply involved in the lives of their school aged children to be able to identify and address issues of inequity and harm. This is a typical burden to receive equity and justice for our Black children. This work is exhausting and serves as free education to the teachers and administrators. I was asked if it was alright for my message to be shared with the school district in order to enhance learning around issues of equity. While my daughter's final quarter grade was improved through this effort, the reality is that there are other Black students on that email whose parents were not able to advocate for them. This is a systemic problem plaguing Black families and in particular Black mothers.

While I was doing this level of advocating for my daughter, I was also managing conversations around my son's progress as well. His team of teachers and educators met regularly to ensure that his individualized educational plan would remain intact through the remote learning environment. It was a very challenging thing to manage with overlapping goals and priorities, so I had to remain diligent and on top of it every day. There were times I had to push back on the learning plan and request additional support or a review of the plan. There were also times when we were operating without a plan since it took longer for the school district to determine how to handle individual learning

plans and make decisions around how learning would be delivered. Like all of us, he did the best he could and pivoted or disconnected from the work when necessary to maintain his well-being.

Being a Black Women Leader in a PWI during the Public Health Crisis

Navigating the public health crisis meant that I was required to balance being a mother supporting children through homeschooling while simultaneously performing well under new extreme pressures at work. As a professional responsible for equity initiatives at a PWI, my new reality at work at the onset of the global health pandemic was frantic. I was working with a team to navigate the swift departure from campus for students, with particular leadership around scenarios involving equitable solutions for students of concern. The work carried a significantly high burden of emotional labor that only intensified when George Floyd was murdered, and the country began to reckon with racial violence.

As the institution grappled with how to best support the entire campus community, it was also experiencing a major transition of leadership with the appointment of a new college President. The presidential transition was one that completely rocked my stability at work and has had lasting impact on my experience as a Black woman leader working within a PWI. Although I was hopeful that this would be a promising time of innovation and great change as the new college president was a Black man for the first time in the history of the college, my experience instead was one of great disappointment in the institutional response to equity, diversity, inclusion, and racial justice work under the new leadership.

There were a number of leadership changes that occurred rapidly at the institution including the departure of my supervisor, the only queer, woman of color. During this time, I felt increasingly marginalized, invisible, and ignored as I watched the leadership shift almost entirely to white women and with no immediate priority to stabilize the institution's diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. It was not lost on me that while I was embarking on this particular dissertation work, uncovering the stories of Black women leaders in predominantly white institutions of higher education and considering the factors impacting sustainability and empowerment, I myself was living an existence as a Black women leader at a PWI experiencing a drastic shift in my work life where I was not empowered at all and ultimately forced into such an unsustainable situation that I had decided to resign from my position.

My Triple Burden

Managing through the COVID-19 global health pandemic and racial violence it was clear that it was an impossible task and at times I felt like I was failing miserably. There were many tears associated with my newly separated status as well as my new reality of working remotely and supporting my children's remote learning from home. I continually worked to press forward reminding myself that I was blessed to still have a job in a world where many people had lost their jobs. I reminded myself that there were plenty of people who were worse off than me so I needed to pull it together. I eventually allowed myself to lean into the despair I felt and accepted that I didn't have to make excuses for how I was feeling and that it was ok to acknowledge the struggle I was experiencing.

I have learned that trying to maintain the strong Black women role was not only not necessary at times but also harmful to my overall health. My friends and family were always familiar with me displaying resilience and perseverance, and I was comfortable situating myself in that acknowledgement. The fact of the matter was that I was slowly coming apart and my emotional and mental wellness was suffering. The burdens of my personal life had carried over into my work life and vice versa and I was experiencing the Triple Burden with such intensity that it had taken a severe toll. The feeling was like I was losing my footing and was completely off balance and I knew I had to do something.

Regaining Ground

As I pondered what I would do to make a drastic pivot, I reached out to a close friend Macy and expressed my despair. Macy had a solution; we would make this the summer of camping. I had never been camping but immediately connected to the idea of grounding myself to the earth in this way. My summer consisted not only of camping adventures with Macy and our kids, but a multitude of other life-giving, soul filling adventures with my adventure partner Kwame. I connected with my cousin and fitness coach Cee and began a journey to improve my physical health, which turned out to boost my mental well-being as well and I relied heavily on my closest friends, Blanca and Viola, for deeply intimate reflection and conversation. This all allowed me the space to reset and recharge by tending to my spiritual, mental, and physical well-being while indulging in personal joys.

I began to push back on the notion that Black women had to be superbeings in order to demonstrate success. In fact, I began to resonate with the idea that rendering Black women as superbeings is an act that contributes to the invisibility and silencing of

Black women. It is an act that contributes to the unfair expectations and stereotype that Black women must endure agonizing grief and pain all in the name of resiliency and must do so without the benefit of recognition, care, support, or the advantage of patriarchy. Resisting this stereotype is an act of strength that requires courage to be vulnerable and set boundaries to create a healthy and balanced life. Doing this freed up space to focus on my personal well-being and self-care in the form of resetting relationships, exercising, hiking, traveling, and spending quality time with loved ones. It meant choosing myself before choosing others and allowing space to quiet my thoughts, get centered, listen to my mind, body and spirit and respond accordingly. The journey provided a new avenue for feeling empowered and sustained.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to uplift the stories of Black women's experiences as leaders in predominantly white institutions of higher education and to shed light on the factors that impact their empowerment and sustainability. Although the study participants provided unique accounts of their professional journeys, there were many commonalities within their stories.

In analyzing the interview data, three major categories of themes emerged from the data with sub themes stemming from those. The major themes were the burden of extra work, care and support, and the treatment of Black women. Appendix B provides a complete list of codes and the themes that evolved from them in a chart.

Burden of Additional Work

The participants all discussed the burden of taking on responsibilities outside of those described within their official job descriptions. This burden shows up when simply navigating a white space as a Black being and when they take on responsibilities for supporting Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color. Collectively, navigating dominant leadership norms, navigating bias and racism, navigating limited representation, visibility issues and usery, and educating white adult peers about issues describe the ways the study participants were impacted by being Black in a white space.

Blackness in a White Space

Simply existing as a Black person in a PWI created the burden of added work for the study participants. Agnes reflected on the fact that her presence alone on a predominantly white campus is added work saying,

> So, my very presence. The act of being, is often difficult for my peers to wrap their minds around. Particularly, not just the PWI, but the PWI in [STATE REDACTED], of all places. Right. So, there's always this kind of like, Hmm. What brought you here? As if you know it's a bit difficult to understand to wrap their minds around my being here and being in this position. So, you begin in that place where it's, it's a bit of a surprise. So, you often find yourself, explaining yourself, explaining your presence, explaining how you came to be where you are.

Agnes's reflection demonstrates how there is added work having to constantly justify her existence in a predominantly white institution. This is additional work that no doubt has an impact on well-being and self-worth constantly receiving messages that make one question their position.

Black women not only find themselves over explaining their existence on PWIs but also as they navigate their work outside of the campus environment. Betty explained that she felt this more as she has moved into a more senior role.

> I feel that certainly as I moved to more senior roles, and particularly as I've traveled, which has been so interesting. You know, they're largely white businessmen on the road, right. So, in my hotel, in a conference space, in restaurants when you're dining on your own. There's just a 'why are you getting on this flight or are you coming into this hotel or you're on the executive floor' or you're, you know, Hilton honors? Like, 'why are you, who are you?' The more senior you get, the fewer people there are, and people of color.

Here Betty articulates how even when she is working for her PWI on the road traveling, she is still within predominantly white environments, and specifically environments dominated by white men. Even as she moves around the country traveling for work, she is not able to escape the suspicion people feel about her existence in spaces as a Black woman.

The burden of being Black in a white space for the study participants was a burden that they realized was a greater issue for them than the burden of being a woman. When considering the challenges they faced, Elizabeth and StarAnn highlighted how the burden of being Black is greater than being a woman. Elizabeth reflected that there is sometimes a desire for her white women peers to relate as women but there does exist a gap in connecting when her Blackness is considered.

> And I think that then there are these awkward moments where people will say things about being women, and how hard that is and how much of a thing that is and like kind of making it all about being a woman, and relating to me in that way, but not really being able to acknowledge that maybe there's something else going on.

StarAnn reflects that considering both her race and her gender is something that is omnipresent and although they are both salient and at play, race still rises up as most prominent.

> It is a constant and never ending. The two components I think they happen to also be the identities that are most salient for me. If I had to pick an order, I would say my race first and then my gender, but I think in the lens in which I have come to

> understand myself and the world I think they both are at play, almost equally at times or jointly at times.

The idea that race rises up as a more prominent aspect of StarAnn's identity over gender is common here and in the literature. While Black women do feel the challenges of being a woman in the workplace, there is no escaping the greater impact of race.

Betty and Adorah both reflected on the lack of understanding by white peers because they aren't always speaking up about situations they encounter. Betty talks about how she doesn't keep a catalogue of all the times and doesn't always relay her experiences to colleagues so when they do have awareness of a situation they often react with shock and dismay.

> I don't have the catalog of all those things, but they're definitely experiences that you know I've shared, and even recently with people in the office and they're like, gosh, I had no idea that was happening. And I'm like yeah, because I don't live my life by that one experience, but you should know it ain't easy out there. I don't have the same flow that you have when you're traveling through an airport, I don't have the same flow that you have when you're going into a prestigious high school. I have to show three forms of ID, you show one. So cataloguing is, you know, it doesn't always happen.

Adorah realizes that it is a constant challenge deciding whether or not she should call out this lack of understanding. Especially when there is a lack of acknowledgement by leadership when experiencing disrespectful behavior by colleagues. She shared an example of how she has to question if this behavior is due to her race. She describes this burden of extra work as a minefield that Black administrators have to navigate.

> And the fact that there was no acknowledgement of the email by the Dean... These are the kinds of minefields, for lack of a better word, that I think Black administrators go through at PWIs. And, you know, it's that question of, do I acknowledge this situation, and if I do acknowledge it, how do I acknowledge it, and was this situation prompted by my race.

Here we see that it is not only about deciding whether or not to call out the particular occurrences, but rather Black women first have to decide if there is even an awareness. Lack of awareness means Black women have to first expend energy articulating why something is an issue even before having to manage any potential negative reaction to being called out.

Navigating dominant leadership norms. Navigating expectations for how Black women show up as leaders can also be a challenge as they navigate hegemonic leadership ideals. Adorah described how she must navigate this nuance not just as an administrator, but specifically as a faculty administrator.

> So, just in general, taking on the role as a Black woman in an administrative position has its own nuances, because there are assumptions and perceptions and dynamics that are present because of the faculty administrator relationship, and I have to navigate through that. But then to add another layer of the faculty administrator dynamic, when you are a Black female administrator is another aspect to that relationship. So, I am constantly moving in and out of those spaces and those intersectionalities. And on some days I feel as though I have navigated successfully, and then on other days I question. So, I think that as a Black female administrator at a predominantly white institution, I am constantly and

> intentionally making decisions to help me navigate through all those intersectionalities.

For Adorah, the nuances of deciding how to show up creates this undercurrent of additional work. She demonstrates how she does not have the luxury of navigating the PWI thoughtlessly, but instead must always be considering how her identity is impacting the work dynamics.

Agnes, Betty, and Elizabeth reflect on the intersection of race and gender and how this bumps up against normative leadership ideologies when they are regarded in the workplace. Agnes's experience was that the intersection of race and gender will always impact the way her leadership is received in her work environment.

> Regardless of whatever the decision is that's being made it's being made by a Black woman. And so, the perception of those decisions, even though the decision could be the exact same decision that would be made by a white colleague, because of the way people perceive you as a leader, it's viewed differently. Sometimes it's difficult to recognize it. Sometimes you have to struggle with knowing that it's the right decision, regardless of how it's going to be interpreted. You're the one making it because it's coming out of your mouth. That's what I mean, that it's an intersection of race, it's an intersection of gender.

Betty reflected that sometimes her methods for achieving the good of the students isn't in line with what her peers are used to because she brings a unique experience and approach as a Black woman.

> I see myself serving the good of the students and the will of the students in some ways, and sometimes that doesn't always jog with institutional priorities or

> sometimes that doesn't jive with individuals who have not had experience with a) a woman in a role of influence and b) a person of color and influence and not understanding what you bring to the table that might be different than just plugging in another administrator, who has come from a very similar path of other white administrators over time.

Pondering what it means to be a successful leader, Elizabeth realizes the burden dominant cultures influence on our perspective on success.

> It's so hard for me to separate out how much of that is about being a woman, how much of that is about being a Black woman, and how much of that is just being me. But I do think there's some of those pieces of how I define success in a certain way. And in some ways, buying into other people's largely white majority versions of success.

In each of these experiences, the intersection of race and gender was a factor that impacted how the participants moved around their work environments and how colleagues engaged with them. The extra work comes from having to constantly be cognizant of the different ways people are reacting to you and successfully mitigate these reactions.

Navigating bias and racism. The prevalence of bias and racism on campuses and the need to navigate it was true for study participants. Adorah reflected on how working within the predominantly white institution has required her to shift her style of communication. She talked about having to address a white male colleague during a faculty meeting where she felt there was a lack of respect for her as a Black woman.

> I have had to ... not necessarily demand, but command respect for me as a Black woman in this position, and this particular situation was particularly among white males. And I have found myself, for the first time in a long time in my career, having to be confrontational.

Adorah also described one of the few times in her five years at the PWI, where she did decide to call out what she called "dismissive, closed-minded, and disrespectful" behavior by white women colleagues that occurred during a meeting that she was facilitating.

> It was obvious to me that they engaged in a pre-meeting gaslighting strategy. Faculty member A said she would not have felt the need to interrupt me if I had sent out a meeting agenda in advance listing the order of the agenda items. And because of how she processes information, that I should have reversed the agenda order. Faculty member B said if she had known how formal and structured I expected the meeting to run that she would not have taken so much time with her story and for the future that she was giving me her permission to tell her to shut up if necessary. My response to the both of them was that my issue was how the two faculty members forcefully centered themselves which compelled me to exert a combative and aggressive stance. I shared with them my expectations of the tone of a meeting and reminded them that it should not be incumbent upon me to regulate my colleagues' behavior.

The blatant gaslighting to pivot blame back to her while centering themselves was present here and Adorah had to respond in a way that does not represent her typical demeanor. While Adorah was able to effectively address this occurrence, she did so by

significantly shifting her personality. This is an example of how hegemony in PWI disrupts the ability for Black women to show up naturally and be successful as leaders.

Agnes described having to deal with racism so blatant that it is shocking to consider that when it occurred in a meeting, it went completely unchecked.

> I went to the meeting, and we were working with a search firm. And we sit down. The search firm guy is presenting to us. I said, Can I see the job description? 'Well, you know it's on the website so you can look it up on the website'. All right. 10 minutes later, white male colleague comes in late to the meeting and sits down. So, he doesn't know what we talked about or discussed, as he was not there on time. And he says, 'can I see the job description'. The search committee guy takes the job description, out of his folder and passes it down the table, past me, to the guy who asked for it.

This example depicts the blatant racism that is pervasive in the workplace. The fact that this was allowed to happen, unrecognized and unchallenged by the room of white colleagues is precisely how racist and sexist norms are perpetuated in not only our institutions of higher education but our society. As no one called this behavior out, the burden of the work fell completely on the Black woman who was impacted by the occurrence.

Agnes also talked about how she not only frequently is tapped to serve on search committees to add diversity, but that she is often put in a position to have to probe the system on its process of including diverse candidates.

> Sometimes I sit back, and I wait to see who's going to ask the question about where we are searching, or the diversity of the candidate pool. I am never the first

> one who's going to jump out with it. I always sit back and I wait to see if anybody else is going to ask the question. Why does it have to be me? Well, you know sometimes somebody else will ask it, you know, and then the reaction invariably is 'oh yes, but you know we want to make sure that we get qualified candidates.' Okay, I can't count the number of times that that has been said or that that has been heard by me. As if diversity and quality are mutually exclusive.

In this example, Agnes must navigate the pervasive idea of needing to focus on qualified candidates over diverse candidates, a problematic and racist perspective on the readiness and qualification of BIPOC job candidates.

Bias and racism are something that Black women can experience working in a PWI even when traveling for work. One instance shared by Betty depicts the exhaustion of navigating the pervasiveness of bias and racism in a single conversation. In her story, she could hardly convince a white man that she, a Black woman, belonged.

> I got on the elevator and this gentleman got on and he saw my badge and he was like 'oh are you here for one of the pre-conference workshops' and I said yeah, I'm here for the directors workshop. He said, 'oh no you mean the middle managers workshop.' No, I'm a director and I'm going to go to that conference, and I know where I am. And he just kept saying, 'you must be mistaken or confused' No, I don't mean anything else but what I said. And he didn't back down. He was like okay I guess, but he kind of didn't believe me. My first thought was really? Would anyone fake this... what's the point.

At times the racism was experienced when Black women are considered to be less qualified than their white male counterparts with significantly less experience such as in

Betty's case where she often has to push back on perceptions of her ability compared to her peers.

> I have a colleague who has half the higher ed experience that I have. And often, people make a big deal out of the number of years that he has experience but my 25 plus years in higher ed, is sort of like, well, you know, you may not have encountered this yet. No, I have encountered that, and I've been doing this a lot longer and I've been in higher ed and aware of these things.

Bias and racism within PWIs are pervasive and creates a dynamic where Black women not only have to deal with oppressive treatment by white colleagues but also are completely exhausted by it.

At other times the racism can be experienced in the functions of the job and when trying to navigate this and express concerns it can be met with confusion or disbelief. Elizabeth shared an example of this navigating relationships with others assigned to her.

> People seem surprised when you sometimes would push back to say, I don't know if I'm the right person to solicit this person. They're like 'well what do you mean that's your territory.' I'm like, 'I think they're racist. Look at these emails, they've written.'

Elizabeth also reflected on the racist perceptions of Black and brown students and the way she navigates stereotypical assumptions about student support needs.

> It rubs right up against that white savior, complex for me. So, I think there were some places where I felt like it shouldn't be about like, oh, let's help all these poor brown kids. Well, you know almost any student could find themselves in this situation.

Here Elizabeth experiences an added burden by having to take on a sort of advocate role for both herself and other BIPOC students being served by her institution.

Navigating limited representation, visibility, and usery. Agnes talked about managing being taken advantage of and being positioned in such a way by the institution that makes them look good, as though the institution is doing the work to be diverse and inclusive.

> I will get noticed or put out there. Which is sometimes a good thing because you get opportunities. But if you had to count the number of times I've appeared in the magazine, you know, always with a picture of me smiling (laughing). You know, it's those kinds of things.

Agnes also describes how this can be a double edged sword.

> I mean it definitely is a double edged sword. You know you can get called upon and tapped to do so many different things. And you know why. I mean, part of you says, yeah, cause' I'm awesome. Right, you know you're awesome. But the reality is, sometimes it's not because you're awesome. It is simply because you're a minority. It's simply because you're Black. They need somebody and you happen to be that person. Because they don't have many others to choose from.

Agnes's examples demonstrate the way in which the institutions can often mask the fact that they have not completely committed to the work to be more inclusive by creating a facade using Black employees. The extra work comes from having to consider every opportunity for its potential undercurrent of being used.

Whether Black women are being tapped because the institution is seeking another perspective or because there are simply too few of them, so they are asked to show up in

spaces more frequently, Black women are often invited into spaces simply because the institution needs a Black face at the table. Both Agnes and StarAnn recognized that they may not have been necessarily invited because they were thought of as exceptional and needed in the dialog but once they arrived, they demonstrated their excellence. Agnes reflected that

> It might not be that they feel that you're so exceptional. Right. It just might be that they need a Black face at the table. And then you get there, and you're exceptional. And you get more opportunities because you're good and you're Black.

Similarly, StarAnn understood that this sometimes means Black women are not included at the beginning of processes.

> For Black women as leaders, I think sometimes unless folks can see that there are tangible outcomes for them to benefit from, you're not necessarily always included in the beginning of innovative ideas or practices.

Both of these examples demonstrate the usery that persists as Black women are underrepresented and so are tapped more frequently. Additionally, both Agnes and StarAnn's examples highlight that while Black women's' talents are frequently ignored, these usery type situations actually create an avenue for dodging marginalization.

Educating white adult peers about issues. White peers in PWIs often relied on Black women to help educate them about issues faced by Black people. Agnes reflected on how people often turn to her to provide them guidance around issues of race. She, like other Black women, is often put in a position of having to educate adults on issues that

she feels she should not have to and talked about the surprise her white peers expressed as she began to set boundaries around this.

> There just came a point where I was done doing their work. I think peers or colleagues were surprised. You know, I was not giving of my time. I was not. No. I'm not coming into your class. You need to figure out how to talk to your class about issues of race.

For Elizabeth, this was particularly alienating in one incident where she served on a search committee and had to question a process that in her experience could have implications for discouraging diverse candidates from applying. While her goal was to challenge the process, it turned out that she became the Black woman showing up in support of other BIPOC people.

> You know, it felt like suddenly I had to show up as this person of color, and it felt like that was what it was about - a person of color advocating for other people of color, as opposed to being a leader, advocating for us following our own policies, and upholding our own values.

Elizabeth goes on to describe how incidents like this one come up often and it is a process to decide whether or not she has the desire or capacity to address it.

> And things like that often would come up. I would say that's a more extreme or more pointed example where I actually decided to do something about it. But if I think about over the course of twenty plus years of being in the field, there are a number of times where something like this has come up and I've just decided, it's kind of not worth my time to worry about it.

This is the epitome of holding the burden of extra work just simply being a Black woman in a PWI, knowing that some issues just have to be let go and left unaddressed because they occur too frequently.

It is extra work to both represent the voices of other Black students and students of color on their campuses while navigating the surprise that white peers demonstrate when confronted with the issues Black people face on white campuses. Agnes shared the utter disbelief some of her colleagues' experience when she reports the difficult experiences BIPOC students face on her campus.

> You know, when you have these meetings and students talk about how they feel and the experiences they've endured. And then it's like, oh my gosh I didn't realize that things like that happen here. White colleagues are often shocked. People are so amazed. Oh my gosh, that couldn't happen here. Oh my gosh. I don't think there's recognition. I don't think they understand what our students are experiencing. And so, I don't even think they know what to provide to those of us who are supporting them, because they don't recognize that there is something to support. They don't recognize that there's an issue there.

In Betty's experience this is also true when sharing the stories that Black professionals experience at work.

> She had no idea how to handle that. We are talking about a white colleague who has been in the office 20 plus years. She was like, it didn't occur to me that this could happen. I'm like, this has happened to me multiple times. Now I'm not going to bring this to a staff meeting every time it happens to me, but you should be aware that staff are going to experience the world differently. Yes, not all of us

> can just roll in. I said no I don't come to every staff meeting and talk about the time that, you know, a security guard pulled me aside out in the front of the building, and it was like 'why are you loitering out here?'

These examples illustrate how Black women shoulder the weight of educating their white peers, even as their peers demonstrate a complete ignorance to the issues occurring.

Both Agnes and Betty expressed frustration at this role that they often have to play educating white peers and pushed back on this, deciding it is not their responsibility to educate their peers in this way. Agnes shared

> And there was a point when I decided, my peers are not my problem. They are grown adults. They need to figure out how to deal equitably with their students. My responsibility was the students of color. That was in my mind. Because it's not my job to work to educate grown people simply by my being Black. That's not my job. My job is to take care of the students and to educate the students. Right. And so, there was just a point where I said I'm done with dealing with my peers.

Similarly, Betty shared

> I think the expectation sometimes falls to the two women of color who sit in the room to kind of explain it to them. And sometimes I'm not going to engage. That is not my work. That is their work.

It became a sustainability issue for both Agnes and Betty who eventually realized they needed to set firm limits around taking on the role of educating white peers.

Supporting and Mentoring People who are BIPOC

All five study participants indicated that they take on additional work related to supporting and mentoring other BIPOC colleagues. Agnes, Adorah, and StarAnn

reflected that for them, this happens when dealing with students. Agnes shared that this burden is substantial and connects to the fact that students have limited access to Black people or people of color on her campus.

> It’s definitely about the students on campus. It's that invisible work, the cultural tax that you put in that doesn't go on your resume kind of thing. I'm into plenty of that. Absolutely. Plenty of that, you know, because there are so few of us on my campus. Right. There is a natural affinity. Where else are they going to go?

Agnes’s quote epitomizes the work that Black women experience in supporting students of color and demonstrates that this work is invisible and not something that can be quantified on a resume.

Adorah discussed this extra work as one in which she has taken on organically, but also with coaxing by upper administration who indicated to her that this is a way to support the retention of these students. The following quote demonstrates the way this extra work is imposed upon Black women leaders as an unofficial responsibility outside of the boundaries of official workload.

> I don't assume that my presence in the PWI gives me the privilege of taking on that type of relationship. However, it just happened organically. And I was told by one of the administrators that this mentor-mentee relationship is very valuable in that it helps with students not only surviving the institution but thriving in the institution and being of value in terms of student retention.

Agnes’s institution leans on her to take on this additional work in a reactive way. She details how she was pushed to support students after racist occurrences on campus and how she was sought out because the institution was unable to respond.

> When there's some kind of negative situation that happens, then they look to me like, ‘we're completely inept in taking care of the students, so we're so glad you're here’. Right, they view it as my responsibility. You know they’re like, ‘pheww, Agnes is here she’ll handle it’.

This demonstrates the way in which institutions have relied on Black women to shoulder the weight negative incidents impacting students of color. While it should be the responsibility of the institution to take on this work, in a crisis, they are relying on marginalized populations within the institution's faculty and staff to carry this extra work supporting marginalized student populations. This shifting of work can also shift responsibility for fixing the problems onto the backs of Black women leaders.

This can also become complex as Black women negotiate their relationships with students since they can often shift from a supportive mentoring role to an almost maternal figure in the lives of students. Black women represent a familiar home life and thus provide comfort to BIPOC students when they are having a difficult time. Adorah describes this as “connected to the students’ sense of familiarity and comfort and establishes a space for the students to breathe.” Students have become so at home with Adorah that she reports they have begun to call her “Auntie” and “Queen”, terms that use in the academy by white students to refer to their white institutional leaders is unfathomable. Agnes realizes this complexity when she recalls

> For the students of color in particular, there is definitely an affinity and I feel like, and I hate thinking this way but, it's much more like a mother. Like here's what you need to do...It's okay. You can cry. It's fine. Okay, now we're done crying, and we’ve got to strategize and figure out what you're going to do... And so, yeah,

> you are responsible for other people's children and if they're hurting. Right, their mom isn't here... I feel like it's my responsibility because I would want somebody to do the same thing with [my child].

While Black women leaders at PWIs taking on maternal or family-like roles in the lives of students may seem odd or different from hegemonic norms within PWIs, this actually more closely mirrors a common way that Black women show up in their community and families. Black women collectively represent a village that wraps around every member of the community regardless of if there is a family tie.

Betty, Elizabeth, and StarAnn discuss the roles they play in supporting and mentoring other BIPOC colleagues at their institutions. While these populations of people remain severely underrepresented in PWIs, the study participants reflect that they often take on roles to support and mentor other BIPOC employees at their institutions. Betty recounted the time she had to support a member of her team as they experienced racism and bias while traveling for work related business.

> I mean, I had to have a conversation with the staff person because she was going to a high school visit in [LARGE STATE REDACTED], and she parked in a neighborhood that was one of those sort of private streets kind of neighborhoods. She was just eating her salad because she was like 40 minutes early to the visit, and the cops came up. You know she comes from a family where she has a large number of people in her family who are undocumented. It was a horrific experience to be called out by the cops and to be questioned and told “you have to move along”. And you know she actually thought she was in trouble with us. She was like “I didn't do anything wrong” and I'm like “been there, done that”. I don't

know how to train staff of color on how to manage that, but she was obviously upset, broken, you know, hurt.

She then recounted how she had to step in to do this when other colleagues simply did not understand the weight of the experience for the employee.

> And, you know, I have white colleagues who are like "well you know, we can talk to her about it but she's just going to have to move on" and I'm like, "Okay, I will talk to her". We will have this conversation, but no one can just move on. If you felt that and you felt the fear of being called out and thinking you were (a) going to be pulled into the police department because you're sitting on a street somewhere and you have no idea what you've done wrong, and (b) that's in any way shape or form okay.

Betty now has to be proactive in supporting young BIPOC colleagues about the experiences they may have in the PWI work environment.

> It was a large impact, she was traumatized. And I'm like, and now I have to think about how I prepare young women of color, men of color for the kinds of experiences that they are going to have out there. And how do you process, how do you unpack that, how do you find a place of resilience around that experience because honestly, I can't say it's not going to happen, and I can't say that someone else isn't going to be curious about you.

Supporting, mentoring, and preparing BIPOC colleagues for the negative work experiences they may encounter is not something that Betty's white peers can do simply because they do not have these experiences themselves and do not fully understand. White leaders who demonstrate confusion about the issues that BIPOC people experience

are useless in providing support, which consequently forces to Black women shoulder this burden of work.

Betty also understood that she holds this responsibility both because she sees it as an informal responsibility but also because the lack of BIPOC people in her area of work at the leadership level. She realized that BIPOC professionals across the country will be referred to her.

> Because of where I am now there are not a ton of other people of color in staff roles, so I think people will refer everybody to me, not just a particular kind of person. But I think in higher ed, more broadly, encountering younger [role redacted], for example like being on a panel somewhere and then on the road and I meet somebody and then their supervisor will say you should really talk to [name redacted] more with questions about, you know, being a woman of color in a leadership role if you're thinking about being a director for example.

Elizabeth reflects how navigating the PWI is challenging and successfully doing so means you've cracked a code of sorts. She sees it as important to her mentoring younger and newer BIPOC employees through this.

> I feel like I really want to help people crack the code. I mean, it does feel like there's a code right, I think, to my earlier point about kind of how I navigated promotions and opportunities. It was like, I figured out the code and it's like, Okay, got it. Relationships are key. Yes, I need to figure out what I want to say and what I want to be doing and I need to show up. Well, but I also need to be, I can't just stay in my little bubble and the meet and greet. It's been sustaining those

relationships so right. I would rather like something I don't need, I don't need to hoard that information for myself, it feels really important that it is shared.

Elizabeth also recounts that she spends significant time coaching these employees as the training process doesn't account for the details specific to BIPOC employees navigating PWIs and realizing the added burden of unfair criticisms.

A lot of coaching I think particularly for the people of color who we would hire into those roles. For example, there was a young woman who did great work, but she would make these little mistakes all the time, just like not proofing things when turning stuff in. I was like, yeah, you didn't quite finish it out...and I just said, we need to figure out how to support you around proofing this and getting stuff to be more detail oriented because this is the thing that people are going to focus on. They're not going to give you allowances because the content was fantastic. At the end of the day, they're going to be fixated on these little things, so I think there's something valuable about hearing that kind of feedback from someone who looks more like you where it's given with a sense of, I'm giving you feedback, positive or negative because I care, because I want you to be successful.

In some instances, this support is in the form of organizing affinity spaces for BIPOC employees to come together. In StarAnn's experience, she has even created space for BIPOC employees at her home.

We ended up doing the BIPOC affinity space in our backyard but people social distance and got like meals and to go stuff. It was like when people were just talking about, like, my boss let us do that with funding that I had in my budget, which was nice.

The study participants understood each demonstrated a responsibility they felt to prepare and support BIPOC colleagues in PWIs. While this responsibility is additional work for them, none of them expressed any issue with taking on this work. In fact, the study participants expressed a desire to do this work in order to help set BIPOC people up for success in their institutions.

Care and Support

The findings provide evidence that Black women leaders achieve care and support through mentorship and support at work, through their own intrinsic connection to a greater purpose and connection to purpose, by growing from their experiences and making new choices including balancing the burdens of added work pressures, and from family and friends.

Mentorship and support

Black women leaders did not express that they were able to access other Black women as mentors in their professional life and so had to find other ways to navigate gaining mentorship and support. Agnes did not feel it was possible for white colleagues to provide mentorship to her as a Black woman but was happy to have some guidance from peers as a fellow educator.

> They could not have mentored me as a Black woman leader, because they were not Black women. They provided me with what they could provide me with in terms of guidance as fellow educators, which was great, but in terms of the acknowledgement of the differences or difficulties that were unique to me they could not have advised me in that. Yeah, I don't think that they would have been much help in that regard.

In the absence of mentor relationships at her institution, Agnes proactively sought out information on her own to help her on her professional journey.

> But there have definitely been people that I've been able to look to, not even necessarily people that I know, but people in the larger world community where you can say, okay, she did this. I mean there are plenty of books out there, plenty of memoirs out there that talk about personal experiences and reading through and you can see yourself and say yeah that's me, I have experienced that. And so, you learn, and you pick up things in different ways. It isn't always just one way and it isn't always an individual that is able to shepherd you along. The people that were in my life were not all Black women. But there were definitely people who encouraged me along the way, who, you know, buoyed my spirits along the way to keep me moving, or who provided encouragement, but I wouldn't say mentored me.

Though not able to access real mentors in the work environment, Agnes makes sure she is able to get the information she needs by taking a proactive role in seeking out alternate resources.

While not at her institution, Betty was fortunate to connect with a Black male in her area of work who had a pattern of looking out for BIPOC people across the field.

> He was just looking out for other people of color and saying you know don't get discouraged. You know I know you wanted the job but, here are the real other opportunities that I see for you. And also, just willing to hear me out, like, you know, okay here's my situation here's what I need help with so that was certainly one.

Like Agnes, Betty also found informal friendship with people to serve as avenues of support even just to lift her spirits and encourage her to continue on.

> You know it goes the span and I find that a lot of my mentors are also just friends, people that you want to go to a movie with or people that you want to send a funny text to every once in a while to lighten the mood.

Here it is clear that Black women may not always have seamless access to mentors and support in the work environment, but they have become savvy in finding other ways to access needed support.

StarAnn described how she is proactive about seeking out mentors through affinity groups when she arrives at new institutions.

> I think every time I go to a new institution, or I join a new organization, I develop some deep relationships that don't necessarily start out as formal mentoring but continue as some.

StarAnn has approached mentorship relationships from a broader perspective. She has been able to create co-mentor relationships with other BIPOC women leaders, even those not senior to her, as a way to not only gain support and mentorship but also a sense of community within a PWI.

> I think one of the one of the things that's really important to me, at a PWI always as soon as I get there, and even if I can do some of this proactively before I start the role, is to find community with other folks in affinity, so folks of color. So, I think I do have access to other women of color who are leaders, and I use leaders in a broad sense whether they're leaders because of their faculty roles or leaders administratively or leaders because they've been in the community, doing certain

> work and I really would like to help with that. So, I think for me, those are always relationships that I'm trying to attend to and always try to grow and deepen.

As StarAnn navigates building community, she has been successful at solidifying relationships with individuals even after they leave her institution because she has been able to establish deeply meaningful and lasting relationships.

> I'm grateful that I feel like I have at least a few here and some folks who are no longer at [institution redacted] but have moved on, but still keep in really good contact with me and understand the institutional infrastructure, and the members who make up how the institution functions which is very helpful. And so, you know, this particular matter of mentor that I'm thinking of is someone who has invested, personally, in my life which I think is for me helpful in terms of the longevity of the relationship, it's not just because I work here, and they work here. They are someone that our bosses say you will help her with this. And that's in a really friendly way. And they are someone who has said to me early on in my career, I want to be helpful to you, but I want to be supportive.

StarAnn displays a great deal of commitment to connecting with BIPOC communities in her PWI and prioritizes these relationships. She has a keen understanding of the importance of accessing other BIPOC leaders and focused on building these relations at all stages of her time with her PWI including before she arrived, during her time there, and even after some of her colleagues have left.

For Elizabeth not having access to a mentor of color became a pressing issue as she navigated the work environment as a woman of color and wanted to have an outlet to express the unique challenges and issues she was facing.

> And I remember a couple of years ago feeling like. Gee, I would really have loved some of that connection with another woman who is a more senior leader, and either they didn't exist, or they existed and were too busy. That was mostly it, they were too busy. And I say there were some conflicts like I think, for me it's also again going back to that piece of the more conscious I became of being a woman of color and what that meant and seeing some things and being willing to and wanting to say like, No, I think that's bs. I kind of wanted to be able to call a spade a spade at least within close personal relationships to say, I don't believe that institution when they say they're doing XYZ and I think it's total bs, and I felt like I couldn't identify anyone at the institution who wasn't going to just give me a party line back.

Over time Elizabeth felt really disconnected from higher education and reflected that her experiences had become pretty unbearable.

> I would say it's probably part of the reason why I feel really disconnected from higher ed. You know, I mean, this is the only career field I've ever been in aside from my work as a coach. You know, I went straight from undergrad to a graduate program in higher ed administration. The only thing I've really ever seriously thought about doing, and I've had some really crappy experiences at work, starting in 2009 and since then. I could leave higher ed in a heartbeat.

Elizabeth's story is profound in that it speaks to the endangered nature of Black women leaders in PWIs. She is a highly skilled and experienced leader and persisted in the field for over 20 years but found herself in a position where the environment was no longer empowering and sustainable. This coupled with the lack of mentorship for Elizabeth

undoubtedly contributed to her decision to eventually leave higher education during the course of this study.

In our third interview to review this chapter and the findings, Elizabeth reflected further and expanded her thoughts here. She shared that she has yet to find an institution that she truly believes has integrity where words and actions are in line with values. More often than not, she finds that when PWIs are pressed to uphold their values they push back. She describes this tone as one of "gaslighting" where Black women are othered. Pondering the question of whether mentoring would have made a difference she shared

> Mentoring might not have helped with that but what got frustrating for her was being surrounded by white people, who might not have even felt differently, but they were more tolerant of it and somehow felt like there was a feeling of how dare you to have the audacity to expect more. You should be happy here as it is. You should be happy here too if I am as a white woman. Like, what are you complaining about? There was an atmosphere that says you don't have any reason to complain here and you're going to get your hand slapped if you complain or become more vocal and call out the bs.

Elizabeth shared an example of being reprimanded for speaking up where she worked in an office where the senior leader was doing terrible things. When she brought it up to her boss, there was no digging into what was going on because he just didn't care and wanted her to stop talking about the issues with other people. "Just shuffle papers and smile and otherwise be quiet if you don't have anything nice to say." As she became more comfortable being uncomfortable and evolved both professionally and personally as a Black woman, this became more of a problem.

> It feels like higher ed really only wants to accept one version of Black women. Women who evolve to not accept these things are the first go. All of a sudden, Black woman are not palatable when they want an "easy" version and where white comfort is most important.

For Elizabeth, this was a very clear marginalization of her voice and silencing of her experiences. This is something that Black women have to work against constantly in the workplace which, for Elizabeth, became unbearable to manage.

Connection to purpose

Study participants described feeling a sense of connection to greater purpose as a way they felt intrinsic value in their work as a Black women leader in a PWI. In particular, study participants felt that their roles as a Black being in a PWI was especially important for students. Adorah describes that helping others and seeing students thrive keeps her going.

> What keeps me going is any evidence that I have been able to help someone else grow, and prosper, and flourish, and thrive. That's what keeps me going. When I first moved into administration out of teaching a four course load per semester, I found it very isolating to be in administration because I was not connecting with the students anymore. And so, the next opportunity that I had as an administrator, I wanted to keep some level of direct interaction with students. I will always want to teach, as well as being an administrator, because I find that to be a happy balance for me.

Agnes understands that students of color seeing a successful Black person is important and that is a major way she connects to purpose.

> Personally, you know it's students of color who just need to see somebody in a leadership position, you know, someone who looks like them. Right. Just your mere presence says okay somebody made it. She graduated from somewhere.

Betty also finds staying connected to students to be the most important aspect of her work, without which she would lose purpose. She too recognizes the importance of the relationship with BIPOC students who need to see and hear from BIPOC leaders.

> So, I guess I haven't ever been good at letting go of the student piece. I have learned to say no to every committee related to the work because I feel like we got a campus full of smart people and not all of them need to be people of color telling you that we shouldn't say certain words and we should treat each other with respect, and we have systemic racism. I think there are wonderful scholars that can probably pick that up. But for the student piece I think there is nothing that you can change about the impact of them seeing a [position redacted] say I get it, I see you, I hear you, and I'm not expecting any sort of glossing over of your experience. It is what happened to you, it's what happened to me. It's happened to people I know, and I just want to figure out a way to support you in whatever way that is, whether that's transferring or whether that's sticking it out or trying to improve something about the ways in which we operate.

StarAnn offered that she too finds connection to purpose meaningful and in particular is able to tap into her own positive view of herself and connection to the greater spirit of her ancestors who have allowed her presence in her position.

> For me my empowerment comes from my own self-realization and actualization of who I am and not the position. So, like whether the position had been there like

> I think I was still I was showing up with some of the same principles and some of the same ground. For me I'm only sitting here because my ancestors have allowed me to stay here. Everything that I do is based in connection with other people.

The study participants clearly articulated the importance of having a greater purpose. Given the challenges they faced, it became evident that having a greater purpose was a key factor in sustaining within their PWIs. Of all the ways they did find purpose, being connected to the students and their success was a most prominent theme salient throughout their stories.

Growing from experiences and making new choices

Another salient way study participants expressed they accessed the care and support they needed was by learning from their experiences and seeking better avenues. Elizabeth recognized that colleagues around her had successfully asked for and received things they wanted or needed. Learning from this she was encouraged to do the same in hopes of improving her work life.

> I think I needed the experience of seeing lots of other people, often white men, asking for stuff and getting it. Like the more I saw people ask for stuff all the time, all sorts of stuff. It would never even occur to me that you could ask for XYZ time off or time at home or to work remotely or money or an admin assistant or a coach or whatever.

Agnes realized that sometimes she just needed to say no to taking on additional work in order to take care of herself at work. Agnes expressed how this can be a real internal battle realizing that if she doesn’t do the work no one will.

> And you know, it's sometimes a fight within myself, because if I don't do it, who's going to do it. And if I don't do it, is it going to ever get done. So, although I may not feel like I want to engage at that level, or that I want to take on that additional burden or responsibility, it is this question or this feeling of responsibility for making sure it gets done.

Over time, Agnes realized that her emotional and mental health were at stake and so that helped her to make choices to not always take on the added work.

> I mean for my own mental health there just comes a point where you're just fed up and you're like, boom, I am not going to do this. It is detrimental to me. No, I'm not. I am not going to be detrimental to my own mental health for your well-being. To make you feel better. No. So there just came that point where I was like I'm done. I need a break.

Perhaps the most profound decision that Agnes made was to take an entire year off of work to tend to her well-being. This decision was one that she navigated knowing that she would not draw her annual salary to do so and while having to contemplate what else she would do given the enormity of her identity wrapped up in her life at a PWI.

> I think what I'm looking at out of this time is the ability to be as disengaged as I want to. I think what I'm learning is that, you know, there are alternatives. Doing this for almost 20 years now prior to taking this leave, I just felt like this is what I do so you know what else is there for me to do. But there are other things for me to do, you know, and I guess because I've been so deeply invested in academia and my teaching and believing that that's who I am. I am more than just a teacher. There are so many other things out there for me.

The impact of her work life was so great, and the need to step completely away was so immense, that she was forced to access her personal savings/finances to make it happen. Reflecting on this, it is clear that making this decision is not one that most Black women could likely make, which leaves us with the alternative of Black women leaving higher education to pursue other careers.

Support from family and friends

Accessing family and friends was an important way study participants achieved care and support. Both Adorah and Agnes talked about how they rely on their network of family and friends for support and that they find that taking care of themselves is both intrinsic and extrinsic in nature. For Agnes this was sometimes a matter of protecting her mental well-being.

> You know, it's about being able to have people who are able to acknowledge that you're not the crazy one, that yeah this really is a problem or an issue. And then it's about them being able to share with you what they think or what they would do or that they just simply encountered something very similar. You know, so it is about finding your crew and being able to socialize with them.

Adorah talked about how she has had to balance the expectations that she takes on added work in the professional environment with making smart decisions to not engage when it would not benefit her health and well-being.

> Sometimes it is a process that once I get through internally, I then can share with loved ones in my family, particularly my husband and/or other colleagues.

In addition to family, Betty sees the relationships she has been able to build with her direct colleagues as instrumental in providing friendship.

> I think I draw on family, but I also draw on my colleagues. I mean we spend so much time together at work, you know your colleagues are your family, your second family because you're spending nine or ten or twelve hours working with them.

For StarAnn, she sees that she is more empowered at work because she has family to retreat to for support when she needs it.

> I think, you know, a lot for me is always around my family. I think I also felt empowered enough or had enough relationships, or I felt enough self-worth to go for what I wanted. And I also know if it hits the fan, I was going to go home with someone who's going to be there to catch me. That had a role in what I was willing to try and willing to explore.

Support from family and friends was an important way that study participants sustained in their environments. These relationships both inside and outside of the work environment allowed participants a vital place to retreat and be uplifted.

Treatment of Black women

Black women leaders often face treatment in their work environments that disrupt their empowerment and sustainability in PWIs. They face added scrutiny for the work they do compared to white colleagues at the same time experience marginalization and are rendered invisible in the workplace. They find it challenging at times to achieve professional growth and face undue pressure to prove they belong in professional environments and have the knowledge necessary to do the job. Black women also find themselves pushing back on coercion to take on work related to equity, diversity, and inclusion in their work environments whether or not they have experience in this area.

Criticisms

Participants perceived themselves as receiving harsher criticism in their roles as Black women leaders. Agnes reflected on this showing up in her evaluations where students used coded and stereotypical language to describe her style. She also highlights the difference between how her white students evaluate her and how her students of color see her performance.

> In terms of student evaluations, you get the buzzwords. I get intimidating. I get sassy, because I'm an eight year old girl apparently, (laughing). You know, you get, she's large and in charge. I don't think I've ever gotten aggressive, but I've definitely gotten the borderline, she's an in charge person, like she doesn't take any stuff.

Similarly, Adorah reflected on the vast change in the course evaluations she received from her white students in her current PWI versus the course evaluations by students at her previous institution, which is an HBCU.

> So, interestingly enough, or maybe not surprisingly, my student evaluations, prior to coming to the PWI, were always high (laughing). So, I experienced a decline in my student evaluations at the PWI. So, in my conversations with my Dean during my evaluation review, it was recommended that if I made these adjustments that I would see improvements in my student evaluations. So, I've made those adjustments, and I think embedded in that conversation were factors of race, as well as gender and as well as my unfamiliarity with the, I guess, personality with white students versus students of color. So, I've made those adjustments and I am seeing improvements (laughing).

The description of their treatment as professional Black women was astonishing. Particularly in contrast to their experiences of respect and appreciation from BIPOC students. These experiences highlight the ever present underlying expectation that Black women behave in a way that upholds dominant hegemonic leadership styles. Further, in the case where Adorah is persuaded by leadership to adjust her style, it is clear that leadership within predominantly white institutions are perpetuating racism and sexism.

Black women have long navigated the “angry Black woman' stereotype that serves to silence and reprimand Black women for speaking up assertively to issue they experience at work. Betty recognized that she has been a victim of this trope being described as bitter for not blatantly supporting an initiative at work.

> And I was set to be the person who had to respond and say something, and also the person who was then sort of spurned for the rest of my time there for being, they didn't go as far as the angry Black woman, but they were like she's just so bitter about, you know, how far we've come and she's just not supportive of how many inroads we've already made and, and she just doesn't get it she just comes at us as if we've done something wrong. And, you know, just the way it went down every stereotype, it checked off every box, angry Black woman.

Betty also recognized that while she is hyper criticized for minor mistakes, her white male colleagues have had the luxury of brushing their mistakes off as simple errors.

> I feel like male colleagues can easily say, oh I messed that up, or, you know, oops, I missed that number and laugh it off. I'm not given the same level of courtesy or respect around missing something or overlooking something or, not crossing a T or not adding a decimal point or, you know, you don't get the same

> sort of leeway around any sort mistake or hiccup and so I've tried to, build the armor to be able to, you know, certainly own it, but also push back if someone says, I think you're really struggling because of who you are, maybe, your background or what you ...Nope, we are not going there. This double standard is threatening to Black women who have to work overtime to achieve perfection for fear of being called to task for errors.

Black women are aware of the undue scrutiny they face in the workplace compared to white colleagues, particularly white men. Dominant norms within PWIs allows white colleagues to underperform at times without the same added scrutiny that Black women face regularly.

It is not only formal feedback but also informal feedback that can be harsher for Black women. Elizabeth experienced informal feedback that also upheld biases and stereotypical views of Black women that have challenged her all while ignoring poor behavior from colleagues around her that had gone unaddressed.

> I feel like there been a couple of things like that where I felt like there were not informal feedback that like intermittent feedback from someone who's like, Oh, you know, you kind of show up this way or you have this thing going on and it very much felt like, it's around an edge, it's around voice tone, which does feel like the most common ways, in my view that Black women are policed, how they show up at work. And I feel very very defensive about that, in part because I know it's true that sometimes I can respond more harshly, or I can be more defensive when initially caught off guard, so it is both true. And there's all sorts of

> poor behavior happening all around me that I don't see anybody getting called on the carpet for.

Again, the reality that Black women are scrutinized more harshly is problematic for Black women who constantly feel they have to work harder and manage others' perceptions of them in the workplace knowing this is not the same reality for their white colleagues.

Being a hidden figure and lack of recognition

Lack of recognition for the exceptional or additional work that the participants perform was salient in the interviews. Agnes talked about how people aren't even aware of the additional work she performs so if they don't realize, they are not likely to recognize you for it.

> I don't think there is necessarily an understanding of all the work that it takes. Because my peers or because the administration isn't having this same kind of relationship with the majority students.

Agnes takes this a step further and highlights that this burden is substantial and connects to the fact that students have limited access to Black people or people of color on her campus.

> In terms of evaluating your work, the institution might say what we value scholarship. You know, we value scholarship over service, but the service is the part that is much more prevalent for me. Because I'm doing service that is not being recognized. Scholarship is quantifiable, the service I perform is not. So, in terms of assessment, you know I always get, 'publish more publish more, publish

more’. Well, yeah. Okay. That means ignoring the needs of students of color. There are only 24 hours in a day.

As the academy values the production of scholarship and other work and is not acknowledging the time intensive and emotionally taxing labor to support BIPOC students, Black women will not only continue to underperform their jobs in the eyes of their institutions, but they will do so while feeling emotionally and physically drained.

Adorah obtained an incredible achievement in helping to secure a major grant for a local organization that would work with her institution, and it went completely unrecognized at her PWI unlike the achievements of some of her white colleagues.

> You may have one perception of your position or place in the institution. When it may not be the same as other folks in the institution. And, for example, if there was one instance in which I was involved in a grant activity. And I thought the outcomes were extraordinary however, there was no acknowledgement from upper administration about it at all.

Betty has experienced people flat out taking credit for the accomplishments she achieved at work and so she has had to navigate making sure her achievements are recognized as hers and not taken over by colleagues.

> When people take credit for the things that I've done when they haven't done them. I'm sort of right out front with that was my idea and I think people sort of sometimes look at me like, Why is she calling out that is her idea but I do that because knowing that other people will say we have decided we're going to do this thing, it's like, Nope, we are not, you didn't decide that and you weren't even at the table when we made this choice and so you're taking all the credit for

> something that eight of us had priority on, and I feel like as a person of color, and particularly a woman.

Given the opportunity to reflect, Elizabeth recognized that she was passed over for a professional opportunity that she believes she would not have been if she were white. She is acutely aware of the impact her work had on her institution and still, she was not the choice for career advancement.

> Although it's interesting to me that when given an opportunity I named for myself that I think that if I was white, I would have been [position redacted]. I have never named that before. I'm fine with where I am now but I do think it's a loss. For them and for me. I had given so much to the institution and my career and I had a five or so year period where things were so terrible, but in the end, I just completely opted out of the school and higher ed. I just didn't want to convince people of my value after I'd so clearly demonstrated it and I didn't want to pretend anymore.

Black women work hard to achieve benchmarks and success and make significant contributions to the academy, yet these achievements are often ignored and not celebrated. As such, Black women find themselves missing out on the professional validation that should come with professional milestones such as broad institutional acknowledgements or like in Elizabeth's case, career advancement.

Mobility

The ability to be mobile and move up in higher education is a challenge for Black women who have to contend with oppressive perspectives by white leaders that they are

not ready for career advancement. Betty has had to navigate couched language around her readiness to take on more leadership roles.

> Well, I get, you know, I'm not sure that's the direction we want to go in and you know all this sort of couched language about, whether or not somebody is strong enough to kind of lead the charge, and partly it was gender, but I also think it was being a person of color who had moved up pretty rapidly in the office and that was largely because my supervisors and boss saw my work and, whereas external folks didn't have as much exposure to me.

When she was not able to successfully overcome these oppressive forces, she made sure she took the opportunity to move on and find other opportunities.

> I think the best thing I was able to do and not everybody can do these things but was to move on to other opportunities. When I felt like I couldn't see the ways in which I might be promoted, and I couldn't see the ways in which I was being recognized for the work that I was doing.

Here we see an example of the direct relationship between institutional oppression and the instability of Black women leaders who choose to leave PWIs when systemic oppression prevents them from opportunities for career advancement.

Elizabeth saw that there were opportunities that she was able to grow, she also saw other less qualified white women getting opportunities to grow where she wasn’t even considered.

> I'm certainly seeing other individuals, white women, who I want to say I believe to be less talented getting opportunities. And I've had lots of opportunities

> provided to me, and at the same time I'm like, that's interesting that there wasn't even a conversation with me about that particular opportunity.

The reality is Black women feel it necessary to be overly prepared, and almost perfect to achieve mobility. Elizabeth has an almost comical take on the absurdity of this reality.

> I would say that I do think that as a Black woman I feel conditioned to have checked every single box and have done as much as I possibly could with as little resources as possible. I have demonstrated how fantabulous I am to the Nth degree before it's okay for me to say, please, mother may I, could I get a little six cents? Like I just, I do feel like there were many things about the code that I was like okay, got it. Cracked it. That's how I've got to move here.

Elizabeth articulates how hard Black women must work to navigate these impossible circumstances and how doing so means she has cracked a code to success in a PWI. It was profound how even after demonstrating significant wealth of knowledge and preparedness, she still felt the need to request rather than command that she be granted her earned advancement opportunities.

Questioning Black women belonging and their knowledge

The study participants all experienced some form of marginalization by peers who questioned their belonging and knowledge. Agnes talks about how the colleagues and even students make it so that she has to always explain herself. "Instead of the acceptance or acknowledgement that maybe, just maybe you know your stuff, there's always this need to legitimize yourself. I start the first class each semester listing her degrees" For Betty, she too is hearing messages that question her belonging and these messages are not

grounded in the reality of her experience, but rather stereotypical assumptions about her as a Black woman.

> They say 'Well, I think, you know, because of her background she may not be fully aware of, you know how important this donor relationship, or this trustee relationship is to the institution.' It sort of becomes about background as opposed to, you know, experience with the work. There's always sort of the alluding to, well, your background may not have allowed you to understand that this project really needed some more data around it and maybe you don't have the skills yet to figure that out and you know just sort of the assumptions again of a person of color who was relatively on the young end of the work.

StarAnn recognizes the elite nature of higher education, the fact that she doesn't hold a terminal degree and presents as a younger woman really encourages these reactions to her.

> I present young looking, thank goodness, I think when I come into spaces as a Black woman who also looks younger. I definitely think if people don't understand my role, or they don't understand my positionality or they don't have a sense of my credibility. I'm not heard as often, or ask for input, until some of those things can happen. But mostly, I would say, mostly white men but I think men in general, and older white women in the institution.

In each of these cases, Black women who perform as leaders in their institutions spend a considerable amount of time proving that they both have the knowledge necessary to do their jobs and belong in the roles they hold. This is a distraction for Black women who should be afforded the opportunity to just show up and be great leaders.

Resisting marginalization into diversity work

Black women often found that they were asked or expected to take on work related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at work regardless of whether they held roles related to this work. Adorah found the degree of assumptions colleagues made about her desire to take on DEI work almost comical.

> Sometimes coworkers would say, or assume, that I would be interested in (laughing) diversity initiatives. (laughing) And I would politely (laughing) I would politely let them know that that was not necessarily the case (laughing).

Adorah also realized that while there were some advantages to supporting the institution's DEI initiatives, she had to be careful when taking on unofficial DEI roles as not to create an expectation that this is an area she would take on more frequently.

> I had to be very careful in terms of going back to my performance evaluations of how to be supportive of the institution, since it did have diversity and inclusion initiatives, but at the same time not lock myself into that. And at the risk of folks, assuming that's where I belonged. But over the years, I think I have been able to show that I can be just as effective in the role that I have as an administrator, as well as be supportive of DEI efforts, maybe not in an official capacity, but maybe in an unofficial capacity with some of its diversity and inclusion and equity initiatives.

Similarly, Betty navigated the occurrences where she often would be the only voice in the room and so had to be careful not to let other leaders off the hook from speaking up around issues of DEI.

> I try not to be the only voice of diversity, equity and inclusion. I think that other people, our director and others in the office, also need to chime in and give suggestions for readings and podcasts, you know cool events that people can participate in.

Elizabeth described how strange the assumption was that she could do DEI work simply because of her identity as a Black woman.

> I would say the other place for marginalization or these sort of weird moments comes up for me is, there's a presumption that because I'm a person of color that I that this is my jam, right, like diversity and equity, and inclusion is the thing I should be assigned to I'm like, I actually am probably, maybe not like the best person. So why are you coming to me because I have had nothing to do with this. I have my personal experience as a Black woman, but I am not an expert in diversity and equity work.

It is clear that making smart decisions around how Black women engage in diversity and inclusion work within PWIs is critical to well-being. While PWIs are responsible for advancing equity and justice, they are falling short and instead relying on Black women to shoulder the weight of the issues, even if they don't have an interest or hold expertise in this area. This creates a challenge for Black women who on the one hand understand the importance of this work and the institutions aspiration to undertake diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, but on the other are trying to avoid being tapped to serve in this way beyond their capacity.

Triple Burden

Throughout the study, the participants shared their stories navigating predominantly white institutions of higher education as Black women and reflected on the added burdens associated with living life as a Black woman. The weight of the world that these women navigate outside of their work environment was immense, particularly as they navigated this during the global health pandemic and the pandemic of racial violence. The study participants articulated the stress of managing life as Black women who hold additional roles as mothers, spouses, friends, and community leaders. This Triple Burden was evident throughout their stories.

Agnes was acutely aware of the fact that the burden for Black women coming in to teach the class versus white men was different with COVID-19 because of racial disparities in health care.

> If I get COVID-19, there is an extra burden. COVID-19 is not just an external thing where we're all in this together. Some people are in a yacht and some people are in a canoe and some people are drowning. COVID-19 is affecting me and my white colleague right beside me completely differently. We have the same job, we're showing up for our students, and have the same health care, but we know that because of the disparities if I were to get COVID-19 the outcomes are much worse. It's the overall societal disparities that we carry with us every day and that interact with us at work.

Agnes very clearly articulates the Triple Burden in that she identified the greater societal circumstances that exist external to the workplace that are omnipresent for her every day that she also has to negotiate within her work environment.

The impact of the double pandemic was one that Adorah realized created a strange new reality for her at work where white colleagues who could arguably be considered well meaning, demonstrated an uptick in their concern for her.

> I think that this is just a weird type of space right now that all of us are being challenged to navigate because it's all new. So, not only now is there the question of is this happening because of my race, there's also now, on top of that, is this happening because of the pandemic. Or, on top of that, is this happening because of the racial unrest that we are experiencing, not only internationally and nationally, but also locally. So, the reason why I bring that up is because there may be some assumptions on some, on the part of some of my white colleagues that, because I am an African American, I am experiencing an additional emotional burden because of what society is experiencing right now in terms of racial injustice and racial unrest.

Adorah also reflected that in this new reality she is also having to manage her feelings towards colleagues who now are taking an interest in her state.

> I am getting overtures now from white colleagues who I had not really had much communication with before. And while I vacillate between thinking, I need to be appreciative of those overtures versus annoyed by them.

This added concern was not welcome because it created a dynamic where white people were actually performative in their concern for her and not actually relieving her of any additional burden. In fact, they were placing their issues at the feet of Black women who now had to deal with the new issue of navigating the expectation to manage white peoples' comfort.

The global health pandemic created immense challenges for PWIs who worked to reimagine higher education. While great strain was placed on institutional leaders to understand how to move forward, racial violence and unrest surged. Many PWIs failed to adequately recognize the impact of racial violence and address this in their campus communities. Betty experienced this in her institution and reflected on one video meeting.

> And there were just these comments like, wow, you know we just don't have time to reflect on this right now. I mean you know the Black Lives Matter movement and you know all of the stuff that's happening with criminal justice...I think we should just push that conversation until October. And I had to carefully unmute myself because I was mad, and I was like I'm not waiting. You all can wait. I said I don't think that's the good optic that you're looking for, to say, to anybody. Oh, and we'll wait on that piece because we're focusing on the reopening. We have students who are in distress within our community, and we have parents in distress. We have people from cities that are on the national news all the time. I don't get it. So, if you can't find an hour to have this conversation there's something wrong.

She expressed how she was at her limits and still pressed for action to be taken, even on the heels of racial violence she herself experienced in a community meeting.

> And I said, look, I'm at the max too. And that was shortly after we got zoom bombed at a [local meeting redacted] meeting here in [city redacted] where we were talking about reopening plans and someone came on and started writing 'Kill the [N word]' and drawing swastikas and stuff. So, I was already past it right

like no one did anything about it. No one said anything about it. No one's fixed it. And now you're telling me you have no time. And I was like, nope, we're not doing this we have to make time. I have to make time because I have no choice, I walk this path. And you have the luxury of putting it aside when you don't feel like talking about it but nope. And I was happy that several colleagues stepped up and said nope, we're not waiting. You know I think that's right, we can't. If not now than when?

Betty like many Black women leaders were greatly impacted by these institutional failures as they bore the brunt of the fall out for themselves experiencing the Triple Burden, and for the Black students on their campuses. The fact that her institution attempted to continue on with business as usual while she was burdened as a Black woman was impacted by rampant racial violence occurring in United States is a manifestation of the Triple Burden.

Elizabeth reflected on the mental harm done experiencing the ignorance and disconnection to issues that her white colleagues displayed in her presence.

So, this, um, I just remember like one day is the day that Philando Castille was killed. And I came into the office and I was kind of like low energy and she's like oh yeah how are you doing? You seem low energy but just in general how are you doing? And I was like, well, okay, kind of struggling a little bit like I had a hard time sleeping. And just feeling really down, and she's like oh yeah, it's so hot. And then I said, yeah, it is it is warm, I also am really just feeling some kind of a way about this murder. And it was like, you could kind of see this flash across her

face like yeah that, but then there was no additional follow up it was just kind of dropped.

StarAnn recognized that as racial violence occurred and she was managing reactions on her campus, she also knew it was necessary to not hold all of the pressure herself.

> I think the narratives that folks shared about what the impact was on them being on this campus and what people have said or what happened in social media changed…. and I think it was becoming really clear that I don't need to hold all that by myself.

Black women were faced with navigating the uptick in racial violence and still has extraordinary responsibilities to hold reactions and feelings about this at work. They experienced a Triple Burden as they had their own feelings about what was happening in the country which carried over and impacted them in the work environment.

In addition to racial violence and the COVID-19 global health pandemic, the United States was also grappling with an election year in which people were very concerned about the outcomes given the 45th president's tenure and racist policies. This reality intensified the Triple Burden effect for both Betty and Elizabeth. Betty was very concerned about keeping not only her campus community safe but also her own family.

> You know I'm just thinking, how do I keep my family safe? How do I keep integrity around the conversation in spaces? We just as a staff were talking about some training we're doing, and I said you know no one is brought this up but election day is coming up. And I said you know having lived through 2016 on this campus, I think it would be a huge misstep not to plan for some kind of feelings and I don't know how the election is going and I'm not going to predict. But I

> think we have to leave some time and space for people to either have a release or have a space to be upset or happy or whatever it is to reflect on where we've been the last four years. And I don't think work training the day after the election is really the best idea.

Generally, these are huge burdens to bear. Elizabeth understands that these are ever present and both conscious and unconscious.

> I think that that's the piece that keeps bubbling up is all the things that I am carrying an awareness of, even when it's not conscious. Like every interaction.

Betty perhaps articulates The Triple Burden the clearest when she reflects on the weight of being a Black woman and a leader at a PWI. Having navigated PWIs her entire career, she understands that her role requires a level of strength to get through the rough interactions that come from her holding a different life experience than her colleagues. Pondering this and the events that transpired over the year of the double pandemic, she shared how the overlapping nature of life within and outside of work together is a lot to hold and she expressed the immense concern that she holds for this.

> And so, I actually brought that up at work and at home about how heavy it was. I mean certainly after the election and when Trump took over, I remember that day on campus and I was talking to a student about that recently that we basically just went to the chapel and everyone just sat there and hugged and talked. So that's the overlap. It’s not just the work, it's not just your personal life, but it's also feeling like you have lost control of the narrative around the progress that was happening. And I think particularly in a place like [STATE REDACTED] where you don't have to change. There isn't a requirement that things change, you know, I want it

> to be different here and I want more people of color to move here and I want that evolution to happen but really people don't wake up here in the morning and feel like they have to make change, because it's comfortable, and it's easy enough...I'm like, and it's so much bigger, it's just a constant barrage of questioning of who we are as people, our humanity, what our families have fought for, what experiences our kids are going to have in school. I mean, there's just so… it's just a lot to wear.

It is clear that the problem is compounded because different realities exist for white peers in that they do not experience the same burden of added work with the dominant student population. Additionally, the danger here is that while there is the burden of additional work, the system is regarding Black women as not performing all the functions of their job. Black women are not only working with additional burden that is invisible, but they are also often being coerced into this added work. Since this extra work is not relatable for white colleagues, Black women are not recognized for the extra efforts and further and most alarming, considered as not fulfilling the responsibilities of the job as stated in the job descriptions which impacts their ability to receive positive job evaluations.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Through this study, we have gained an immense amount of information about the lives of Black women leaders in predominantly white institutions of higher education and the factors impacting their empowerment and sustainability. Collectively, the tapestry of the stories of the study participants demonstrated the very real threat to the empowerment and sustainability of Black women leaders in PWIs. Together their stories emphasized that Black women have the burden of additional work, navigate issues around care and support, and negotiate the variety of ways they are treated as Black women in PWIs.

Summary

Black women experience the burden of additional work in PWIs including supporting and mentoring BIPOC students and other professionals in the workplace and burdens associated with simply existing as a Black being in a PWI. Being Black in a PWI, Black women navigated dominant leadership norms and practices that did not always uphold them, rampant bias and racism, limited representation of other Black women leaders creating issues around their visibility and usery behaviors and having to educate their white peers about the issues that they and other BIPOC people face in PWIs.

Black women in PWIs are faced with issues around getting proper care and support in PWIs. Access to mentors and support systems can be challenging but because of limited representation of other Black or BIPOC leaders. They also find it important to feel connected to a greater purpose, which often stems from working with BIPOC students. They have grown as professionals in PWIs and have learned much form their experiences, which led them to make new, more sustainable choices. Black women

leaders also rely on family and friends for care and support which serves as a needed reprieve from the pressures of work in a PWI.

Black women leaders in this study collectively highlighted the issues that arise from the treatment they receive as Black women in PWIs. They face harsher criticisms for the work they do than their white colleagues and have experienced a lack of recognition for the work that they have achieved. There have been concerns about the ability for career advancement as Black women have sometimes been regarded as less qualified due to bias and they have to constantly challenge questions of whether they have the knowledge needed to do their jobs and if they belong in PWIs as leaders. They actively resist institutional pressures to take on work related to equity, diversity, and inclusion work but do so carefully as they also recognize the opportunity that can exist when supporting institutional initiatives.

Triple Burden

Black women sustain a Triple Burden where the unique pressures of their lives outside of the workplace carryover to their existence in PWIs and impact their lives at work. The COVID-19 global health pandemic disproportionately Black people while racial violence against Black people in the United States has exacerbated the weight for Black women leaders. Black women leaders are not only dealing with their own feelings and concerns regarding the overlapping societal issues that are creating a public health crisis, but have also had to shoulder the weight of the impact on BIPOC students and other colleagues in their PWIs. This has had a grave impact on the sustainability of Black women leaders in this study and contributed to the departure of two study participants from their positions at their PWI during the course of this study.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

This study provided insight into the lives of five Black women leaders in PWIs in the northeast region of the United States and the findings have implications for future research. As Black women take on additional work that is above and beyond the responsibilities outlined in their job descriptions they are overburdened, and this is unrecognized. More attention should be given to explore the institutional and structural factors in place that perpetuate this so that institutions can work to dismantle these oppressive forces.

Additionally, this study revealed that accessing proper support and mentorship was important to the success of Black women leaders in PWI, however this has been difficult for many Black women. It will be important for future research to address this lack of representation in PWI for Black women, and for PWIs to develop practices and policies that prioritizes the professional development of Black women leaders. These policies and practices need to include direct access to pathways for growth, clearly defined access to senior-level organizational leaders to serve as professional sponsors, and avenue for hearing and reacting to the experiences of Black women leaders.

As conditions within PWIs perpetuate negative treatment towards Black women, specific attention in future research should address the pervasive racism and bias, with a particular focus on both uncovering more stories of Black women and connecting these stories directly to institutional priorities. The process to develop policies centering Black women leaders should be done with power in the process given to Black women leaders.

PWIs need to make explicit commitment to uplifting Black women and they need to articulate the importance of this priority to all employees. At the same time, they need

to make clear the drastically different and more challenging experiences that Black women are having in the workplace compared to their counterparts. They must also foster a culture that supports and values Black women. This should include significant efforts to denounce discrimination and microaggressions providing Black women with the support they need. Norms and rituals that do not create a sense of belonging for Black women need to be disrupted in PWIs and institutions should listen to Black women while holding their wisdom and knowledge in the highest regard.

PWIs need to give Black women power. There is a very real need to counterbalance hegemony in PWIs. By giving Black women power to make decisions that could alter the course of institutions, PWIs would actually be interjecting a counter-narrative that would work to disrupt dominant norms and culture enacting justice for Black women.

Conclusion

There is great strain on the ability for Black women to experience success in their social interactions, relationships, leadership tasks, and overall well-being. The reality of these issues highlights the struggle of Black women leaders for freedom, equality, and justice in the workplace. They not only encounter struggles in the workplace in isolation, but rather they sustain a Triple Burden where the unique pressures Black women face outside of the workplace carryover and are present with them at work, impacting their lives there as well.

As leaders, it is important to understand these struggles and exercise a transformative leadership approach as a way to break down the injustices Black women face in professional environments. To effect change, it is imperative that those in

positions of power within organizations make deep commitments to promoting more sustainable and empowering environments for Black women leaders. As this is a moral and ethical responsibility, organizations should work to deconstruct hegemonic leadership practices and work to uplift the experiences of their Black women leaders.

Like two of the study participants, I also did not sustain at a PWI during the course of this study while I watched white colleagues be elevated to leadership positions. Having had the incredible privilege of uncovering the stories of these five study participants, there is no question that with the immense talent that these women hold, any PWI that would relinquish power and allow them to lead without reservation would be rewarded enormously. Until this behavior is adopted broadly, PWIs will continue to uphold institutional and systemic oppression which directly endangers the existence of Black women leaders on their campuses.

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Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

General

1. Tell me about your experiences as a Black woman leader in a predominantly white institution of higher education.

Leadership

2. Have you experienced marginalization in your role as a leader? Tell me your story.
3. How would you describe the impact of your race and gender on your positioning as a leader?
4. Have you been treated differently than your white peers? Are there stories you can tell?
5. What are your experiences as a leader?
6. What is your thinking about leadership?
7. What makes a good leader?
8. What makes a bad leader?
9. What does it take to feel uplifted? Examples?

Mobility

10. How have you been able to navigate the hierarchy and move up since you started your career in higher education?
11. How has the process been to move up compared to your peers?

Mentorship

12. What has been your experience with mentoring?
13. Can you talk about a mentor that you have had at your institution or in the field?
14. What has been your experience as a mentor to others?
15. What has been your experience as a mentor to students, Black students and/or students of color?

Support

16. Talk about your experience with support in your professional environment?
17. Do you receive the things you need to do your job?

Evaluation/Feedback

18. What feedback have you received about your job performance
19. Tell me about your experience with your evaluation in your role as leader?
20. What were you told as your strengths?
21. What were you told that you had to improve?
22. What is your feeling around the impact of your race and gender on your feedback and performance evaluations?

Impact of home life and work

23. What are your family responsibilities outside of work?
24. What are the responsibilities outside of the workplace that are impacted by race and gender?
25. Do you have to deal with racism in your personal life?
26. What is the collective impact of responsibilities outside of work impacted by race and gender?

27. What are the responsibilities within the workplace impacted by race and gender beyond mentoring?
28. What is it like to balance responsibilities between settings?

General

29. How do you cope with the disappointments and difficulties?
30. What keeps you going?
31. Are there stories that you are willing to share about lessons learned?

Transformative Research Paradigm

32. I am looking to uncover (INSERT RQ's). Did I ask the right questions and/or is there anything that you would like to add to help me understand this experience?
33. Is there anything else that you would like to share that I didn't ask or that we didn't talk about?

Appendix B: Code List

Themes emerged in four major categories (level 2) under which additional themes emerged (levels 3 and 4).

LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
BURDEN OF ADDITIONAL WORK		
	Burden of additional work - Blackness in white space	
		Burden of additional work - Navigating dominant leadership norms
		Burden of additional work - Navigating bias and racism
		Burden of additional work - Navigating limited representation, visibility and usery
		Burden of additional work - Educating white adult peers about issues
	Burden of additional work - Supporting and mentoring BIPOC people outside of job description	
CARE AND SUPPORT		
	Care and support - Mentorship and support	
	Care and support - Connection to purpose	
	Care and support - Growth from experience and making new choices	
	Care and support - Support from friends and family	
TREATMENT OF BLACK WOMEN		
	Treatment of Black women - Criticism	
	Treatment of Black women - Being a hidden figure and lacking recognition	
	Treatment of Black women - Mobility	
	Treatment of Black women - Questioning Black women belonging and their level of knowledge	
	Treatment of Black women - Resisting marginalization into diversity work	
TRIPLE BURDEN		