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An Exploration of the Impostor Phenomenon and its Impact on Black Women Administrators in Higher Education in the South

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON AND ITS IMPACT ON BLACK

WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH

by

MARIAN MULDROW

(Under the Direction of Brenda Marina)

ABSTRACT

Numerous studies document Black student and faculty underrepresentation in higher

education and the obstacles blocking their access to the classroom either as students or as

instructors. As Black women students work toward graduate degrees, Black women

administrators are needed so these students can see their identity reflected in their academic

leaders.

As a result, this study focused on the particular challenges that limit upward mobility to

senior-level administrative positions and highlighted some of the obstacles and conflicts that

arise when Black women pursue leadership positions at institutions of higher education. The

highlighted historical events related to education, as well as factors, such as negative self-talk

and over preparation, are attributable to the *impostor phenomenon*, which can occur when

individuals who have earned degrees and academic honors feel no internal success. The impostor

phenomenon also refers to high-achieving individuals who are marked by an inability to

internalize their accomplishments and who live with a persistent fear of being exposed as a fraud.

The manifestation of the impostor phenomenon can cause individuals to let the workplace and

other personal commitments cloud their judgment of their ability, which can further push them

into outsider positions. However, in this study, the impostor phenomenon was not prominent

among Black women in higher education administrative positions. While the women did exhibit steps in the impostor phenomenon cycle, they did not find those steps to be a hindrance in the workplace.

This study focused on Black women in entry-level, middle-level, and senior-level leadership positions at colleges and universities in the southern part of the United States. The theoretical framework that informed the study was Black feminist thought. For this qualitative analysis, a narrative inquiry was used to conduct interviews with Black women administrators in the South. During the open-ended semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to describe their experiences in higher education. The study highlighted the experiences of the participants to educate administrators, faculty, and staff about the perceptions of Black women in the higher education workplace.

INDEX WORDS: Narrative inquiry, Identity, Impostor phenomenon, Black feminist thought, Black women, Higher education, Administrators

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all Black women who strive for greatness as leaders in higher education and agents of positive change, not only for themselves but also for the institutions as a whole in which they work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Black women were denied the right to a formal education at the beginning of America during slavery, yet they were considered outcasts for their inability to read and write (Adams, 2015). Even faced with this double-edged sword, some fought against this social norm. While enslaved, Black women found ways to educate not only themselves but also their children so that they would not have to live with the burden of ignorance.

For example, individuals such as Mary McLeod Bethune were able to educate not only themselves but others (Littlefield, 2005). Black women who were slaves had to negotiate on behalf of their children for snippets of learning. "Enslaved and free Black mothers kept an eye out for the cracks in the system of White supremacy where their children could gain a foothold, could potentially flourish. Those cracks were the freedoms that mothers sought" (Simpson, 2014, as cited in Smith, 2013, p. 178). After the Civil War, when Black people received the legal right to an education, Black women continued to play a pivotal role in their education. During the 1800s, Black women received opportunities in higher education institutions (Littlefield, 2005). Their commitment eventually contributed to leading Black people out of the bondage of legal discrimination and segregation and into the forefront of freedom (Noble, 1988).

Federal laws, as well as historical changes, further opened the doors to educational opportunities for Black people. For example, The Equal Pay Act abolished wage disparity based on gender (Duignan, 2010). The basis for this act was that women were receiving only three fifths of the salary of men for the same job responsibilities or title. President John F. Kennedy sought to remedy this with The Equal Pay Act of 1963. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

prohibited employers from discriminating against employees based on gender, race, color, national origin, or religion (Duignan, 2010). However, according to a White House report, *Women in America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being,* women still only earn 75% to 80% of the equivalent male wage (Carlin, Kidd, Rooney, & Denton, 2013). On average, today, men in higher education in Georgia make at least $4,000 more than women at the same institutions (Duignan, 2010). Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 included the right to a public education for all those who sought one (Kline, 2016). Title IX prohibits discrimination based on gender in any federally funded education program (Duignan, 2010). Societal change was also ushered in with the Equal Employment Opportunities Act, which promoted equal employment opportunities for American citizens (Duignan, 2010). Policies related to affirmative action (Duignan, 2010) and other changes were enacted to ensure that women and other minority persons received consideration for employment and educational opportunities.

This study expanded on past research (Becks-Moody, 2004; Beloney-Morrison, 2003; Thomas, 2013) and explored external obstacles imposed by others, life events, and priorities that Black women assume. Those challenges include the lack of safe spaces, historical practices related to race and gender, and lack of opportunities for advancement. The external obstacles discussed in this study are the result of the lack of representation in undergraduate and graduate programs in the classroom, as well as underrepresentation in the board room (Kabacoff, 2000). Underrepresentation is present despite increased access to programs (Meuth, 2009; Onwuachi-Willig, 2013). Hiring practices, which include recruitment, retention, and promotion, are also external obstacles that hinder the upward mobility of Black women in higher education (Meuth, 2009; Thompson, 2008).

The life events that women choose for themselves include commitments to family, community, and church. While these life commitments may not be obstacles, they may either contribute to or deter women's upward mobility. Social issues include homophily, inhospitable peers, and a lack of respect in the higher education arena. These problems result in isolation and a lack of self-esteem (Becks-Moody, 2004; Brock, 2010; Casemore, 2008; Coleman, 1998; Dindoffer, Reid, & Freed, 2011; Meuth, 2009; Watkins, 2005).

In addition to the obstacles already mentioned, the impostor phenomenon might prove to be a vital key to understanding the role of Black women in their upward mobility. The impostor phenomenon results from people (in this study, Black women) who do not allow career accomplishments to correspond to their capabilities. The result is a fear of failure (Clance & Imes, 1978). Black women who suffer from the impostor phenomenon feel the need to be the best; however, in a large university setting, they may realize that others are just as smart as or smarter than them, since Black women do not always or automatically start out as intellectuals just because they work in academia (Collins, 2000). Not beginning as academics increases feelings of inadequacy. With the increase in feelings of inadequacy comes the unrealistic need to be a "superwoman" (Sakulku & Alexander, 2011). The impostor phenomenon results in feelings of rejection and overall failure. This study described external obstacles and personal commitments, along with social and historical challenges, contributing to the impostor phenomenon.

Background and Brief Literature Review

Despite the federal initiatives that were meant to establish a protocol of equality, there continues to be a lack of women and persons of color, particularly Black women, in middle- and senior-level administrative positions in higher education. However, the same is not true of

faculty and senior staff peers who are not persons of color (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2015). According to the *Digest of Education Statistics*, Black women hold only 6% of the executive and administrative leaderships positions in institutions of higher education in the United States (Snyder et al., 2015), an increase of only 1% since 2007. These acts, initiatives, and statistics are important because it is the administrative body that is usually solely responsible for executing the policies and procedures for the institution, and they represent the culture and climate.

Black women have dealt with the challenges of racism, sexism, isolation, lack of trust, rapport, and tokenism in higher education (Chamberlin, 1988; Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Heikkinen & Huttumen, 2004). Such challenges have created a sense of a dual culture for many Black women and have led to lower retention rates in the positions obtained (Becks-Moody, 2004; Wallace, Moore, & Curtis, 2014). The dual-culture ideology goes back to W. E. B. Dubois (1965) and his idea of double consciousness. As Dubois explained, double consciousness defines the personal impression of feeling that one's identity is divided into multiple sections, making it difficult or impossible to have a unified identity. Regarding this study, double consciousness is a process in which Black women have the world at work and one outside of it and must separate the two, navigating between two worlds.

While there is a paucity of studies about Black women in educational leadership (Choates, 2012; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Robinson, 2012), studies that focus on self-imposed issues about Black women administrators in institutions of higher education are limited. For example, there has been attention paid to women breaking ground in historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs; Herdlein, Cali, & Dina, 2008; Stewart, 2014) with an increase in presidency and dean positions. However, mainstream educational research has not popularized the concept of self-imposed obstacles or the impostor phenomenon for Black women in higher

education as administrators. Also, past studies of the phenomenon have targeted graduate students (Clance & Imes, 1978). Furthermore, once a person has gained entrance into her field, she is not expected to have such staggering feelings of inadequacy as those associated with the impostor phenomenon.

Problem Statement

Black women who aspire to hold senior-level leadership positions or are pursuing entry-level and middle-level leadership positions in higher education should be cognizant of external barriers, such as historical factors and personal commitments and obligations (Becks-Moody, 2004). These responsibilities and duties can then be perceived as obstacles, whether the women create them on their own or allow others to do it for them. This recognition contributes to the impostor phenomenon and poses challenges to upward mobility. With this recognition, Black women can continue upward in leadership rather than remaining in entry-level positions or remaining stagnant in their current roles.

Prior dissertation studies that have addressed the experiences of Black women in higher education have focused on professor positions or only on 4-year institutions (Bright, 2010; Choates, 2012; Croom, 2011). Because of the shortage of Black women in such posts, even fewer studies exist about Black women who are presidents, provosts, or in similar positions. Bates (2007) and Williams (2007) included Black women in these leader positions. Sharpe and Swinton (2012) noted that the higher in importance an administrative position, the fewer women who hold these posts. Only one in four college presidents are women, and in the past five years, four universities gained the first woman president in the history of the college: University of Virginia, Middlebury College, Alabama State University, and Pueblo Community College. Only about 33% of community colleges have women as presidents, compared with 23% of bachelor's-

and master's-level institutions and 22% of doctoral institutions, and Black women hold less than 10% of the total number of leadership positions at colleges and universities (June, 2015).

A search of ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, using the keywords search term "Black women" AND "higher education" AND "leadership" was conducted. The search revealed only a handful of studies on Black women administrators in higher education published within the past five years (Andriano, 2010; Diaz, 2011). One study was a qualitative study of six leaders and their views on social justice within the academy. The others focused on the experiences of students of various ethnic backgrounds who aspired to be leaders and their engagement as first-generation college students. However, Sharpe and Swinton (2012) completed a quantitative study documenting the success of Black women in higher education. One of the important conclusions from that study was that attainment of degrees and the increase in tenure positions held by Black women have steadily increased, but this again points to faculty positions rather than administrative positions. There were no qualitative studies that called attention to each of the personal choices mentioned in this study, coupled with historical standards and hiring practices that affect upward mobility to senior-level administrative positions. In this search, there were also no other studies to aid in understanding how Black women make meaning of their experiences in the workplace as college-level administrators. The same search conducted on EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete provided 24 results. Only six of the studies focused solely on Black women in leadership positions (Dowdy & Hamilton, 2011; Hartmann, 1992; Livers, 2005; S. Patton, 2013; Praylow, 2009; Watson, 2004). Most of the remaining studies concentrated on Black women in faculty positions (Brown-Glaude, 2010; Henry, 2015; Sulé 2015), Black women as students (Chambers, 2010; Domingue, 2015; K. B. Jackson, 2008), or Black women as college athletes.

Little is known or understood about the realities that Black women experience to justify their choices in the workplace. According to June (2015), there is a lack of interest in Black women's issues. However, it is of vital importance for others to hear the voices of Black women because of researchers who consider the voices of Black women as simply noise silence their voices and typically do not include them as a central focus in research studies (Chin, 2007). Despite the growing presence of Black women in graduate programs, higher education teaching positions, and entry-level administrative positions, Black women are still not progressing to leadership positions in higher education at an equitable rate. Collins (2000) explained how race, class, and gender are intersecting oppressions; however, the dominate group has changed the way they approach these oppressions toward Black women.

Purpose of the Study

Historical standards and hiring practices have affected upward mobility for Black women as they pursue leadership roles in higher education; as a result, many Black women may experience the impostor phenomenon (Jarrett, 2010). While research indicates that all women face many obstacles (de Wet, 2010; Dindoffer et al., 2011), Black women face obstacles unique to the environment engendered at predominantly White institutions, including gender and racial discrimination, isolation, and discriminatory hiring practices (Moody, 2004). Further, Johnsrud (1993) explained that Black women have different experiences than other minorities including Asian, Latino, and Native American women as well as different than White women.

Past efforts by Black women show that Black women have a desire to progress into senior-level leadership positions but have not done so after years in academe (Croom, 2011). This study considered and highlighted factors associated with the impostor phenomenon that causes Black women to doubt and second guess their potential as administrators in higher

education. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of Black women that include external obstacles and personal commitments that can lead to symptoms of the impostor phenomenon and limit upward mobility.

Significance of the Study

This study may increase understanding of the day-to-day experiences of Black women who work in higher education. While studies exist on women in higher education, at the time of this study there had been scant research on the obstacles that hinder upward mobility for Black women. This study is a distinct contribution to the literature as it describes the external and historical barriers that are common to Black women; it outlines commitments that Black women choose for themselves outside of the workplace. Black feminist thought provides Black women a means of working toward justice (Collins, 2000).

This study was designed to educate those in higher education administration about the experiences of Black women. A study such as this may lead to a greater commitment by senior-level administrators to foster and support the efforts of Black women for continued upward mobility. The study could, in turn, lead to the recruitment, retention, and promotion of Black women leaders in higher education. Having Black women leaders is relevant to higher education as a leadership problem because the administration must represent the growing population of Black women in higher education. An increased representation of Black women in graduate leadership programs and leadership positions promotes a diversified body in institutions' organizational structure.

Theoretical Framework

This section provides a discussion of Black feminist thought, which is the framework that was used to mold the dimensions that framed the experiences of the participants as Black women

in higher education. The section also provides context for Black women and their relationship to Black feminist thought, as well as the impostor phenomenon.

Misconceptions can arise that suggest that only race binds Black women, who 'play the race card.' That is a misunderstanding because race is only one marker for a group. Other realities play a role in the oppression of Black women, including class, gender, sexuality, religion, and citizenship status (Collins, 2000). Furthermore, the discussion of the lived experiences of Black women's oppressions shape their lived experiences with each other, and each must arrive at a collective understanding, even though each experiences life in unique ways. While racial segregation was created to keep the oppressed in their positions, Black women must eliminate such present-day notions of oppression to articulate their voice and place in the landscape of living. By continuing the dialogue of Black feminist thought and the oppressions that Black women face, the work that was started decades before can continue. Black feminist thought, then, is about promoting all movements and people, but it also forces others to recognize the movement of Black women.

Black feminist thought is a theory that expresses how Black women can resist oppression, understand the struggles that they face daily, and explore their individual place within society and within their families (Collins, 2000; hooks, 2009; Whitlock, 2007). Also, Black feminist thought forces Black women out of their quiet submission and into an acceptance of their value and worth (hooks, 2009). Lastly, Black women's activism has two primary dimensions: struggle for group survival and struggle for institutional transformation. The notion of the group survival means that Black women must work together to overcome oppressions and survive. The struggle for institutional transformation suggests that discriminatory policies and procedures, particularly in the workplace, must be removed (Collins, 2000).

Most other theories on men's and women's interactions in the workplace and society tend to approach race from a male perspective (Fagenson, 1993). However, Black feminist thought focuses solely on Black women. As such, establishing a context for Black feminist thought to understand how it is a framework for Black women and upward mobility in this study is important.

> In a society in which no one is obligated to respect African-American women, we have long admonished one another to have self-respect and to demand the respect of others. Black women's voices from a variety of sources reflect this demand for respect. (Collins, 2000, p. 115)

Educator Cornel West stated during a speech at Kennesaw State University on January 20, 2013, that in this post-Civil Rights Era, it is time for Black women to take the hump of stereotypes, marginalization, and oppression out of their backs and walk upright. He explained that it is a time to speak out and not be afraid of how they feel and let others know how they feel.

Collins (2000) aimed to continue the previous efforts of other Black feminists and suggested that Black women continue to educate themselves to gain independence and cause a seeable change in their environments so that they are thriving, not coping. She insisted that Black women could resist oppression, recognize daily struggles, and carve out a place in society. However, merely knowing that these issues exist is not enough; Black women must avoid social destruction and margins (Becks-Moody, 2004; Collins, 2000). Black women must understand the tools at their disposal to create a space that allows them to have a voice to challenge the stereotypes and false ideologies and images constructed about Black women (Collins, 2000).

To escape the margins, Black women must develop a self-defined standpoint. Self-definition is about removing the controlling images that others have created and, instead,

creating their own (Collins, 2000; Lorde, 2007). Collins explained the life of Black women as one that requires acting, where Black women live two lives - one for the dominant group and one for themselves. Even in domestic work, Black women have a way of deflecting the negativity that is extended to them, but they have not completed this work by any means. At the same time, being silent is also a way to defend their standpoint. However, silence is not a way for Black women to continue a submissive position; instead, it can allow for a self-defined Black women's realization (Collins, 2000).

Black women are often subject to group treatment. Because of the dominant group placing Black women together, they become a collective invisible, but that also means that they are in an outsider-within position. While on the surface being invisible is a less than ideal, the outsider-within position can lead to creativity and make new meanings (Collins, 2000).

Even in the face of the collective group, Black women can further use this oppression to their advantage. They can turn that grouping into creating safe spaces that will allow Black women to avoid being labeled as the Other (Collins, 2000). In those safe spaces, they can study the controlling images with closer inspection and create plans for dismantling them. However, the safe spaces remain safe only if others do not intrude into these areas. While Collins (2000) and Thomas (2013) addressed the argument that exclusionary organizations can be detrimental, it is what Black women do after they leave those spaces to enact positive change that matters. Safe spaces, then, are a component of the survival of Black women in academics, in positive communities, and in ensuring the active existence of a unified America.

In continuing the effort to create a self-defined voice, Collins (2000) articulated the Black woman's standpoint, which includes a legacy of struggle, intersecting oppressions, self-defined images for Black women, Black women as leaders, and sensitivity to sexual politics. These can

be further classified as five components. The legacy of struggle encompasses the attacks that women have faced at work, home, and in the media, which has perpetuated the fight for the Black woman (Collins, 2000; Richardson, 1987). Intersecting oppressions, particular to this study, are race and gender. However, it is not enough to recognize that such oppressions exist; Black women must engage in thought and action that destroy these social constructions. The controlling images of Black women are ones that portray Black women as ugly or unfeminine (Collins, 2000).

Collins (2000), Davis (1997), and Walker (1997) pointed out five original controlling images that have been used to define Black women in America. The "mammy" was the first image, dating back to slavery. Here the Black woman was seen as a maternal figure, but not just for their children, as that position was not guaranteed, but also for the White woman for whom they worked. Black women were the sexual property of some slave owners in America's past, but such oppression still lingers as Black women explore their place in relationships and seek a partner who provides a balance rather than simply a partner for the sake of escaping loneliness or fulfilling an expectation suggested by others. With the slow emergence of Black women having opportunities for better jobs, they have muted this mammy position but not erased it completely (Collins, 2000).

The next image is that of the matriarch. The problem with this image is that she exists because anyone can overcome poverty if she is taught the way out (Collins, 2000). This image attempts to control Black women's actions and racially oppress them.

The welfare mother is a binary of sorts to the matriarch; this image is one of an unfit mother that came about as Black women wanted equal access to state services. As a welfare

mother, Black women receive an updated version of the breeder, whose primary role, when not working like a mule, was to have babies (Collins, 2000).

The next image is that of the Black Lady. In the 21st century, the Black woman can be the Black Lady; however, she is too assertive and is simply a modern version of the club woman who cannot keep a man because she has forgotten how to treat him.

The last image that Collins (2000) provided is that of the Jezebel, who is only interested in sex with as many men as possible, often for payment. This image is lasting and continuously filters in and out of the media and Black culture. Sadly, Black women often do not challenge this image, even though Black women's sexuality is often linked with historical "jezebels" and contemporary 'hoochies' (Collins, 2000, p. 81).

Black women must break these stereotypical false and unappealing images. Black women must create an image that lifts them into a position of acceptance, not just by others but by each other as well.

When discussing Black women and controlling images, it is necessary to bring up the topic of sexuality and how it concerns Black women. Scholars typically frame the sexuality of Black women using the frameworks that work for any women and simply show that they have it worse than others (Collins, 2000). Since many other groups tend to speak for Black women, they find it hard to articulate a voice of their own (Collins, 2000).

Black women have also been historically reluctant to use research by Black feminists who are also lesbian in understanding the oppressions of Black women and creating a self-defined standpoint. Black women who are not gay "perceive their own race and gender oppression yet victimize lesbians, gays, and bisexuals" (Collins, 2000, p. 126). Understanding Black women's sexuality will make way for understanding the oppressions of Black women.

This understanding is based on the intersection of politics and oppressions concerning Black women. Black women are mothers, so they have a sexual side; they are women by the social construction of gender, so they have a sexual side; they are nurturers, so they have a sexual side. To separate sexuality from the understanding of women is to separate Black women into multiple parts, which would be detrimental to breaking multiple oppressions.

Another theme that Collins (2000) addressed that continued the discussion of a Black woman's sexuality is that of Black women's love relationships. Slavery forced Black women to disassociate love with family and children because both were not options that always occurred at the same time. To truly love themselves and those in their lives, Black women must reject the oppressions and definitions of the dominant group and write their own (Collins, 2000).

Also, Black people tend to pay more attention to Black men's issues rather than women. Black women encourage Black men to be mentors for Black male youth and to be role models, but they do not do the same for young, Black girls (Collins, 2000). Furthermore, Black women work to justify the wrongs against Black men, but they do not do the same for themselves.

> Many Black women want loving sexual relationships with Black men, but instead end up alone. Black men may be the closest to Black women, and thus receive the lion's share of the blame for all the daily ways that Black women are caused to feel less worthy, yet this societal judgment and rejection of Black women permeates the entire culture. (Collins, 2000, p. 160)

Black women establish Black manhood but not womanhood. Lastly, Black women want relationships with Black men, but they fail to establish such connections with themselves (Collins, 2000; Hurston, 1937; Lorde, 2007). Instead of fearing the stigma of receiving the label of a lesbian for loving and respecting another woman on a deeper level, Black women should

embrace such connections and dismantle the ideas of eroticism and homosexuality that have oppressed Black women loving each other beyond themselves.

Collins (2000) explained that, for her, Black feminist thought was a combination of various theories, including "diverse theoretical traditions such as Afrocentric philosophy, feminist theory, Marxist social thought, the sociology of knowledge, critical theory, and post-modernism" (p. vii). While she did not explicitly state the terms associated with these approaches or the exact methods throughout the text, the ideas are present. Collins's (2000) book suggested a similar process. Although Collins did not explicitly state the creation of five dimensions of Black feminist thought, the five used to explore the experiences of the participants in this study can be found weaving their way throughout the text, waiting to be compiled loosely based on the entirety of the book and standpoints of Black feminist thought.

Collins supported a variety of voices to work through the theory of what it means to be a Black woman. She stated that intellectual creativity can extend from a variety of people representing various backgrounds (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) encouraged others to "present Black feminist thought as a shifting mosaic of competing ideas and interests. I have focused on the pieces of the mosaic—perhaps others will emphasize the disjunctures distinguishing the pieces of the mosaic from one another" (p. ix). This study is designed to add to the collection by exploring the experiences of Black women through five distinct dimensions. After all, "Reinterpreting existing works through new theoretical frameworks is another dimension of developing Black feminist thought" (Collins, 2000, p. 14).

Alasuutari (1996) explained the concept of theorizing as one that applies directly to qualitative research. Theories work for different frameworks that aid in explaining a phenomenon when different viewpoints are involved (Alasuutari, 1996). Furthermore, a

theoretical framework can be used to analyze a group of people, case, or abnormality that garners further exploration. In the instance of this study, the different viewpoints were from the participants and the phenomenon was the challenges that Black women face in higher education leadership positions. The five dimensions used in this study are (a) core themes that emerge from Black women's experiences, (b) variations on the core themes, (c) interdependence of experience and consciousness, (d) consciousness and the struggle for a self-defined standpoint, and (e) interdependence of thought and action (Collins, 1990).

The first dimension from theorizing Black feminist thought is the core theme of a Black women's standpoint (Collins, 1990). The core issues relate to Black women having similar experiences throughout their lives. Those can include the struggle for identity, oppression, and the need to replace degrading images of Black women with self-defined images (Becks-Moody, 2004). These struggles can rise above the constraints of race, class, gender, and sexuality (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) described these similar experiences as hidden places within Black women's consciousness. Within these locations, Black women must seek safe places and coping mechanisms that will allow them to be a part of larger society with a sense of self, even if acceptance from others is lacking.

The second dimension recognizes the variation of responses to the core themes that emerge from the participants (Collins, 1990). For the purpose of this study, this difference came in the form of interview data that yielded diverse responses from the participants. Although they share similar experiences, Black women have different ways and degrees of oppressions because of social class, the region of the country in which they live, urbanization, and age. These factors combine to produce wide-ranging experiences that help to shape the diversity among Black women (Becks-Moody, 2004). Despite differences of age, sexual orientation, social class, region,

and religion, United States Black women typically experience social norms that prohibit them from equitable housing, neighborhoods, schools, jobs, and public treatment. The dominate group hides this disparity behind the common beliefs about Black women's intelligence, work habits, and sexuality. These common challenges can result in recurring patterns of experiences among Black women. For example, Black women from different backgrounds are not all treated the same way in stores, but unequal treatment is common (Collins, 2000).

The third dimension is the interdependence of experience and consciousness and relates to the personal and professional experiences of Black women. This aspect includes cultural experiences that help to shape everyday lives (Collins, 2000). Black women have unique experiences, and the perspectives of Black women are not expressed and adopted by all Black women. However, there are some cultural similarities. According to Collins (2000), Black women encounter challenges resulting from living in a society that historically oppresses women of African descent. However, recognizing commonalities can lead to a collective knowledge that can transform many Black women's lives and how they view the workplace.

The fourth dimension suggests a consciousness that struggles to create a self-defining position. This dimension insinuates that a Black woman has to be what the dominant group views her to be (Becks-Moody, 2004). Even though Black women have experiences that can enlighten more than just other Black women, other groups would rather suppress such ideas and insight (Collins, 2000; Osada & Costa, 2008). As Collins (2000) explained, "Black feminist thought's identity as a 'critical' social theory lies in its commitment to justice, both for U.S. Black women as a collectivity and for that of other similarly oppressed groups" (p. 9). Even though Black women should carry the ideology of Black feminist thought throughout their daily

lives, they can help to improve the social climate in the workplace through articulating their experiences.

The fifth dimension is the interdependence of thought and action. This dimension deals with identifying oppressions, mainly through experiences, and attempting to resolve them (Becks-Moody, 2004).

> As members of an oppressed group, U.S. Black women have generated alternative practices and knowledges that have been designed to foster U.S. Black women's group empowerment. In contrast to the dialectical relationship linking oppression and activism, a dialogical relationship characterizes Black women's collective experiences and group knowledge. On both the individual and the group level, a dialogical relationship suggests that changes in thinking may be accompanied by changed actions and that altered experiences may, in turn, stimulate a changed consciousness. For U.S. Black women as a collectivity, the struggle for a self-defined Black feminism occurs through an ongoing dialogue whereby action and thought inform one another. (Collins, 2000, p. 30)

Thereby, Black women will change their views on their lives and the challenges that they face by breaking normalized oppressions.

Black Women in Higher Education

The history of Black women in the workplace has gone through many cycles, starting with enslavement, emancipation, domestic work, and working poor to middle-class status. Unlike their White counterparts, Black women were not able to ensure that their families remained together through Black servitude. Black women did not have autonomy over how they spent their time or where, what, and with whom they worked (Collins, 2000). Even with the passing of emancipation, White ideology dictated the terms of Black women's work because

White people, particularly men, controlled the workforce and were not above resulting to violence to maintain their control (Collins, 2000). As time progressed and Black families moved to cities, Black men began to spend their time in social spaces such as barbershops and pool halls, which in a sense acted as their safe spaces, and left women with the house and church. Black women showed their Black daughters how to perform domestic work (Collins, 2000).

With the 1960s came civil rights, which opened opportunities for Black women; however, they still faced racial discrimination and separation by class structures. Also, to counter the equal rights awarded to Black people, White men began to eliminate jobs once reserved for Black men. The introduction of cocaine opened a new type of workforce: drug dealer. Consequently, family ties began to diminish and Black people became further impoverished and functioned in single-parent households where Black women took the role of single parents (Collins, 2000). Eventually, Black women, through their legacy of struggling, began to obtain middle-class positions. That, too, came with a cross to bear because Black women professionals were expected to shoulder the burden of institutions and personnel that were in disarray (Collins, 2000). Not only do many Black women face being single with children or single and looking for a companion, they must do so in professions where they are underrepresented. However, if they believe they will never get married, some Black women choose to remain single without seeking a companion (Collins, 2000).

However, Collins (2000) pointed out that the Black woman is not alone; these women and others can work to change the environment around them. However, change cannot occur in an environment that promotes the continuation of social injustices (Collins, 2000). Black women, including professors and those in administrative positions in higher education, can add to the body of knowledge that promotes a desire for effective change in the practices of dismantling

oppressions against Black women. However, Black women, since few are in leadership positions in higher education, must not allow themselves into a place of separation even though they have limited access to other United States Black women and to Black women's communities (Collins, 2000). While Black women are in some positions in higher education, many of those tend to be entry-level positions. Few of these posts are senior level, which means that "U.S. Black women still do a remarkable share of the emotional nurturing and cleaning up after other people, often for lower pay" (Collins, 2000, p. 40). Even though Black women have a history of working in servitude, such work is not over yet. Black women remain among the lowest-paid groups in America. Even though Black women have worked in slavery, an urbanized South, domestic labor, and now in professions, they are not compensated for such longevity in the workforce (Collins, 2000). The under-compensation extends into higher education, where the same imbalance is still present, not just in a monetary sense but also in overall equality.

Collins (2000) explained how the experiences and consciousness of knowing shape the way in which Black women carry out their lives as scholars. The canonized literature by Black women exposes the fact that Black women often find themselves in places where life experiences, family, work, and the balance among them all, often lead to an attempt to craft self-definitions (Collins, 2000). The women in this study were no different. While they did not directly articulate that they were in the act of crafting a self-definition, their stories relayed the message. Just as Collins (2000) was at points in her career, some of the women in this study were firsts in their positions or departments. Just as Collins wanted to be more than a first, they, too, want to have a voice in the decision-making processes in their departments. However, overcoming efforts to silence not just the woman voice but the Black woman voice is an

obstacle. Sometimes they found that silence was easier or more acceptable. However, Collins (2000) challenged women to find their voice and use it, proudly and in a commanding manner.

Developing a self-defined Black motherhood can help to eliminate these oppressions. Motherhood goes beyond bearing children and extends to considering those who care for another family, the children of others, or even other professions where Black women must examine the needs of others. Black women need a "revitalized Black feminist analysis of motherhood that debunks the image of 'happy slave,' whether the White-male-created 'matriarch' or the Black-male-perpetuated 'superstrong Black mother'" (Collins, 2000, p. 176). Even work done in academia falls into this category; since Black women often work in entry-level and middle-level positions, they are in the care of senior-level administrators who they must meet the needs of in the workplace.

Black feminist thought is applicable to defining the Black woman's place in higher education administration. The theory is a means of explaining how "[a black feminist is] an idea involving such qualities as being challenging and bold, being inquiring, pushing and striving toward a special kind of maturity" (Sanders, 1995, p. 36). Challenging, bold, and inquiring are qualities that reliable administrators should have in higher education ("Forum," 2016). Also, Collins (2000) explained that Black women have been "prevented from becoming full insiders in any of these areas of inquiry, Black women remained in outsider-within locations, individuals whose marginality provided a distinctive angle of vision on these intellectual and political entities" (p. 12). This means they are individuals whose marginality provides a unique vision on intellectual and political units (Collins, 2000). Black women are considered outsiders because they are Black women who happen to work in a White, male-dominated environment in higher education. As a result of the marginality forced on Black women, they feel that they must exist in

an outsider position. They not only face responsibilities of family, church, and other commitments, they must also combat obstacles within the workplace (Brock, 2010; Collins, 2000; Mitchell, 2009; Walker, 1997). Collins (2000) explained that after WWII, more White women entered the labor market and challenged Black women's role in the workplace. As a result, Black women who are in fact administrators feel a sense of isolation when working in environments where they must confront obstacles such as racism and sexism and personal commitments (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Heikkinen & Huttumen, 2004).

Even though Black feel isolation with their peers, they can use their positions at various levels of administration to enhance the lives of Black students who attend higher education institutions. Black women can foster relationships with these women in order to show them ways to overcome oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation they will face as students, particularly at institutions in the southern part of the United States. This relationship is what Collins (2000) refers to mothering the mind and acts as a symbol of empowerment for Black women.

<div align="center">Impostor Phenomenon</div>

In describing the experiences of Black women in higher education, the impostor phenomenon is a fundamental theory that contributes to making meaning of their experiences. This is because of the following explanation by Collins (2000):

> The presence of Black women's collective wisdom challenges two common interpretations of the consciousness of oppressed groups. One approach claims that subordinate groups identify with the powerful and have no accurate independent analysis of their oppression. The second assumes the oppressed are less human than their rulers, and are therefore less capable of interpreting their own experiences. (pp. 24-25)

Although this corresponds to the silencing of Black women, it also speaks to the elements of the impostor phenomenon, such as the possibility of negative self-talk and psychological distress that can occur among the oppressed. When others put a Black woman's position as a person into question as being less than, negative results are inevitable.

Factors that contribute to the impostor phenomenon include perfectionism, negative self-talk/self-doubt, and family environment, which can lead to psychological distress, including anxiety and depression (Clance, 1985; Sakulku & Alexander, 2011). Figure 1 portrays the cycle of the impostor phenomenon; however, not all people experience each step in the cycle. Neither do all people experience the same degree of each characteristic. Clance (1985) realized that the impostor phenomenon initially affected women most often; however, she later discovered that the impostor phenomenon affects both genders and various races (Taylor, 2009). This study focused on the relation of this phenomenon to Black women in higher education.

THE IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON
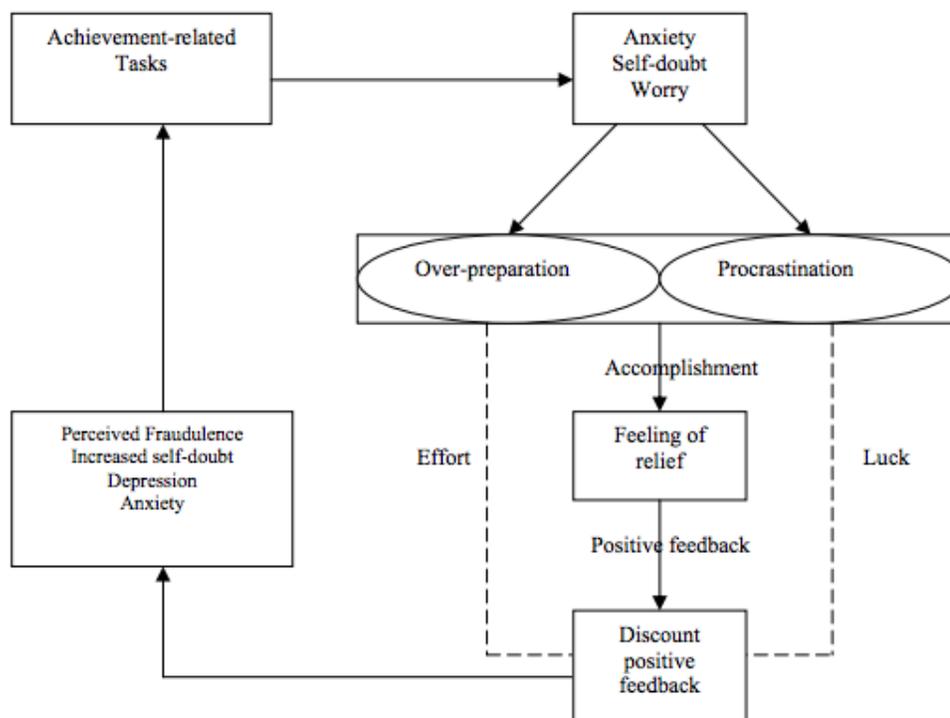
Figure 1. The impostor cycle. Based on *The Imposter Phenomenon,* by P. R. Clance, 1985, Atlanta, GA: Peachtree.

      As shown in Figure 1, based on research by Clance (1985), the impostor cycle begins when a Black woman receives a task to complete on the job. The task leads to an onset of fear and anxiety-related symptoms, which may cause either over-preparation or procrastination, followed by a heightened state of readiness. Once the task is complete, there is a sense of accomplishment, but the feeling is short-lived. Even if the Black woman receives positive praise for the job, she does not attribute the success to her own doing; instead, she denies that she is capable of completing such work and rejects the praise. On the other hand, if she has over-prepared for the task, she credits effort with the accomplishment rather than her abilities. If procrastination were present, she would point the success to luck. When she receives the next

task, this cycle repeats itself. Black women who suffer from the impostor phenomenon often overwork, which hinders other duties and projects; it is a hard step of the cycle to break. Repeated success also heightens the impostor phenomenon's impact as one begins to feel like a fraud (Clance, 1985; Cokley, Mcclain, Enciso, & Martinez, 2013; Sakulku & Alexander, 2011).

Jarrett (2010) summarized this cycle with three defining characteristics of the impostor phenomenon. The first is the feeling that others have an inflated perception of their abilities; second, one's true abilities will be found out, along with the fact that they are subpar; third, success is attributed to luck rather than to skill and education. Self-doubt often accompanies the phenomenon, which leads to sabotaging the career (Jarrett, 2010). When Black women face traditional barriers of race and culture and family obligations along with other compounding factors, they may suffer from the impostor phenomenon (Taylor, 2009). The impostor phenomenon could stifle their upward mobility in higher education leadership positions.

As Sakulku and Alexander (2011) explained with regard to Clance's (1985) cycle, the consequences of the impostor phenomenon's fears require further investigation. In addition, the connection between impostor fear of achievement in the workplace and how family and outside commitments affect workplace success requires further exploration. It is necessary to establish a clear link between the goals of Black women in higher education and the social expectations of them.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

The purpose of this study was to describe the obstacles that Black women encounter because of historical standards, hiring practices, and personal commitments that can lead to symptoms of the impostor phenomenon. These barriers can limit upward mobility when pursuing leadership roles in higher education. The research questions were developed considering Black

feminist thought (Collins, 2000), which gives voice to marginalized Black women through their narratives. The questions that guided the study were similar to those used to guide Becks-Moody's (2004) study of Black women in higher education in the state of Louisiana.

1. How do Black women experience upward mobility at institutions of higher education?

2. What challenges do Black women administrators face in higher education?

3. What coping strategies do Black women use to successfully manage those challenges?

Methods

Research Design

This qualitative study utilized narrative inquiry as a way to gain insight into the lives and experiences of Black women in higher education. Anderson and Jack (1991) explained that others may silence one's unique life experiences. This silence often occurs when the interests and experiences of women diverge from those of men. Consequently, the women interviewed in this study used their voices and experiences to provide an understanding of Black women in higher education who may suffer from the impostor phenomenon, which stifles upward mobility.

Etter-Lewis (1991) explained the use of narratives from the perspective of Black women. Stories provide a unique way of gathering information essential to understanding women's lives and viewpoints, particularly Black women. When applied to women of color, stories contain a particular element of power that leads to the redefining of womanhood and sisterhood that history, literature, and the academy often overlook. However, narratives are a useful tool to explore the layers of a Black woman's life. Narratives can result in understanding race and gender from a Black woman's perspective (Etter-Lewis, 1991).

Population and Sample

Of the 238,718 executive leadership positions in higher education, Black women hold approximately 16,710 of those jobs in the United States (Snyder et al., 2015). The intent of the study was to draw a sample of Black women in higher education institutions holding leadership positions who are members of the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education (AABHE). AABHE was established on the premise of supporting the educational and professional needs of Blacks in higher education while focusing on leadership and issues that affect students, faculty, staff, and administrators. AABHE also supports opportunities for collaborating and networking with individuals, institutions, groups, and agencies in higher education (AABHE, 2016). AABHE has a network of several thousand members across the country and internationally, as well 18 institutional memberships with colleges and universities. Participation in this study was delimited to women who had held their positions for three years or longer, since they had established themselves in their current role and were able to contribute their narrative to the study.

Instrumentation

The interview protocol was peer reviewed by seven higher education professionals. The protocol consisted of 11 questions concerning the workplace. Becks-Moody (2004), Beloney-Morrison (2003), and Robinson (2012), who also examined Black women in higher education, found that the ability to explore and inquire through questions and interviews was essential to understanding the realities of Black women and opening up the silence behind their experiences.

The questionnaire included demographic questions to gather descriptive information about the participants and their institutions (Robinson, 2012). The interviews began with the demographic questions, followed by the protocol of open-ended questions, and ended with more

investigative questions that arose during the discussion. This semi-structured format allowed for a detailed account of the participants' experiences. Merriam (2009) explained that open-ended questions also allow for more detailed data and stories. The goal of the questions was to understand the lived realities of the Black women participants.

Data Collection

Approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Georgia Southern University (Appendix D). Following IRB approval, the plan was to request a list of AABHE members; if that list were not available, the alternate plan was to reach out to the colleges and universities with an institutional membership. Because the AABHE list was not received, the alternate plan was executed. The researcher emailed a request to participate and a letter of consent (Appendix A) to women who were identified as potential participants. After actual participants had signed the consent form, a biographical and institutional data form was emailed (Appendix B). Upon receipt of the demographic form, dates and times for telephone, Skype, or in-person interviews were scheduled, and the interviews were conducted using the interview protocol (Appendix C).

Data Analysis

The interviews were conducted based on a qualitative method outlined by Liamputtong (2013). Transcriptions of the interviews were sent to participants for member checking (Carlson, 2010). The first step in coding was primary coding (Saldaña, 2013), in which answers to fundamental questions were underlined and circled. Commonalities among responses were noted. From the underlined and circled words in the interviews, open coding was used to develop themes from the replies (Liamputtong, 2009; Saldaña, 2013). Utilizing the dimensions theorized from Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000), further analysis of the themes followed.

Core Themes Theorized from Black Feminist Thought

The core themes theorized from Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000) are framed as dimensions. The first dimension is concerned with the idea that Black women have shared experiences (Collins, 1990; Thomas, 2013). Thus, the first step was to describe the common experiences of the women in this study. Next was the second dimension, which considered the variations in experiences, followed by the variations with the third dimension, which was the experiences that Black women have had toward upward mobility and how those experiences expressed the importance of Black women as compared to any other group. Finally, the data were examined for coping strategies for Black women to eliminate oppressions, which is the fifth dimension.

Limitations, Delimitations, Assumptions, and Bias

A limitation of this study was that the experiences of women in this study are not generalizable to all Black women in higher education in the United States. The study was delimited to Black women in higher education in the southern region of the United States. It was assumed that all participants were truthful in their narration. As a Black woman, the researcher was conscious not to convey a personal stance on any given question or give cues that would influence the data. However, researchers can never completely remove bias from qualitative research (Madison, 2005).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they are used in this study.

Black woman: A woman of African descent.

College administrator or leader position: A position at a college or university held by a person who is responsible for the supervision of the institution, including faculty who take on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom.

Higher education: Merriam-Webster ("Higher Education," 2011) defines higher education as education or learning that takes place at a college or university.

Leaders: Any person in a coordinator position or higher position in a higher education institution.

Negative self-talk: Internal negative dialogue that convinces a person that she is not capable of performing tasks.

Outsider position: A place of marginalization based on being of the non-dominant race among one's peers.

Self-imposed obstacles: Personal commitments such as family, church, and community involvement.

Upward mobility: Overcoming challenges, internal and external, to advance in higher education.

Chapter Summary

The lack of mobility and representation are due in part to the past obstacles that have limited mobility. Although life choices, such as family, church, and community involvement, are important, they do not have to stifle the Black woman's presence in higher positions of leadership at colleges and universities. As Collins (2000) suggested, Black women are strong and intelligent enough to handle both aspects of their lives without compromising either. This narrative and study considered factors that cause Black women to doubt themselves as potential administrators in higher education. Many Black women in higher education assume that they are

not adequate to take on senior level leadership roles; this suffering is symptomatic of the impostor phenomenon.

Therefore, this study described the personal and professional challenges that Black women experience as administrators in institutions of higher education and the approaches they use to cope with conflicts (Becks-Moody, 2004). This study is grounded in literature that explored challenges concerning Black women administrators in higher education. The targeted literature is that which explores balancing career, family, and community commitment; hiring and promotion; isolation; and sexism and racism (Becks-Moody, 2004). Black feminist thought was used to inform this study. Examining the experiences of Black women will provide Black women with information to improve the outlook for upward mobility in the departments and colleges where they work.

<div align="center">Organization of the Dissertation</div>

Chapter 2, the literature review, provides a historical journey of Black women in higher education. A synopsis of the underrepresentation of Black women in graduate programs follows the history. The discussion then shifts to the external commitments that influence the upward mobility of Black women. Finally, social issues that may prohibit advancement and may lead to the impostor phenomenon are discussed. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used for this study. The chapter includes a detailed discussion of the population and instrument for the interviews. Also, the chapter addresses data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 begins with the demographic data of the participants and an overview of each participant. The chapter also presents the data and an interpretation of the information gathered based on the themes that emerged and an analysis of those themes through the dimensions derived from Black feminist thought. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review was to describe the obstacles that Black women may encounter as a result of historical standards and personal commitments that can interfere with their upward mobility when pursuing leadership roles in higher education. When coupled, these obstacles and choices can lead to the impostor phenomenon. This study utilized Black feminist thought and considered other theories to scaffold understanding, such as the moral development of women in leadership.

This review begins with Black feminist thought and addresses the successes, history, and impact of Black women in higher education, starting with an exploration of the historical journey of Black women in higher education in America during the 18th century. Next is the Harlem Renaissance, pivotal court cases, and the 21st century's downplaying of the potential of the Black women after centuries of perseverance to define themselves (Collins, 2000). The history is followed by a synopsis of the systematic oppressions that act as barriers to upward mobility. These oppressions include representation of Black women in graduate programs; however, there exists underrepresentation in higher education administration. The review addresses personal commitments, including family and church, which play a role in the thought processes of Black women, as well as psychological issues such as isolation, and low self-esteem. Personal commitments and psychological issues are considered factors for the impostor phenomenon.

Black Feminist Thought and Other Theoretical

Perspectives on Women in Leadership

Although Black feminist thought focuses on combating oppressions, Collins (2000) pointed out challenges and shortcomings to such a theory. She stated that knowing that a struggle

is real does not mean that all Black women recognize it, and age does not always make the struggle any easier (Collins, 2000). Another challenge is that Black women do not have identical experiences or interpret experiences the same (Collins, 2000). Racism is another challenge to Black feminist thought because not all Black women experience it in the same way (Collins, 2000). Social class status often influences how little or how much Black women face being objectified due to the color of their skin (Collins, 2000; Thomas, 2013).

Collins (2000) suggested that Black feminist thought stems from a specialized knowledge base created for Black women. Black feminist thought, then, presents a standpoint of and for Black women. This theoretical perspective embraces theoretical interpretations of Black women's reality by those who live it. This approach also facilitates the understanding and resolution of social dilemmas of race and gender for Black women (Becks-Moody, 2004). Furthermore, since Black feminist thought is a critical social theory, it empowers Black women to face injustice and intersecting oppressions while also addressing broader issues that Black women's particular needs (Collins, 2000). Black feminist thought translates to a means for implementing social and organizational change for Black women.

In examining the impostor phenomenon concerning Black women, social class structure and moral development were considered. Gilligan (1982) is a theorist who focused on the moral development of women in leadership. Her work, which is grounded in the work of Kohlberg (1958), suggested two modes: One mode focused on caring, responsibility, and nurturance of people's needs and the second mode stressed reasoning based on moral principles of justice, equality, and individual rights (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan classified the psychology of women and being in a position of leadership and decision making into five components, including family, community, and church and social issues such as feelings of isolation and building relationships.

Gilligan (1982) explained that women strive to develop relationships that are important to women, but they tend to want happy, perfect relationships, which can be unrealistic for certain situations, as well as difficult to maintain when they have hard decisions to make in the workplace. When they do not have the ideal relationships, they lack a true identity. Furthermore, they link the preservation of relationships to the value of their lives (Gilligan, 1982). That train of thought filters into the workplace and creates a barrier to advancement. Instead, Black women should see that the world is, in fact, more about relationships and human connections rather than a system of rules.

Women tend to waiver on making decisions because of fear of judgment (Gilligan, 1982). Also, when women feel isolated from participants in the world around them, they view themselves as subject to the judgment of others and are dependent on the ones who are judging them (Gilligan, 1982). Women feel a sense of selfishness when given power, which forces them to withdraw and concentrate on family or other home commitments. "Virtue for women lies in self-sacrifice, [which] has complicated the course of women's development by pitting the moral issue of goodness against adult questions of responsibility and choice" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 32).

Although the moral development of women in leadership has parallels to work environment and life experiences that Black women experience, it is not crafted for Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000). Even with the limitations that come with Black feminist thought, regarding theorizing Black women and upward mobility in higher education, it is most reflective and inclusive of the struggles and oppression of Black women (Becks-Moody, 2004). Frameworks designed from the White standpoint tend to exclude Black women, while White women scholars reject them as equal colleagues (Collins, 2000).

Race-Based Systematic Oppressions for Black Women

as Barriers to Upward Mobility

This section provides a historical overview of Black women in higher education with a focus on the significant events that shaped their involvement. Black women are underrepresented, discriminated against, and face personal commitments all at the same time, which warrants attention. This historical analysis of Black women calls attention to past experiences of Black women in higher education.

Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Experiences in Higher Education

White people excluded Black people from institutions of higher learning before the Civil War (Chamberlin, 1988). Although these same people were allowed to fight for America and the people who enslaved them, and at times were secretly educated to read and write, they could not enter an institution of higher learning. During this period, White people still enslaved Black people, who could not receive a formal education. Black women were refused the right to become scholars, teachers, authors, poets, or critics (Collins, 2000). Through publications by people such as Phillis Wheatley (2001) and Olaudah Equiano (1999), Blacks gained an education by other means. However, the merging of race, class, and gender oppression during slavery shaped future relationships for Black women with employers, their communities, and each other (Collins, 2000).

However, after the Civil War, Reconstruction made it possible for Black people to gain an education. Also, Black people won support for an education through the Freedman's Bureau, as well as state governments ("America's Reconstruction," 2003). Because of educational possibilities, job opportunities and educational gains improved. Oberlin College admitted women for the first time, which occurred at least 200 years after the first men became college educated

in the United States (Becks-Moody, 2004; Chamberlin, 1988). Even though Black women were last to explore learning in a higher educational setting, they had dreams and goals (Thomas, 2013). However, Black women continue to have a problem with finding that same location in higher education, that happy crux (Brock, 2010) between where they are, where they want to be, and where they are allowed.

In 1850, Lucy Session was one of the first Black women to graduate from Oberlin College with an undergraduate degree. Twelve years later, Mary Jane Patterson earned a Bachelor of Arts degree, which made her the first Black woman in the United States to hold a bachelor's degree. Black women in higher education did not simply end with obtaining degrees; they also became administrators in small numbers (Becks-Moody, 2004). In 1869 Fanny Jackson Coppin was appointed the principal of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, which made her the first Black woman to undertake such a task at any United States institution. Three years later, Josephine A. Silone Yates headed the Natural Sciences Department at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri (Becks-Moody, 2004; Littlefield, 2005). Still, the ethnic make-up of the administrative staff did not match that of the student body at many institutions of higher learning. A mirror image is not necessary, but having a diverse staff for schools that strive to maintain a different image and mission makes sense ("Concluding Remarks," 2009).

As a result, as time went on, Black women were considered the outsiders in higher education, and they were an unwanted part of higher education. As the outsider, they were not only marginalized; they faced marginalization in two forms. "A harassed woman is still a double victim, and a vocal, critical black woman is still a traitor to the race" (Jones, 1994, as cited in Collins, 2000). The Black woman did not want to avoid the fight, start a fight, or fight a fight; she only wanted an education and stood as an active agent of change for students. As Hurston

(1937) put it, "She had glossy leaves and bursting buds, and she wanted to struggle with life, but it seemed to elude her" (p. 11). There came the point when Black women no longer wanted to use the basin to scrub the floors; instead, they wanted to wash their hands of the injustice of former days and focus on the possibility of latter days. The misfortunes were a product of society, the environment, and factors beyond their control.

Twentieth-Century Experiences in Higher Education

The Harlem Renaissance at the beginning of the 20th century led to a rebirth of the quest for knowledge and advancement for Blacks. The Harlem Renaissance was a cultural, social, and artistic explosion that took place in Harlem, New York; the movement spanned the early part of the 1920s (Baym, 2013). During the Harlem Renaissance, Black people developed ways to preserve their heritage, including music, dance, literature, speeches, and art (Baym, 2013). Black activists organized the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 (NAACP, 2002), shortly before the Renaissance. As a result of the NAACP and the Renaissance, Blacks moved to the north, where they felt that they would thrive and make gains in arts, education, and employment. By 1920, Black women began to establish institutions and organizations solely for Black women to promote gains in higher education. Bennett College, founded in 1926, become known as an institution for women where Lucy Diggs Slowe held the first annual conference of deans and advisors for girls in Black schools. This led to the formation of the Association of Deans of Women and Advisors to Girls in Negro Schools (Becks-Moody, 2004; Littlefield, 2005).

As the 20th century progressed, various court cases focused on attempts to desegregate schools and bring about equality in education. Among those cases were *Brown I* and *Brown II;* however, states such as Arkansas went to great lengths to keep Black children from attending

schools with White children (Leadership Conference, 2016). Also, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s resulted in Black students and Black faculty (Green & Lewis, 2013), both in slow numbers, particularly the latter. The 1980s saw more additions to Black women in higher education with Johnnetta Cole serving as president at Spelman University, Marian Wright Edelman serving as a member of the Spelman College Board of Trustees, and Niara Sudarkasa at Lincoln University as the first Black woman administrator (Becks-Moody, 2004; Littlefield, 2005).

Though few in numbers, Black women made an impact in higher education from the 1800s to the 20th century. While still few in number, the overall structure of institutions that serve thousands of students with 100 or more administrators calls attention to a problem. Black women were an almost invisible presence in higher education during this period. Even though Black women were becoming historians, writers, and social scientists in small numbers, Black women have not held leadership positions in universities, professional associations, publishing arenas, broadcast media, and other social institutions of knowledge in large numbers (Collins, 2000). With the absence of Black women for leadership positions in higher education, their contributions to the academy have been limited.

Twenty-First-Century Experiences in Higher Education

Thomas (2013) described how Black women often struggle with the insecurities of not being good enough, along with the securities of knowing that they can also work hard to accomplish anything they wish. Thomas suggested that Black women must learn to embrace each other, learn from each other, share with each other, and most important, teach each other how to create private, safe spaces. In these spaces, Black women can share knowledge that empowers them to go beyond stereotypes and psychological barriers.

Bright's (2010) study highlighting Black women in senior leadership positions in higher education described their day-to-day experiences. The recommendations explain how all administrators, regardless of color, can sensitize themselves toward the needs, rights, and achievements of Black women. The sensitization is an effort for others to gain appreciation for the contributions that Black women make on college campuses that will, hopefully, lead to more significant commitment to find ways to support their continued advancement (Bright, 2010).

Humphrey (2012) studied Black women presidents in higher education. Using Collins (2000) as her framework, she concluded that Black women develop a long-term vision for their careers because of the chance to receive interim opportunities, which can sometimes be more common than long-term positions for Black women. Her results indicated the acceptance of failure as the norm for Black women, which is a component of the impostor phenomenon.

Consequently, in the 21st century, many institutions of higher education are primarily composed of women as students. Many of the country's leading colleges and universities have large numbers of Black women enrolled; however, time has not eliminated the barriers to entry and new obstacles have emerged (Becks-Moody, 2004; Beloney-Morrison, 2003).

<div align="center">Gender-Based Systematic Oppressions for Black Women</div>

<div align="center">as Barriers to Upward Mobility</div>

The systematic oppressions or external barriers presented in this section are not exclusive to Black women. Other groups, particularly Hispanics and White women, experience these same obstacles. However, more often than not, Black women experience a combination of several barriers at once (Becks-Moody, 2004).

Representation in Higher Education

Higher education administration. Coleman (1998) conducted a study of women, including Black women, to determine the barriers that stifled advancement. Of the 49 women in the study, only 10 were Black and represented only 25% of the sample population. The study indicated that there were few Black women in higher education across the country. Most of the participants had spouses and children, and few had degrees beyond than a bachelor's degree. Although nearly half of the women had applied for leadership positions, only one third had attained one. "Survival for most African-American women has been such an all-consuming activity that most have had few opportunities to do intellectual work as it has been traditionally defined" (Collins, 2000, p. 4).

Meuth (2009) noted the need for colleges and universities to include a diverse faculty initiative in their strategic plans. The thought behind including diversity in strategic plans evolves from the idea that students, regardless of color, feel a sense of belonging when they are in the presence of people who are a reflection of who they are in some way. Belonging can lead to the recruitment of Black women in higher education as students. Wanting to be with others who are like us is not the same as homophily, where there exists an embedded fear of the other to the point of the other becoming marginalized. Instead, having people around, in a capacity where others can see us work and thrive, lends a sense of security and assurance in our capabilities (Meuth, 2009). This presence does not have to involve one-on-one contact; the mere notion that other Black people and minorities are working in the same environment helps to bring about positive attitudes about minorities among students. Furthermore, a diverse population of students and faculty benefits students of all races (Meuth, 2009), simply from being able to gather experiences and knowledge from many viewpoints rather than only one or two. Administrators

must put race and entitlement aside and choose candidates to work in administrative positions based on credentials while considering the laws established through acts such as Affirmative Action (Duignan, 2010). Affirmative action assures that a diverse candidate pool is considered for open positions while also forcing organizations and institutions to allow minorities the same opportunities in the workplace afforded to the dominate group (Duignan, 2010). Affirmative action, in the case of Black women in particular, suggests that slavery and historical oppressions do not continue to handicap and define Black women as less than capable employees.

Professional development programs. To change the face of higher education administration, recruitment, retention, and promotion must occur. To initiate such a change, Thompson (2008) suggested creating cohorts for minority faculty and staff on college campuses.

> Despite this purported belief and strategies designed to increase the number of faculty of color in academe, the current representation remains dismal and is not proportionate to the rate of growth for students of color or representative of the U.S. population, where minorities constitute 20 to 25 percent. (p. 47)

Even though a quarter of the population is a minority, they make up only 5% of higher education administration. While some colleges are successful in using the cohorts to recruit Black women, they are not working as successfully to retain them for longer periods of time. The cohorts are brief and introduce employees to the institution but fail to provide further opportunities for development that would lead to promotion and longevity (Meuth, 2009; Thompson, 2008). Thompson (2008) even suggested that mentoring programs might prove beneficial as a means of continued professional development and, consequently, retention. However, if facilitators do not handle the programs correctly, the programs can face the stigma of one employee being superior to another and lead to inefficiency and isolation.

Professional development programs cannot repeat a cycle present in elementary school and perpetuated into adulthood in careers for Black women. Administration cannot force Black women to care less and less about who they need to be to travel down someone else's path (Thomas, 2013). Black women must not be forced to the margins and in the shadows of supposed peers. Furthermore, it is not necessary to deviate from the ladder of leadership in an attempt to mimic others. The administration must be open to providing the resources that are needed to allow Black women to make decisions because "being oppressed means the absence of choices. It is the primary point of contact been the oppressed and the oppressor" (hooks, 2000, p. 4), which stifles diversity and mobility in the workforce. Those resources for empowerment must be defined and established.

Hiring Practices in Higher Education

Recruitment. The myth exists that many academic units do not have Black women as administrators because there are not enough Black women who are qualified to do the job (Kamassah, 2010; Meuth, 2009). However, that is not the case, and hiring officials at colleges and universities with small numbers of Black women are simply not trying hard enough to diversify the administration (Meuth, 2009). Also, money is available for recruitment of minority staff, but not all administrators establish techniques and practices to recruit a diverse staff (Meuth, 2009). Specifically, funding is provided to bring diversity into colleges and universities, and some institutions have implemented other strategies. A system of economy, social structures, and ideology function as an effective structure of social control intended to keep Black women in a marginalized position (Collins, 2000).

However, since many faculty members become administrators, they cannot work through the lenses of ingrained myths that suggest that not enough Black women exist to fill the jobs to

diversify campuses. Also, the same people must realize that Black women can academically handle the type of workload that a White person could easily do (Meuth, 2009; Thompson, 2008). Furthermore, Black women have been attending institutions of higher learning since the 19th century.

Retention. Even when colleges and universities recruit a diverse staff, including Black women, retaining them for an extended period can be problematic. Meuth (2009) explained that, to keep them in place, Black women want to work in a positive workplace experience even if it does not start out that way. Also, the same sense of homophily ironically can make its way to Black women, and after a time of pseudo adjustment and still not seeing others like themselves, they leave the position, even if it means a lower job and lesser pay. Black women are more likely than any other group to exit majority White colleges and universities (Kobrak, 1992).

Meuth (2009) explained that, once in the institutions, Black women become solely responsible for minority programs, curriculum, and decisions on campus and act as the schools' poster persons for diversity rather than as a component of the larger face of the college or university. They become overworked and overloaded, in contrast to their White counterparts.

Promotion. Regarding promotions, decisions must be made based on the employee's teaching, scholarship, service, and commitment to strive toward the goals and mission of the college. However, barriers exist that prohibit promotion even though evaluations and work ethic are primary deciding factors. Among those obstacles is discrimination (Thompson, 2008). With bias comes stress, and with stress the quality of one's work suffers. The impostor phenomenon speaks to the heightened anxiety and stress that overworking can cause (Jarrett, 2010). As a result, in addition to increased workloads (Meuth, 2009; Thompson, 2008) and personal

obligations, the promotion rates of Black women suffer, and they receive inaccurate reviews that would otherwise have led to career advancement.

A report by the Association for the Study of Higher Education surmised the problem with career advancement for Black women. Because of fewer Black faculty and administrators on campus, those who are there are burdened with heavier student loads because of the need for students to feel a sense of belonging when they encounter staff who look like them ("Concluding Remarks," 2009). When Black members are already limited, students have fewer options, which leads to increased workloads. At the same time, Black women leaders do not want to push these students away because they have experienced similar situations themselves and strive to be agents of positive change rather than catalysts of the problem. Because of the expectations now established with students, Black women have less time to commit to other parts of the job, which means that some areas will suffer, which means that promotions will be fewer. Again, the echoes of the impostor phenomenon and the idea of forcing one aspect of the job to suffer to accomplish another are present (Clance, 1985). In reality, the senior administration will not consider personal and other commitments when it comes to promotion; these superiors only want to see the direct results of direct responsibilities as handed down by them or their departments.

Thompson (2008) explained that Black women faculty who are attempting to enter the administrative realm face problems in the classroom that limit their promotion. For example, students more often challenge instruction by a Black woman than that of any other instructor. They are critiqued and questioned more in the classroom than their peers. Class members challenge their Black women instructors' expertise in subject matter, and such problems appear in student evaluations that may weigh on tenure and promotion decisions (Thompson, 2008).

Another barrier to promotion is that of meeting the expectations of the goals and mission of the college. There is a sense of ambiguity in knowing what the president desires from the staff when the mission changes with new administration. If the president is conforming to a mission, it can be unclear as to what he or she ultimately desires. For the Black woman, the result is an attempt to decipher unclear expectations (Stanley, 2006), which leads to a feeling of isolation (Clance, 1985). Because of homophily, White male administrators do not include Black women in their circle of knowing. To combat this issue, White leaders must embrace a diverse faculty with open lines of communication.

Homophily. Homophily is the need for people to bond and work close only with those whom they are like (Moody, 2004). The familiar phrase "good old boys network" is an example of this concept, one in which White men prefer to work with other White people who have the same values and customs as they do. The preference excludes women, including Black women, from being a part of their inner circle as these men see nothing of themselves in Black women. Such a social custom as homophily can even extend to fear of working with someone of a different race and background. White men do not see themselves represented in the images of Black women. Coleman (1998) explained that 71% of the women in her study felt excluded from the "good old boys" and 71% reported negative attitudes from men solely for being a woman.

Inhospitable peers. To understand homophily better is to see it through the minds of inhospitable peers. Inhospitable peers are leaders who take on the persona of being arrogant, abusive, dangerous, dominating; they tend to be unprincipled while being powerful (Allan, Gordon, & Iverson, 2006). As a result, the actions of White men become "hegemonic, namely, seen as natural, normal, and inevitable" (Collins, 2000, p. 5).

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* published a study of 74 articles and 229 opinion pieces written from October 2002 to October 2003 on the topic of leadership. One of the leading questions for the study concerned the dominant images of leadership. The researchers followed that question with the discourses that shaped the images of leaderships. The findings showed that the models included autonomy, relatedness, masculinity, and professionalism. The terms that emerged from the four models were *tyrant, hero, negotiator*, and *facilitator*. When considering the impostor phenomenon, these are factors that can increase feelings of failure and insecurity (Clance, 1985). Collins (2000) pointed out that, when Black women take on personality traits typically reserved for them, the dominant class views them as unladylike and outside the norm of what it means to be a lady.

Autonomy, according to Allan et al. (2006), is the ability to make decisions without constraints. However, for a person to make decisions, he or she must work in a leadership position. Relatedness means the capacity to act as a facilitator. A Black woman in the post of the facilitator can be problematic because homophily will prohibit entrance into that space. Masculinity as an image would eliminate not only Black women but White women as well. Allan et al. (2006) concluded with the notion that leadership is seen as "a statesman and warrior" (p. 54). However, Allan et al. (2006) and Collins (2000) suggested that others negatively notice Black women for being assertive and in charge, which implies a male quality, but when men act in the same way, it goes unnoticed. The last image, professionalism, is in the sense of professional development and career training. However, as Meuth (2009) and Thompson (2008) explained, career development and leadership programs are in place briefly but often do not extend into career advancement for minority employees.

Personal Obligations for Black Women as Barriers to Upward Mobility

Just as the external barriers do not apply solely to Black women, the obstacles presented in this section are not exclusive to Black women, as other groups experience these same barriers. Again, more often than not, Black women experience them all or a combination of several (Becks-Moody, 2004).

Work and family. S. Jackson and Harris (2007) completed an investigation of the experiences and perceptions of the barriers to an institutional presidency that Black women face in higher education. They concluded that family responsibilities were among the commitments that Black women have, yet they are often asked in interviews to relocate. Relocating can have a negative impact on children and spouses.

Clance (1985) and Hensel (1991) examined gender differences in women and found that women often encounter stress when attempting to balance careers and family. This tension stems from a lack of maternity policies that support women to take extended leaves of absence from work, as well as a lack of child care within institutions. Without such practices in place, Black women can find themselves cycling through the components of the impostor phenomenon, such as inadequacy, without a support system in the workplace to combat some of those issues (Dindoffer et al., 2011; Hensel, 1991). The study by Dindoffer et al. (2011) on women in administrative positions in higher education added that women tend to operate under guilt and time constraints in the workplace, in addition to the obstacles that men also face. The time constraints are a result of women having not only to work full time outside of the home but also to maintain household duties, which become a second-shift job for many women (Dindoffer et al. 2011).

Coleman (1998) described the effects of personal commitments regarding the Black woman's upward mobility in higher education. Most important is her discussion about family. She explained that Black women have long adapted values that force them to believe that their culture dictates staying in the home rather than joining the work force. The quantitative data from the study showed that 43 of the women studied cited family and home as a barrier, while only 39 stated that discrimination was a factor. Black women also reported family and home as barriers more often than did White women in the same study (Coleman, 1998). Casemore (2008) noted that Black women must learn for themselves the need to traverse work-life boundaries. Although the home can be a secure place, Black women need to know how to look for other safe places outside of this considered haven and step into areas that support other areas of life (Casemore, 2008).

Dindoffer et al. (2011) determined that women in leadership positions can perform well on their jobs while maintaining a stable family life. Although her study started with 24 colleges, she used only four because of the lack of women in senior-level positions in colleges, such as president and vice president. She interviewed the six women selected from the four institutions; a third party transcribed the responses, and the researcher gave the participants the opportunity to review their responses and comment on the accuracy of the transcripts. Based on the findings, the balance that some of the women found between work and family was a foundation that they had established in their early lives. In addition, some of the participants had mothers who regretted not having pursued a career outside the home. Although some of these women had people in their lives to influence them about the positive aspects of having a family in addition to a career, such is not always the case for Black women (McMillan, 2013).

Traditionally, women have been primarily responsible for taking care of the children and providing the domestic care for the entire household. Today, this is in addition to working outside of the home for many women (Dindoffer et al., 2011). Women often feel torn between trying to care for their families and maintaining an active career. Viola Davis (as cited in Bush, 2013), an actress, mother, and a woman serving as a leader in her own right, situated this complex phenomenon of work and family best when she explained how she embraced her success because she embraced the responsibility of it. Davis embraced her current power because she believed that women have only a short period. Her position was that Black women should be able to work and show that their narratives are complicated and relevant. She stated that it is common for the world to dismiss Black women, but it is another issue altogether when Black women do it to themselves (Bush, 2013). Dismissing oneself is a form of self-inadequacy and lack of worth, which are components of the impostor phenomenon (Clance, 1985). The home provides a balance between career and family even in the face of challenges because family is a healthy part of Black culture and motherhood is an important role, along with having a successful career (Becks-Moody, 2004).

Motherhood is not the sole means by which a Black woman measures her worth. Mothers see themselves as the ones who must attend all school meetings, shift work appointments around school events, and maintain the entire housework. Unfortunately, Black single-parent women are often viewed as heading a dysfunctional family (Watkins, 2005) in which the mentioned tasks are cast over by much more pressing issues such as poverty.

Meuth (2009) explained that the influences of a family could play a role in a child's education, but the same can be true of the mother who is attempting to educate herself for the sake of advancing her family. Being a mother is not a decision to be made but a balance to be

maintained. How to do this must be established and discerned in a safe place created through understanding what this means for Black women (Collins, 2000). Church, religion, or spirituality can act as a safe space (Marina & Edwards-Joseph, 2014), rather than an obstacle for Black women as mothers as they move toward leadership.

Religion and spirituality. Starks, Vakalahi, and McPhatter (2014) noted that spirituality is one of the most important factors in the success of women of color. In their mixed-methods study, they addressed the constant balance that Black women try to achieve when balancing tenure processes, potential promotions, and home life. They concluded that change must occur in the academic field to support Black women in the academy. Starks, Vakalahi, Comer, and Ortiz-Hendricks (2010) found that women in their study did not abandon their spiritual and cultural practices regardless of their level of education.

Mattis (2002) conducted a qualitative study to examine the ways in which Black women use religion to cope and make meaning through the obstacles that they face in day-to-day life. Although the study suggested that Black women also use humor, revenge, and advice from other Black women, religion was a constant refuge. The participants sought refuge in religion in crises of race, social, class, and gender oppression. Religion allowed the participants to turn a situation over to God rather than confront issues in the workplace. Instead, the participants stated that they asked God to help their co-workers and allowed religion to create a barrier. That divide rests between them and issues at work. However, some of the participants stated a certain level of growth and purpose when they chose to cope with problems in this way (Mattis, 2002).

Research by Dindoffer et al. (2011) identified words such as *prayer, devotion*, and *duty* throughout the conversations of the participants, which demonstrated the importance of religion as part of the lives of the participants. The researchers reported that spiritual connections and

faith tended to transcend life for the participants in the work environment. The participants categorized their educational decisions as administrators by using the following system: drawing on past experiences, prayer, collaboration, and data, usually in that order.

Marina and Edwards-Joseph (2014) stated that Black women find refuge in their religion and often keep Bibles in the workplace environment as a reminder of the principles that guide our lives. They attribute success to God and connect their level of confidence and self-esteem with their level of spirituality. A few of the participants even stated that they relied on gut instinct because God gave the wisdom to make choices, so they put aside collaboration with peers (Dindoffer et al., 2011).

Becks-Moody (2004) explained that Black women rely heavily on the church and spirituality for encouragement, guidance, and training as a means to cope with stresses in everyday life, including the workplace. However, they noted that church could lead to Black women being resistant to speaking out in the workplace because of the mentality that their spirituality would cover all of their problems, rather than taking direct action. Even though spirituality is an integral part of Black women's life (hooks, 2000), there are "two things everybody's got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves" (Hurston, 1937, p. 192).

<div style="text-align:center">

The Impostor Phenomenon and Psychological Factors for Black

Women as Barriers to Upward Mobility

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Thirty years ago, Clance (1985) coined the phrase *impostor phenomenon*. As Clance explained, the impostor phenomenon results from a person's inability to allow career accomplishments to correspond to his or her capabilities. The result is a fear of failure that is more complicated than just insecurity (Clance & Imes, 1978). While people who suffer from the

impostor phenomenon feel a sense of pushing forward, uncertainty pulls them back (Roche, 2014). Nearly 30% of professionals admit to feelings of the phenomenon on a consistent basis, which holds them back from enjoying the successes that occur on the job. Internally, sufferers question the point of working hard, since they lack a sense of accomplishment or worth (Clance, 1985). While it is typical for most people to experience failure at some point in their careers, the impostor phenomenon forces a disproportionate amount of fear and inability to arise, which cripples job mobility (Sam, 2008).

When Clance (1985) first studied the phenomenon, she discovered that women were more affected than men. Furthermore, because of the marginalization that Black women tend to face in higher education, the perception that they are not competent follows them through much of their career and leads to high levels of stress and a battle of proving themselves (Myers, 2002; Trotman, 2009). The impostor phenomenon tends to be prevalent among Black women who pursue careers in higher education (Trotman, 2009).

A quantitative study conducted at Agnes Scott College by Cusack, Hughes, and Nuhu (2013) considered whether gender, mental health, perfectionism, and low self-esteem were significantly related to impostor phenomenon feelings. They found that women were more likely to suffer from this phenomenon, just as Clance and Imes (1978) had reported. In addition, they found that gender, mental health, and perfectionism were related, while low self-esteem had less of a relationship (Cusack et al., 2013). However, they found that low self-esteem led to social and interpersonal consequences. They also found that the women who had multiple roles in their lives tended to experience more symptoms of the impostor phenomenon. Their study had limitations in that the sample size had an age cap of women in their mid-20s and included men, while race was not a significant factor. Some of the recommendations from the study were to

look at women at various stages of their career and to focus the research on one particular gender and race, which is what the present study did.

Just as Cusack et al. (2013) found a connection between the impostor phenomenon and feelings of failure and inadequacy, so did McGregor, Gee, and Posey (2008). They, too, found that women suffered from the impostor phenomenon at higher rates than men. Their study, however, included participants up to age 45, which is more representative of professionals who have been working in their profession long enough to desire upward mobility. Their study found that participants had feelings of depression and anxiety, devalued self-image, symptoms of depression, and more negative emotions than non-impostors (McGregor et al., 2008). They suggested that more research is needed specifically on Black women, since their study included Whites and the results were not analyzed specifically based on race.

Coleman (1998) focused on identifying the perceived internal and external barriers that limit career mobility for Black women in higher education; however, the study did not include the possibility of the impostor phenomenon, even though many of the outcomes of the research pointed in that direction. The study included 10 Black women who were administrators. The barriers that Coleman identified as internal or personal involved isolation, overcompensation, and high stress, all of which are characteristic of the impostor phenomenon. As Coleman found, discrimination occurs but results in a loss of self-esteem, which is representative of Gilligan's (1982) theory that self-esteem issues are a psychological problem. These problems are also characteristic of the impostor phenomenon, and these feelings may then begin to feed off each other and can serve as a debilitating factor to achieving success (McGregor et al., 2008).

Traditionally, the habit of Black women was to "gradually [press] her teeth together and [learn] to hush" (Hurston, 1937, p. 71). Although the Black woman has played the role of the

matriarch throughout history and literature, "She [has been] a rut in the road [of higher education]. Plenty of life beneath the surface but it was kept beaten down by the wheels. Sometimes she stuck out into the future, imagining her life different from what it was" (Hurston, 1937, p. 75). Even though Black women can have only as much voice as they receive, there comes a point when isolating themselves for the preservation of others, who see them as less, is problematic. Therefore, Black women must find a voice for their Blackness and walk through the purple fields of their womanness (Brock, 2010).

<div align="center">Intersection of Issues</div>

[Intersectionality] refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation. Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice. (Collins, 2000, p. 18)

Even though Black women can come from various social classes and have other differences, they are ultimately all affected to some degree by the oppressions of race, gender, and class (Collins, 2000). The intersection of external barriers, hiring practices, and social issues present challenges for Black women seeking upward mobility in higher education administration. Black women, particularly those at predominately White institutions, must respond to an isolating climate and learn how to maneuver campuses, which then creates factors that hinder meeting expectations (Becks-Moody, 2004; Green & Lewis, 2013). The challenges are paired with little external support from within the institution and even fewer accolades (Green & Lewis, 2013). In addition, personal commitments present added layers of responsibilities. The result is that Black women administrators must develop ways to overcome manifest challenges that are the product of the impostor phenomenon.

Because of the recommendations and limitations of such studies as those by Beloney-Morrison (2003), Becks-Moody (2004), Cusack et al. (2013), McGregor et al. (2008), and Robinson (2012), Black women should conduct more research. The research should isolate Black women in higher education and how the impostor phenomenon plays a role in their upward mobility. The interviewees in this study may have experienced both the external barriers to mobility and the internalized effects of the impostor phenomenon. Together, these factors result in an added sense of diminished self-worth and low self-esteem. Their voices might assist other women in overcoming their challenges.

Having a diverse workplace is beneficial to higher education. The experiences and knowledge of Black women can provide support and added value to the institution. With the ever-changing landscape of higher education and more open access to higher education, student demographics will continue to evolve (Green & Lewis, 2013). Ensuring that Black women have a presence at all levels of administration is essential, but this cannot occur if Black women find themselves limited by the impostor phenomenon and other obstacles.

<div style="text-align:center">Summary of the Literature</div>

This literature review demonstrated that Black women leaders at institutions of higher education face many challenges. The literature suggested that Black women continue to suffer exclusion, isolation, and little value in higher education. Appendix E demonstrates how each researcher and the contributions discussed in this literature review parallels with the research questions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study describes the realities of Black women in leadership positions in higher education and their underrepresentation in senior-level leadership positions. The historical standards and personal commitments that play a role in their upward mobility when pursuing leadership roles in higher education were, in part, the impetus for this study, which describes the obstacles that Black women encounter. In addition, Black women are most underrepresented at the dean level and above (Davis, 2012; Kowalewski, 2005); thus, participants were sought at various stages of their careers. Such research may provide insight into the lack of upward mobility of Black women. The study may also assist with the preparation of aspiring Black women to take on leadership roles.

This study considered administrators in the southern part of the United States. This chapter details the methodological design of the study, the research questions, population, sampling, instrumentation, ethical considerations, validity, data collection, and data analysis.

Methodological Design

Qualitative research procedures were used to gather information for this study. Specifically, a narrative inquiry was used to collect personal reflections from participants (Creswell, 2003). Stories provide a way to gain insight into the lives and experiences of Black women in higher education. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) explained that qualitative research involves a social phenomenon and provides essential knowledge to its respective field. Consequently, the women who were interviewed for this study described their experiences to provide an understanding of Black women in higher education who encounter obstacles that limit their opportunities for senior-level administrative positions. As previously explained, Etter-

Lewis (1991) explained that narratives provide a unique way of gathering information essential to understanding women's lives and viewpoints, particularly those of Black women.

Research Questions

Senior-level management and human resource departments in higher education must consider that anyone can "attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us, for it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken" (Lorde, 2007, p. 44). Breaking such silences includes Black women realizing the obstacles in their path to senior-level leadership positions. Thus, the purpose of this study was to describe the obstacles that Black women encounter that limit upward mobility in pursuing leadership roles in higher education. The research questions were developed using the Black feminist thought framework (Collins, 2000) and Becks-Moody's (2004) study, which gives a voice to marginalized Black women through their narratives. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do Black women experience upward mobility at institutions of higher education?
2. What challenges do Black women administrators face in higher education?
3. What coping strategies do Black women use to successfully manage those challenges?

Population

The study was initially designed to interview participants who were members of AABHE, specifically, those from colleges and universities in the southern United States. Richardson (1999), a Civil War scholar, suggested that the southern states include states as far west as Texas and as far east as West Virginia. For this study, participants were drawn from Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, Mississippi, and Texas.

Sample and Sampling

The target population for this study was Black women administrators in entry-level to senior-level positions in institutions of higher education in the South. The aim was to interview 10 to 12 Black women in entry-, middle-, and senior-level positions. Persons in the higher education community suggested possible participants. Snowball sampling is the process of consulting with others in the profession. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) defined *snowball sampling* as a group of cases selected by asking people with the correct knowledge to recommend participants.

The participants gained from the snowball sampling were narrowed even further through purposeful criterion sampling (Gall et al., 2007). Purposeful criterion sampling aims to provide deeper information because of participant knowledge of and immersion in the mobility experiences of Black women in higher education (Gall et al., 2007). The criterion was Black women in higher education institutions holding leadership positions in at least entry-level positions. Participants included only women who had held their leadership positions for at least three years and had established themselves in their current role so they were able to contribute their narrative to the study.

Instrumentation

Marshall and Rossman (2011) stated that an in-depth interview strategy is an appropriate research method to allow for deep descriptions to emerge from participants. In-depth descriptions lead to understanding of the experiences under study. Interviews provided an opportunity to build a rapport with the interviewees and establish a high level of credibility; they also allowed for the interviews to occur in the participants' natural setting (Creswell, 2003).

Interviews can extend a degree of freedom for participants to describe their experiences and respond without being confined to established answers.

The interview protocol (Appendix C) consisted of 11 questions; it was peer reviewed by seven higher education professionals and adjusted based on feedback. The questionnaire included demographic questions to gather descriptive information about the participants, which was sent to the participants before the open-ended interview questions (Robinson, 2012). During the interview, the 11 open-ended questions were presented, along with probing questions that arose during the interview. This semi-structured format allowed for a detailed account of the participants' experiences. Merriam (2009) explained that open-ended questions allow for detailed data and stories. As described, these questions sought the first-hand realities of the Black women participants.

Table 1 outlines the relationship of the research questions to the interview questions and Black feminist thought and the impostor phenomenon.

Table 1

Research Questions and Parallel to Black Feminist Thought and Interview Protocol

Research question	Interview protocol	Black feminist thought	Imposter phenomenon
1. How do Black women experience upward mobility at institutions of higher education?	1. Describe how you obtained your current position. 10. What do you see as factors that serve as obstacles to Black women's full and equitable participation? 11. Explain your desire for upward mobility.	Third dimension: Interdependence of experience and consciousness Fourth dimension: Consciousness and the struggle for a self-defined standpoint	Achievement-related tasks Accomplishment Positive feedback
2. What challenges do Black women administrators face in higher education?	2. Describe a typical day of interacting with others. 3. Describe your greatest challenges personally. 4. Describe your greatest challenges personally. 7. Explain times where you have considered resigning due to some of the issues you face as a Black woman. 8. Explain the balance you have found between your internal motivations and external expectations.	First dimension: Core themes of a Black woman's standpoint Second dimension: The variance of response to the core themes	Anxiety/self-doubt/worry Over-preparation Procrastination Discount positive feedback Perceived fraudulence/ increased self-doubt/depression/ anxiety
3. What coping strategies do Black women use to successfully manage those challenges?	5. What coping strategies do you utilize in your position? 6. From what source(s) have you found your support? 9. In what ways do you view yourself making a difference for Black women or any race of women administrators in higher education?	Fifth dimension: Interdependence of thought and action	- Feeling of relief - Luck

Instrument Reliability and Trustworthiness

Member checking (Carlson, 2010) was used to ensure reliability of the research data. This involved reviewing transcripts and analytic findings to provide accurate capturing of the intent behind each participant's responses (Creswell, 2003). Also, member checking guards against researcher bias in the reporting of the data. According to M. Patton (2014), trustworthiness requires that credible findings, as well as interpretations, be presented at the conclusion of data collection. Because of this, member checking was used to substantiate the data. The transcriptions of the interviews were submitted to the corresponding participants for review of accuracy (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). The participants confirmed the data and provided clarity where needed.

Ethical Considerations

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) pointed out two issues related to working with human subjects: informed consent and protection from harm. Therefore, the participants in this study signed consent forms (Appendix A). The consent form provided a description of the research, the nature of the study, and provisions for confidentiality, including use of pseudonyms.

Data Collection

Obtaining IRB approval was essential because it provided security against violations of human rights and was the first step in the data collection process. Procedures of the Georgia Southern University IRB were followed. After obtaining approval, the researcher compiled a list of potential participants. A letter of introduction and request to participate in the study (Appendix A) was then emailed to the women. The participants had five business days to respond. After the participants returned the signed letter of introduction and request to participate, they received the biographical and institutional data form (Appendix B). Participants

had five business days to respond to this as well. Interviews were scheduled once the demographic form was received. A two-week time frame was provided for participants to select an interview day and time. Interviews in person or via telephone, FaceTime, or Skype, depending on the preference of the participant lasted 45 to 120 minutes. Each conversation was digitally recorded and the researcher took handwritten notes. A timer on a digital recording device was used for time keeping.

Data Analysis

Figure 2 outlines the data analysis method for the narratives.
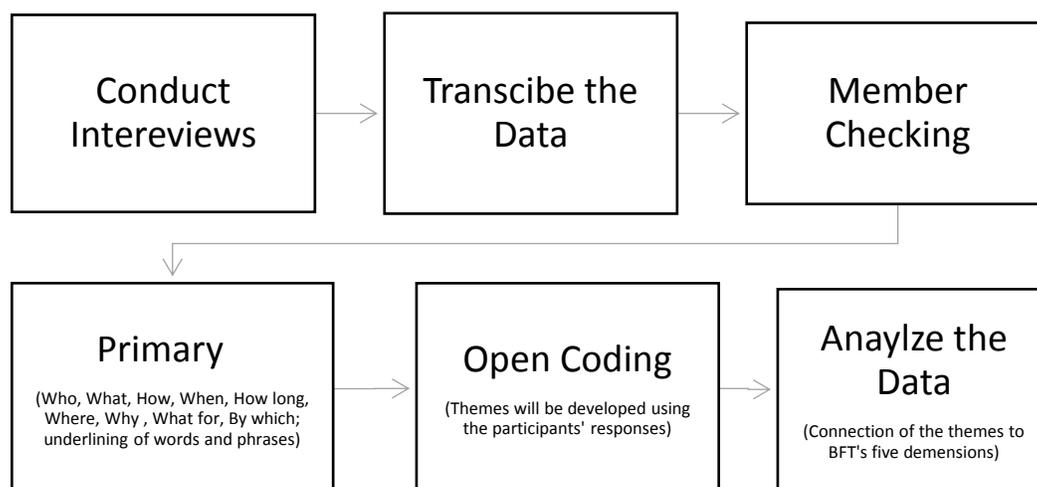
Figure 2. Data collection and analysis process.

Once common themes were determined, they were analyzed to determine whether a conceptual relationship to Collins's (1990) five critical dimensions that characterize Black

feminist thought was evident. The first dimension is concerned with the core themes from a Black woman's standpoint, which centered on the idea that Black women have shared experiences (Collins, 1990; Thomas, 2013). Mostly, Black women share a degree of commonality from being in a society that oppresses women of African descent. Furthermore, the commonality suggests that Black women share common characteristics, so the data would be expected to present similar themes. Participant responses were grouped into themes to determine what experiences they had in common that might represent the population of Black women.

The variation in replies suggests diversity even among participants who share common experiences. Because of low-, middle-, and upper-class distinctions, Black women tend to experience different forms and varying levels of racism (Collins, 2000). Geographic location also plays a role in this experience (Collins, 2000). Since theory ties geographic location to social class, that also plays a role in how Black women respond to questions concerning the workplace and their experiences. Therefore, this dimension led to a description of each woman's unique response to the shared experiences that she faces.

The third dimension, the interdependence of experience and consciousness (Collins, 1990), speaks to the personal and professional experiences of Black women and how various levels of cultural exposure mold their lives. In other words, although Black women may share common experiences and although individual awareness exists, this does not mean that all Black women share the same life view. Awareness was brought to their common experiences while also attempting to determine whether the Black feminist consciousness is common to each woman as well as to the group as a whole. In comparing their common experiences, an effort was made to determine whether the experiences had an impact on their career and upward mobility.

The fourth dimension is consciousness and a struggle for a self-defined standpoint (Collins, 1900). Because Black women have a particular set of experiences based on cultural and historical events that are not always favorable, dominant groups attempt to suppress or ignore those experiences (Collins, 2000). Thus, Black women must let others know that the Black woman's experience is just as important anyone's experience (Becks-Moody, 2004).

The fifth dimension, the interdependence of thought and action (Collins, 1990), involves identifying oppressions through experiences. If the women identified oppressions from either past or present, they were asked whether they had attempted to eliminate those oppressions and how, in an effort to determine how they had resolved those oppressions through thought and action. Therefore, this step discussed the strategies that were successful for the participants.

After all analytic processes were completed, each participant's interview was compiled into a separate narrative. The stories represented a synthesis of the challenges, experiences, and reflections of the Black women administrators who were interviewed for this study. The narratives were examined for possible connections between the impostor phenomenon and the upward mobility of Black women in higher education.

Chapter Summary

This study focused on the description of the realities of Black women in leadership positions in higher education and their underrepresentation in higher-level leadership positions. A qualitative methodology was used for the study. The participants were Black women in various positions in higher education administration. Permission to conduct the study was granted by Georgia Southern University's IRB, and participants gave their consent. The participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed. The procedures described in this chapter constitute an effort to gain

insight into how the impostor phenomenon, coupled with historical practices and life choices,

might affect the upward mobility of Black women in higher education leadership positions.

CHAPTER 4

DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges that Black women experience as administrators in public institutions of higher education, the strategies that they employ to cope with the resulting conflicts, and whether or not the impostor phenomenon plays a role. The narratives in this chapter represent a synthesis of the real challenges, experiences, and reflections of 10 Black women administrators in entry-level, middle-level, and senior-level administrative positions. Although some of the data indicated that the narratives are consistent with findings from other studies conducted pertaining to Black women in higher education, there were some discrepancies.

Participants' Demographic Data

The initial intention was to retrieve a list of participants from the AABHE; however, after failed attempts to receive a response, snowball sampling was employed (Gall et al., 2007). Names of potential participants were obtained from professionals in higher education. Of the 21 women who were contacted, 12 signed the consent form; of those, 10 followed through with an interview.

The participants were requested to submit a Biographical and Institutional Data Form (Appendix B) to provide background information. This was done to facilitate the interview process and to understand their personal and professional experiences.

The participants were from Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, Mississippi, and Texas. A summary of participant characteristics is as follows. The average age range of the participants was 40–49 years. Five of the 10 women were single, four were married, and one was divorced; four of the 10 women had no children, with an average of two children

per participant for those with children. The education level of the participants' mothers varied; however, a majority of the fathers were educated with a bachelor's degree or higher, with the exception of three participants. Each participant had at least two people on staff who reported directly to her. No institution had more than 17% Black women in administrative positions at the institution, with the exception of the HBCU, which had 55%. This information is summarized in Table 2.

Nine of the administrators were employed at predominately White universities (PWUs), while only one worked at an HBCU. Half of the participants were the only Black woman administrator in their department. All participants had at least a master's degree, two had a doctorate, and three were either working on or considering doctoral degrees. Four of the women had initially worked in industries outside of higher education, while the others went from graduating from programs in higher education to working in education. Four of the participants expressed a level of religious belief in God or mentioned God, Christ, or the Lord in some form.

Four of the women were the first Black person in their positions at a PWU. Three had attended institutions of higher education during the struggle for civil rights. Four grew up in the 1970s, when federal laws had just been enacted for all people, including Black women. The women in this study were working in administrative positions in higher education, and most of them were currently seeking opportunities for advancement.

Table 2

Participant Characteristics

Name	Years in higher education	Years in administration	Age	Relationship Status	Children	Education	Father	Mother	Direct Reports	Black women in administration at institution
Niecy (Coordinator)	3-10	3-10	30-39	Married	3+	Master	Master	High school	1-5	1%
Nella (Specialist)	11-20	3-10	30-39	Married	1	Master	Master	Associate	1-5	1%
Superwoman (Coordinator)	3-10	3-10	30-39	Single	0	Master	Master	Bachelor	1-5	1%
Scarlet (Associate Registrar)	21+	11-20	50-59	Single	1	All but dissertation	-	-	11+	>1%
Zena (Assistant Director)	3-10	3-10	30-39	Married	0	Master	Bachelor	Doctor	6-10	17%
Terry (Associate Director)	3-10	3-10	30-39	Single	0	Master	High school	Associate	6-10	>1%
Mrs. Triche (Department Chair)	21+	21+	60+	Divorced	2	Doctor	Middle school	Middle school	11+	55%
Lisa (Director)	11-20	3-10	30-39	Single	0	Master	Doctor	Doctor	1-5	8%
Taniyah (Associate Director)	3-10	3-10	30-39	Single	0	Doctorate in progress	High school	Bachelor	11+	5%
Ima B. Real (Vice President)	21+	11-20	50-59	Married	1	Doctor	Some college	Associate	11+	15%

Participant Overview

The following descriptions provide an overview of each woman's higher education profile, the self-chosen pseudonym and the explanation for that choice, and a representative quotation from her interview. The pseudonym and quotation place each participant in context for the discussion of the findings.

Niecy

Niecy is a coordinator in Student Affairs at a college in Georgia. She has been in her current position just over three years and has been in higher education for close to a decade since leaving a government job. She assigned herself the pseudonym Niecy from the movie *Lift*. The protagonist comes from poverty but learns to escape the cycle. Niecy chose Macy's Institute for the name of her college because, although it has many useful items like a department store, it also has components that are not necessary. Niecy said, "A woman of color is the lowest rung of the totem pole . . . but I want to carve out a wet place in dry lands."

Nella

Nella is a specialist in Admissions at a college in Georgia. She has been in her current position for close to five years and has been in higher education for about 15 years. She assigned herself the pseudonym Nella from the author Nellalitea Larson, who wrote *Quick Sand* and *Passing*. She chose this name because it is her belief that Black women have to take on the persona of the dominant race in the workplace, just as the protagonist did in the novels. Nella chose Target Institute for the name of her college because based on her belief that the potential for greatness is there but she wonders whether they will ever reach it. Nella said, "Black women are grouped in the same group and brushed with the same brush."

Superwoman

Superwoman is a coordinator in Career Services at a college in Georgia. She has been in her current position for four years; she worked in similar positions with various government agencies, and worked as an adjunct instructor before taking a full-time administrative position in higher education. She assigned herself the pseudonym Superwoman because she stated that she can do a little bit of everything and can conquer a lot.

Superwoman named her institution Thinking Outside of the Box Institute because she is pursuing a career in higher education to add increase into her life and the lives of those around her, and she claimed that the only way to make that reality is to think outside of the box. "You have a stigma put on you, and people don't really understand what you can do because you aren't given an opportunity."

Scarlet

Scarlet is an assistant registrar who recently worked in Kentucky before relocating. She has held the position of assistant registrar and then registrar for about a decade and has worked in higher education for more than 20 years. She gave herself the pseudonym Scarlet based on Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*. Scarlet explained that Hester was singled out because of her past and that she, too, has a "bull's eye" on her because of her previous institution. Scarlet calls her university Elitist Institute based on the cultural belief that the "buck stops here" at the college. Scarlet said, "It's one thing for Whites not to be in your corner. It's another for your own people to not be in your corner."

Zena, Warrior Princess

Before entering higher education as a career path, Zena was a rehabilitation counselor for a private agency. She has worked at two universities in the South and currently is an assistant

director in the Disability Services department. She gave herself the pseudonym Zena, Warrior Princess because she, like Zena, came from a bad background but was able to overcome and do good in the world. Zena considers herself to be stable and does not let her bad past interfere with her future. Zena calls her university Xavier Institute, taken from *X-Men*, because her college has a concrete plan for creating diversity, including gender, race, sexual orientation, and learning age. Just like the X-Men found a way for the mutants to be accepted, Zen contends that Xavier Institute recognizes the differences in people and how all those parts come together to make a whole. Zena said, "I make a difference; just the presence of talking to students makes a difference."

Terry

Terry is a coordinator at a university in Kentucky. She is relatively new to her current position, which she obtained by being recruited for it by a colleague. Terry applied, interviewed, and was offered the job as associate director of the Student Life department and was the only person interviewed for the position. She assigned herself the pseudonym Terry because, as she explained, it is a generic name and seemed to fit at the time. Terry chose Delta Institute for the name of her college because things are constantly changing even before the previous change has had a chance to take hold. Terry said, "You can be your authentic self at all times, but . . . in being authentic, you have to understand how others interact with you, so you can continue to come across as authentic."

Mrs. Triche

Mrs. Triche is a professor and department chair at a college in Louisiana. Before entering higher education, Mrs. Triche served as a principal in the public school system for 21 years, then retired. Mrs. Triche then moved into higher education and served another 25 years as a

department chair. Mrs. Triche is a strong-willed and passionate leader who has seen various changes in both K–12 public education and higher education. She reported that she has consistently found a way to stay true to her beliefs while excelling as a professional. Mrs. Triche assigned herself that pseudonym because that was one of her middle school teachers who took the time to talk to her and encourage her to be her best. She assigned her to be a teacher's aide in the elementary school, which allowed her to channel her energy in a positive way. Mrs. Triche chose Alpha Institute for the name of her university because she explained that it is considered number one in a variety of areas related to higher education and the betterment of the lives of students. Mrs. Triche said, "Keep our persona and always be prepared."

Lisa

Lisa is a director in the Student Life department at a university in North Carolina. Like Terry, a former boss recruited her for her position. In addition to her director position, she is a motivational speaker; she has no desire to continue through the ranks of leadership at her institution. She assigned herself the pseudonym Lisa because that is the name of her best friend and one of the people to whom she turns for support. Lisa chose Portugal Institute for the name of her university because she spent a portion of her summer in that country to have a vacation away from the workplace. Lisa said, "You need support; you need a village a little bit."

Ima B. Real

Ima B. Real is a vice president for Academic Affairs at a university in Mississippi. She assigned herself the pseudonym Ima B. Real because she wants to be daring enough to be different while confident enough to speak her mind, like Dr. Patricia Hill Collins. Ima B. Real chose Out of Grasp Institute because, as she explained, her institution grapples with the idea that

change should occur yet it seems beyond their reach, and they are forever grasping for that

elusive change. Ima B. Real said,

> I despise not speaking out on what I know to be right, regardless of how it sounds. I
>
> despise being the marginalized female that society expects. I despise not being the
>
> woman that those before me, such as bell hooks, Collins, and Angela Davis would expect
>
> me to be. I just want to be me without question or expectation; that's all.

Taniyah

Taniyah is an associate director at a university in Texas. She assigned herself the

pseudonym Taniyah because it is her first goddaughter's name and she is sure that society has

already dictated what the child will be. However, Taniyah imagines that, once this study is

published and she shows her goddaughter her name in a document and explains why it is

important and the power in a name, the child will know that she, too, is important. Taniyah

named her university The Little Engine That Could Institute because the institution is on an

uphill to success. It has had some setbacks but, even with those, the school just keeps going and

presses forward. Taniyah said, "It's full access to college and knowing where the actual

resources are when you get there. I want to be able to show Black women this is something you

can do and here is how you do it."

<div align="center">Emerging Themes</div>

The responses were grouped into themes to determine what experiences were in common

that might represent the larger population of Black women. Once themes were established, they

led to the next four dimensions that guided the data analysis for this study.

For all of the participants, their professional work seemed connected to their personal

lives. The participants expressed a level of fulfillment in working in higher education even

though it could be challenging at times. The women expressed commitment to establishing a positive environment for others, regardless of race or gender. In fact, they showed that the collective wisdom of Black women can change the negative stereotypes of this oppressed group (Collins, 2000). Based on the words, phrases, and similar characteristics, six themes were identified during open coding: (a) balancing career, family, and personal commitments; (b) mentors; (c) underrepresentation; (d) lack of respect; (e) spirituality; and (f) preparedness. The core themes of a Black woman's standpoint showed the commonality of experiences.

Balancing Career, Family, and Personal Commitments

As previously discussed, the Black woman's standpoint encompasses a legacy of struggle, intersecting oppressions, self-defined images for Black women, Black women as leaders, and sensitivity to sexual politics. Analysis of the interviews showed that the legacy of struggle was a common thread, which included balancing a career with other aspects of life. Every woman experiences this, and the discussion that follows explains how Black women in higher education struggle.

The participants mentioned concerns about family and career, along with the need to balance family and personal commitments with their careers. Even though six of the 10 women were single or divorced, dating and having a social life was still presented as a challenge. Dating was mentioned by three of the single participants. Lisa explained because she is not actively going out and meeting people outside of her professional circle, dating is challenging. She explained that having an advanced degree makes finding persons who share the same level of education can be difficult at times. Terry revealed the following about dating:

The demographics for what I'm looking for, I haven't been able to find that. By nature of who I've become friends with, people are already committed to someone, dating,

married, engaged, have children. I have not found an outlet where I've felt comfortable with my dating situation. I also know I'm not dating just to have someone to talk to. I want it to lead to something long term. I want to be that missing rib. I don't see myself staying here, and most people don't want to leave.

Similarly, Scarlet noted that "the pickings are slim." She said that Black women also want the dog and white picket fence but this is not likely to happen. Collins (2000) explained that Black women feel the need to have relationships but forcing relationships can put them in another place of bondage. Also, Black women are attempting to fit a family into a traditional definition of the word when that might not be the lens that fits. This historical norm suggests that family equates to a man who earns the income, a wife who cares for the home, and children to care for (Collins, 2000). While some women will search for a man out of loneliness, others will do as Scarlet, and once they have children and are single or divorced, understand that, sometimes, a good Black man can be hard to find (Collins, 2000). Men are clearly a component of a woman's happiness, as children can be, but work and being successful play an equally important role. The struggle to achieve a balance is not easy, as expressed by these participants. Furthermore, Black families are not representative of the traditional ideal family (Collins, 2000). Rather than attempting to fit a mold, Black women would benefit from challenging the social norm of what is meant by family.

The women in this study all worked outside of their homes at a college or university. Four of the women returned home to tend to children; one had two adult children outside of the home. By highlighting Black women's contributions to their families being take care of, such as keeping families together and teaching children survival skills, Black women view the unpaid work that they do for their families as way to resistance oppression (Collins, 2000).

Four participants had husbands in addition to children to tend to after the workday. Collins (2000) stated, "The ideas we share with one another as mothers in extended families, as othermothers in Black communities . . . have formed one pivotal area where African-American women have hammered out a multifaceted Black women's standpoint" (pp. 16-17). Therefore, both those with or without a husband and with or without children had to find a balance. The women in this study expressed the desire to be good mothers or significant others while also working long hours and even taking work home to perfect presentations and projects.

Nella and Terry described their commitment to their sororities. Terry's commitment included weekend meetings, extended trips for events, emails, calls, and texts throughout the entire month. Sororities are middle-class organizations that offer a type of sisterhood that aims to uplift those in classes and positions beneath those in the organization. Black women have to be careful not to exclude those they are meant to uplift by thinking the less educated and those in lesser professions do not belong in their organizations (Collins, 2000). While social organizations can be safe places, they can also do the reverse.

Author bell hooks (2009) explained that Black women have traditionally worked outside of the home and had to return home to work that job as well. There has been a constant effort for Black women to save time for themselves while providing for those at home and the workload of their jobs. Collins (2000) explained this paradox in that paid public employment and free home responsibilities clash for Black women. Initially, Black women worked without pay as slaves, and even with laws in place to combat pay equality and gender equality, distinctions still exist (Carlin et al., 2013; Duignan, 2010).

Six of the 10 women had an immediate and direct desire for upward mobility. Mrs. Triche was retiring, Lisa was content not advancing past the director-level position, and Niecy

and Ima B. Real were waiting to hear from God for their next step. Collins (2000) commented that God will listen to a Black woman when no one else will. While studies show religion is a safe place where Black women can find solace, especially if they grew up in the church (Marina & Edwards-Joseph, 2014) and relying on God is a way for women to find their own voice (Collins, 2000), such was not the case for the women in this study.

Even though not all of the women had children or were married, the family was still crucial regarding connecting at least with family at some point during the work week. For example, Niecy, Zena, and Superwoman each explained that they have a small circle that consists of their parent(s), sibling(s), spouse, and lifelong best friends. Niecy's circle is her husband, mother, and sisters. Zena relies on her husband and three close friends. They depend on these groups because family, church, and Black community organizations are important venues where safe dialogue can take place (Collins, 2000). Superwoman referred to her circle as her Fave Five, which included her mother, father, and sisters. Because they have each worked in higher education and public or federal government, they understand what it means to work with different personalities, so they can offer Superwoman a different mindset. Superwoman can go to them with a particular situation and receive advice on how to handle the issue. These safe spaces are comforting and act as a place where others cannot devalue the worth of a Black woman, and she can "resist the dominant ideology" (Collins, 2000, p. 101).

Scarlet reported that one of the greatest challenges is raising her son as a single parent. She explained,

> I know it sounds cliché. Before I had a child, I really thought I could move the world and that there was nothing was too much for me or nothing that I couldn't do. I had my son late in life; I had him when I was 36. Now, I understand what people mean when they say

there is an order to things. I tell young people all the time that there is an order to things. Wait on that husband or spouse or whatever you have to do because having a child has challenges. When you have someone to help, it takes the pressure off. I'm mama, daddy, everything; I thank God for my parents who have been active grandparents in my son's life. I love my son, but it is a challenge. It's been one of the greatest challenges in my life, and it ain't over because he's only fifteen.

Scarlet reported that she has let her job consume her. She noted that her son has suffered from this. She said that she was mentally done by the end of the work day and did not have energy left for her son when he was a small child. Collins (2000) situated the life of a single mother as one in which she often feels powerless when confronted with caring for children on her own while also working a full-time job to support herself and her children.

Nella and Niecy both recognized the challenge of balance between furthering their education and professional career as competing with family life. Nella described it this way:

I think that for woman, and especially Black women, being the primary caregiver and our historical roles with family and being the nurturer, there is a connection. We often have to sacrifice our professional roles for our homes and for our families, and there is a connection there. So, with that sacrifice, comes job titles, opportunities, positions, and someone in the home has to sacrifice, and a majority of the time, it's the woman. My husband received a promotion in his workplace that moved him and forced us to have to relocate with him. I think it was a little bit of mourning in the process because I had worked hard to achieve the role and the respect and title that went with it. But, I wanted to give him a chance to increase in his role and titles and things of that nature.

Niecy wants to pursue a doctorate but expressed that she might not have the stamina to do so. Niecy's plight with attending school is parallel to an element of the impostor phenomenon and to a comment by Jarrett (2010), who explained "The condition is particularly likely to strike when a person starts a new job or takes on new responsibilities" (p. 380). Niecy described being at work all day and having to come home and take care of children who are learning the foundations of education. At the same time, she also had to be a wife and spend time with her husband, cook; she noted that, at the end of the day, there are simply not enough hours to get it all done. Collins (2000) explained, "Because they have had greater opportunities to achieve literacy, middle-class Black women have also had greater access to the resources to engage in Black feminist scholarship. Education need not mean alienation" (p. 34).

Mentors

The participants described having and being a mentor as a means of professional development and improvement of themselves as people. Davis (2012), Meuth (2009), and Marina and Fonteneau (2012) suggested that mentors are a means for professional growth. Mrs. Triche explained her unique position on mentorship:

I would put my name second on something with my faculty and even if I did all the work; I would put my name second because I knew they needed it to achieve their job status and for promotion. I think it's about trying to help others to succeed and maintain their employment status. It has been a part of how people know me and have a relationship with me. Women, especially Black women, I've always tried to do that, to help them so they can be successful. I learned that mentoring technique from White females. White females pushed me and allowed me to do the same thing. The reasoning behind that those White women, were all about the same age, and they had already achieved tenure and

recognition, and they were in a position to do those kinds of things and mentor in that type of way. As I would go to different campuses and work, I did not find Black women who had that kind of recognition and could mentor me, so when I was able to do just that, I knew that I had to do it.

Taniyah, Niecy, and Nella recognized the value in having a mentor. Taniyah noted that mentors allowed her to block out what she hears at work and allowed her to focus on someone with an outsider perspective. Niecy explained that having a mentor allows her to learn from another woman of color who has climbed the ranks and noted that having a mentor is an important professional goal. She suggested seeking a mentor who will build you to your next level. While having the same person in a Black woman's corner for the rest of her life is good, she suggested knowing when to shift gears and seeking a new mentor at different stages of a career. Nella agreed that mentors allow women to develop professionally, to network outside of their institutions, and to showcase skills in different environments. Lisa and Zena have also found value in being a mentor. Lisa explained,

> I recognize that women of color, especially the young ladies, are watching me. I know because I've watched other women on how to lead, talk, commanding the space, and collaborating. Others have told me that I'm being watched. You have to be mindful of others watching you. When you reach a certain level, it becomes your duty. So, I see that and take that challenge.

Lisa mentors four to five people at a time at various stages of their education or profession. However, she explained that she is very intentional in being a mentor. Lisa has her mentees provide her with a resume; she challenges them and finds out what opportunities they are pursuing so she can help get them there. Zena is a mentor to Black women students because she

is convinced that it automatically gives her a better working relationship with them and makes it easier to reach out to them or have them open up to her. Collins (2000) explained that mentors allow Black women to use their knowledge and education to be more socially responsible and to improve their communities. Therefore, there is a need for mentors among Black women to lead to recruitment, retention, and promotion of Black women in higher education (Wallace et al., 2014). Though Mrs. Triche's idea of having a mentor that is not always Black can be viewed as intruding on that safe space, Collins (2000) explained that letting 'others' in can allow Black women to use their credentials to break oppressions and exert a level of authority.

Underrepresentation

Collins (2000) explained that senior-level administrators often exclude Black women from the knowledge validation process by not allowing them to obtain positions of authority in institutions of higher learning. This exclusion, in simplest form, is pointing to the underrepresentation of Black women in higher education leadership positions. Five participants mentioned underrepresentation in some way and five stated that they were the only Black women in their department. One participant has been the only Black woman to hold her position in the history of the institution, and one, at the director level, holds the second-highest-ranking position for a Black woman at her university. Instead of affirmative action working for these women, it is actually being used inappropriately. Instead of using affirmative action to diversify the institutions and provide opportunities for minority women, these institutions are using it to satisfy a mandate, which has negatively impacted these women rather than building them up as it should.

Niecy stated, "The First Lady of the United States, who is a scholar and the ugly things people have to say about her and you know our fabric of the country, and she is still really just

you know somebody's baby's mama, somebody to just bear kids." The child bearer is a controlling image that must be dismantled, along with similar images (Collins, 2000). Niecy contended that, until those in higher education are honest about how they feel about Black women in leadership and until they have the conversation with Black women, real change cannot occur in the structure of America's institutions. She commented,

> We allow ourselves to color the portrait that we allow to be painted for us because sometimes we are so used to pushing forward that we don't get caught up in the peripheral stuff, but sometimes the peripheral stuff is what keeps up for progress, from being substantiated.

Niecy's stance is that, if people believed that Black women were qualified, there would be more Black women in senior-level positions. Nella noted that Black women have been the last to vote and the last to have human rights, so being the last in higher education is a part of that last-place position, which carries with it the notion of living in the impostor phenomenon cycle.

However, Collins (2000) suggested that this is an outsider-within position that can be used to a Black woman's advantage. The outsider-within position is one in which Black women have seen life through both lenses, oppressed and not oppressed. Collins (2000) gave an example of a Black woman working for a White woman in a position of servitude. The Black woman knew that she would never live a White middle-class lifestyle, but working for a White woman allowed her to view the contradictions of the two worlds. Therefore, the women in this study have an advantage in which they understand the entry- and middle-level positions in higher education but, because of their experiences in the workplace, they also know how to understand senior-level responsibilities. Having both angles can lead to conversations with others to enact change, while also presenting the paradox of being frustrating for Black women (Collins, 2000).

Collins (2000) warned that remaining in the outsider position will never result in a position of power because the outsider position requires the holder to be marginalized.

Scarlet's department hired her because of underrepresentation at her previous institution. She explained her hiring process:

They had submitted a program for approval, so when the program went through, for a doctoral program, the college was on hold for not adhering to the diversity plan. When I sent my resume, they rushed through the process. I wrote my ticket; they asked me how much I wanted to come here. I didn't realize all of this at the time. What they wanted was a reason to say we have a Black administrator. However, once hired, I was told, "Negro, know your place. We don't want your opinions, thoughts, or ideas. We don't want you to improve anything." It was the good ole boy network. It's disheartening when you come in and think you are going to make a difference, and then they tell you that aren't here for that. Then you see people around you getting raises, promotions, and raises, with money. You apply for positions on campus, and the people bring in their cousins and others to take positions that you know was handed to them. The chief diversity officer called me and told me he needed a favor. He said when you come to this meeting, I want you to be on your best behavior. It's one thing for Whites not to be in your corner. It's another for your people not to be in your corner. I was like, ok, it's time for me to go.

Scarlet's colleague was challenging the idea of being "Black *and* female *and* respected" (Collins, 2000, p. 115). The fact that Scarlet's colleague saw the need to tell her this speaks to the need for Scarlet and other Black women to create their self-defined standpoints. Scarlet's co-worker was working under his definition without regard to who Scarlet was, outside of a set of stereotypes.

Ima B. Real identified as factors for underrepresentation Black women's skin color, the way they talk, their hair, whether in its natural state or braids or extensions, their mannerisms, their loud voices, the shape of their bodies, the way they eat, the cars they drive, and the neighborhoods they live in. She explained that so many more attributes outside of physical appearance define Black women. A Black woman cannot just be a woman with a career. A Black woman must be a leader, yet somehow Black women are exposed for that. It has to be written about and researched. They cannot just be leaders; instead, it has to be explained and understood and critiqued, and then, Black women are left out even after all of those efforts. Thompson (2008) explained that if institutions want to promote committed efforts at diversity, they should make more of an effort to recruit, retain, and mentor minority faculty. Many Black women have the potential to be leaders but the opportunities for advancement are limited.

Again, being in the outsider-within position is not an entirely bad place for a Black woman to find herself. In this post, she has the chance to build coalitions to initiate dialogue with others in a similar position (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) posed a challenging question for Black women in white-collar professions:

> Will they continue to value Black solidarity with their working-class sisters, even if creating that solidarity might place them at odds with their prescribed "mammification" duties? Or will they see their newly acquired positions as theirs alone and thus perpetuate working-class Black women's subordination? (p. 67)

If a change in the right direction does not occur, Black women will continue to perpetuate the notion of oppressing themselves and other Black women.

Lack of Respect

Collins (2000) addressed the concept of self-definition stating "These self-definitions of Black womanhood were designed to resist the negative controlling images of Black womanhood advanced by Whites as well as the discriminatory social practices that these controlling images supported" (p. 10). However, seven of the participants specifically addressed instances in which they had felt a sense of disrespect from peers and supervisors. A lack of respect can have a direct impact on a Black woman's self-esteem and create an environment of separation (Brock, 2010; Casemore, 2008; Coleman, 1998; Dindoffer et al., 2011; Meuth, 2009; Watkins, 2005), leading to a stifling of upward mobility.

The impostor phenomenon speaks to this idea of lack of respect with regard to anxiety and depression (Clance, 1985). When people bombard a person with the notion that she does not deserve adequate respect, she can begin the process of self-doubt or negative self-talk (Clance, 1985). This disrespect from a Black woman's peers and subordinates also speaks to the binary of object/subject that Collins (2000) addressed. This binary leads to Black women being the *other*. When one is in the position of the *other*, one loses a bit of human status, and that diminishing continues until the person disappears all left is the *other*.

Nella, Niecy, Ima B. Real, and Superwoman addressed the stereotypes that are placed on Black women as soon as they enter the office. This stereotyping occurs before Black women receive a chance to perform in the workplace. Niecy explained,

> You have so many stereotypes working against you from the time that you walk in the door, and I have seen that at every single job. The question is, how do you manage without it being obvious that you know that they're treating you a certain way because

they have already placed limitations on what they think you can do and how effectively they think you can do your job?

According to Nella, unless persons of other races have been around Black women, they do not always understand their mannerisms or expressions. She noted that others label Black women who are passionate as having the Angry African American Woman Syndrome when, in fact, it is coming from a place of love, nurturing, and understanding. Superwoman stated, "Before you even meet them, they have formed a first impression of you, and it is hard to change someone's first impression." Superwoman described how she came into her position, which had been held previously by other Black women; before she started, she heard, "Hmm, well she's, or he's going to be just like that other person, probably."

Both Zena and Scarlet addressed the lack of respect. They both commented that their presence in the room is not always respected by their subordinates. The position that Zena and Scarlet described is the outsider-within position (Collins, 2000). However, they can attempt to remove that barrier by recognizing what it means to be both the outsider, the Black woman who is now in a leadership position, and the within position, which is having been in the place of the subordinate. If they merge the two, they will have a better working relationship in the workplace. Zena described the people whom she directly supervises as sometimes

> having side conversations, and I walk in, and they keep having conversations. I feel like they should stop. I don't want them to feel like they have just to stop, but sometimes I just want to say, "Hey, I'm here. Stop talking!"

Collins (2000) addressed this type of behavior: "Now, to white people, your colored person is always a stranger. Not only that, we are supposed to be dumb strangers, so we can't tell them anything!" (p. 70).

Scarlet commented that she could not make a decision without scrutiny. "Everything I did and every decision I made across campus was being questioned. Even something as simple as me asking a White person to move a chair, and they looked at me like, no." Taniyah reported having received disrespectful emails that she knows other, not like her demographically, did not receive. She commented that she had to change her persona to gain acceptance during meetings.

> It's called code-switching for me. Always have to think about what I say and smile and put my face on. I've been in meetings and what I've said has been repeated. I am very much aware of my surroundings. I intentionally dress extremely professional when I come to work because I know I have to look and act a certain way.

What Scarlet is describing fighting against is a controlling image of beauty. Although Collins (200) discussed beauty as regarding hair and body image, she suggested that physical appearance plays a role as well. Scarlet is fighting against the media's portrayal of Black women. Because of the misogyny of rap music, which is under the same heading as Black, the popular culture image of Black women has painted Black women as hoochies, particularly in music videos. To combat that image, Scarlet has become hyper-aware of her physical appearance. In fact, she is creating her self-defined image but, because she uses the words "extremely" and "intentional," whether she is doing so on her own will or at the silent insistence of her peers is put into question.

When asked about being accepted for who she is without code switching or taking on a more acceptable persona, Taniyah responded,

> I know it will never be enough. As much as we talk about Black girl magic, and all that we can do as long as we have racism, there will always be something. I know that no matter what, there will always be something.

However, if Black women do not write their definition, it will be written for them, and it will contain a position of marginality and limitations. Black women must not forget that, by educating their slave children to read and write, slave mothers were writing definitions for their children (Collins, 2000; Littlefield, 2005; Smith, 2013). Even though it is the 21st century, such crafting of the Black woman's identity is not over.

Spirituality

Although studies such as those by Becks-Moody (2004), Dindoffer et al. (2011), Mattis (2002), Starks et al. (2010), and Starks et al. (2014), point to a Black woman's need to be grounded in a God and religion, this was not the case with this study. Five of the 10 women mentioned God or expressed a belief, but Niecy, one of the five, admitted that God was not her first choice when she needed an outlet, even though she is waiting on God for her next career decision.

Nella and Terry reported that they are involved with ministries at their churches. Terry stated that she is at church every Sunday unless there is a conflict at work that takes her away. Nella turns to church members for support when needed. During the interviews, the other six women used phrases such as "Oh, God," "Jesus," or "Help me, Lord" consistently throughout their conversations. However, only one of the participants, Taniyah, said that she turned to God or religion as a coping strategy or a place for support. "No matter what they put me against, the God that I serve will see me through it. I grin and bear it and keep going."

This relationship, or apparent lack of relationship, with religion, can be rationalized, considering the age range of the participants. Seven of the 10 women were 30 to 39 years old, and millennials are considered to be 18 to 34, and millennials are less religious than older generations (Lee, 2015). Although some of the seven women might be outside the cut-off age of

34, some are in that group, and the rest are on the cusp. Lee (2015) reported that Black people have dropped out of religion at an annual rate of 1.5% since 2012. Black millennials are finding themselves outsiders to religion, in contrast to older generations. Millennials claim that old Black church leaders are not responding to the narratives that millennials are writing about themselves and what they define as present-day struggles (Lee, 2015).

Collins (2000) saw the church as a place where contradictions lie. In one sense, social organizations such as church can challenge the controlling images of Black women; they can also teach Black women to think of the greater good that they can do rather than the good that they can do for themselves. When these supposed safe places begin to contribute, albeit unknowingly, to the oppression of Black women, they fail to be the safe places that they should be. "One wonders, however, if contemporary Black churches equip themselves to grapple with the new questions raised by the global circulation of the hoochie and comparable images" (Collins, 2000, p. 87).

Preparedness

The theme of preparation is important in understanding the amount of time and work that Black women spend in preparing for presentations, projects, and tasks in the workplace. In many situations, the participants had been in their positions for only a short amount of time or their supervisors had been in place for some years and advancement at their current institution was not likely in the foreseeable future. The participants stated that it was important to be ready for work that they had to submit, and they contended that Black women must overly prepare in order to appear competent.

Niecy said that she had supervisors who have not always bought into what she was selling, and so for her, that was just motivation to make it better and sell harder. Similarly, Superwoman described her experience:

It's hard to shut off. So, when you go home, or when I go home it's more like I need to get XYZ done. It should have been done right before I left, but I didn't have enough time, so it never goes off for me until I go to sleep.

Mrs. Triche stated, "I have a long day and night. I learned early in K–12 that, because of my desire to have things done in a very professional and efficient and effective way, I had to be overly prepared." What these two responses do not address that the impostor phenomenon does address is that, although they overwork and over-prepare, they do not let it interfere with their other tasks. Neither woman stated an inflated perception of her abilities (Jarrett, 2010). However, these actions carry with them the idea of perfectionism (Clance, 1985), but this perfectionism is applied to please them, not others. Instead, they were working well within their abilities and wanted to use those abilities to exhibit their knowledge and competence.

<center>Variation of Responses to Core Themes</center>

The second dimension derived from Black feminist thought is the variation of response to the core themes (Collins, 1990). Based on their lived experiences, location, work environment, and cultural upbringing, Black women experience various forms of racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression; in addition, age and social class can play a role. Combined, these oppressions produce a composite picture of the lives of Black women, which Collins (2000) termed the *matrix of domination* because of the intersection of oppressions. These oppressions combine to form a social organization that oppresses Black women. For many Black women, racism is a constant presence in the workplace and a presence that many Black women face

every day on the job (Collins, 2000). Different memories and varied responses emerged throughout the narrations. For example, when asked about their greatest personal challenge, a couple of the participants responded by tying in their work lives, but others did not do so. However, these intersecting issues, this matrix of domination, lends empowerment and knowledge to Black women.

In considering the responses that related to a lack of respect, women who were the only Black women in their department described being more introverted in meetings regarding verbalizing their opinions because of how others would perceive them. For example, Lisa stated,

The head nods and all of that, I have had to learn to have a poker face because I don't have one. I have learned that I have to be more stoic and hard to read. With that, I don't necessarily involve myself in the conversation. . . When I'm in a meeting with my executive director, I have a lot of the nonverbal cues when I agree and don't agree. I've been asked to speak up more in meetings, but part of me is hesitant to do so. You have to be careful with what you say and how you say it.

Similarly, Nella contended that Black women have to mask expressions because other might misinterpret them. She explained that others could even misunderstand confidence as being cocky or thinking that one is better than someone else. A Black woman who comes in with a feeling of authority or a sense of presence is misinterpreted and can be viewed in a negative way, even though those are all positive characteristics. "African-American women who must work encounter pressures to be submissive mammies in one setting, then are stigmatized again as matriarchs for being strong figures in their own homes" (Collins, 2000, p. 78). Instead of letting oppressions strip away their self-confidence, they must learn to face them head on. As previously discussed, nearly 30% of professionals suffer internally from actions that occur in the workplace

(Clance, 1985). This suffering can stem from a lack of respect, which leads to feelings of inadequacy, which is symptomatic of the impostor phenomenon (McGregor et al., 2008).

Mrs. Triche completely disagreed with Nella and Lisa. She contended that staying quiet and playing a role is the opposite of what Black women need. Instead, she is striving to achieve what Collins (2000) called intellectual activism. Mrs. Triche will not allow others to suppress her ideas; instead, she forces her voice to have a purpose and enact positive change in higher education. She stated,

> We are acknowledging that those the males in the room are the dominant ones as though they have all the knowledge. No, no, no. If it's not good, we have to be ready to go in and say it's not good.

Furthermore, it is her firm belief that Black woman cannot just ask, "Why not?" They must ask, "Why, why not?" She posed the following question: "Do you want to be in a position where you were put in a position because you are Black and female and you are a nodder?" Mrs. Triche ended with this solid piece for Black women:

> You have to get to a point where you have said all you needed to say, and if they still don't accept it, at least you put it all on the table. They don't put their names up for committees or put their names up for stuff to get their name out there. We will blame the campus, but we haven't done things across the campus to get our names known. You can't be voted on a campus-wide committee without someone knowing us. I tell my faculty, 'You aren't going to be chosen for positions if no one knows you.' I tell my faculty to put their names in, and then, I go behind them and speak on their behalf. You got to learn to politic while working on a college campus.

According to Kotter (1999), leadership is about motivating and inspiring others in the right direction; for this to happen, leaders need multiple career experiences. These experiences, as implied by Mrs. Triche, come with experience and proper training, which is reflective of the older generations. Proper training involves courses related to professional discourse, facilitating meetings, and being involved around campus. Mrs. Triche has removed the controlling images of the mammy, matriarch, the welfare mother, the Black lady, and the jezebel (Collins, 2000) and replaced them with the image of a Black woman who is creating her own self-definition.

The majority of the women discussed some form of racism at their institution, which was more common at the PWUs. Mrs. Triche, who worked at an HBCU, realized that she could not take it personally and base the treatment of those around her on "because I was a woman or Black. As a professional, as a person, I found that I didn't think those things. That doesn't mean there weren't people who might have thought that in the room with me." However, each of the other women reported a certain stigma or dismissiveness simply for being Black and a woman. Superwoman even included the characteristic of young, along with Black and a woman. She explained,

> Then you have a stigma put on you, and people don't really understand what you can do because you aren't given an opportunity. Before you even meet them, they have formed a first impression of you, and it is hard to change someone's first impression.

Race, as one of the intersecting oppressions that Black women face, influences the workplace setting, but again, lessons can be learned from this outsider-within position.

Preparedness also came from different places among the participants. Mrs. Triche wanted to be sure that she was prepared so that she had "everything I needed and be able to answer any question that came to me was a way to alleviate stress." For her, it was not the perception from

others that drove her to be overly prepared: "It wasn't anyone putting that on me; I just wanted to be sure I had what I needed." Superwoman, Niecy, and Lisa wanted to be ready for their best work to show those around them what they were able to accomplish, even if it meant investing long hours. All three either were the first to arrive at the office or the last to leave, and both Niecy and Superwoman discussed taking work home in addition to the work that was completed in the office.

Participants who had degrees in education were more interested in advancing within the next three years to a higher level position, while those who were initially in other careers were content to wait for their next move. Mrs. Triche attributed the desire to continue to advance to the training that Black women receive in leadership programs, which she maintains college administrators need to be entirely successful. Rossing and Lavitt (2016) noted that traditional graduate education programs were designed to teach leaders how to be independent without relying on the expertise of others to guide them.

The Interdependence of Experience and Consciousness

The third dimension is the interdependence of experience and consciousness (Collins, 1990), which corresponds to the personal and professional experiences of Black women in this study. Black women have unique experiences, and the perspectives of Black women are not always expressed and implemented by all Black women, but "being Black and female in the United States continues to expose African-American women to certain common experiences" (Collins, 2000, p. 23). Therefore, there are some similarities.

All of the participants discussed some level of awareness of what it means to be Black women working the South while attempting to be accepted as the norm rather than the exception. Ima B. Real captured the essence of their sentiments:

It's a constant battle. You want to balance what your mind is saying with what you know to be the—for lack of better words—politically correct thing to say. And sometimes I fall short of using those correct words, which gives others the impression that I might just be the stereotypical female they expect. Perhaps they are right, perhaps at those moments, or perhaps honesty isn't what others want to hear because sometimes it does hurt.

Each of the participants also addressed the desire to support other Black women in their careers. "Black solidarity, the belief that Blacks have shared interests and should support one another, has long permeated Black women's political philosophy" (Collins, 2000, p. 31). This solidarity can occur in small ways, such as being a visual role model, as Lisa suggested, or writing materials for publication along with them as the primary writer, as Mrs. Triche has done. The participants agreed that it is important to help other Black women advance in leadership positions, even though nearly 40 years of experience separated the oldest participant from the youngest. Women believe in the power of networking and understand its capability to act as a professional development mechanism (Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez, & Nies, 2001). In some places, there is still a fight to build each other up because, as Mrs. Triche put it, Black women have to encourage themselves early in their careers. However, it is still important to help Black women, and other women, to move forward and be successful in higher education.

<div align="center">Consciousness and the Struggle for a Self-Defined Standpoint</div>

The fourth dimension is the fight for a self-defined standpoint, which suggests that Black women have to mimic the views of the dominant group (Collins, 1990). The women addressed how others in the workplace place them in a box because of their race and sometimes even gender and age. Collins (2000) disagreed with this separation because everyone fits into one category or another.

The complexities of African-American women's group experiences challenge simple hierarchies that routinely label wealthy White men as global oppressors, poor Black women as powerless victims, with other groups arrayed in between. Instead, race, gender, class, citizenship status, sexuality, and age shape any group's social location in the transnational matrix of domination. (p. 289)

While none of the participants articulated that they allow those judgments to define them, neither did they did always speak up for themselves. Collins (2000) maintained that, if Black women receive their rights, they ought to demand them and stand on the principles of what is right for all, not one. Of the 10 women, Lisa and Mrs. Triche were the most vocal regarding not allowing others to define them. Others, such as Terry, Zena, Niecy, Superwoman, and Ima B. Real, did not always take opportunities to speak against oppressions vocally. Rather, they wanted their work ethic to do the talking to break barriers and glass ceilings.

For all of the women, the dominant group was White males, and that group stereotyped the women based on the media's perception of Black women or based on past experiences with other Black women. Historical norms have positioned the White male view to be the standard view (Collins, 2000). Most of the women agreed that, with time and future conversations, the image of Black women will eventually change. Mrs. Triche suggested,

I think you should try to keep our persona and always be prepared. If you are prepared, no one can shoot you down. How you make that comment and make that presentation and how you do it, I wouldn't say I have changed who I am to have that male nature, I am not willing to say that. I am inclined to say I have done my homework and when I go wherever I am, people listen whether it is a man or woman or whoever because I have done my work. I don't need to yell or scream; I just go in ready. I have that persona that I

am ready. I don't think it's a male persona. It's a persona. It's a preparedness that we do, or we make sure is there so when we have to do or say something, there is no doubt we have the information necessary to support what we are saying.

The Interdependence of Thought and Action

The fifth dimension is the interdependence of thought and action. Black women identify oppressions through their experiences. They also attempt to right those wrongs.

Family and friends and the occasional colleague's support were the primary outlets for the women to find reassurance to maintain the balance and sanity needed to remain in their careers. The support structures go back to the idea of creating safe spaces for Black women (Collins, 2000). However, there were also instances in which participants such as Scarlet, Nella, and Niecy discussed family as being another job to come home to and sometimes they would not have the stamina to be everything for everybody. Mentoring was another means of support for the women, whether they were the mentor or mentee. That added layer as an outlet was a means of giving back and growing as a professional to learn how to navigate the world of academe more effectively.

All of the participants wanted to improve the workplace for higher education for Black women. Niecy, Nella, Scarlet, and Mrs. Triche spoke of doing so for all women, regardless of race. These women wanted to remove the requirement that women have a male personality to be successful. When women decide to work outside of the home and earn money, they are seen as less feminine, especially so when they demand the same benefits as men (Collins, 2000). Instead, the participants in this study saw a strong personality as a trait for everyone, not just men.

Impostor Phenomenon

While the 10 women in this study did not discuss an experience that included every step in the cycle, most of them carried with them some component of the cycle. Again, Clance (1985) claimed that not all people experience each step in the cycle; neither do all people experience the same degree of each characteristic.

Mrs. Triche, for instance, discussed consistently feeling that, "I thought I was having an ulcer. When I reflected, I said to myself, 'If you aren't trying to do well as the presenter, you aren't going to have that kind of feeling.' If you do well, you are going to feel anxious." However, none of the women expressed feeling the symptoms of fear, as opposed to anxiety to do a good job. Most of the participants shared their experiences of being overly prepared for projects and presentations, which is the second step in the impostor phenomenon cycle (Clance, 1985). Although they did not say that they did not accept their success as their own doing, many attributed successes to long hours, being one of the first to arrive and one of the last to leave. As for overworking themselves, which can hinder other tasks or projects, the participants did not report any experiences in this area.

"Black women in the United States have experienced the impostor phenomenon by virtue of being both black people in white America and women in a male-dominated culture" (Trotman, 2009, p. 78). Trotman (2009) asserted that Black women need more opportunities to meet with other minorities and to continue to write and speak about their experiences. Also, she noted that more Black women need opportunities for advancement. However, this study demonstrated that Black women have relationships with mentors, attend professional development opportunities to network, deliver presentations and speak at conferences, and some are striving to obtain senior-level positions.

"Impostorism is related to and overlaps with several other manifestations of self-doubt including self-handicapping, in which an individual sabotages their own performance . . . taking extensive measures to try to avoid expected failure" (Jarrett, 2010, p. 380). While these women exhibited some aspects of the phenomenon, they did not seek to sabotage themselves or repeat the impostor phenomenon cycle every time they received a new job task. Instead, they rely on their mentors, patience, and coping mechanisms to find solace in the work that they do. Jarrett (2010) also noted that those who suffer from the impostor phenomenon have the feeling that others have an inflated perception of their abilities and that their real abilities will be found out and label them as subpar. The participants did not discuss either of these two areas.

This study demonstrated that Black women are in fact still fighting against stereotypes, racism, sexism, and other historical norms as indicated by their experiences. However, they are not trapped in a repetitious cycle of failure. What is important is how these Black women are fighting to break the barriers that they face and are doing so on their terms.

<div align="center">Chapter Summary</div>

This chapter identified the emerging themes from the study and how they conceptually related to Collins's (2000) theory of Black feminist thought. The six themes identified were balancing career, family, and personal commitments; mentors; underrepresentation; lack of respect; spirituality; and preparedness. The themes provided awareness of the experiences of Black women in higher education. As for the impostor phenomenon, though the women mentioned actions related to it, they do not present themselves as facing a hindrance from the phenomenon per the researcher's original supposition.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings from the interviews with 10 Black women who, at the time of the interviews, were in leadership positions of various degrees from entry level to senior level. This chapter also provides a discussion of the findings and recommendations for practice and future research.

Discussion of Findings

Based on interviews with 10 Black women administrators in higher education, data showed the need to balance family and career as a primary issue for upward mobility and success. Thus, coping mechanisms play an integral role in how the participants experienced workplace mobility and professional challenges.

Mobility

Four of the participants were content in their current positions, two because they were waiting to hear from God about their next move, and two because they thought that Black women receive so few opportunities for advancement. They chose to stay where they were until they felt completely stifled and would most likely seek opportunities at other institutions where there might be more avenues for upward mobility. Thompson (2008) supported this notion by explaining that the number of minorities in higher education administration does not align with the rate of minorities entering as students in higher education. Furthermore, even though 20% to 25% of college and university students are minorities, the organizational structures do not reflect the same numbers (Thompson, 2008). This slow rate of growth goes back to the idea of having an organizational structure representative of the student body ("Concluding Remarks," 2009).

Another issue with mobility is the need for exposure and experiences both within and outside of the institution so that others can see one's full potential. The participants did not agree strongly one way or the other in this area. While half reported that they received adequate opportunities, others said that they did not get the chance to express their potential or that others repeated their ideas and received the praise. Black feminist thought reveals the critical need to have a voice because understanding Black women's experiences lie at the center of Black feminist thought, and understanding those experiences requires all stakeholders to take a role in promoting diversity (Collins, 2000). The results of this study indicated that this issue remains unresolved. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that Black women are often not allowed the opportunity to challenge the norm without also challenging their chances at upward mobility in higher education. By not speaking up and by allowing others to claim their ideas, Black women are not writing their definitions. "Another pattern of suppression lies in paying lip service to the need for diversity, but changing little about one's own practice" (Collins, 2000, p. 6).

Challenges

The themes that were identified as challenges included the balance of career, family, and personal commitments; mentors; underrepresentation; lack of respect; spirituality; and preparedness. As explained, balancing career, family, and personal commitments, and lack of respect are common obstacles for Black women in higher education (Brock, 2010; Casemore, 2008; Coleman, 1998; Dindoffer et al., 2011; Meuth, 2009; Watkins, 2005). Regarding lack of respect, not all educated Black women, especially in colleges and universities in the United States, are automatically intellectuals. Black women intellectuals are not a female version of DuBois's 'talented tenth.' Furthermore, a person is neither automatically born being an intellectual nor does a person become an intellectual by earning a degree. "Rather, doing

intellectual work of the sort envisioned within Black feminism requires a process of self-conscious struggle on behalf of Black women, regardless of the actual social location where that work occur" (Collins, 2000, p. 15)

The lack of respect in the workplace must be countered by using the outsider-within position, the legacy of struggle, and all of the tenets of a Black woman's standpoint to create a voice and space for dialogue to effect change. Black women must begin to do this for themselves because, as the past four centuries have shown in America, no one will do it for them.

Each of the Black women in this study discussed how balancing career, family, and personal commitments outside of work is a constant juggling act and commented that the number of hours in the day are never enough. Often, work disrupts the scales even more. Only two of the participants discussed learning how to separate the two aspects of their lives to understand who they were outside of work. S. Jackson and Harris (2007), as well as Hensel (1991) and Dindoffer et al. (2011), discussed the guilt that Black women often feel when they are forced to choose between career and family or to try to find a balance between the two. The controlling images that contribute to Black women's oppression make this a difficult balance to achieve.

As previously discussed, although Collins (2000) outlined the mammy, matriarch, and the Black Lady as three separate controlling images of the Black woman, it is likely that these three are constantly intertwined and fight against each other in Black women's subconscious selves. While Black women in higher education want to exert a Black maternal behavior as a strong Black woman who maintains the household, working outside the home contradicts that position. Next, although Black women have in fact risen out of poverty, unlike the mammy image, single mothers or unmarried women believe that they must have done something wrong to have so many roles for their children and themselves. At the same time, the Black Lady who is working

in the middle class may be labeled as too assertive when she expresses her voice, and others question her accomplishments because her job should have been reserved for White women (Collins, 2000). Black women are asked to take on multiple roles at one time, but no one recognizes them for any of those roles in a positive manner.

Coping Strategies

The Black women in this study are not making sense of coping strategies in the traditional sense; instead, they are normalizing themselves into higher education. The common coping strategies for those in higher education include knowing how to capitalize on political processes, obtaining support from within the organization, and accepting, promoting, and maintaining a culture of excellence (Joseph, 2015). As Collins (2000) put it, Black women have created their own idea of what Black womanhood means. That created purpose, along with historical norms, make the traditional coping mechanisms ineffective. Even with finding a balance in their lives, each of these women had at least one coping mechanism, such as religion, reading, reading and writing, unplugging from work, mentors, and sharing their experiences with people not connected with their work environment.

Four of the 10 women described their circle of family and friends as their primary coping strategy to deal with the challenges that they face in the workplace. Most of the women used their circles either to vent about the day's activities or to seek advice from people who were removed from the situation; they described a definitive boundary between family and work such as that described by Casemore (2008). For two of the women, their sororities were included in these outside circles and served as a way to give back to the community and separate themselves for a time from work; however, they stated that they gave up those opportunities when work events conflicted. Even though Dindoffer et al. (2011), Hensel (1991), S. Jackson, and Harris

(2007) cited family as a hindrance to mobility, the women in this study position family as a much needed support system that is working for them in a productive manner. While the impostor phenomenon maintains that the family can become a part of this perpetuation of self-doubt and inability to have real success, (Clance, 1985) for these women, family was a means of reassurance and letting go of the burdens of work or regaining a focus on priorities.

Four of the 10 women reported that reading and writing was a coping strategy because it provided a time to reflect on their work experiences. They used those reflective thoughts to place themselves in the context of their surroundings in the workplace. As for writing, the women stated that they read books for pleasure and intentionally steered away from academic reading to separate themselves from work. Collins (2000) discussed writing as a way to develop a self-defined standpoint because it allows for a voice in breaking silences, which can lead to taking action. To continue this effort to arrive at a self-defined standpoint, these women would need to eventually speak up to their oppressors and against the oppressions for this writing to have an impact in effecting change for Black women.

Having mentors was typical for most of the participants. Davis (2012) and Meuth (2009) stated that mentoring others is vital for opening doors, especially for Black women seeking upward mobility. According to Marina (2015), "There is a lack of development and intentional mentoring within the academy, where academic socialization is neither consistent nor an institutionalized process" (p. 195). Mrs. Triche agreed in this study, but she suggested that women stop seeking a Black woman mentor and instead embrace the idea of finding simply a woman mentor.

Although Black feminist thought advocates for mentors for Black women, the relationship is a much deeper one. Collins (2000) used the term *othermothers* to show that Black

women share a sisterhood. While the othermother has contradictions to the relationship that Mrs. Triche advocated, othermothers make sense for Black women. The women in this study have demonstrated that they understand the need to make connections with mentors for professional development and upward mobility in higher education. They can learn from those who have preceded them. Christian (1985) captured it best: "Take her beyond the society's narrow meaning of the word *mother* as a physical state and expand its meaning to those who create, nurture, and save life in social and psychological as well as physical terms" (as cited in Collins, 2000, p. 191). Creating knowledge that will lend itself to understanding upward mobility, knowing how to confront the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class, and tearing down controlling images (Collins, 2000) will help to create a self-defined persona for Black women in America in higher education.

The women cited solid preparation as a coping mechanism. Black women who can use their resources and can be self-reliant are powerful and deserve respect (Collins, 2000). Most of the women arrived early and were usually the last to leave the office, some taking work home. Being thoroughly prepared for meetings, presentations, and conferences allowed the women to feel confident and open to having a voice because they had answers to any potential questions. Also, being overly prepared helped with the level of stress, while also positioning Black women as competent in the workplace and as administrators. Although over-preparedness is a component of the impostor phenomenon (Clance, 1985), the women did not report feeling insecure even with the preparation, which comes with the over-preparedness of the impostor phenomenon. Instead, they expressed a sense of confidence because of their preparation.

What stands out here is that Black women have oppressions that have oppressions. In other words, it is not enough that race, gender, and class are intersecting oppressions. There are

layers to gender and the image of a Black woman. Not only is race a factor - hair and the lightness or darkness of various skin tones (Collins, 2000) add layers, as well. Then there is class and the clashing of the mammy, the matriarch, the lady, the hoochie, and the welfare queen, all vying for attention and place and purpose. Black women must find ways to fight against all of these images while still carving out the 21st-century image that they define for themselves. While they are aiming, stretching, reaching, and hoping for upward mobility in the world of academia, according to Collins (2000), some do not even enter as intellectuals. Some are raging a civil war within themselves, for themselves, yet the weapons are not theirs.

The church has been an important aspect of Black families, and Mattis (2002) reported that religion was a constant source of refuge for Black women. However, this study found that not all of the women openly expressed a belief in God or any other higher being. Although many of the responses began with phrases such as "Oh, Lord" or "Jesus," religion did not present itself as a primary factor or a primary coping mechanism. Reference to God in the public sphere has become more of an expression than an action for half of these women. Though it was not directly found in this study, according to Collins's (2000) discussion on the church and Joseph's (2015) study of millennials in religion, the church is considered more like another oppression or reminder of what Black women are not doing right. Additionally, they should consider the plight of others and not worry about their own condition. However, if Black women do not accept themselves first, accepting the oppressions of others will be quite a task. How can they tell someone else who and how to be when they have not articulated the same for themselves?

Recommendations for Further Research and Practice

The Black women in this study saw few opportunities for upward mobility because of the structure of administration, often referred to as the "Good Ole Boy Network" at the PWUs.

Further research could explore whether or not White men view themselves as an obstacle to Black women. In addition, further research could determine whether or not that network can be dismantled at PWUs.

While Black women are represented in higher education in terms of students, they are limited in leadership positions on PWU campuses. Since not all of the women in this study desired upward mobility, research could be extended to examine issues of race, gender, and upward mobility.

Even though each of the women had various personal obligations, none of those responsibilities seemed to hinder her workplace efforts. Instead, family enhanced the focus by offering advice and support from a perspective outside of the job. Further research could explore how Black women see their family as support rather than as a barrier to mobility.

Member checking is another area to consider for future research or replication of this study. While member checking allowed for the participants to review their responses before the researcher coded the data, it did not prove as beneficial as the researcher first thought. Of the 10 participants in this study, two sent back revisions to their transcriptions. Narratives are meant to capture the story of the participants including the emotion and intent behind their words as soon as they are spoken; therefore, member checking can strip some of that away if the participants make changes to their initial responses (McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2011). Instead, a researcher replicating this study should listen with the intent to interpret, invest as much time as needed with the participants rather than having a set interview time frame, and ask as many probing questions as possible including as many how, what when, who, why questions as possible (McConnell-Henry et al., 2011).

For further practice in higher education, the administrative structure of institutions should to be a reflection of diversity. In other words, the organizational structure of institutions of higher learning should reflect the study body that they serve. For example, Mrs. Triche, summarized this need best:

I think that coping skills should be taught in addition to your academic curriculum. That's one. And another thing, we should talk more about what to do when you get there and how do you maintain your status, and at the same time, how do we help others to be able to cope. We don't teach that, and that's sad. I believe there should be a mechanism to help women to learn how to cope. We do so much for our families, but we don't know how to collaborate outside of that. And, if you aren't strong enough to be able to explain and support your issues, you can just forget it. That's not to say there are not men who need these coping skills. But, I'm not talking about a woman who is in a higher education leadership position. I'm talking about women who want to get there and who need to learn those skills. And, I don't think we teach that.

While the women in this study displayed various levels of confidence and hopefulness for advancement, coping strategies cannot completely break traditional barriers, stereotypes, and the doubt that Black women may experience. Even though Title VII, Title IX, and the Equal Employment Opportunities Act (Duignan, 2010) have been in place for decades, they do not necessarily alter personal mindsets and opinions, or workplace norms.

Although the women in this study are in fact not suffering from the impostor phenomenon in its totality, it could be that denial pervades the mindset of the women in this study (Collins, 2000). Perhaps, by suggesting or inferring that they are not like other women, some Black women are failing to realize the similar experiences they share with other Black

women, which could aid in breaking oppressions and creating a self-definition (Collins, 2000). In this sense, Black women see the potential for a "way out" but, in doing so, fail to recognize how they have instead assimilated to the dominant group's idea of who they should be (Collins, 2000). Most of the women did not imply or express a clear self-defined position for themselves that did not include any of the oppressions characteristic of Black feminist thought. In failing to do so, how have they truly escaped both social constructions of gender, race, and class? While they did not articulate a case for a repetitious cycling of the phenomenon, neither did they clearly describe complete freedom from it. People want to be different, unique, and individual; however, in doing so, they may repeat patterns and false hopes without challenging the historical constructions created about them. Furthermore, the fact that Superwoman chose this name is interesting, considering that Clance (1985) provided the premise that women who suffer from the impostor phenomenon often see themselves as the superwoman who must do it all and do it all to perfection (as cited in Sakulku & Alexander, 2011). Further exploration of this connection to the impostor phenomenon led to another term for this concept: the multiple-role woman (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015). The researchers of that study explained that women who take on various tasks and roles may or may not also suffer from heightened levels of stress that can interfere with other areas of their lives. Clance (1985) made a similar point about the impostor phenomenon. Although the superwoman role may be an archetype of a female identity (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015), it can attach itself to a Black woman and push her to unreasonable limits to achieve goals that might prove to be too much to take on at one time. As a result, other areas of her life can suffer (Clance, 1985). Further research could seek to dispel the idea that Black women are living these controlled images and residing in a false sense of doubt about their real potential. Further

research could also attempt to demonstrate ways that Black women, specifically in higher education, can create self-defined images to replace the controlling images of Black women.

Through this study of Black women in higher education and the impact of the impostor phenomenon, the researcher aimed to explore how the impostor phenomenon could adversely affect a Black women's mobility. After decades in higher education, the researcher hoped that historical norms would be more dismantled and hiring practices were more equitable, thereby, making the impostor phenomenon the biggest obstacle hindering the mobility of Black women in higher education leadership positions. However, that was not the case, and even in 21st-century America, Black women continue to face discrimination and unfair treatment in the workplace, from their communities, and at times, from themselves. While components of the phenomenon are present in the participants' lives in different ways, the impostor phenomenon cycle is not a hindrance nor is it a stifling means for the majority of the participants.

Lastly, Black women's oppressions are not a United States issue; these are global oppressions of Black women. As such, the oppressions must be dismantled everywhere. Further practice could target that issue. As Collins (2000) explained,

> Shifting to a global analysis not only reveals new dimensions of U.S. Black women's experiences in the particular matrix of domination that characterizes U.S. society, but it also illuminates how a transnational matrix of domination presents certain challenges for women of African descent. Intersecting oppressions do not stop at U.S. borders. Intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation constitute global phenomena. (p. 231)

Placing these intersecting oppressions in a global light can then not only dispel myths in America, but around the world. The dominant groups' oppressions would also be made more apparent with a global lens.

While change has occurred, and some of these women are the first or only Black women in their institutions, they represent but a fraction of the number of women who desire to hold administrative positions in higher education. Black women continue to work toward graduate degrees, and Black women administrators are needed so these students can see their identity reflected in their academic leaders (Meuth, 2009; Ortega et al., 2013).

America is diverse and education is a cornerstone of life for most Americans. Colleges and universities must consider their diversity efforts and take women into consideration. Higher education has struggled with the issue of diversity since its conception; centuries later, the battle continues. A change in practice and attitudes is needed. Instead of quantifying diversity efforts, higher education should put an emphasis on qualifying such efforts.

This study suggested that, while Black women still face areas of marginalization in higher education and have experienced overt or implied racism and lack of respect, each had a unique response to those experiences, depending on the longevity of career, desire for upward mobility, and personal commitments. Further studies that can lead to open discussions about how these feelings could serve as a catalyst for change.

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APPENDIX A

REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE AND CONSENT FORM

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Prospective Participant,

My name is Marian Muldrow, and I am a doctoral student in Georgia Southern University. I am currently conducting research on Black women in higher education administration as part of the completion of the doctoral degree in higher education administration. This is a qualitative study using interviews to explore the experiences of Black women as professionals in institutions of higher education.

If you agree to participate, the interview questionnaire will include demographic questions in order to gather descriptive information about you and your institution. The interviews will involve investigative questions. I am asking for a commitment of a scheduled interview during April or May 2016 via FaceTime, Skype, in person, or phone call lasting approximately one hour and 15 minutes to two hours.

All data with the potential to identify participants will be held in confidence. Your name will not be utilized in the study. Instead, pseudonyms will be assigned to you. However, quotes from the interviews will be utilized to support general themes. Finally, there is no financial benefit to the participants; however, participants might get emotional when discussing past successes and failures in the workplace, which is the only foreseeable risk.

Your participation is voluntary, and if you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time with no penalty to you. Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information and willingly signed this consent form.

You may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If you have questions about your rights or other concerns, you can contact Georgia Southern University's Institutional Review Board (912) 478-5465. By signing, you agree to participate in the study

described above and acknowledge the researcher's obligation to provide you with a copy of this consent form.

Your response to this request is important to the advancement of my research on Black women in higher education administration. Your participation is greatly needed, valued, and would be deeply appreciated. If you are interested in participating, please submit a signed consent form. Shortly after receiving your consent, I will email you the biographical and institutional data form. After I receive the form back, I will email you about setting up at time to conduct the interview.

If you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me at (678) 571-5643 or you can e-mail me at mm09266@georgiasouthern.edu. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records. This project has been reviewed and approved by the GSU Institutional Review Board under tracking number H16360.

Title of Project: An Exploration of the Impostor Phenomenon and Its Impact on Black Women

Administrators in Higher Education in the South

Principal Investigator:

Marian Muldrow 678-571-5643 mm09266@georgiasouthern.edu

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Brenda Marina 912-478-5600 bmarina@georgiasouthern.edu

_____   _____

Participant Signature   Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

_____   _____

Investigator Signature   Date

APPENDIX B

BIOGRAPHICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DATA FORM

Part I: Biographical Data/Personal Data

Name:_____

Phone: (_____)_____

E-mail address:_____

Age: 20-29 ☐30-39   ☐40-49   ☐50-59   ☐60+

Relationship Status: ☐single   ☐married ☐divorced ☐widowed   Children: ☐yes ☐no

If yes, how many? ☐1 ☐2   ☐3+

Years of Experience in Higher Education: ☐3-10 ☐11-20   ☐21+

Years of Leadership Experience: ☐3-10 ☐11-20   ☐21+

Educational Background: (Please list degree and university).

Bachelors_____

Masters_____

Doctorate_____

Mother's Educational Background: (Check highest degree earned).

☐High School   ☐Bachelor's   ☐Masters   ☐Doctorate

Father's Educational Background: (Check highest degree earned).

☐High School   ☐Bachelor's   ☐Masters   ☐Doctorate

Part II: Institutional Data

Institution_____

Enrollment_____

Size of Administrative Staff_____

Percentage Women_____

Percentage Black_____

Percentage Black Women_____

Part III: Position Data

Title_____

Department_____

College/Division_____

Job Description _____

_____

_____

_____

Size of Direct Staff   ☐1-5   ☐6-10   ☐11+

Titles _____

_____

Your Direct Report's Title_____

Years in Current Capacity   ☐3-10   ☐11-20   ☐21+

Years Planning to Remain in Capacity   ☐3-10   ☐11-20   ☐21+

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Describe how you obtained your current position.

2. Describe a typical day of interacting with co-workers.

3. Describe your greatest challenges personally.

4. Describe your greatest challenges professionally.

5. What coping strategies do you utilize in your position?

6. From what source(s) have you found your support?

7. Explain times where you have considered resigning due to some of the issues you face as a Black woman.

8. Explain the balance you have found between your internal motivations and external expectations.

9. In what ways do you view yourself making a difference for Black women or any race of women administrators in higher education?

10. What do you see as factors that serve as obstacles to Black women's full and equitable participation?

11. Explain your desire for more upward mobility.

APPENDIX D

GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Georgia Southern University	
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs	
Institutional Review Board (IRB)	
Phone: 912-478-5465	Veazey Hall 3000
	PO Box 8005
Fax: 912-478-0719 IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Marian Muldrow

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Initial Approval Date: 04/12/2016

Expiration Date: 03/31/2017

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research –
Expedited

After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H16360** and titled **"An Exploration of the Impostor Phenomenon and Its Impact on Black Women Administrators in Higher Education in the South"** it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable. You are authorized to enroll up to a maximum of **10** subjects.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research. Description: **This study intends to investigate the obstacles that Black women encounter as a result of historical standards and personal commitments that limit their upward mobility.**

If at the end of this approval period there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period. Total project approval on this application may not exceed 36 months. If additional time is required, a new application may be submitted for continuing work. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer

APPENDIX E

LITERATURE MATRIX

Research Question	Researcher	Contribution
1 How do Black women experience upward mobility at institutions of higher education?	Collins, 2000	- BFT
	Northouse, 2013	- positions why BFT is the best framework for the study
	Bell and Nikomo, 1992	- positions why BFT is the best framework for the study
	Maier, 1992	- positions why BFT is the best framework for the study
	Gilligan, 1982	- positions why BFT is the best framework for the study
	Becks-Moody, 2004	- BFT best reflects the struggles and oppressions of Black women
	Chamberlin, 1988	- 18th century Black women in HE - first Black woman in HE institution for an education
	Thomas, 2013	- Black women have dreams and goals in education despite oppressions
	Littlefield, 1997	- first Black administrator - institutions just for Black women - Association of Deans of Women and Advisors to Girls in Negro Schools - first Black woman to earn a PhD - *Louis Sipuel v. Board of Education* - first Black woman college president - Lincoln University
	Noble, 1998	- more Black women than Black men earning degrees - Title VI - Title VII - Equal Pay Act of 1963
	Braxton, 1989	- HE was more obtainable for Black women
	Green, 1998	- Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s
	Meuth, 2009	- money for recruitment isn't spent on recruiting Black women
	Jarrett, 2010	- impostor phenomenon
	Cokley, Mcclain, Enciso, & Martinez, 2013	- impostor phenomenon
	Sakulku & Alexander, 2011	- impostor phenomenon
	Littlefield, 1997	- Harlem Renaissance and rebirth of Black women in education - NAACP

Research Question	Researcher	Contribution
2 What are the challenges and experiences Black women administrators face in higher education?	Collins, 2000	- BFT - race as an oppression
	Moody, 2004	- inhospitable peers - Black women share similar experiences - homophily
	Thomas, 2013	- social class affects experiences - forcing Black women down the paths of others
	Brock, 2010	- Black women haven't found complete happiness in HE - low self-esteem - isolation
	Huston, 1937	- Black women receive double marginalization - Black women are perpetually searching for themselves - church obligations
	Green, 1998	- Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s
	Noble, 1998	- Title VI - Title VII - Equal Pay Act of 1963
	Becks-Moody, 2003	- new obstacles in the 21st century - underrepresentation in graduate programs
	Beloney-Morrison, 2003	- new obstacles in the 21st century
	McCandless, 2009	- sexism, racism, and overall discrimination
	Ehrenberg, 2004	- underrepresentation in graduate programs
	Marina, 2014	- White peers have a circle of socialization
	Meuth, 2009	- underrepresentation in undergraduate programs - poverty - Black women aren't given challenging workloads, but they receive heavy workloads of menial tasks - institutions aren't concerned with retaining Black women - homophily - Black women have to become solely responsible for minority programs, curriculum, and diversity decisions
	Coleman, 1998	- underrepresentation in HE - family - low self-esteem - isolation
	Watkins, 2005	- dysfunctional family
	Thompson, 2008	- Black women aren't given challenging workloads, but they receive heavy workloads of menial tasks - discrimination - Black women have a harder time with students, so they aren't promoted into leadership positions - forced to decipher unclear expectations - homophily
	Allan, Gordon, and Iverson, 2006	- Black women aren't given the opportunity to make decisions without constraints - considered to assertive when they speak up
	Hurston, 1937	- low self-esteem - isolation
	Denzin and Lincoln, 2003	- understanding Black women's experiences - qualitative methods
	Anderson and Jack, 1991	- narratives

Research Question	Researcher	Contribution
2 What are the challenges and experiences Black women administrators face in higher education?	Etter-Lewis, 1991	- narratives
	Lorde, 2007	- research questions
	Gall, Borg, and Gall, 2007	- snowball sampling - mobility experiences
	Merriam, 2009	- descriptive data in the form of stories
	Creswell, 2003	- narratives
	Chamberlin 1998	- racism, sexism, isolation, lack of trust, rapport, and tokenism
	Dahlvig & Longman, 2010	- racism, sexism, isolation, lack of trust, rapport, and tokenism
	Heikkinen & Huttumen, 2004	- racism, sexism, isolation, lack of trust, rapport, and tokenism
	Jarrett, 2010	- impostor phenomenon

Research Question	Researcher	Contribution
3 What coping strategies do Black women use to successfully manage conflicts they face?	Collins, 2000	- BFT - combat oppressions - find a balance between working and being a mom - create safe places
	Onwuachi-Willig, 2013	- mentors
	Marina, 2014	- White peers have a circle of socialization
	Meuth, 2009	- pre-college level coursework - counselor engagement - mentoring programs - diverse faculty initiative in the strategic plan - more recruitment efforts for Black women - promotion - cohorts - professional development
	Thompson, 2008	- cohorts for minority faculty and staff - mentoring programs - professional development
	Hooks, 2000	- resources for Black women
	Casemore, 2008	- find secure places outside of home
	Dindoffer, Reid, and Freed	- supportive network - some Black women have mothers who have educational regrets - find balance
	McMillan, 2013	- Black women need to put themselves first sometimes
	Bush, 2013	- Black women need to embrace their power - Black women need to stop dismissing each other
	Braxton, 1989	- motherhood is not the only way to measure worth
	Dinodoffer, 2011	- religion as a refuge, not a crutch
	Marina and Edwards-Joseph, 2014	- religion as a refuge, not a crutch
	Becks-Moody (2004)	- need to understand Black women's realities
	Beloney-Morrison (2003	- need to understand Black women's realities