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Herstory: A Qualitative Examination of the Experiences of African American Women Senior Student Affairs Officers at Land-Grant Institutions

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Tanisha Jenkins entitled "Herstory: A Qualitative Examination of the Experiences of African American Women Senior Student Affairs Officers at Land-Grant Institutions." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Higher Education Administration.

Dorian McCoy, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Norma Mertz, J. Camille Hall, Joe Miles

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Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

Herstory: A Qualitative Examination of the Experiences of African American Women Senior
Student Affairs Officers at Land-Grant Institutions

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Tanisha Leverne Jenkins
December 2019

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DEDICATION

To my Parents and Family

Jimmy and Shirley Jenkins

Elizabeth R. Young

Christopher Jenkins

James A. Jenkins, Jr.

The Late Florence Jenkins

The Late Dorcas Jenkins

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I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Dorian McCoy for guiding me through this doctoral journey. I am also grateful for my amazing committee members: Dr. Norma Mertz, Dr. J. Camille Hall, and Dr. Joe Miles.

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ABSTRACT

Despite decades of efforts on the part of the nation's postsecondary institutions, racial equity remains a major hurdle facing higher education institutions in the United States (Hylton, 2012; Jackson, 2000, 2001). Although Black women have participated in U.S. higher education for more than a century and have certainly made great strides toward occupying their rightful place within academia, they continue to face a myriad of personal and professional challenges (Burke & Carter, 2015; Gregory, 2001). Some scholars have resolved that existing literature has shifted from sharing the narratives of underrepresented women in senior student affairs officer (SSAO) positions to reporting in gender neutral ways, which leaves their unique experiences undocumented (Clay, 2014; Yakaboski & Donahoo 2011). The purpose of this critical qualitative study was to explore the experiences of purposively selected Black women in SSAO positions. The following research question guided this study: What are the professional experiences of Black women who serve as senior student affairs officers at land-grant colleges and universities? Interviews were conducted with 10 Black women serving in SSAO roles at land-grant higher education institutions, and four themes described the lived experiences of the participants: (a) outsider-within, (b) controlling images, (c) intersectionality, and (d) Black women's standpoint – shared experiences.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Problem.....	4
Purpose of Study and Research Question	4
Significance of Study	5
Delimitations.....	5
Theoretical Framework.....	6
Definitions of Terms.....	7
Organization of Study.....	10
CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	12
History and Development of the Student Affairs Profession.....	15
Women’s Leadership in Student Affairs.....	18
Black Women’s Leadership in Student Affairs	20
Challenges Encountered by Black Women in Leadership.....	24
Discrimination/Isolation	24
Double Consciousness	24
Imposter Syndrome.....	25
Ceilings and Cliffs	26
Mentoring.....	27
Black Feminist Thought.....	30
Intersecting Oppressions.....	32
Controlling Images.....	33
Self-Definition and Outsider-Within	35
Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood	36
Black Women’s Love Relationships.....	37
Black Women and Motherhood	37
Black Women’s Activism.....	38
Summary.....	39
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY	41
Research Design.....	41

Critical Research	42
Participants.....	44
Gaining Access	46
Data Collection	47
Document Analysis.....	47
Interviews.....	48
Data Analysis	49
Organization of Data.....	50
Coding Process.....	50
Presentation of Findings	51
Trustworthiness.....	52
Positionality	53
Ethical Considerations	54
Summary.....	55
CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS.....	56
Key Themes	56
Outsider-Within: A Seat at the Table.....	57
Controlling Images: She’s a Bitch!.....	59
Intersectionality: You’re Too Young and You Don’t Know Anything!.....	63
Black Women’s Standpoint – Shared Experiences.....	64
Mentoring.....	72
Summary.....	75
CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	76
Summary of Findings.....	76
Interpretation of Findings	77
Outsider-Within	77
Controlling Images.....	78
Intersecting Oppressions.....	79
Imposter Syndrome.....	79
Relationship Building	80
Mentoring.....	81

Implications for Practice	82
Recommendations for Future Research	83
Participant Updates	86
Conclusion	86
REFERENCES	88
APPENDICES	125
VITA.....	132

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Historically, the pursuit of education has been a critical element of importance for the Black community (M. King, 1964; Robinson & Nelson, 2010; A. Smith, 1989). Educational scholars and practitioners have emphasized that many members of the Black community conceptualize education as an opportunity for advancement and a means to greater social and upward mobility (Bailey-Johnson, 1999; Burke & Carter, 2015; Higginbotham & Weber, 1988; L. R. Jackson, 1998; Robinson & Nelson, 2010; Willis & Lewis, 1999). In particular, Black women have viewed education not only as a means to a better quality of life but also as a conduit to significant professional opportunities within the higher education field (Perkins, 1982, 2015). The road to gaining access to higher education for Black women has not been an easy one and has consisted of struggle, perseverance, and enlightenment (A. C. Collins, 2001). For most Black women, the ability to work within educational arenas, such as higher education, serves as a premier forum to fulfill their professional aspirations and network with other Black women in the field (Burke & Carter, 2015). Brazell (2012) posited advancement to high levels of authority represents to many Black women not just the attainment of a job or the capstone of a career but the desire to make a difference and to give back, which ultimately trumps personal gain.

Jones Anderson (2014) found that, due to the influence on policies, procedures, culture and climate, the lack of diversity within the top levels of leadership can have a direct impact on student success. She posited, “Institutions that lack diversity in senior-level administrative positions run the risk of neglecting or underserving their stakeholders who benefit from the perspectives inclusion and diversity can bring” (Jones Anderson, 2014, p. 4). Campuses that employ a multicultural workforce enhance the climate for all members of the organization and show minoritized students that success and career advancement are possible (Clay, 2014; Patitu

& Hinton, 2003). Tinto (1975, 1993) identified and discussed how the presence of African Americans in leadership roles aided in the retention and persistence of African American students. Studies have also shown African American women leaders contribute to the enrollment and graduation of African American college students (Clay, 2014; Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2002). In a similar study, Gardner, Barrett, and Pearson (2014) emphasized the importance of the presence of Black women on college campuses to student success, but found that Black female senior-level administrators remain underrepresented in higher education.

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2017) indicated that of the women employed in student and academic affairs and other education services, 46% identified as White and 9% identified as Black. The number of White female administrators has increased steadily, but the progression of Black female administrators, particularly at large predominantly White 4-year institutions (PWIs), has remained relatively stagnant (Croom, 2011; Everett, 2015; S. L. Holmes, 2003). However, Black women are often employed in small, 4-year public institutions in urban areas that enroll large numbers of underrepresented and female students, as well as in 2-year colleges (Henry, 2010; Hinton, 2012; NCES, 2015, 2016, 2017).

While women of all races may have to manage multiple roles and responsibilities, previous research indicates that Black women must also manage and overcome isolation, exclusion, racism, and/or sexism at their place of employment (Gibson, 2006; S. L. Holmes, 2008; S. L. Holmes, Land, & Hinton-Hudson, 2007; Tran, 2014; Turner, 2002a). For Black women, the intersectionality of identities creates different lived experiences and social realities (White, Lane, McConnell, Jones, & Jackson, 2013). The pressure of being a Black woman places an added burden and feelings of scrutiny, and Black women indicate encounters with social inequity despite possessing advanced levels of education (Lloyd-Jones, 2009; Tran, 2014).

Although White women have been subject to oppression because of their gender, they remain privileged based on their racial identity (Accapadi, 2007; Davidson & Burke, 2012; L. R. Jackson, 1998); whereas, outside of Asian, Latino, and Native American women, Black women experience the lowest status in importance standing behind White men, White women, and Black men (Jones Anderson, 2014; McCurtis, Jackson, & O'Callaghan, 2009; Sobers, 2014; Zamani, 2003).

For Black women who have ascended into leadership positions, Henry and Glenn (2009) found that they often felt that their power was regularly challenged. Henry (2010) noted that they were often identified as “angry Black women” (p. 13) when they asserted themselves in their management or leadership style and these issues and conditions make it difficult for Black women to feel supported and valued in the workplace. Black women must constantly ensure that their voice is not being diminished when offering their positions on issues (White et al., 2013). In comparison, Black women who attend meetings and do not say much may be perceived as weak. At the same time, if one is too vocal or opinionated, she is perceived as overly aggressive (Henry, 2010; White et al., 2013).

The presence of African American women in higher education administration has not widely been documented and a fairly small body of research exists on the intersection of race and gender as experienced by Black women senior student affairs officers (SSAO; Clay, 2014; Tyson, 2002; Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011). Clay (2014) and Ramey (1995) both have suggested that additional research on African American women SSAOs could assist college presidents and senior-level administrators who are reluctant to appoint Black women to SSAO positions and provide Black women seeking these positions the guidance needed to make informed decisions.

Statement of Problem

Despite decades of efforts on the part of the nation's postsecondary institutions, racial equity remains a major hurdle facing higher education institutions in the United States (Hylton, 2012; Jackson, 2000, 2001). Although Black women have participated in U.S. higher education for more than a century and have certainly made great strides toward occupying their rightful place within academia, they continue to face a myriad of personal and professional challenges (Burke & Carter, 2015; Gregory, 2001). Some scholars have resolved that existing literature has shifted from sharing the narratives of underrepresented women in SSAO positions to reporting in gender neutral ways which leaves their unique experiences undocumented (Clay, 2014; Yakaboski & Donahoo 2011). Exploring and sharing the narrative experiences of African American women SSAOs is important because they enrich the educational process of students, faculty, and staff by offering varying perspectives on racial and social issues (Clay, 2014; Slater, 2007). Clay (2014) also stated that the supervisors of Black women SSAOs could gain a better understanding of these women's experiences and develop new strategies for supporting them. As higher education strives to be responsive to the diverse needs of students, faculty and staff, it is important to analyze, understand, and honor the voices and experiences of Black women in SSAO positions.

Purpose of Study and Research Question

The purpose of this critical qualitative study was to explore the experiences of purposively selected Black women in senior student affairs officer positions. The qualitative framework enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of 10 women serving in these roles at land-grant higher education institutions. The following research question

guided this study: What are the professional experiences of Black women who serve as senior student affairs officers at land-grant colleges and universities?

Significance of Study

Student affairs professionals have long been aware of the importance of employing a diverse staff, but regardless of the attention given by the profession to the problem, inequities in staffing patterns continue (Bensimon, 2004; Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014; Turrentine & Conley, 2001). Researchers have reported that there is inadequate representation of administrators of color, and that Black women, though present in the profession in growing numbers, remain underrepresented in SSAO positions (Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014; Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008; Reason, Walker, & Robinson, 2002; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wong, 2011; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999; N. M. West, 2018). To increase the representation of Black women SSAOs, their experiences must be researched and documented, with a specific focus on their contributions and successes in an effort to chisel away at the “boulder of victimization” (Henry, 2010, p. 14) that often obstructs the accomplishments of Black female student affairs administrators. This study strived to illuminate the experiences of Black women in SSAO positions at land-grant institutions and gave attention to the often over-looked voices of Black women SSAOs and higher education professionals.

Delimitations

Delimitations exist in the research due to the scope of the qualitative study. This study will be delimited to African American women SSAOs at land-grant institutions. By limiting the sample to African American women SSAOs at land-grant institutions, the findings will not speak to the experiences of African American women SSAOs at other types of institutions.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Black Feminist Thought (BFT) (Chapter 2 includes an extensive discussion of BFT). BFT was conceptualized from the ideas of Black feminists, such as Patricia Hill Collins (2000), who insisted that Black women faced a unique set of issues that the predominantly White feminist movement was not addressing (Kelly, Segoshi, Adams, & Raines, 2017; Nicholson & Pasque, 2011). It was designed to “counteract the historically White women and patriarchal epistemology that has shaped the ways in which Black women are viewed” (Kelly et al., 2017, p. 168). In research, BFT allows the researcher to resist the urge to ground the experiences of Black women into any single theoretical tradition. The theoretical framework recognizes the totality of experiences and provides an opportunity to examine individual experiences from a multitude of perspectives, such as that of standpoint (P. H. Collins, 2000; Everett, 2015; S. L. Holmes, 2003). The notion of standpoint is central to BFT and represents the shared experiences and ideas of Black women (P. H. Collins, 2000). P. H. Collins (2000) asserted that Black women’s standpoint can be understood within the context of several common threads which link Black women together. Standpoint acknowledges that the occupational and familial experiences of Black women and the experiences grounded in Black culture lead to a Black feminist group consciousness (P. H. Collins, 2000). While not all Black women identify with group consciousness, most Black women consider the group’s standpoint when attempting to develop their own standpoint (Henry, 2010; Hylton, 2012).

Within BFT, the strategy of rearticulating everyday experiences in light of race and gender converges on: (a) building critical awareness of ascribed and false controlling images and (b) allowing for the construction of new and empowering knowledge (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; P. H. Collins, 2000). These strategies are particularly effective in combatting issues of

gender and race. In academic administrative positions, Black women have experienced sex discrimination at both historically Black and predominantly White universities that has inhibited their upward mobility (F. J. Scott, 2003). F. J. Scott (2003) also found, for Black women in higher education, racism is an everpresent obstacle. Both sexism and racism reinforce negative stereotypes often applied to women in professional settings (Belk, 2006; Everett, 2015). Black feminist thought recognizes the marginalization felt by many Black women in academia and provides useful cues for redressing the disenfranchisement that Black women continue to experience in higher education institutions (Henry & Glenn, 2009; Winkle-Wagner, 2015). Black feminist thought provided the interpretative lens for understanding, as a group, Black women live in a different world from those who are not Black *and* female (Hylton, 2012). P. H. Collins (2005) stated that Black women's intellectual production (BFT) has been essential to their progress and sanity. Black feminist thought cannot be understood unless you consider the importance of the intersectionality of race, gender, and class and how those factors affect the success and acculturation of Black women in higher education. P. H. Collins (2014) argued, "Self-definition and self-valuation are not luxuries, they are necessary for [Black women's] survival" (p. 310). This study explored how and if they are also necessary for Black women's abilities to thrive as SSAOs.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions of terms and concepts are used within the study:

Ageism. Ageism is defined as the negative stereotyping and discrimination against people solely because of their age. It should be noted that in this definition no distinction is made between people of different ages. Both young and old people may be discriminated against or stereotyped (Schroots, 2003).

African American/Black. The terms African American and Black will be used interchangeably and are defined as a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

Black feminist thought. Black feminist thought (BFT) is a theory conceptualized by P. H. Collins (2000) that offers an understanding of the intersecting identities of Black women.

Career barrier. A career barrier is an event or condition, within the person or in his or her environment, that makes career progress difficult (Swanson & Woitke, 1997).

Career path. A career path is a vertical and/or nonvertical career move that an individual is willing to take to satisfy their career orientation (De Vos, Dewettinck, & Buyens, 2008).

Culture. Culture is defined as the beliefs, customs, arts of a particular society, group, place, or time; a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization; the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people (Hofstede, 1997).

Historically Black college and university. A historically Black college or university (HBCU) is a college or university originally founded to educate students of African American descent (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Institutional culture. Institutional culture is described as the deeply embedded patterns of organizational behavior and shared values, assumptions, beliefs, or ideologies that members have about their organization or its work (Campbell & Hourigan, 2008).

Intersectionality. Intersectionality is an analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructive features of social organization which shape Black women's experiences, and in turn, are shaped by Black women (P. H. Collins, 2000).

Land-grant institution. A land-grant institution is a college or university that has been designated by its state legislature or U.S. Congress to receive the benefits of the Morrill Acts of 1862, 1890, and 1994. The original mission of these institutions, as set forth in the first Morrill Act, was to teach agriculture, military tactics, and the mechanic arts as well as classical studies so members of the working classes could obtain a liberal, practical education (APLU, 2018).

Mentor. A mentor is an experienced person who serves as a role model, provides support, direction and feedback regarding career plans and interpersonal development (Day & Allen, 2004).

Othering. Othering is defined as a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities (Powell & Menendian, 2016).

People of Color. People of Color (PoC) is the term used to encompass all people racialized as non-White, as PoC are all subject to systemic racism (Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, & Kelly, 2006).

Predominately White institution. Predominantly White institutions (PWIs) are institutions of higher education where the majority of the student population are comprised of individuals who identify racially as White (Brown, Dancy, & Davis, 2013).

Racism. Racism refers to the belief that all members of a purported race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or other races. Racism is a particular form of prejudice defined by preconceived erroneous beliefs about race and members of racial groups (Hoyt, 2012).

Senior student affairs officer. Senior student affairs officer (SSAO) positions typically comprise the Dean of Students, Associate/Assistant Vice President/Chancellor of Student Affairs, and Vice President/Chancellor of Student Affairs. In the context of this study, the term refers to a person in a managerial or policymaking capacity who may have a line or staff function (Jackson, 2004).

Sexism. Sexism refers to the negative beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors against individuals simply based on their gender (Swim & Hyers, 2009).

Student affairs. Student affairs refers to the organizational structure or unit within an institution responsible for students' out-of-class life and learning (Winston, Creamer, & Miller, 2001).

Student affairs administrator. In the context of this study, the term administrator refers to a person in a managerial or policymaking capacity that may have a line or staff function (Jackson, 2004).

Underrepresented group. An underrepresented group refers to racial and ethnic populations that are underrepresented in various professions relative to their numbers in the general population (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2004).

Women of Color. The term Women of Color (WoC) includes all women racialized as non-White and is capitalized to validate the experiences of women who have been excluded from the literature (Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, & Kelly, 2006; Luedke, 2017).

Organization of Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 included the introduction to the study, stated the problem and purpose, identified the research question, provided an overview of the theoretical framework, discussed the significance of the study, defined key terms, and

discussed the delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 provides a critical review of the relevant research related to the study. Chapter 3 details the procedures and methods used in conducting the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings. Chapter 5 summarizes the study and its findings while discussing the implications of the findings, and offering recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of relevant research and literature on Black women in student affairs. This review centers on the literature related to the history and development of the student affairs profession, women’s leadership in student affairs, Black women’s leadership in student affairs administration, challenges encountered by Black women in leadership, and the influence of mentoring. Research related to the theoretical framework of Black feminist thought (BFT) is also covered in this chapter. A critique of the research shapes the scope and perspective of the study and helps to identify areas where further research is needed.

More than four decades have passed since key legislation, including the Equal Pay Act, Title VII, and Title IX, was passed and efforts were begun to broaden and create more inclusive curricula, policy initiatives, curricular reform, research, and grassroots organizing in contemporary U.S. higher education and shape women’s status in higher education (Allan, 2011). While society in general has made significant gains in women’s participation in social, political, and employment spheres; women’s representation in positions of power and influence has been notably less impressive (Catalyst, 2014; Ryan et al., 2016; United Nations, 2015). Higher education is not immune from an absence of women in senior leadership roles and there are increasing numbers of women who manage to break through the glass ceiling and occupy senior-level leadership positions (Cornelius & Skinner, 2005; Davis, 2009; Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014; Hays & Kearney, 1995; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). However, researchers have suggested that these successful women are disproportionately represented in leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ryan et al., 2016) and that the “final male bastion”

(Ryan et al., 2016, p. 447) remains—positions that were at the pinnacle of power, influence, and leadership.

The organizational culture for women on university campuses has depicted a climate that is not conducive for success because practices, structures, and policies often work against women (Aala, 2012; Iverson, 2009). Higher education leaders purport to understand the benefits of diversity in higher education, but many have yet to make the leap toward gender equity in senior administration to achieve diversity (Astin, 1993; O’Neil, 2002; Walker, 2014; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). The senior student affairs officer position traditionally has been held by White males (Blackhurst, 2000; Mendez-Moore, 2004; Reason, Walker, & Robinson, 2002; Walker, 2014). Walker (2014) found that women continued to be underrepresented at the senior levels of leadership in student affairs but remained overrepresented for lower and mid-level positions in the profession. Additional research suggested that while up-and-coming women are directed to staff positions, men are often diverted to line positions where they are groomed for further advancement (Davis, 2009; Hays & Kearney, 1995).

While there is a robust body of literature on leadership in higher education, most scholars have noted that this scholarship has focused on the perspectives and experiences of male leaders, primarily ignoring gender and the experiences of women leaders (Chliwniak, 1997; Coleman, 2003; Enke, 2014; Jablonski, 2000). Higher education research does not reflect a deep understanding of the ways that multiple identities shape women leaders’ enactments of leadership in educational contexts or a full understanding of how leadership context mediates women’s leadership (Chliwniak, 1997; Coleman, 2003; Enke, 2014; Jablonski, 2000). Enke (2014) noted that only a few studies examining leadership in higher education have considered the institutional context in which leaders work as a major influence on leadership enactment.

Women leaders face complexity in their interactions because of gender bias and discrimination, differential perceptions of women leaders' effectiveness, devaluation of women's work, and legitimacy issues and beliefs about women leaders' effectiveness, competency, and legitimacy, as well as the value of their work, may disadvantage them in comparison to male leaders, and diminish the power and influence that women leaders hold in organizations (Chliwniak, 1997; Coleman, 2003; Enke, 2014; Jablonski, 2000).

Studies of leadership in higher education have routinely considered the perspectives of male leaders and described leadership in stereotypically masculine ways, without acknowledging that these understandings of leadership are gendered (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Enke, 2014; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). Other extant studies of women's leadership often have included only White, middle-class, heterosexual women and have not illuminated the way that these women's racial/ethnic, class, and sexual identities influence their leadership enactment (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Enke, 2014). Several studies have explored the way that intersecting identities, such as gender and race/ethnicity affect women's enactment of leadership within higher education (Enke, 2014; Ideta & Cooper, 2000; Mendez-Morse, 2003; Murtadha & Watts, 2005), but only a small segment of the literature specifically examines the intersection between race and gender among women in student affairs administration (Henry & Glenn, 2009; Hylton, 2012; Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011).

Previous research has focused on the successes and challenges of Black women SSAOs while highlighting the issues of retention and promotion (Cobham & Patton, 2015; Gaetane, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Gregory, 2001; Myers, 2002; Stanley, 2009; Wesley, 2018). Few researchers have examined how Black women SSAOs view their professional experience (Hughes, Kiecolt, Keith, & Demo, 2015; Wesley, 2018). This chapter provides a review of the

research and literature on the experiences of Black women in student affairs. The review of the literature analyzed the history and development of the student affairs profession, women's leadership in student affairs, Black women's leadership in student affairs, barriers encountered by Black women in leadership, and the effects of mentoring. In addition, the study's theoretical framework of Black Feminist Thought was reviewed.

History and Development of the Student Affairs Profession

The development of student affairs parallels that of U.S. higher education (Hylton, 2012; Nuss, 2003). In the early years of higher education, college faculty, tutors, and presidents were not only charged with achieving the academic mission of their colleges, but they were also expected to manage the social, athletic, and co-curricular lives of students (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Students had institutional regulations and they engaged in structured daily activities, which included attending required meetings, chapel services each morning, and evening study hours. Colonial college presidents and faculty were empowered to *act in loco parentis*, serving in place of the students' parents and looking after the welfare needs of each student (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Creamer, Winston, and Miller (2001) stated that colleges and universities were seen to have "parent-like responsibilities for students" (p. 10). Once *in loco parentis* was eliminated in the early 1970s, the relationship between students and their respective colleges and universities changed and, the role of the student affairs professional changed from one that was viewed as a disciplinarian to educator (Garland & Grace, 1993; Hylton, 2012; Lee, 2011; Nuss, 2003).

During the Federal Period (1780-1820), college staff's administration of the residence halls, monitoring the welfare and disciplining of students were the beginnings of contemporary student affairs (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Leonard, 1956). With the increasing number of U.S.

colleges and universities, institutions were categorized into liberal arts colleges, land-grant institutions, women's colleges, technical institutes, and research universities (Nuss, 2003; Rhatigan, 2009). The expanding faculty roles and the growing demands on university presidents created a need for student personnel administrators to take responsibility for student welfare, discipline, housing, and activities (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Leonard, 1956; Nuss, 2003; Rudolph, 1965).

It is unclear when the first dean of men was appointed, but W.H. Cowley suggested that the first dean of men was LeBarron Russell Briggs of Harvard, who assumed the position in 1890 after being selected by Harvard president, Charles Elliot (Cowley, 1940; Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Everett, 2015; Rhatigan, 2009). The University of Chicago is considered the first institution to use the title Dean of Women, which was given to Alice Freeman Palmer in 1892 (Fley, 1979; Horowitz, 1987; Rhatigan, 2009). The first deans of men and women were established to manage out-of-class behaviors at colleges and universities; however, significant differences existed in the roles of deans of men and deans of women. The challenges that early deans of women experienced reflected how women were treated in society and the understanding that many women who attended universities were either preparing for teaching or learning how to be good wives for their educated men (Fley, 1966; Nidifer, 2000; Schwartz & Stewart, 2016). Some presidents who appointed deans of women, immediately gave these individuals administrative and disciplinary functions that were unlike the counseling and advising functions of dean of men (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; L. H. Holmes, 1939; Mueller, 1961; Rhatigan, 2009). Dungy and Gordon (2011) found that as the co-curricular lives of students became more complex, the dean of men and dean of women positions soon became dual roles of managing the administration of the multiple services available on college campuses while simultaneously

focusing on the overall development of students. Due to the increasing breadth of student life services on a college-campus after World War I, the dean became one of the more influential positions on campus, and anyone who assumed the role began to shape the foundation of the student affairs profession (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Schwartz & Stewart, 2016).

By the early twentieth century, the concept of educating the whole student and of establishing the connection between the curriculum and co-curricular activities provided the basis for the student personnel movement (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976; Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Nuss, 2003). During the post-World War II period, the student affairs profession grew dramatically in concert with the rapid growing enrollment at higher education institutions. The profession also grew in specialization among functional areas including housing, student conduct, and multicultural student services (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Everett, 2015). The student affairs profession was established to address students' developmental needs outside of the undergraduate classroom and "to educate the whole person" (Creamer et al., 2001, p. 9). Creamer and colleagues (2001) noted that faculty members who wished to devote more time to research would relinquish their student service-oriented responsibilities and additional personnel were hired to serve in those capacities. The original concept of higher education had a focus on the development of the individual to be a well-rounded, balanced citizen who possessed a foundation in education, social, and moral convictions (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Everett, 2015). However, in the latter 20th and early 21st centuries the field of student affairs responded by foregrounding student learning and articulating how its work contributed to the preparation of globally aware and competent students through an emphasis on assessment and measurement (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Everett, 2015).

Women's Leadership in Student Affairs

With the founding of Harvard University in 1636, the purpose of higher education was to prepare young men to become ministers and government leaders, and women were not considered as potential students in colonial and antebellum colleges (Allan, 2011). The history of women as student affairs administrators is intertwined with the history of women in education. Shakeshaft (1987) illustrated this concept in stating “to understand the former, one must know the latter” (p. 23). The status of women in higher education today is a product of its historical context and the confluence of numerous social and political forces that provide an important backdrop for understanding the gains made and continuing challenges for women in contemporary higher education (Allan, 2011). Nidiffer (2002) found that the realities for women in U.S. postsecondary education today are the “direct legacy of America’s historical antagonism toward women’s higher learning” (p. 3).

Previously women attended only female institutions, but in 1833, Ohio’s Oberlin College became the first coeducational institution to admit White women and later admitted Black women in 1837 (Dale, 2007; Glover, 2012; Gordon, 1990). By 1850, the opinion that educated women could be beneficial to society grew in popularity (Schwartz & Stewart, 2016). In the decades following the Civil War, numerous sociopolitical events and policy initiatives influenced social acceptance of women’s participation in higher education, such as the Morrill Act of 1862 (Allan, 2011). Although Black people were denied entrance, the Morrill Act of 1862 gave states federal land and funds to support programs in agricultural sciences, thus beginning the trend of providing education at the public’s expense and helped to launch the modern concept of equal access (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Perkins, 2017; Schwartz & Stewart, 2016). In response to the needs of its female students, Oberlin College hired the first woman in 1870 as Lady Principal of

the Female Department (Dale, 2007; Nidiffer, 2002). The Lady Principal was in charge of the residential arrangements, counseling, health, and social needs of every woman who chose to study at the college (Dale, 2007; Nidiffer, 2000). In 1890, Congress passed the second Morrill Act, which supported Blacks, also known as historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU), land-grant institutions in 17 southern and border states (Jenkins, 1991; Perkins, 2017).

By 1910, women represented 35% of all college students and were gaining entry into professional and graduate schools. These gains served to challenge longstanding cultural attitudes about women and often fueled a backlash because of the perceived threat to male economic advantage (Allan, 2011; Nidiffer, 2001; Solomon, 1985). Male administrators at coeducational institutions feared that the growing numbers of female students would drive male students from the academy (Allan, 2011; Nidiffer, 2001; Solomon, 1985).

To better support the arrival of female college students, coeducational institutions created specialized roles for women leaders to oversee women students (Hoffman, 2011). The earliest known student affairs administrator position for women was the dean of women. The dean of women served as advocates for female students and worked to counter resistance from men in coeducational settings who assumed that women were not able to handle the intellectual demands of academic life (Belk, 2006).

Despite their successes, the number of deans of women began to decrease due to the increased presence of deans of men and backlash from the women's suffrage movement contributing to a hostile environment for some deans of women. The end of World War II had a significant influence on women administrators in higher education. Higher education institutions focused their efforts on war veterans taking advantage of the GI Bill, while women leaders continued to focus their efforts on managing the lives of their female students (Hoffman, 2011).

Institutions combined separate departments of dean of women and dean of men into new dean of students units with women leaders losing their administrative positions to White males and being relegated once again to a secondary role (Belk, 2006; Hoffman, 2011; Wesley, 2018; N. M. West, 2017b). In the final decades of the 20th century, there were gains toward gender equality, but the representation of women in senior organizational ranks stagnated, and in some situations even declined (Barreto, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2009; Davidson & Burke, 2012; Ryan et al., 2016; Sandberg, 2013; Sobers, 2014; Vinnicombe, Doldor, & Turner, 2015).

According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* 2017-2018 Almanac, there were a total of 110,458 professionals in executive, administrative, and managerial positions at 4-year public institutions. Of that number, 45.7% identified as men and 54.3% identified as women while 78.1% identified as White and 10.5% as Black. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2017) indicated that of the women employed in student and academic affairs and other education services, 46% identified as White women and 9% identified as Black women. In 2015 and 2016, Black women remained at 9%; whereas, White women were 46% and 45%, respectively.

Black Women's Leadership in Student Affairs

Nearly three decades after admitting White women, Oberlin College extended higher education opportunities to Black women in 1837. In 1850, Lucy Sessions earned a literary degree from Oberlin, making her the first Black woman to obtain a college degree in the United States (A. C. Collins, 2001; S. Y. Evans, 2007; Glover, 2012). Rebecca Lee Crumpler was the first Black woman to earn a Doctor of Medicine in 1864 from the New England Female Medical College in Massachusetts. In 1890, only 30 Black women possessed a baccalaureate degree, compared to over 300 Black men, and 2,500 White women, with White women comprising 35%

of the undergraduate student enrollment (Graham, 1978; Perkins, 2015). By 1921, Saddie Tanner Mossell Alexander had become the first Black woman to earn a PhD in economics, while Jan Ellen McAlister was the first Black woman to obtain a PhD in education in 1929 (Glover, 2012; Hine, Brown, & Terborg, 2005; Williams-Burns, 1982).

The early role of Black women in higher education was limited to educating other Black students in the field of housekeeping and elementary school teacher preparation (Hylton, 2012). Perkins (2015) argued that although the number of Black women students was increasing and HBCUs were expanding during the early 20th century, there still remained a limited number of professional opportunities for these college-educated women in higher education. The earliest known student affairs administrator for Black women, was Lucy Diggs Slowe (Glover, 2012; Wolfman, 1997). Dean Slowe was the first dean of women at Howard University from 1922 to 1937. Black college-educated women in the early 20th century were usually similar to Lucy Diggs Slowe, meaning they were from affluent families, well-traveled, and classically educated (Perkins, 2015). Slowe was educated at Howard University and Columbia University's Teachers College. She was one of the first Black women to study in the field of student affairs and to be trained as dean of students. Dean Slowe was known for mentoring several Black women who eventually became deans of women or held other roles as educators in colleges and universities (Belk, 2006; Hylton, 2012; Perkins, 1996). Her work provided a personal and professional framework for future Black students in higher education to think beyond the norm of what society expected of them (Hylton, 2012; Perkins, 1996). Slowe became the first Black member of the National Association of Deans of Women (NADW), and in 1929 she coordinated the first annual conference of deans and advisors to girls in Negro schools (Glover, 2012). Her commitment and dedication to educational leadership forged the establishment of the National

Association of College Women (NACW) and the National Association of Women's Deans and Advisors of Colored Schools (NAWDACS). These organizations advocated for Black college women (Hylton, 2012; Perkins, 1996).

Previous research (Glover, 2012; Patitu & Hinton, 2003) has found that the presence of Black women on college campuses is a welcomed system of support and encouragement for Black female students. Black women holding administrative leadership positions within higher education have helped to improve the enrollment and persistence of all Black students, particularly at predominantly White institutions (Glover, 2012; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Black women continue struggling to acquire positions of leadership within the academy, and the limited number of Black women in these positions reflects they are not often hired for mid- to senior-level administrative positions. Black women in higher education have reported being employed in lower-level administrative positions where they carry out policy as opposed to formulating it (Davis, 2009; Glover, 2012; Konrad & Pfeffer, 1991; A. Smith, 1989). Black women are often called on to work with Students of Color on campus, which can prove to be both physically and emotionally demanding (Gardner et al., 2014). Black women administrators who seek advancement into senior-level roles often give up as they contend with the visible and invisible obstacles within their departments, divisions, colleges, and higher education in general (Candia-Bailey, 2016).

Despite the role Dean Lucy Diggs Slowe established for Black women administrators and higher education's efforts to increase the representation of Black professionals in higher education, Black women in student affairs have not received equal consideration for positions, particularly positions of power and authority (Cruse, 1994; Drummond, 1995; Harvey, 1999; Hylton, 2012; Jackson, 2003). They continue to struggle with racism, sexism, the absence of

positive mentoring, and overall personal and professional development (Carroll, 1982; Guillory, 2001; Hylton, 2012; Moses, 1989; Watson, 2001). Access to educational and professional opportunities for Black women in the academy, particularly for those in higher education administration has increased significantly during the past 200 years; however, the current status of Black women administrators in higher education indicates continued room for improvement (Becks-Moody, 2004; Glover, 2012; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; N. M. West, 2018).

The increase in women faculty and administrators suggests equity has been achieved, but this argument fails to acknowledge the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions (Allan, 2011; Gangone & Lennon, 2014; J. E. King, 2010; Longman, Daniels, Bray, & Liddell, 2018; Touchton, Musil, & Campbell, 2008). S. Patton (2013) discussed racial and gender demographics in senior-level positions at Ivy League colleges and found senior leadership at the Ivy Leagues was overwhelmingly White and primarily male. Data also indicated the hiring of Blacks and members of other underrepresented groups for a broad range of professional staff and administrative positions at Ivy League institutions lagged behind that of women (S. Patton, 2013). Gamble and Turner (2015) suggested the relatively low number of Black women college administrators indicated leaders might be overlooking talent, intellect, and motivation in its workforce. Research has found Black women in senior leadership continue to be the group that has progressed the least systematically in higher education (Candia-Bailey, 2016; Henry, West, & Ferguson, 2013; Madsen, 2005). In the everchanging and challenging environment of contemporary higher education, colleges and university administrators should hire effective and diverse leaders to help move the institution forward (Bisbee, 2007; Gamble & Turner, 2015).

Challenges Encountered by Black Women in Leadership

Although Black women eventually pursued their educational goals, they continued experiencing adversity, such as discrimination and isolation, overcoming double consciousness, the imposter syndrome, criticism from Black men and other women, and breaking through ceiling and cliffs (Candia-Bailey, 2016; Davis, 2009; Gardner et al., 2014; Glover, 2012; Turner et al., 1999; Wolfman, 1997).

Discrimination/Isolation

It has been suggested that Black women, due to their race and gender, are more vulnerable to exclusion and discrimination (Burke & Carter, 2015; P. H. Collins, 2000; John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2002). Discrimination refers to behavioral bias toward a person based on the person's group identity (Gardner et al., 2014; Guillory, 2001; Turner et al., 1999). Turner et al. (1999) posited many Black women administrators had experienced some type of covert discrimination. Findings from the 23 participants in Lutz, Hassouneh, Akeroyd, and Beckett's (2013) study suggested being relegated to positions dealing with race, such as multicultural programs, can bring on feelings of isolation and a feeling of not being integrated into campus life or fully embraced by the university. Previous research has asserted dealing with prejudice and experiencing feelings of isolation and separation negatively affect the professional experiences of Black administrators (Gardner et al., 2014; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Lutz et al., 2013; Pittman, 2012).

Double Consciousness

W.E.B DuBois (1897) described double consciousness as a person's ability to adapt to having multiple identities simultaneously. Double consciousness is about understanding self, how one is perceived by others, and deciding to adjust your actions accordingly (DuBois,

1897; Sobers, 2014). With double consciousness, DuBois (1897) posited Black people saw the world from the black and white perspective and assimilated as necessary. Double consciousness can affect how Black women perceive themselves as they struggle in an environment where they have no voice and often feel isolated, which can cause bicultural stress (P. H. Collins, 2000; Gardner et al., 2014; Harris, 2007; Hylton, 2012).

The daily experience of moving back and forth between the dominant culture and one's own culture, or living a "bicultural" existence, can prove to be stressful (Gardner et al., 2014). Gardner et al. (2014) defined bicultural stress as the set of emotions and physical upheavals produced by a bicultural existence. Bicultural stress can happen on a superficial level such as dress, hairstyle, and acquired tastes and at deeper levels of emotional and ideological attachment such as with whom one associates, what one's political and social values are, and where one lives (Gardner et al., 2014; Lutz et al., 2013). Some Black women have often projected a false sense of normalcy to the outside world while internally struggling with self-oppression, identity development, and needing to be accepted by society, which can lead to the imposter syndrome (Sobers, 2014; Watt, 2006).

Imposter Syndrome

The imposter syndrome is an "internal experience of intellectual phoniness that appears to be particularly prevalent and intense among a select sample of high achieving women" (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 241). Pedler (2011) also described it as the "condition where people find it hard to believe that they deserve credit for what they have achieved . . . and remain internally convinced that they are frauds" (p. 90). Research has suggested some Black women in higher education believe they must prove themselves worthy and often take on too many tasks at the expense of their mental and physical health (Davis, 2009; Thompson, 2004). In their studies,

Aala (2012) and Johnsrud (1996) found women who serve as midlevel managers and have contemplated advancing in their career encountered frustrations that affected their level of self-confidence and belief they could pursue such leadership roles. In these qualitative studies, one of the first findings presented included the participants' lack of acknowledgment for their skill set and contributions, which if not managed could negatively affect their healthy self-image (Aala, 2012; Johnsrud, 1996). In their qualitative study of 14 Black student affairs administrators at PWIs, Gardner et al. (2014) found having a healthy self-image was an important enabler for career success. Another enabler to career success included having the ability to break through the glass ceiling, concrete ceiling, and glass cliff.

Ceilings and Cliffs

The glass ceiling is a metaphor that represents the invisible barriers one may face as they pursue career advancement in a male-dominated workforce, and, since the 1980s, the federal government has recognized that the glass ceiling prohibits the advancement of women and People of Color (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009; Sobers, 2014). Within student affairs, Ford (2014) described the glass ceiling as the lack of opportunity women have to progress to SSAO positions, thus remaining stagnant in midmanagement positions. Studies on the glass ceiling effect on women in student affairs asserted that there are a limited number of women being promoted from midlevel managers to SSAO positions (Belch & Strange, 1995; Ford, 2014). Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, and Vanneman (2001) stated there are four criteria that define and describe a glass ceiling: (a) a gender or racial difference that is not explained by other job-relevant characteristics; (b) a gender or racial difference that is greater at higher levels of an institution than at lower levels; (c) a gender or racial inequality in the chances of advancement into higher levels, not merely the proportion of each gender or race currently at those higher

levels; and (d) a gender or racial inequality that increases over the course of a career. Along with the glass ceiling, there is also an opportunity for women to be faced with the concrete ceiling and glass cliff.

The concrete ceiling represents barriers that are harder to break through because of race and gender discrimination (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Sobers, 2014). It is a metaphor for professional opportunities that present themselves for upward mobility but do not occur because of the lack of role models, motivation, and/or direction (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Sobers, 2014). The concept of the glass cliff is defined as women making it pass the glass or concrete ceiling and achieving a SSAO position, but then being put on a cliff where they are not provided the same levels of support as their male colleagues. The women are often assigned projects or tasks that are already failing or have the most potential for failure (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Sobers, 2014). Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) also coined the term *labyrinth*, which is used to describe the difficulty of navigating the ceilings and cliffs and how women often are directed down the wrong path with or without mentoring relationships.

Mentoring

For women who aspire to administrative leadership positions in higher education, mentoring has been cited as an important professional development strategy (Gardner et al., 2014; Richard & Sherman, 1991; Walker, 2014; N. M. West, 2018). A mentoring relationship is “process oriented, including knowledge acquisition, application, and critical reflection, rather than only a transfer of knowledge” (T. B. Jones & Dufor, 2012, p. 28). Prior research has found mentoring relationships are a form of social capital (Hopkins, 2012), meaning individuals who ascend to higher ranks are somehow better connected than others (Burke & Carter, 2015; Burt, 2001; Chow & Chan, 2008). Mentoring has been found to be valuable in leading to upward

mobility, educational success, and personal development (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Davis, 2009). It has been suggested as a way to enhance work effectiveness, job success, salary attainment and to increase women's satisfaction within the student affairs profession by facilitating their professional development, assisting in career planning, and aiding in the career development process (Bierema & Merrian, 2002; Blackhurst, 2000; Blackhurst, Brandt, & Kalinowski, 1998; Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992; N. J. Evans, 1985; Fagenson, 1989; D. Holmes, Verrier, & Chisholm, 1983; Kram, 1985; Roche, 1979; Scandura, 1992; Twale & Jelinek, 1996; Walker, 2014; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). To aid midlevel managers as they transition to senior-level positions, mentoring is suggested as a means to facilitate professional development, assist in career planning, and increase career mobility (Bender, 1980; Langdon & Gordon, 2007; Twale & Jelinek, 1996; Walker, 2014).

Developing and maintaining mentoring relationships in academia is considered valuable for women, but the lack of mentoring is indicated as one of the major institutional barriers to Black women's advancement in higher education (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; T. B. Jones & Dufor, 2012). Studies have found the absence of mentoring relationships is a source of dissatisfaction among women administrators and many women who have secured senior-level positions have acknowledged the help of their mentors (Gamble & Turner, 2015; Hamrick & Carlisle, 1990; Knapp, 1986; Walker, 2014). Research suggested, without mentoring relationships, women remain dependent on institutional practices that favor men for specific positions (Dean, 2003; Jarnagin, 2010; Walker, 2014).

In a qualitative phenomenological study on the career ascension of Black woman administrators, Gamble and Turner (2015) conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews with 10 Black women who held executive leadership positions in student affairs. Each participant had

at least 10 years of experience in higher education administration and their ages ranged from 38-67. The study's findings suggested mentorship was essential for success as a leader and five of the participants indicated that they regretted not choosing a mentor early in their career. The participants also indicated that even though mentoring programs now exist in higher education, mentoring programs for Black women are still lacking in postsecondary institutions.

In a study for the American Council on Education (ACE) Fellows Program, Dufor (2007) noted the necessity for higher education institutions to afford Black women access to mentoring and networking opportunities to achieve a senior leadership role. Findings from the ACE Fellows Program's study provided insights about how mentoring can meet the needs of historically underrepresented Black women in senior-level collegiate administrative roles at PWIs (Dufor, 2007; T. B. Jones & Dufor, 2012). In their qualitative study, T. B. Jones and Dufor (2012) found Black women administrators benefited from developing mentoring relationships that supported their understanding of an organization's culture and leadership expectations to achieve career advancement. They (2012) found mentors provided assistance with work-related issues, career advancement strategies, critical decision making, encouragement for professional growth and development, and appropriate professional conduct/behavior. In previous studies, researchers have found mentoring is a tool that supported the career development of Black women administrators and increased positive socialization experiences in institutional cultures while contributing to the successful retention of Black women administrators at PWIs (Jackson & Flowers, 2003; T. B. Jones & Dufor, 2012). In contrast, T. B. Jones and Dufor (2012) posited one explanation for the lack of mentoring relationships is limited access to the formal and informal networks due to the underrepresentation of Black women in senior leadership and faculty roles. In a study on the effectiveness of informal mentoring networks that have emerged

due to the lack of critical mass of Black women in higher education, Agosto et al. (2016) found these informal networks tend to be virtual, which often means that culturally responsive mentoring relationships are not always locally accessible. Irby (2014) argued, “Mentoring that is not culturally responsive to the experiences of historically underrepresented people can be destructive” (p. 265). Gamble and Turner (2015) indicated the lack of Black women mentors creates a barrier for Black women to successfully earn a SSAO position. Considering the scarcity of Black female administrators at colleges and universities across the country, it is not feasible for every Black woman to be mentored by another Black woman (T. B. Jones & Dufor, 2012). To increase the number of Black women in senior-level administrative positions, Davis (2009) found it could be critical to develop strategies that cultivate strong networks and support systems such as those of mentoring relationships.

Black Feminist Thought

Black feminist thought (BFT) is the theoretical framework used in this study. Black feminist thought fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift in how society thinks about unjust power relations. P. H. Collins (1986, 2000, 2009) described BFT as a culturally responsive theory that is grounded in the lived experiences of Black women in the United States. By embracing a paradigm of intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender, as well as Black women’s individual and collective agency within them, BFT reconceptualizes the social relations of domination and resistance (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009). Because Black women remain relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy from one generation to the next, U.S. Black women have a vested interest in opposing oppression. Thus, BFT must redefine power and empowerment (Burke & Carter, 2015; P. H. Collins, 2000). P. H. Collins (2000) tells the story of pain, strength, anger, and joy and celebrates intellectual scholarship that helps others to

understand the complexity of the Black woman identity. Black feminist thought views Black women's struggles as a part of a wider struggle for human dignity and social justice, and encourages Black women to empower themselves by understanding the perceptions of the world but not letting it stop them from being who they are in the world (P. H. Collins, 2000).

The primary tenets of BFT have been applied to study the experiences of Black women higher education administrators and faculty members by several Black feminist scholars (Harris, 2007; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Lloyd-Jones, 2009; N. M. West, 2011, 2018; Wilder, Bertrand Jones, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). The following core themes of BFT are discussed in this section: (a) intersecting oppressions, (b) controlling images, (c) self-definition and outsider-within, (d) sexual politics of womanhood, (e) Black women's love and relationships, (f) Black women and motherhood, and (g) Black women's activism. *Intersecting oppressions* of race and gender highlight any relationship that the participant described about the effect of being both Black and female. *Controlling images* are stereotypes that can dictate certain opinions of Black women. *Self-definition* is designed for Black women to provide meaning in their daily lives and experiences and *outsider-within* speaks to the concept of being caught in between two different groups with varying levels of power (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009). The *sexual politics of womanhood* deal with how sexuality and power become linked in constructing Black women's sexualities (P. H. Collins, 2009). *Black women's love and relationships* discusses how intersecting oppressions influence Black women's love relationships. The understanding of maternal love is highlighted in *Black women and motherhood* and *Black women's activism* focuses on Black women's influence in transforming systems of oppression in the United States.

Intersecting Oppressions

Intersectionality symbolizes ways in which race, gender, and social class interact to influence the everyday lived experiences of Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). Rooted in Black feminist scholarship, intersectionality aims to understand how multiple social identities intersect at the “micro-level of individual experience to reflect interlocking systems of privilege and oppression at the macro social-structural level” (Bowleg, 2012, p. 1268). The microlevel of individual experiences focuses on multiple social categories, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, while the macro socialstructural level deals with racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Living life as Black women requires wisdom because knowledge about the dynamics of intersecting oppressions has been essential to U.S. Black women’s survival (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009). Within U.S. Black feminism, race, class, and gender constitute mutually constructing systems of oppression (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; Lorde, 1984; A. Smith, 1989). Race, gender, and class are considered to be components of a “triple whammy” (Robinson & Nelson, 2010, p. 1171) source of oppression for Black women. Researchers (Higginbotham, 2001; Robinson & Nelson, 2010) have argued the intersectionality of race, gender, and class has the potential to negatively affect all people; however, these three factors intersect to present additional pressures to Black women in their pursuit of upward mobility and only a Black woman will experience oppression because she is Black, female, and poor.

In a mixed-methods case study of 60 Black women, Burke and Carter (2015) examined the perceptions of networking and reported the duality of race and gender could create a distinctive challenge to gaining access to career networks, which are crucial components for advancing to upper-level leadership positions. Thompson (2004) posited race and sex play a significant role in contributing to the lack of progress made by Black women in their upward

mobility to senior-level leadership positions. Black women must concurrently deal with both racism and sexism, two sociocultural constructs directly related to discrimination and intolerance (Burke & Carter, 2015; Wilson, 1989). The double oppression of racism and sexism was born for Black women when their subordinate status was assumed and enforced by White and Black men, as well as by White women (Burke & Carter, 2015; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Intersectionality is intended to take account of historical, social, and political contexts and address inequalities (Symington, 2004).

Controlling Images

Stereotyping and preconceptions of women leaders are primary factors that impede the ability of women to rise to the top of higher education institutions (Gamble & Turner, 2015; Knapp, 1986). Davis (2009) stated attitudes and values about women have a vital role in the decision-making processes in hiring, training, and promotion. The images of women presented in books, television programs, and movies overwhelmingly depict women as less competent than men, and women sometimes have difficulty overcoming these biased perceptions (Faludi, 1991; Gamble & Turner, 2015). Consistent with gender stereotypes, many of these images portray women to be considerate, cooperative, and accommodative while male leaders are expected to be structured, competitive, and authoritative (Davis, 2009). The same is true for Black women. Portraying Black women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas helps justify U.S. Black women's oppression (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009; Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010; Wesley, 2018). These controlling images are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life. Challenging these controlling images has long been a core theme in BFT (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009).

The first controlling image applied to U.S. Black women was that of the “mammy”—the faithful, obedient domestic servant who sacrifices her own needs and desires to support the White family she serves (P. H. Collins, 2000; Jones Anderson, 2014; C. M. West, 1995). The mammy image is central to intersecting oppressions of race, gender, sexuality, and class and serves a symbolic function in maintaining oppressions of gender and sexuality that aim to influence Black maternal behavior (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009; Townsend et al., 2010; Wesley, 2018). In her work on the difficulties faced by Black women leaders, Dumas (1980) described how Black women executives were hampered by being treated as mammies and penalized if they did not appear loyal, warm, and nurturing.

Another controlling image is that of the “Black lady,” which refers to middle-class professional Black women who represent a modern version of the mammy (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009; Jones Anderson, 2014)—namely, the hardworking Black woman professional who works twice as hard as everyone else. Black ladies tend to have jobs that are so all-consuming they do not have time for anything else. Because they so routinely compete with men, they become less feminine and are deemed to be *too* assertive (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009; Townsend et al., 2010; Wesley, 2018). Black women encounter these controlling images, not as disembodied symbolic messages but as ideas designed to provide meaning in their daily lives (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009; J. C. Scott, 1985).

Controlling images are especially important to understand because they are potentially harmful to Black women’s career progression if they are not understood and managed carefully (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009; Townsend et al., 2010; Wesley, 2018). By managing the perceptions of controlling images, Black women put themselves in a position to control perceptions and help

to address the institutional culture and climate on their campus while helping others who are also affected by these negative images.

Self-Definition and Outsider-Within

Self-definition challenges the ways knowledge about Black women has been constructed and illuminates the larger sociopolitical climate that gives powers to others to define and objectify Black women (P. H. Collins, 1986; N. M. West, 2018). The outsider-within experience characterizes the status of members of underrepresented groups within a majority organization (P. H. Collins, 2000). Although individuals may be part of an organization, they can remain outsiders in important ways because of their race, ethnicity, gender, and/or class (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Everett, 2015). The outsider-within is ultimately a marginalized position because of the less-than-full status experienced or granted within a majority organization, in terms of unequal distributions of power that can negatively affect the individual (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; P. H. Collins, 2000). Black women's status as outsiders becomes the point from which other groups define their normality and Black women, by not belonging, emphasize the significance of belonging (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009). Black feminist critic Christian (1985) asserted, in the United States, "the enslaved African woman became the basis for the definition of our society's *other*" (p. 160).

P. H. Collins (2000, 2009) suggested maintaining images of U.S. Black women as the "Other" provided ideological justification for race, gender, and class oppression. Othering is a process "which serves to mark and name those thought to be different from oneself" (Weis, 1995, p. 18). For Black women who are agents of knowledge within academia, the marginality that accompanies outsider-within status can be the sources of both frustration and creativity (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009). P. H. Collins (2000) suggested:

The category of “Black woman” makes all us Black women especially visible and open to the objectification as Black women as a category. This group treatment potentially renders each individual Black woman invisible as fully human. But paradoxically, being treated as an invisible Other places us Black women in an outsider-within position. For individual women, resolving contradictions of this magnitude takes considerable inner strength. (p. 16)

The status of outsider-within is a marginality in which Black women have been invited into places where the dominant group has assembled, but they remain outsiders because they remain invisible and have no voice when dialogue commences (Everett, 2015; Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood

In discussing Black women’s sexuality, P. H. Collins (2009) posited the silences about sexual politics among Black women and within BFT lie in Black women’s lack of access to positions of power in U.S. social institutions. She found those who possess power tend to suppress Black women’s collective voice. Within U.S. Black intellectual communities and Black studies scholarship, Black women’s sexuality is either ignored or included primarily in relation to Black men’s issues (P. H. Collins, 2009). The sexual politics that constrain Black womanhood constitute an effective system of domination because it intrudes on people’s daily lives at the point of consciousness (P. H. Collins, 2009).

Studying Black women’s sexualities reveals how sexuality constitutes where heterosexism, class, race, nation, and genders as systems of oppression converge. P. H. Collins (2009) found, for Black women, ceding control over self-definitions of Black women’s sexualities upholds multiple oppressions, because all systems of oppression rely on harnessing the power of the erotic. When self-defined by Black women ourselves, Black women’s

sexualities can become an important place of resistance and just as harnessing power of the erotic is important for domination, reclaiming and self-defining that same eroticism may constitute one path toward Black women's empowerment (P. H. Collins, 2009).

Black Women's Love Relationships

Black feminist analyses are characterized by careful attention to how intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, and sexuality provide the backdrop for Black heterosexual love relationships (P. H. Collins, 2009; White, 1985). P. H. Collins (2009) found the general climate fosters a situation where some Black women feel they must subordinate their needs to those of Black men to help Black men regain and retain their manhood. Yet, at the same time, Black women's daily struggles for survival encourage patterns of self-reliance and self-evaluation that benefit not just Black women, but men and children as well (P. H. Collins, 2009). Many Black women understand the power that maternal love has had in empowering them as individuals. Yet this power of deep love remains "circumscribed in biological motherhood, biological sisterhood, sorority ties, and other similar socially approved relationships" (P. H. Collins, 2009, p. 184).

Black Women and Motherhood

The institution of Black motherhood consists of a series of constantly renegotiated relationships that Black women experience with one another, with Black children, with the larger Black community, and with self (P. H. Collins, 2009). P. H. Collins (2009) described mothering as an empowering experience for many Black women that often serves as a catalyst for their movement into self-definition, self-valuation, and individual empowerment. Motherhood can be invoked as a symbol of power by Black women engaged in Black women's community work. Much of Black women's status within women-centered kin networks stems from their important

contributions as bloodmothers and othermothers. P. H. Collins (2009) defined othermothers as those who often helped to “defuse the emotional intensity of relationships between bloodmothers and their daughters” (p. 204). Moreover, much of U.S. Black women’s status in Black communities stems from their activist mothering as community othermothers. Some of the most highly respected Black women in working-class Black neighborhoods are those who demonstrate an ethic of community service. Work emphasizing mothers’ influences on their children is how Black children affirm their mothers and how important that affirmation can be in a society plagued by the sexual politics of Black womanhood.

Black Women’s Activism

Black women often have been excluded from both labor unions and political parties, two modes of political activism dominated by White males, leaving these approaches “bereft of a theoretical analysis of Black women’s social class protest” (P. H. Collins, 2009, p. 217). P. H. Collins (2009) posited that Black women’s absence from positions of formal authority and the membership rosters of political organizations indicated low levels of Black women’s activism. But, P. H. Collins also asserted Black women’s activism has occurred in two primary dimensions: (a) struggles for group survival and (b) struggles for institutional transformation. The struggle for group survival comprised of actions taken to create Black women spheres of influence within existing social structures to resist oppressive structures by undermining them. The struggles for institutional transformation focused on efforts to change discriminatory policies and procedures of government, schools, the workplace, the media, stores, and other social institutions (P. H. Collins, 2009). Without Black women’s activism, struggles to transform U.S. educational, economic, and political institutions could not have been sustained (P. H. Collins, 2009).

Black feminist thought reflects the effort to find a collective, self-defined voice and express a fully articulated womanist standpoint (P. H. Collins, 1998, 2009). Black women share a common bond that is a result of their struggle against the oppression of intersectionality and the common bond is known as standpoint (P. H. Collins, 2002). Standpoint is the product of the experiences and ideas shared by Black women that provide an unique angle of vision on self, community, and society (P. H. Collins, 2002; N. M. West, 2018). Central to BFT is the role that Black women scholars play in producing theories on the common yet unique experiences of Black women while clarifying the ways in which these theories are expressed in the lives of these women (N. M. West, 2018). While a full overview of BFT was presented in this chapter, I will focus on the core themes of intersecting oppressions, controlling images, and self-definition and outsider-within for the purposes of this study.

Summary

From early colonial times to the Civil Rights Movement, Blacks have been fighting for equal educational access and attainment (Hylton, 2012; Spring, 2006; Urban & Wagoner, 2009). While the opportunity to receive a formal education was not always afforded to Black men and women, education served to liberate, empower, and expand their knowledge and intellectual abilities (A. C. Collins, 2001; Du Bois, 1903; Glover 2012). Black women have been shaped by historical and societal forces which have influenced the ways they view the world, themselves, and their careers (Belk, 2006; Gregory, 1995). Even though Black women have participated in higher education for close to 200 years and have made considerable progress in gaining access to leadership positions, they have experienced and continue facing personal and professional barriers that impede their success (Candia-Bailey, 2016; P. H. Collins, 2009; Glover, 2012; Henry & Glenn, 2009; Stanley, 2006; Turner, 2002b). It is vital to recognize Black women are

not a monolithic group, since not all Black women are the same, and each of their experiences, challenges, and concerns are unique (Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Hylton, 2012; Moses, 1989). Literature on Black women administrators' experiences has attempted to illuminate the concerns and experiences of this population (Hylton, 2012; Jackson, 2001; Rusher, 1996), but there is a paucity of research on the experiences of Black women who have successfully achieved leadership roles as an SSAO (Stanley, 2009; Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). This chapter provided a review of relevant research and literature on the history of the student affairs profession, women's and Black women's leadership in student affairs, challenges encountered by Black women in leadership, the influence of mentoring, and an overview of the theoretical framework, Black feminist thought.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this critical qualitative study was to explore the experiences of purposively selected Black women in senior student affairs officer (SSAO) positions. The qualitative approach enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of 10 women serving in these roles at land-grant higher education institutions. The following research question guided this study: What are the professional experiences of Black women who serve as senior student affairs officers at land-grant colleges and universities?

Research Design

When researching the experiences of underrepresented groups, Black women and women from other marginalized groups often find it challenging to be at the center of the analysis (Burke & Carter, 2015; Wolfe, 2010). In particular, as Black women tried to make sense of the communities in which they live and work, it is necessary for them to consider their race, gender, and class as playing a crucial role in shaping their experiences (Burke & Carter, 2015; Generett & Jeffries, 2003). Unlike most positivist methodologies, qualitative research provides a means for researchers to critique and improve this process. Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Generett & Jeffries, 2003), while critical qualitative research seeks to critique, challenge, transform, and empower (S. R. Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016;).

Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, constructed their worlds, and what meaning they attributed to their experiences (Generett & Jeffries, 2003; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Four characteristics for understanding the nature of qualitative research include: (a) the focus is on the process, understanding, and meaning; (b) the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; (c) the

process is inductive; and (d) the product is richly descriptive (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Critical Research

Critical research is understood in the context of the empowerment of individuals who attempt to confront the injustice and inequality of a particular society or public sphere within society (Flick, 2017; Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). Denzin (2017) described critical qualitative research as a “call for interpretive, critical, performative qualitative research that matters in the lives of those who daily experience social justice” (p. 8). Critical research focuses less on individuals than on context and raises questions on how power relations advance the interests of one group while oppressing those of other groups, and the nature of truth and the construction of knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Power dynamics are at the center of critical research, and power in combination with hegemonic social structures results in the marginalization and oppression of those without power (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; M. Q. Patton, 2015). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posited that critical research questions the context where learning takes place, including the larger systems of society, the culture and institutions that shape educational practice, and the structural and historical conditions framing practice. Critical research seeks to assess, contest, alter, and invest. It is critical because it pursues knowledge and understanding of humanity but also works to transform and inspire society (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; M. Q. Patton, 2015). Critical qualitative research is viewed as a vehicle of resistance, empowerment and transformation that places the voices and experiences of marginalized groups at the center of inquiry that allows the researcher to study rather than conduct research on those who experienced discrimination and oppression

(Dillard, 2000; Fine, 1994; Gildersleeve, 2010; A. Y. Jackson & Mazzei, 2009; Pasque, 2010; Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, & Gildersleeve, 2012; L. T. Smith, 1999). Essentially:

Critical qualitative research aims to understand itself as a practice that works with people to raise critical consciousness rather than merely describe social reality. A critical qualitative research project is typically a project in conscientization. It will work with people to make implicit forms of knowing-how into explicit and criticizable forms of discursive knowledge. It will contribute to social change directly and thus not only by informing policy decisions. (Carspecken, 2012, p. 44)

The point of critical research is to conduct research with people, not on people (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) stated critical research opens the doors of the academy so the voices of oppressed and marginalized people can be heard and honored and so others can learn from them. Pasque et al. (2012) argued that “critical research explored the intersecting influences of public policy, family, social identities, and so on, on the experiences, opportunities, and achievements of historically underrepresented groups in higher education” (p. 28). Critical qualitative research scholars are united in the commitment to expose and critique the forms of inequality and discrimination that operate in daily life (Denzin, 2017; Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008). Flick (2017) references claims made by Denzin (2015) and Winter (2017) that critical scholars are “committed to creating new ways of making the practices of critical qualitative inquiry central to the workings of a free democratic society” (p. 28).

Within critical qualitative studies, researchers use thick description to create writing that is fluid, vivid, and contextualized and readers are transported back in time as if they were present and witnessing the life story as it unfolded (Ponterotto, 2006). Thick description offers the reader entry into the culture as it existed and as interpreted by the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Rich, thick descriptive data, such as participant interviews and documents analysis, developed trustworthiness within the study. As a result, the reader is drawn into the setting and develops understanding through rich, detailed description of that setting, the cultural nuances, and patterns present (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Ponterotto, 2006).

This chapter details the methods and procedures used to conduct the study and includes a description of the research design, sample, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter also explains the methods used to establish trustworthiness and discuss positionality.

Participants

In qualitative inquiry, the only rule is the sample size primarily depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources (M. Q. Patton, 2015). The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants who will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question (S. R. Jones et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Purposeful sampling is a method of sample selection based on the assumption the researcher can learn and gain insight from selected participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; M. Q. Patton, 2015). The logic and power of purposeful sampling lay in selecting information-rich cases for an in-depth study (M. Q. Patton, 2015). In purposeful sampling, the size of the sample is determined by the informational considerations, and the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming, which is called saturation (S. R. Jones et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The selected sample size is more about saturation than representation (Hodges, 2011; Wesley, 2018). Saturation means key issues, common experiences, and primary points are surfacing repeatedly, and no new information is being uncovered in the data (Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Wesley, 2018).

I used criterion-based purposeful sampling for this study. Criterion-based sampling focuses on attributes essential to the study and locating participants that match those attributes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A sample of 10 African American women SSAOs were identified for this study. Participants were all employed at public, land-grant institutions and held the title of Vice President of Student Affairs, Associate/Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, and/or Dean of Students. Each participant was assigned pseudonyms as a means of anonymity, and the pseudonyms were maintained throughout the study.

Table 3.1 displays the following selected demographic characteristics of each participant: participants' pseudonyms, institution types, institution pseudonyms and enrollment numbers, participants' years of employment at their current institution, and number of years serving as a SSAO at their current institution. Table 3.2 displays participants' pseudonyms, age range, relationship status, number of years employed in student affairs, number of years working as an SSAO, and highest level of education.

Table 3.1

Participants' Selected Demographic Characteristics

Pseudonym	Institution Type	Institution Pseudonym	Institution Enrollment	Years Employed at Current Institution	Years Serving as SSAO at Current Institution
Brenda	HBCU	Brice College	5,000-10,000	2.5	2.5
Cathy	HBCU	University of Culture	10,000-15,000	6	6
Diane	4-Year PWI	Divine College	25,000-30,000	36	16
Gail	4-Year PWI	Grace College	25,000-30,000	7	7
Helen	4-Year PWI	Harper University	30,000-35,000	33	11
Mary	4-Year PWI	University of May	60,000-65,000	14	6
Michaela	4-Year PWI/HSI	University of Marshall	50,000-55,000	4.5	4.5
Stacey	4-Year PWI	Saints University	30,000-35,000	6	4
Whitney	4-Year PWI	World University	40,000-45,000	25	4
Yvonne	4-Year PWI	Youth University	45,000-50,000	7 months	7 months

Table 3.2

Participants' Selected Demographic Characteristics

Pseudonym	Age	Relationship Status	Years Employed in Student Affairs	Years Employed as an SSAO	Level of Education
Brenda	35-40	Single	15	2.5	Masters
Cathy	40-45	Married	20	6	EdD
Diane	65-70	Married	30	16	EdD
Gail	45-50	Married	20	7	JD
Helen	60-65	Married	41	11	PhD
Mary	35-40	Partnered	18	8	PhD
Michaela	50-55	Single	30	9	EdD
Stacey	45-50	Married	24	4	EdD
Whitney	50-55	Married	25	4	Masters
Yvonne	40-45	Married	21	6	PhD

Gaining Access

Gaining access to participants for research is a process and involves acquisition of consent to go where you want, observe what you want, talk to whomever you want, obtain and read whatever documents you require, and do all of this for whatever period of time is necessary to satisfy your research purposes (Glesne, 2015; S. R. Jones et al., 2014). For this study, I was strategic in how access was gained to ensure the study was not biased based on who I could interview and their responses (Seidman, 2006).

To identify participants for this study, I reviewed the student affairs websites of 70 land-grant institutions in search of participants who met the research sample criterion. I created an Excel spreadsheet with participants' names, institutions, titles, and contact information for 21 Black women who met the criteria. Upon IRB approval, I sent emails to all 21 women requesting their participation in the study (see Appendix B).

Data Collection

Data collection is the process of gathering information on targeted variables in an established systematic fashion, which then enables one to answer relevant questions and evaluate outcomes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In a qualitative study, data collection and evidence can come from many sources. The sources of evidence most commonly used for qualitative research is: (a) documentation, (b) archival records (c) interviews, (d) direct observations, (e) participant-observation, and (f) physical artifacts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Yin, 2014). These sources of evidence strengthen data collection because it is insightful, contextual, immediate, stable, specific, broad, and concise, but could also weaken it due to bias, selectivity, reflexivity, and access (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Yin, 2014). In this critical qualitative study, document analysis and in-depth semistructured interviews served as the two sources of evidence to help answer the research question.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is the review of printed and other materials relevant to the study such as “public records, personal documents, popular culture and popular media, visual documents, and physical artifacts” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 106). Document analysis triangulates and points out discrepancies in data that is collected in alternate ways, suggests questions for participants, and identifies analytical categories (Stage & Manning, 2016). Prior to the interviews, I reviewed participants’ curriculum vitae (CV) to assess their previous professional work experiences and qualifications. Reviewing not only the participants’ CVs but also public documents that could be viewed online, as well as participants’ social media presence, allowed me to develop talking points to guide the interview.

Interviews

The interview is a process in which the researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At the root of interviewing is the interest in understanding the lived experiences of the participants and the meaning they make of their experiences (Seidman, 2006). For this study, I conducted audio-recorded, in-depth semistructured, person-to-person, 60- to 90-minute interviews with each participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I used in-depth semi-structured interviews to gather focused, qualitative textual data and offered a balance between the flexibility of an open-ended interview and the focus of a structured survey (Zorn, 2008). In-depth semistructured interviews afforded me the opportunity to capture the participants' experiences and to better understand their career paths, perceived barriers, and resources in their career development (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Human behavior is influenced by the setting in which it occurs and I attempted to provide a safe setting for the participant and one conducive to collecting rich data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). For this study, I conducted a mix of face-to-face interviews and computer-mediated communication (e.g., Skype) to interview participants who were not located within 100 miles of me (Salmons, 2015). I used an interview protocol designed to capture the participants' backgrounds and experiences (see Appendix E) and the interview protocol was pilot tested with two Black women SSAOs who were not included in the data analysis and were not employed at land-grant institutions. Yin (2014) noted interviews are used to capture participants' feelings and experiences in their own words and focus directly on the research topic and provide explanations and personal views about their experiences.

During and immediately following each interview, I recorded highly descriptive field notes that included enough detail to allow me to understand the experiences observed during the interview process (Flick, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell 2016). In addition to taking highly descriptive or detailed field notes, I also kept a reflective journal to document reflections and reactions after each interview. M. Q. Patton (2002) referred to this as a “post-interview review” (p. 384). Writing reflections during the postinterview review were important to the study’s integrity in an attempt to eliminate personal bias, as this period of time was critical for the qualitative inquiry and quality of data (M. Q. Patton, 2015). These reflections helped to establish a context for interpreting the data and helped to guide the process for coding data.

Data triangulation was the collective analysis of data from various sources to generate consistent findings (Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2014). While reducing the risk of bias, data triangulation allowed me to gain a broad understanding of participants’ experiences (Maxwell, 2013; Silverman, 2016). Data triangulation enhanced the dependability of this study and consisted of interviews with in-depth semistructured questions, use of a reflective journal, interview notes, and review of the participants’ CVs.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the “classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it” (Flick, 2014, p. 5). The process of data analysis involves collecting open-ended data based on asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by participants to answer the research question (Maxwell, 2013). The data analysis procedures for this study were a continual process and analysis took place at multiple points during the research process. The document analysis, such as reviewing the

participants' CVs, provided me with a snapshot of the participants' professional backgrounds and experiences. To analyze the data, I engaged in the following three steps: (a) organized and prepared interview data for analysis; (b) conducted a detailed analysis of the interview data with a coding process; and (c) interpreted, summarized, and presented findings from the data (Flick, 2018).

Organization of Data

In the initial step of data organization, a professional transcription service transcribed all of the interview audio files into Microsoft Word documents. This document was then sent to me via the password-protected transcription website. I then listened to each of the audio recordings while following along with the transcriptions. This process allowed me to read all of the data to obtain a general sense of the information and reflect on its overall meaning (Silverman, 2016). I listened to the audio recordings a second time while reviewing the actual notes taken during each interview throughout the research process. To aid in the data organization, I used the constant comparative method. The constant comparative method was the explanatory interest of gaining a better understanding of the causal processes involved in the production of an event, feature, or relationship (Pickvance, 2005). I used the constant comparative method technique to compare one segment of the data with another to determine similarities and differences while identifying patterns in the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The constant comparative method sought to recover the complexity of particular situations by recognizing the character of causation (Fielding & Lee, 1988; M. Q. Patton, 2002, 2015).

Coding Process

Coding is defined as the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to the information (Flick, 2018; Saldaña, 2016; Strauss, 1987).

Based on the literature and theoretical framework used for the study, I employed a combination of open, axial, and selective coding (S. R. Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) . Open coding allowed me to conceptualize the data line by line and was done by listening to and reading each interview transcript while making notes about what participants shared (Flick, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Whereas open coding fractures the data into concepts and categories, axial coding puts those data back together in new ways by making connections between a category and its subcategories (Saldaña, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). By developing charts of the rich data from open coding, the axial coding aided me in identifying the relationships among the codes. Axial coding is the process of relating concepts to each other based on common themes and experiences found within the data, while selective coding is where a core category, propositions, or hypotheses are developed (S. R. Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It was important for me to explore codes readers expected to find based on past literature as well as codes that were not anticipated at the beginning of the study, codes that were unusual and of conceptual interest to readers, and codes that addressed a larger theoretical perspective in the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Presentation of Findings

The findings from qualitative research are typically descriptive and presented as categories or themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The presentation of findings in Chapter 4 provided an opportunity for me to summarize each participant’s narrative, present the themes, and share my interpretation of the findings. The use of a theoretical lens assisted in interpreting the data and developing a call for change or reform (Cannella, Perez, & Pasque, 2015; Flick, 2018). I employed the critical theoretical framework of BFT to shape how I collected and analyzed my data. Based on the study’s findings, I used the theoretical lens of BFT to identify

cultural systems that oppressed and marginalized Black women (Hylton, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; F. J. Scott, 2003). Through data analysis, I addressed the intersectionality of race and gender as it related to and influenced the Black women's professional experiences.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the “qualitative paradigmatic” (S. R. Jones et al., 2014, p. 35) means that ensured the study was of high quality and ultimately is associated with confidence in the research findings. To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, I used techniques such as peer debriefing, member checking, triangulation, and rich, thick description. Peer debriefing allowed me to make arrangements with knowledgeable and available colleagues to get reactions to the coding and the analytic memos written during the data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I consulted two colleagues who were external from the University of Tennessee and had experience in qualitative research to serve as the peer debriefers. Along with peer debriefing, member checking was also used to help ensure the trustworthiness of this study. Member checking was evidence of credibility and was the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do, and it allowed me to devise a way to ask the participants for reactions, corrections, and further insights to the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Maxwell, 2013). Transcriptions were done after each interview and emailed to the participants for their review. Each participant was provided an opportunity to comment and provide feedback on their transcript. Providing the participants with an opportunity to review their transcripts allowed them to recall the conversation and suggest information that was added or removed from the discussion. Briggs, Coleman, and Morrison (2012) defined triangulation as a way to compare many sources of evidence and cross-check the data. The last technique used to ensure trustworthiness was rich, thick description. Rich, thick description

means pictures, words, quotes, and/or excerpts rather than numbers are used “to support the findings and contribute to the descriptive nature of qualitative research” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 18).

Positionality

In positionality, the researcher’s position indicates the influences that come from their own social identities and acknowledges one’s position in the context and helps the reader understand the influence of social identities on the research process (S. R. Jones et al., 2014). When a research project includes interactions with individuals who belong to one or more of these social identities, it is critical to consider the influence this may have on the project and decisions the researcher must make (S. R. Jones et al., 2014). I served as an information gatherer. Information gathering was a process where I gathered information by speaking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The lens in which I viewed the world in this study stemmed from my identity as a Black woman with 14 years of professional experience in higher education administration. Although I do not currently hold a SSAO position within my institution, but based on my personal and professional experiences, I recognize Black women SSAOs have a unique lived experience in higher education administration. An in-depth view aided me in discovering the richness of the participants’ lives in relation to their everyday life experiences in the academy. I have experienced the dynamics of racism, sexism, ageism, and oppression at PWIs and the challenge of not having a voice or feeling like the outsider-within (P. H. Collins, 2000). Because I have experienced these issues and understood this marginalized group, it was important for me to acknowledge the oppressive nature that Black women oftentimes encounter but also guard against hearing, seeing, reading, and presenting findings that conform to my experiences and

assumptions rather than honoring the participants' voices. I am aware my personal and professional experiences as an African American woman who works in student affairs could influence my interpretation of the participants' responses. At the same time, my awareness of my bias has helped me to separate my experiences from those of the research study participants.

Ethical Considerations

To respect the rights of the participants, I first obtained approval from the University of Tennessee's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before recruiting participants (see Appendix A). Once prospective participants were identified, I forwarded an email that outlined the study's purpose and how the findings would be used (see Appendix B). Individuals who agreed to participate in the study were forwarded the informed consent form (see Appendix D) for their review. The informed consent form included a description of the research study, how the data would be used and disseminated, and how I would attempt to maintain confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used to further protect the participants' identities and their institutional affiliation (Kaiser, 2009).

All data files, audio files, field notes, and transcriptions were stored on my password-protected computer, and all paper files are currently stored in a locked file cabinet in my home. All data files, audio files, transcriptions, and analyses will be saved on the secure computer for a maximum of 3 years following the completion of the research project. At that point, all data associated with the research project will be destroyed. Due to the small sample size, I only provided the following demographic or descriptive information about the study participants: age, marital status, highest level of education, number of years in the profession, number of years in an SSAO position, and institutional type and institutional enrollment.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology used to conduct this critical qualitative study on the experiences of African American women SSAOs. The qualitative approach enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the participants. Face-to face, semi-structured interviews were conducted as the primary method of data collection. Data analysis consisted of a combination of open, axial, and selective coding to categorize the data into themes that emerged from the data, and trustworthiness techniques were implemented to protect the research findings.

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS

The themes that emerged from the data analysis as it relates to the research question and the Black feminist thought theoretical framework are presented in this chapter. The findings in this study were based on the diverse experiences shared by the study participants. The participants shared their views of what it means to be a Black woman serving as an SSAO at a land-grant institution and how they experience the intersection of their identities in the professional work environment.

Key Themes

The analysis revealed four key themes that emerged from the data collected from the 10 study participants. In addition to the four key themes, I identified subthemes that emerged as a pattern in the data. A description of the key themes and subthemes, which are linked to the research questions, are highlighted throughout this chapter. To provide context, Table 4.1 represents the key themes and subthemes that emerged from the data.

Table 4.1

Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
Outsider-Within	Invisible, Isolation, Voice
Controlling Images	Attitude, Appearance
Intersectionality	Age, Gender, Race
Black Women's Standpoint – Shared Experiences	Imposter Syndrome, Navigating Others, Relationship Building

Outsider-Within: A Seat at the Table

The participants demonstrated the concept of outsider-within by sharing their experiences of the times they felt invisible, isolated, and/or voiceless. Diane has worked at Divine College for over 30 years and has served as an SSAO for 16 of those years. She recalled multiple staff and committee meetings where she felt isolated and voiceless while sitting in a room with men.

Diane vividly remembered feeling invisible when she shared her ideas in meetings. She stated:

You can say I have an idea, and then a White male can say the same thing and they respond with “Oh, yeah, that's a great idea,” and you're sitting there thinking, “Did I not just say the same thing?” You're invisible. You're not being heard.

Serving as an SSAO for 6 years, Yvonne has often felt her voice is not being heard or respected. Early in her SSAO role, she recognized, within her leadership team, she is often alone and must always be prepared to sit at the table with her colleagues. Yvonne mentioned the importance of fighting for your voice and making sure you are prepared when you do have a seat at the table: “It's one thing to say I want to be at the table, but you have to know what you're talking about when at the table.”

Similar to Yvonne’s experience, Stacy, an SSAO at Saints University, has also struggled with being in a space where she is the only Woman of Color and acknowledged the responsibility that comes with being the “only one” with a seat at the table. Stacy shared:

This is the first time that I've been in a space where there aren't very many other Women of Color. And so, it's been hard to always show up in spaces as the only one. And there have been many times where I have felt left out of things because, I did not look like those people and I did not show up in the same way as those people showed up. But when you think about having a seat at that table, then there's a responsibility that comes along

with that. So even if I show up as the only one, I have the responsibility to be the voice of all the others that don't have a seat at the table.

Gail has served at Grace College for 7 years and has been cognizant of how her identities as a Black woman could affect her interactions with her colleagues. Because she is aware of how her identities could relegate her to the outskirts of the decision-making process, Gail has always had to be hyperconscious about being present and engaged in all conversations. She shared, as a Black woman, she probably spends significantly more time than her colleagues working to ensure she is at the table for those important conversations.

At Saints University, Stacey often found herself educating her colleagues on issues related to diversity and inclusion. For Stacey, being the only Person of Color with a seat at the table became tiring, draining, and exhausting. She stated:

I'm the only Person of Color on our VPSA Council. It is tiring to always have to be the person that's always bringing up the issues of diversity, and inclusion, and equity. It's hard to do your job and also educate others. And you're dealing with your own stuff too, right? So, it's hard to manage all of those things. I think that's an added layer of complexity that perhaps if you're a White woman or a White male that you just don't have to deal with.

Brenda and Cathy are both employed at HBCUs and experienced the outsider-within status from a different lens than some of the other participants. Cathy expressed it was difficult coming to work at an institution like the University of Culture where she was not an alumna and was initially considered and treated as an outsider. She commented, "At a place like the [University of Culture], I was initially considered an outsider and people were very suspicious of my goals and intentions. But my only goal was to work hard and advance the mission of the

institution.” Brenda has been serving at Brice College for 2.5 years and because she also did not attend a HBCU, she struggled daily trying to prove herself to her colleagues in hopes they would stop considering her an outsider-within the HBCU world. Brenda commented:

At an HBCU, there aren't any less opportunities to prove yourself and there is not any less expectation to prove yourself or to prove who you are, especially when you are an outsider, especially when you did not go to an HBCU, especially when you are not from that particular area or region.

Based on the experiences shared by the participants, the findings showed Black women SSAOs continuously felt invisible, isolated, and/or voiceless regardless of whether they were employed at an HBCU or PWI. The Black women at HBCUs sensed isolation from their colleagues because they were not HBCU alumnae, while the Black women at PWIs often not only felt isolated but also invisible and voiceless. The outsider-within status continues to remind Black women that although their position/title places them at the SSAO table, they still are not provided with a place setting to fully enjoy the fruits of their labor. How do you set your table?

Controlling Images: She’s a Bitch!

Controlling images about Black women originated from slavery and continue to be perpetuated through stereotypes that exist within social institutions and limit Black women’s ability to define their existence (P. H. Collins, 2000; Ferguson & Satterfield, 2017). The perpetuation of negative stereotypes socializes some Black women and broader society to believe controlling images hold merit in regulating social expectations for the behaviors of Black women (Ferguson & Satterfield, 2017; hooks, 1981). Several participants shared experiences of navigating their appearance and attitude in a professional work setting.

Gail possesses a JD and has worked in student affairs for 20 years. She expressed her

sentiments of believing the world expects Black women to be perfect: “You can’t raise your voice, you can’t wear this, you can’t do that.” She believes these assumptions are forced upon Black women and help to create boxes that limit Black women. Helen, a 60-something-year-old SSAO at Harper University, had not anticipated becoming a vice president would cause her to pay more attention to her appearance. As a former athlete, Helen was never into wearing heels or makeup. When she was appointed as the Vice President at Harper University, she had to begin caring more about her appearance because she was now representing her university. Helen stated, “As a Black woman, people notice me more than if I was just another White man or woman.” As Helen moved into her new SSAO role, she recalled interactions with her friends who challenged her to put more effort into her appearance. Helen shared:

A good friend said, “Helen, you need to get a tailor and have them sew your stuff. You can afford it now.” I also had this cheap purse and someone told me, “You need to get a new purse because that one is tacky.” I said okay and told them that you can go shopping with me because I don't know what to buy and I'm not paying \$500 for a purse. So, it better be on sale.

While Helen struggled with society’s standards of how a Black woman should look and dress, six participants expressed their experiences navigating the “angry Black woman” stereotype. Serving as an SSAO for 4 years at Saints University, Stacey initially struggled with what it meant to be a female SSAO. She acknowledged having a preconceived notion about what it meant to be a senior leader and how she had to show up at work. Stacey stated, “Society’s expectation of women is that you are to be kind, and generous, and open, and supportive. And then, if you don't show up in that way, they believe that “Oh, that woman is *NOT* a nice woman”

and you know they do not use nice words to describe women like that. As an SSAO, Stacey has worked hard to be true to her authentic self and show up that way at work each and every day.

Whitney, who has been employed at a large PWI for 25 years, is challenged with leading her team and holding them accountable while being perceived as “not taking any stuff.” She commented:

I think that being an African American woman, in this leadership role shocks people. First of all, they think I'm a male because of my first name. They always say “He” and people always correct them and say “She.” I think people are sometimes surprised that there's a Black woman that's the Dean of Students. I've had to nonrenew (that's our word for fire), lots of different people in my time on campus, but not one of those people can say that they were treated poorly, without dignity, the nonrenewal was never a surprise. And that's challenging because there are people on campus who think that, “Boy, Whitney doesn't take any stuff.”

While Whitney is working to overcome perceptions, Mary has mastered how to manage her emotions as an SSAO at the University of May. She has figured out how to be strategic in sharing her thoughts while ensuring her body language does not show just how upset she may be. Mary expressed, as Black women, “We cannot wear our emotions. If we get upset about something, we are angry and have an attitude, whereas others get labeled as passionate.”

Michaela, an SSAO at the University of Marshall, has worked her entire higher education career at PWIs. She has carefully navigated how to be convincing and collegial with White males and White women because, if she is not, there is the potential of her being labeled as difficult to work with. In comparison to Michaela, Cathy has had a diverse experience of working at PWIs and HBCUs. Cathy is an SSAO at a midsize HBCU where she has served for 6 years. During her

career, Cathy has been labeled by both men and women as an “aggressive bitch who needs a man.” She oftentimes has found herself being questioned about her decision-making skills while being categorized as unemotional because she does not tend to be the “warm and fuzzy type.”

Diane has worked at Divine College for more than 30 years and served as an SSAO for 16 of those years. Early in her career, Diane felt she had to be a certain way or play a particular role as an SSAO. Similar to Cathy and Michaela, Diane has been labeled as difficult to work with, too assertive, and a bitch her team and colleagues fear. Diane shared:

I can remember that when I first started working, for some reason, I felt that I had to be a White male administrator [laughter]. I felt like I just had to be somebody else and play their role, and I was not being true to me . . . it took time learning that it was okay for me to be Black, a woman, and the dean of students. I found my voice and I encourage you to find your voice. Early on, I would get the feedback, “Oh, she's a B.” Well, why are we (Black women) called the B-word? “Oh, I'm afraid of her.” What is it that you're afraid about? Have I cursed you out? No. I'm just being me . . . but I'm being labeled as, “Oh, she can be difficult at times.” Being an African American woman who is assertive, reasonably intelligent in higher education and in student life has been a challenge. Simply because of who I am . . .

The participants described ways in which they have had to be cognizant of their appearance and attitude to not perpetuate negative stereotypes. There were mentions of having the appropriate attire and the need for new handbags that did not look “tacky.” In trying to control their image, the participants began to master ways to manage or mask their emotions so they were not categorized as the “angry Black woman.” Many of the participants insinuated their staff and/or colleagues have described them negatively, and others openly shared they have been

called a “bitch.” As paraphrased by Diane, does being an assertive, intelligent, and passionate African American women in leadership classify me as a “bitch”?

Intersectionality: You’re Too Young and You Don’t Know Anything!

Living life as Black women requires wisdom because knowledge about the dynamics of intersecting oppressions has been essential to U.S. Black women’s survival (P.H. Collins, 2000, 2009). Within U.S. Black feminism, race, class, and gender constitute mutually constructing systems of oppression (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; Lorde, 1984; A. Smith, 1989). The perception of the intersections of race and gender varied based on the participants’ experiences within their institutional culture. Although P. H. Collins’ BFT focuses on the intersection of race and gender, another salient identity for participants in the study was age. At least four participants felt their age and gender were more of a factor than their race.

Brenda is a mid-late 30-year-old SSAO who currently possesses a master’s degree and is finishing up her doctoral coursework. She recalled colleagues discussing their perception of how “she is under 40 years old, she doesn’t have her PhD, and I don’t think she knows what she is talking about.” Based on her experiences at Brice College, Brenda expressed her belief that “racism is alive and well, as is ageism, sexism, and misogyny.”

Similar to Brenda, Mary began serving as a director when she was in her mid-20s and then became a SSAO when in her early 30s. Working with directors who were over 50 years old and who had been at the institution for a very long time, there were people who consistently tried to prove Mary was not qualified for her role because of her age. Yvonne’s story parallels the experiences of both Brenda and Mary. Yvonne had her first deanship in her early 30s and her first Vice President position when she was in her mid-30s. She expressed how many people automatically perceived that she was too young for this role and the constantly disrespected her

due to her age, race, and gender.

Cathy, who is in her 40s and possesses an EdD, discussed her experiences at the University of Culture. She shared how her age is often perceived and previous ways students, colleagues, and even the president of the university have addressed her. Cathy stated:

I am not that young, but depending on the day or what I'm wearing, I could look like a student. You can see the difference in the way that you're treated if people think you're older than what you are or if they think you're younger. I'm one of few females on the leadership team and a lot of my male colleagues don't have their doctorate and I do. It is always interesting that when people, even students, address us they say, "Oh, it's Dr. [Johnson]," or "Dr. [Jones]," and they'll say, "Ms. [Brown]." "First of all it's Dr. [Brown] and that's Mr. [Johnson] and Mr. [Jones]." Even with the president, one time in a leadership team meeting he addressed me as young lady. I had to check him on that and say, "Hey Dr. [Williams], it's either Cathy or Dr. [Brown]. It's not young lady." So, it wasn't about my race or my gender. It was about my age. When you control for the race factor, then gender and age is where you're going to get your aggressions.

The participants described ways in which they believed their age, gender, and/or race affected their experiences as an SSAO. Because many of the participants began their SSAO roles at a perceived younger age, colleagues at their institutions challenged their professional work experience, knowledge, and decision-making skills. Some of the women acknowledged being disrespected by others, and Cathy referenced being called "young lady." Who are you to decide if I am too young or not?

Black Women's Standpoint – Shared Experiences

The fourth theme centered on Black women's standpoint. P. H. Collins (2002, 2009)

maintains Black women share important experiences that stem from their shared history of oppression and historical and present-day segregation that have fostered the development of a group standpoint. Black women's standpoint is the "product of the experiences and ideas shared by Black women that provide a unique angle of vision on self, community, and society" (P. H. Collins, 2002, p. 155). Shared experiences acknowledged the various overall experiences of the participants and the subthemes of imposter syndrome, navigating others, and relationship building are discussed in this section.

Imposter syndrome: Do I deserve to be here? Psychologists Clance and Imes (1978) coined the term *imposter syndrome*. These psychologists observed some high achieving individuals have a secret sense they cannot live up to others' expectations. They may think their success is based on luck or timing, not their own experience, skills, or other qualities. Imposter syndrome is most likely to occur in persons for whom success came quickly, first-generation professionals, people with high-achieving parents, members of underrepresented groups, and students (Clance & Imes, 1978; Sherman, 2013). Many of the participants questioned whether or not they deserved to be in an SSAO role and struggled with the notion of not being able to fail or make mistakes while serving in this level of leadership.

Brenda has served in the student affairs profession for 15 years and has worked at an HBCU her last 2.5 years. She believes the imposter syndrome happens to Women of Color, regardless of the institution of employment, sharing: "For me, I did jump from a coordinator position to a director, and from a director to assistant dean, and from assistant dean to an assistant vice-president. I began to question myself and think do I deserve to be here? Did I really earn this?"

While Brenda questioned her SSAO appointment, Mary began to listen to the naysayers and believed she was too young to be an SSAO. Although Mary had earned her PhD and worked at the University of May for 14 years, there were still people who assumed she was just given this opportunity, and this caused Mary significant insecurity. Mary shared:

There were people who felt that I was too young, and I had been given opportunities that perhaps I didn't deserve and consistently wanted to prove that I was not qualified for that role. I remember, at one point, someone said to the Vice President, "I just don't understand why Mary is getting promoted, when other folks aren't." A lot of it was just a matter of folks not believing that I deserved to be there, because that meant, for me to be there, they couldn't. So, I fed into the idea of, "Oh, she's too young to be too here" and I became insecure.

Stacey has served in her SSAO role for 4 years and initially placed a significant emphasis on how others perceived her and her professional work. She often questioned if she was good at her job, whether she was doing it right, and what others were thinking about her. Cathy at the University of Culture acknowledged, as Women of Color, we sometimes create unintentional obstacles for ourselves: "As women, we often overthink things and tell ourselves that we are not ready or do not have the necessary experience for a particular position." For some of the participants, the unintentional obstacles they created included being suspicious of others' agendas and/or actions, being insecure and developing negative self-talk, and crippling their own success based on past hurts and negative personal and professional experiences.

Helen has over 40 years of experience working in student affairs, and the last 11 years have been spent serving as an SSAO at Harper University. Helen openly admitted she was scared to become a vice president and did not believe she was ready nor possessed the confidence in

herself to serve in that role. Helen commented:

I didn't plan on being an associate vice president, so I dang sure, wasn't planning to be a vice president. I knew that even people who were supportive of me would have had a hard time seeing me in a different role. It's also scary because I know that although I can make some mistakes, I cannot make too many mistakes because we (Black women and/or Black people) don't get the opportunity to make those kinds of mistakes. And when we screw up, it's not just about screwing up for me, personally. We have just solidified in some people's minds their own stereotypes about women and/or about Black people. Now, some days I'll look in the mirror and go, what the hell? You're a vice president of a major, predominantly White land grant institution. [laughter]

Similar to many of the other participants' experiences, Gail expressed how society has taught us to question our skills and contemplate the notion we cannot fail. She shared we need to stop underestimating ourselves and realize failing is part of the journey. If we do fail, we should know we have not failed ourselves, our race, and/or other Black women. Gail stated:

Because of how we're socialized and the racism and stereotypes that we live with, we don't give ourselves the space to fail and learn. Those learning experiences are afforded to other people without penalty or consequence, and we need that same insight and capacity as well.

The participants expressed ways in which the imposter syndrome presented itself within them. Among the women, there was a theme of questioning whether they were good enough or even prepared to serve as a SSAO. One participant even questioned if she deserved to be in her role. In contemporary society, many Women of Color are knowledgeable of and have

experienced imposter syndrome, but why do we have to question whether or not we deserve to be here?

Navigating others: When they go low, we go high! The ability to navigate colleagues and other People of Color was a prominent theme among the participants. The participants described situations where they believed colleagues were trying to sabotage their work and damage their credibility. Many of the challenges they overcame were those that were not necessarily presented from White people but that of other Black people.

While Michaela served as a SSAO at a former institution, she recalled experiences of being “pushed out in front” of a campus crisis by the college president to own a problem she and her division of student life did not create. As a new SSAO at that time, she felt she was easily used as the pawn and was set up during the crisis. Diane reflected on the infamous quote by former First Lady, Michelle Obama, “When they go low, we go high,” and she shared the experience of an African American male colleague at Divine College who conspired against her, tried to sabotage her work, and undermined her leadership. While that individual went low, Diane always chose to go high, and she continued to be promoted at Divine College, while her colleague ended up being asked to leave the institution.

Similar to Diane, Yvonne also experienced the negative actions from an African American male colleague upon her arrival to Youth University as their newly appointed SSAO. Yvonne shared:

When I got to Youth University, the person who was my chief of staff was a Black male. He really wanted my job, but he didn't even get a phone interview. He blamed me the entire time, undermined me, tried to undercut me, and sabotage me all because I got the job. I had to be very discerning and find him a way out. I've been here in my position for

7 months. There are some who are just waiting in the wind to try and trip me up, but I'm too politically savvy for that. I make sure I follow policy and protocol, so you can't ever say I've broken any type of rules, and I have been very inclusive in my leadership style.

Because Saints University is located in a small town with a small community of Black people, professional, personal, and social relationships with other Black people are important to Stacey, but having to navigate other Black people at Saints University has at times been the saddest part of Stacey's job. While Stacey has definitely had previous experiences carefully navigating the actions of her Black colleagues, she recalls the recent arrival of the new Black female Chief Diversity Officer at Saints University. Since her colleague's arrival, Stacey has consistently observed her colleague trying to navigate the pretentious actions from other People of Color.

As Mary continued to advance at the University of May, she quickly learned everyone who looked like her did not have her best interests at heart. She referenced the "crab in the barrel syndrome" and how some Women of Color at the University of May were being very underhanded in how they interacted with her. The crab in the barrel syndrome (CBS) is a "metaphor used to describe the mentality and behaviors of individuals belonging to or identifying with a particular community or culture, who 'hold each other back' from various opportunities for advancement and achievement despite incentives and expectations for collaboration" (Miller, 2019, p. 2). Helen recalled attending the past four invite-only meetings for Black women SSAOs at the annual NASPA conference. She stated these gatherings began a few years ago at the conference to provide a time for Black women SSAOs to reflect on their experiences, connect with one another, and create a supportive network. Helen, who has been in

the field of student affairs for 41 years, found it troubling to hear multiple stories from the women about their challenges navigating other Black men and women at their institutions.

Being a Black woman SSAO at World University has provided Whitney with multiple challenges and obstacles to overcome. She has encountered backlash from Black faculty, staff, and students who do not believe, as an African American leader, she has done enough for Black students. Whitney shared:

The hardest part is being one of very few People of Color in leadership is knowing that there are people on campus who have certain expectations of you from our communities of color. Sometimes people forget that I'm the associate vice president and dean of *all* students. I have to think about the institution as well as the individual students. And I think sometimes there are unrealistic expectations of me. I had a graduate assistant say, "You know, Whitney, there are people on campus who think you should be doing more for African American students." Just because I'm not standing outside pounding a drum, doesn't mean that I'm not advocating for African American students, or any other students.

As the participants described situations where they felt they were being sabotaged or undermined, many of them shared their antagonists were other Black people. Instead of finding refuge and solace with their Black colleagues, they instead had to be strategic in navigating their relationships with other Black people. Why is the crab in the barrel mentality still relevant among Black people today? Instead of going low, why can't we all just go high?

Relationship building: I'm putting in a lot of emotional labor and time to build these relationships. Brenda, Stacey, and Gail shared about the importance of building relationships but also discussed their struggle with the extra effort and emotional labor they have had to exude

as Black women SSAOs when trying to build professional relationships. At Brice College, a small HBCU, Brenda recognized the importance of building relationships with students and her colleagues. She believed, as these relationships continued to form and more of the campus community began to see her as one of the faces of student affairs, she would be better equipped to support and stand in the stead of her vice president when needed. In contrast to Brenda, Stacey and Gail both recognize the amount of effort and time they are expending on building campus relationships just so they can be included at the table when decisions are made. Stacey shared relationships are very important to her, and she is aware the relationships she has formed have helped her continue to have her seat at the table and influence the decision-making processes at Saints University. Stacey commented:

There's this extra effort to have relationships with people in order to get what you want. I think there's danger in that because sometimes the way I show up in that relationship may not be the way people want me to show up or the way that they've kind of known me in the past. It's like, oh, there's nice Stacey, and oh, there's *that* Stacey. "She's not quite as easy to work with as the other Stacey." So, that's been challenging to navigate. The way things get done around here is through relationships and it's hard to form relationships with people when you don't look like them, or when you have thoughts that are different than theirs are.

Serving at a large institution such as Grace College, Gail understood how her identities could affect her work as an SSAO, but she has worked tirelessly to form genuine relationships with her colleagues. Gail stated:

I've worked consistently to build long and deep relationships with my other vice chancellors and tried to communicate as clearly as I can that I want to be at the table, and

that we have shared responsibility in the decision-making process. If there's a protest on campus, it's not just my responsibility; it's your responsibility, too. When you're building the budget on the administration of finance site, I have a responsibility in that as well. I am putting in a lot of emotional labor, a lot of time to build these relationships in order to make sure that I'm at that table for those conversations.

The Black women SSAOs expended a large amount of energy and effort to build relationships with others. The women found themselves going above and beyond to establish relationships to secure a seat at the table and engage in important campus conversations. The experiences shared in terms of relationship building also intersect with the theme of outsider-within. To not be perceived as an outsider and to gain a seat at the table, the women acknowledged spending a lot of their time and emotional labor trying to build relationships with their colleagues. Gail mentioned being aware of how her identities could relegate her to the outskirts of big decision-making conversations. Why is it perceived that Black women must spend more time than their White colleagues building relationships with others?

Mentoring

A finding that may not be connected to the theoretical framework was the influence—or lack thereof—of mentoring on the participants' professional success. The participants discussed how mentoring has positively affected their personal and professional growth, while Gail and Whitney shared their experiences of not having mentors who influenced their success. Five participants agreed mentorship was a key influencer for them, and they stressed the importance of Black women finding good mentors. Cathy expressed the need for Black women to be open to mentorship and to realize mentorship may not always look the way they might expect it to look. Casey stated:

Often as Women of Color, we want mentors that look like us. That's great if you find it, but sometimes you don't. It might be an older White male or a White woman or a Black male who are those people that come into your life for a season and offer you nuggets of knowledge. I have embraced being open to mentorship, but I have also seen a lot of Women of Color not take advantage of mentorship and it sometimes can hold us back. Brenda and Stacey shared they have had mentors who identified as White or Black men and White women, and Helen believed Black women should have multiple mentors because Black women have multiple identities. Helen commented:

You are never going to find one person that is going to meet all of your needs. You have multiple identities, multiple strengths and weaknesses and it is not fair to ask someone to try and help you with all of that.

Mary also found mentoring to be a valuable part of her professional experience. She not only found a mentor, but her mentor also served as her sponsor. Lewis (2019) defined a sponsor as someone with power who knows you and your potential, who advocates for your success, and who helps remove obstacles to your progress. Having a mentor aided Mary in her growth and development, while having a sponsor helped facilitate Mary's progression to an SSAO position.

When asked about the influence of mentoring on their personal and professional growth, Gail and Whitney's responses differed from the rest of the participants. Gail recalled, when she was growing within the profession, there was not a defined sense of what a mentor was, but she knew that relationships mattered. She admitted she was not taught to go out and seek a mentor and struggles as she now routinely receives emails from graduate students and new professionals asking her to be their mentor. Gail stated, "If someone said to me, 'Who are your mentors?,' I would have to think long and hard about my answer. I do not have a list of mentors, but I do

have long-term relationships that are important to me.” Although she does not consider them mentors, Gail’s mutually beneficial relationships are the individuals to whom she turns for guidance.

Similar to Gail, Whitney also did not have a list of people whom she considered personal and professional mentors. The only individual who came close to being considered a mentor by Whitney was one of the more seasoned sorority sisters in her alumnae chapter who had helped guide her within the sorority. She mentioned she tries to look for the best in each person with whom she interacts and learns from that interaction. Whitney commented:

I get this question often about mentoring and do I have mentors. I always think mentoring from other people's perspective is that there's this stage, this one person that really shepherded you through and mentored you. I've never had that, but I think my way of being mentored is [that] I pay attention to women and men, particularly Women of Color who are in leadership positions, and I try to glean the best from each one of those people and try to learn from each of those individuals.

In discussing ways in which mentoring has affected their professional development, the majority of the participants found mentoring to be a key factor in their progression and persistence as an SSAO. Although two participants acknowledged not having official mentors, they did mention the importance of forming lasting relationships and learning from each interaction with someone. The use of the term professional sponsor is still fairly new to higher education but was mentioned by Mary in reference to having a sponsor who facilitated her progression to an SSAO role. So, is mentorship a key influencer to the development and progression of Black women SSAOs, or are we now more positively affected by having the appropriate sponsorship?

Summary

In this chapter, I detailed the participants' narratives as they described their professional experiences as Black female SSAOs at land-grant colleges and universities. Their experiences were analyzed through the lens and tenets of BFT (P. H. Collins, 2000): (a) outsider-within, (b) controlling images, (c) intersectionality, and (d) Black women's standpoint – shared experiences. Examining the participants' stories through this conceptual framework helped to address the question the study sought to answer while exposing the complexity of the various professional experiences of Black women SSAOs. In the final chapter of this study, I offer implications for practice and discuss recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I summarize the study and its findings, and I discuss the findings in relation to existing bodies of literature and in terms of the meaning and implications of the findings. I then draw conclusions from those findings and offer recommendations for future research.

The purpose of this critical qualitative study was to explore the experiences of purposively selected Black women in SSAO positions. The qualitative methodology enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of 10 Black women serving as SSAOs at land-grant higher education institutions. The findings of the study are summarized in the following section based on the guiding research question: What are the professional experiences of Black women who serve as senior student affairs officers at land-grant colleges and universities?

Summary of Findings

Examining the participants' narratives through the theoretical framework of BFT aided in answering the research question and exposed the intricacies of the experiences of African American women SSAOs. As each participant shared her narrative, four key themes began to emerge. To provide context to the participants' experiences, each theme also had subthemes. The themes connected to the tenets of BFT: (a) outsider-within, (b) controlling images, (c) intersectionality, and (d) Black women's standpoint – shared experiences.

For outsider-within, participants described feelings of invisibility, isolation, and/or being voiceless during their tenure as an SSAO. Many of them experienced controlling images in relation to their appearance and perceived attitude. For four of the participants, age emerged as the most salient identity when discussing how their race and/or gender influenced their

experiences as an SSAO. Participants had many shared SSAO experiences, and, although mentoring is not a tenant of BFT, five of the participants recounted how mentorship influenced their professional experiences.

Interpretation of Findings

In this study, all participants identified as Black women SSAOs who were employed at land-grant higher education institutions and who held the title of Vice President of Student Affairs, Associate/Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, and/or Dean of Students. There are a small number of Black women who serve as SSAOs (Gamble & Turner, 2015). Therefore, the number of participants for this study was small. To help mitigate bias that could occur with me as the researcher who identifies as a Black woman higher education administrator, I used multiple trustworthiness techniques, such as peer debriefing, member checking, and journaling, to aid in analyzing the experiences of this population. While the four themes may not represent the experiences of all Black women SSAOs, saturation of the data provided insight of a shared phenomenon of invisibility, image, and intersecting oppressions distinctive to Black women SSAOs at land-grant institutions. However, the findings raise questions about the experiences of Black women SSAOs: Why is it so hard to get a seat at the table? What classifies me as a bitch? What's age got to do with it? Do I even deserve to be here?

Outsider-Within

When discussing the experiences of African American women SSAOs, it is likely they will be more vulnerable to discrimination and experience feelings of isolation due to their gender and race (Burke & Carter, 2015; P. H. Collins, 2000; Gardner et al., 2014; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2002; Lutz et al., 2013; Pittman, 2012). This was also true for these participants. Many of the participants shared how they had

experienced isolation, discrimination, and/or felt invisible or voiceless during their professional career. The African American women employed by HBCUs experienced isolation because they were not HBCU alumnae, while the African American women SSAOs at PWIs felt isolated, invisible, and voiceless. The participants recalled being the only Black women and/or sometimes the only woman in meetings surrounded by men. They often felt their voice was not being heard or they were characterized as the “angry Black woman” for speaking passionately during meetings.

Participants repeatedly fought to ensure their voices were heard in meetings and during decision-making processes. For many participants, the amount of energy expended to occupy their seat at the table became tiring, draining, and exhausting. Although they often felt invisible by being the only one or one of few PoC around the table or on campus, they recognized it was also very “visible” when they were not present at meetings. Whitney shared, if she missed a meeting, her colleagues noticed and would often ask why she was not at the meeting. She stated, “While you may feel alone and invisible when you are in the room, it is visibly noticeable when you are not physically present in the room.” Participants also shared it became tiring to continuously be as visible as possible on campus for students, specifically students and parents of color during new student orientation. Participants who worked at PWIs understood and appreciated the importance of being visible and present for students of color but often felt it was an added burden they placed on themselves.

Controlling Images

While wrestling with their outsider-within status, the participants also had to navigate historically controlling images and negative stereotypes of African American women portrayed in contemporary society, such as the image of the mammy and the Black lady. The historical

mammy image consists of being a faithful and obedient servant, while the Black lady is the contemporary version of the mammy and works twice as hard as everyone else (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2009). As outlined in DuBois' (1897) description of double consciousness, participants grappled with disclosing their authentic selves along with trying to understand how others perceived them. They acknowledged the need to be cognizant of their appearance (i.e., attire, hairstyles, and handbags), but they were more aware of the need to manage their body language and verbal and nonverbal communication styles. Many of the participants were very confident in their skills and abilities, and, during their career, they had acquired intentional ways to mask their emotions to not be categorized as a "bitch" and/or the "angry Black woman." The participants navigated multiple worlds with poise, class, dignity, and great pride in being African American women. While managing multiple identities and enduring controlling images and other's perceptions and stereotypes about who they are, the participants displayed great strength and resilience to continue the work of serving students at land-grant institutions.

Intersecting Oppressions

When discussing the ways in which the intersection of race and gender affected their career, for most of the participants, age had a larger influence on their professional experiences than race and/or gender. Due to their perceived age, participants were regularly challenged by their colleagues and staff members. Some participants often had their knowledge and decision-making skills questioned, whereas one participant, Yvonne, was outright disrespected by one of her colleagues.

Imposter Syndrome

Consistent with literature on African American women in higher education believing they must prove themselves worthy (Davis, 2009; Thompson, 2004), participants described feelings of

imposter syndrome, and there was a reoccurring theme and shared experience of questioning whether they were prepared and ready to serve as an SSAO. The imposter syndrome is the “condition where people find it hard to believe that they deserve credit for what they have achieved” (Pedler, 2011, p. 90). Mary began to believe everyone who stated she was too young for the SSAO role. Cathy told herself she was not ready for the position and did not have the necessary experience to be an SSAO. Brenda described questioning whether she deserved to be in her position and whether she had earned it, while Stacy questioned if she was good at her job and wondered what others thought of her work. Kuk and Donovan (2004) found women SSAOs expressed a sense of self-assurance in their SSAO roles yet indicated they experienced feelings of uncertainty about their abilities before accepting an SSAO position. The women also expressed an internalized expectation they needed better preparation for the day-to-day responsibilities and interactions than their male counterparts. As minoritized people in student affairs, they felt the burden of shouldering the expectations associated with representing these broader groups of women.

Relationship Building

The importance of relationship building was another shared experience among the women, but the extra amount of time, energy, and emotional labor expended on relationships became exhausting for the participants. Though exhausting, the women understood the importance of forming genuine relationships to not be perceived as an outsider and to maintain their seats at the table. The women also expressed experiences of Black colleagues sabotaging their work, undermining their leadership, and/or damaging their credibility. Mary described her experience as the “crab in the barrel syndrome,” which is a metaphor for the Black community

holding each other back from excelling. As an African American campus administrator, Whitney was accused by the Black community of not doing enough to support Black students on-campus.

Mentoring

While multiple studies (Blackhurst, 2000; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Davis, 2009; Richard & Sherman, 1991; Walker, 2014; Wanberg et al., 2003) found mentoring to be a valuable and important component of professional development for women, the findings in this study indicated the influence of mentoring varied among the participants. Some of the participants found mentoring to be a valuable part of their professional experience and encouraged others to be open to receiving mentoring from people who do not look like them (i.e., White men and women and/or Black men). Mary was the only participant who spoke of having a mentor and a sponsor. While her mentor helped her develop personally and professionally, her sponsor facilitated her ascension to her SSAO title. In contrast to the literature on the importance of mentoring (Bierema & Merrian, 2002; Blackhurst, 2000; Blackhurst et al., 1998; Chao et al., 1992; N. J. Evans, 1985; Fagenson, 1989; Gardner et al., 2014; D. Holmes et al., 1983; Kram, 1985; Roche, 1979; Scandura, 1992; Twale & Jelinek, 1996; Walker, 2014; Wanberg et al., 2003), two of the participants described their ascension to the SSAO role in the absence of mentors. Mentoring did not influence their professional development or career progression.

While the findings of this study are consistent with previous research, the narratives offered by the 10 African American women provide additional knowledge about the contributions and experiences of African American women SSAOs at land-grant institutions. Their narratives also help to replace images created by the dominant group with self-defined images of African American womanhood and the Black experience.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study can be useful in that they shed light on the distinct experiences of African American women SSAOs who work at land-grant institutions. Highlighting the experiences of African American women SSAOs can benefit future African American women professionals in understanding the roles, responsibilities, potential challenges, barriers, and successes of being a SSAO. It is important for African American women to recognize, understand, and be grounded in the realization that the intersectionality of their race, gender, and age should not be ignored when discussing their experiences in higher education administration and student affairs.

Higher education scholars and future African American women leaders in student affairs can use the findings of this study to assist them in their research and help them navigate their professional experiences. This study could also provide insight to student affairs professional associations and land-grant institutions on how to foster success with African American student affairs professionals and encourage higher education institutions to reflect on how to best develop inclusive campus practices and hiring practices. Focusing on the intersection of age, gender, and race and the experiences of African American women SSAOs and understanding how they respond and cope with their professional work environments, higher education institutions could be encouraged to assess the campus climate to ensure the successful recruitment, retention, and progression of African American women administrators (Watt, 2003; Wesley, 2018).

Moreover, this study also emphasizes the need for the African American community to “check themselves” and rebuild and support its own community and people. Many of the participants shared negative interactions with their Black colleagues and referenced how the

crabs in the barrel syndrome (CBS) manifested itself in their professional work environments. While CBS is not unique to only the Black community, the CBS terminology has been used to uniquely describe Black people. A recent post on the social media outlet Instagram, by @letusawaken, stated, “People say that Black people hold each other back like crabs in a barrel while conveniently neglecting that the crab’s natural habitat is not a barrel. So, who built the barrel?” Crabs are often captured by fisherman and placed in a barrel where they became disoriented and take on new behaviors for survival. Cumberbatch (2015) believed:

The barrel is a premeditated-environment intentionally designed by systems to enclose the crabs with the intended goal of sowing dissension. The actual issue is not the people (crabs) in the environment (barrel); it is the environment itself and the conditions that stem from the environment. Once the focus of attention is shifted to the preconstructed environment then the real question is how do we could overcome this structure?

The CBS dates back to the Willie Lynch Letter of 1712 where he discussed the making of a slave. Lynch alleged, if the slave masters sowed dissension among the slaves, it would cause distrust among them and the slave masters would be able control the slaves for at least 300 years. In 2019, Willie Lynch is still influencing the African American community. Participants referenced the CBS, but no one mentioned the barrel (environment). To attempt to create more positive experiences for Black women SSAOs and all Black higher education administrators, more attention needs to be paid to the campus environment and to discussions on potential ways to unify the Black higher education community.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, there are several opportunities for future research. First, a similar study should be replicated to gather additional data on the

influence of age/ageism on the professional experiences of Black women SSAOs. The BFT tenet of intersecting oppressions focuses solely on the intersection of race, gender, and class. When discussing how the intersections of their identities manifested in their work environment, four of the participants referenced their age being more of a factor than their race and/or gender. Women in Harris and Linder's (2018) study detailed racialized experiences where their age and ageism intersected with race and gender to influence their overall experiences. To better inform practice and experiences, I recommend further research be conducted to explore how the intersection of age relate to the tenets of BFT.

Socioeconomic status (SES) is also an intersecting identity that could be discussed within BFT but was not a theme that emerged in this study. Salary equity has the potential to influence the SES of Black women SSAOs. Brenda was the only participant who shared she was aware of Black male SSAOs at Brice College who had fewer responsibilities and fewer direct reports than her but higher salaries. There is literature on the salary differences and inequities between men and women (Edwards & Ross, 2017; Park, 2011; Toutkoushian & Conley, 2005) and on salaries based on gender and ethnicity (Edwards & Ross, 2017; Renzulli, Grant, & Kathuria, 2006; Toutkoushian, Bellas, & Moore, 2007). Edwards and Ross (2017) found, in these studies, that women and People of Color still experience a gap in their salaries compared to White males within the academy. Continued research on the salaries of African American female SSAOs could provide additional data to inform salary decisions and help the profession address salary equity and gender and race discrimination. This study focused on three of the seven core themes of BFT. To inform future research, I recommend the other four themes of BFT (Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood, Black Women's Love Relationships, Black Women and Motherhood, and

Rethinking Black Women's Activism) are examined in relation to the experiences of Black women SSAOs.

In addition, a mixed-methods study on the emotional/mental health and wellness of SSAOs should be conducted. This study could be disaggregated by gender and race, and the research could focus specifically on the effect of sociostructural stressors and bicultural stress on Black women SSAOs. Bicultural stress is defined as the set of emotions and physical upheavals produced by a bicultural existence (Gardner et al., 2014). Multiple participants described the emotional labor and mental exhaustion they have experienced during their professional career. During our conversation, Stacey became emotional and began crying when discussing her experiences as an SSAO. Along with the explicit demands that come with serving as an SSAO, there was the implicit invisible labor participants also experienced. Finally, I recommend a study on the experiences of Black women SSAOs and the manifestation of invisible labor in higher education. Invisible labor is defined as the expectation and pressure many diverse faculty and staff feel to serve as role models, mentors, and advisors to underrepresented students and to meet the institutional needs for diverse representation on committees, at meetings, and in departmental or office activities (June, 2015). Crain, Poster, and Cherry (2016) also defined invisible labor as activities that occur within the context of paid employment that workers perform in response to requirements (either implicit or explicit) from employers and that are crucial for workers to generate income, to obtain or retain their jobs, and to further their careers, yet are often overlooked, ignored, and/or devalued by employers, consumers, workers, and ultimately the legal system itself. (p. 6)

Participant Updates

I began this research study at the beginning of 2018. Since then, some of the participants have experienced changes in their professional careers. In the process of member checking participants' narratives and building relationships with them during this study, I learned the following:

1. Cathy left the University of Culture where she served as the Associate Vice President and Dean of Students and is now a vice president of student life.
2. Diane "happily" retired from Divine College.
3. Gail accepted the appointment of vice president and dean of campus life and left Grace College.

Conclusion

The purpose of this critical qualitative study was to explore the experiences of African American women SSAOs at land-grant higher education institutions. The study was guided by one research question, and one of the major objectives of the study was to provide readers with data-rich findings to help them better understand the experiences of African American women SSAOs. Conducted through the theoretical lens of BFT, the study focused on ways in which race and gender could directly impact this phenomenon.

The recruitment, retention, and progression of Black women in higher education has important implications in changing the landscape of higher education in the United States (W. Smith & Bender, 2008; Tran, 2014). While Black women may face shared commonalities, they may also have differing challenges and dilemmas in pursuit of educational leadership (Tran, 2014; Valverde, 2003). Research acknowledges the impossibility of understanding the other without understanding the self (Generett & Jeffries, 2003; Morrow, 1991; M. Q. Patton, 2015;

Tierney & Rhoads, 2004). As a Black woman in higher education, I realize I must understand my experiences before I can understand the experiences of other Black women in higher education. It is my hope this qualitative study will add to the existing literature on Black women in higher education administration and provide the opportunity for Black women and others to share, embrace, and understand the experiences of Black women. In the words of the Honorable Shirley Chisholm, “If they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.” Black women, let us prepare to take our rightful seats at the table.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

January 09, 2019

Tanisha Leverne Jenkins,
UTK - Student Life - Student Affairs
Re: UTK IRB-17-04167-XP

Study Title: Herstory: A Qualitative Examination of the Experiences of African American Women Senior Student Affairs Officers

Dear Tanisha Leverne Jenkins:

The Administrative Section of the UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application to **continue** your previously approved project, referenced above. It has determined that your application is eligible for **expedited** review under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1). The IRB reviewed your renewal application and determined that it does comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects.

Therefore, this letter constitutes approval of your renewal application, closed to enrollment- analysis only. Approval of this study will be valid from 01/09/2019 to 01/20/2020.

Any revisions in the approved application must also be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subject or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Finally, **re-approval** of your project is required by the IRB in accord with the conditions specified above. You may not continue the research study beyond the time or other limits specified unless you obtain prior written approval of the IRB.

Sincerely,



Colleen P. Gilrane, Ph.D.
Chair

Appendix B

Request for Participation Email

My name is Tanisha L. Jenkins and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville with a focus in Higher Education Administration. In addition to my studies, I also serve as the Director of Multicultural Student Life at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

I am the principal researcher in a qualitative study examining the experiences of African American women who are senior student affairs officers at institutions of higher education. Your current position at (name of institution), along with your exceptional credentials meet the sampling criteria of my research; and therefore, I would like to invite you to participate in the study.

As a study participant, you would be included in the following:

1. Completion of a brief demographic survey.
2. The submission of your current resume and/or curriculum vitae.
3. A 60-90 minute audio-recorded interview. I would like to conduct face-to-face interviews through computer mediated communication software such as Skype, Google Hangout, etc. If needed, a 30 minute follow-up interview may be requested.
4. You will also be provided with a typed copy of your interview transcript for your review.

Please note that all information/data collected will be kept confidential. It is my goal to interview research participants for this study during the time frame of [insert the dates]. You may reply to this email to communicate your participation decision by [insert date]. Should you choose to participate, I will contact you to schedule a 60-90 minute interview appointment. You will also receive a copy of a demographic survey, and a letter of informed consent required by the University of Tennessee Institutional Review Board.

I sincerely hope that you will contribute to the research in the field of student affairs, by accepting participation in this study. Your time is valued, and your consideration is much appreciated.

Sincerely,
Tanisha L. Jenkins
Principal Investigator
University of Tennessee

Appendix C

Follow-Up/Reminder Message

Greetings [Name]: You volunteered to participate in a qualitative study examining the experiences of African American women who are senior student affairs officers at institutions of higher education. You are scheduled take part in an individual interview on [date] at [time]. The interview will be conducted face-to-face or via video chat (i.e., Skype). If you have any questions, please contact me. Thank you.

Tanisha L. Jenkins
Principal Investigator
University of Tennessee
xxxxx@utk.edu
(865) XXX-XXXX

Appendix D

Informed Consent Statement

Herstory: A Qualitative Examination of the Experiences of African American Women Senior Student Affairs Officers

INTRODUCTION

You are being invited to participate in a research study that will explore the experiences of African American women in senior student affairs administrative positions. The purpose of this qualitative, multi-case research study is to explore the experiences of African American women in senior student affairs officer positions.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

The participants for this research study will include 12-14 African American women who serve as senior student affairs officers at an institution of higher education. I will conduct 12-14 semi-structured interviews with study participants. All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interviews will last approximately 60-90 minutes. If needed, a 30-minute follow-up interview may be scheduled.

RISKS

Most research involve some risk to confidentiality and it is possible that someone could find out you were in this study or see your study information, but the investigators believe this risk is unlikely because of the procedures we will use to protect your information. A risk to participating is that due to the small number of participants in this study, you may potentially be identifiable by your demographic information. To address this, all data will be kept [on an access restricted drive], and you may choose to not answer questions on the demographics questionnaire that you believe may help identify you.

BENEFITS

You will not directly benefit from your participation in the research.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information in the research study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study. Audio files will be kept on an encrypted computer and secured with password protection to which only the investigator have access. File sharing will occur for transcription and data analysis only. All documents will be destroyed no later than December 2021. Your research information may be used for future research studies [and/or other purposes (education, etc.), if applicable] or shared with other researchers for use in future research studies without obtaining additional informed consent from you. If this happens, all of your identifiable information will be removed before any future use or distribution to other researchers.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Tanisha L. Jenkins, at xxxxx@utk.edu, and (865) XXX-XXXX or her advisor, Dr. Dorian L. McCoy, at dmccoy5@utk.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If there is a question in the study that makes you uncomfortable, you may skip that question(s). If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name (printed) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E

Research Question

What are the professional experiences of African American women who serve as senior student affairs officers in higher education?

Interview Protocol

Demographics

Marital Status: Single Married Partnered Separated
 Divorced Widowed

Age:

Number of Years in Student Affairs:

Number of Years in a SSAO position:

Highest Level of Education: PhD EdD Masters Bachelors

Institutional Demographics

Current Institution Size:

Current Institution Type:

Number of Years Serving at Your Current Institution:

Number of Years Serving as a SSAO at Your Current Institution:

Interview Questions

1. How did you decide to pursue a career in student affairs?
2. Describe your career path and how you have progressed in student affairs.
3. Tell me about your experiences serving as a SSAO for the past (insert number) years?
4. How has it been for you to serve as a SSAO? What challenges, barriers, or limitations have you faced? What skills were needed? What successes have you had? How did all of this affect you?
5. You have been in this position for (insert number) year(s). What has kept you going, why have you stayed, and would you do it again?
6. What advice do you have for African American women pursuing SSAO positions?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience?

VITA

Tanisha L. Jenkins (she/her/hers) currently serves as the Director of Multicultural Student Life at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee where she is responsible for providing the overall leadership, direction, and management of the Office of Multicultural Student Life and the Frieson Black Cultural Center. Before coming to Tennessee, Tanisha served as the Director of Multicultural Affairs and the Multicultural Center at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC. Ms. Jenkins received a bachelor's degree in business administration from Presbyterian College in Clinton, SC and a master's degree in counselor education with a concentration in higher education administration from Clemson University in Clemson, SC. Her passion for helping students succeed stems from her very first job as Enrichment Specialist/Mentor Program Coordinator with the Upward Bound Program at Greenville Technical College in Greenville, SC. Ms. Jenkins' research agenda primarily focuses on the collegiate experiences of students of color attending predominantly White institutions and the experiences of African American women in higher education and student affairs leadership.