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Straight from the Source: Black College Presidents Tell Their Stories

Steven Purcell
Loyola Marymount University, Steven.purcell24@gmail.com

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by

Steven Purcell

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Steven Purcell

Loyola Marymount University
School of Education
Los Angeles, CA 90045

This dissertation written by Steven Purcell, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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Dissertation Committee

[redacted]
Antonia Darder, Ph.D., Committee Member

[redacted]
William Parham, Ph.D., ABPP, Committee Member

[redacted]
Koffi Lonfotey, Ph.D., Committee Member

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ABSTRACT

Straight from the Source: Black College Presidents Tell Their Stories

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Students on college and university campuses across the United States are becoming more racially diverse. However, leadership on college campuses is not trending toward more diversity, particularly in higher administrative posts such as the presidency. To better understand this stagnate trend of college president diversity, this critical narrative study examined the lived experiences and insights of six current or former college presidents who identify as Black. The participants in this study are a unique cohort of individuals who have served as presidents/ chancellors at institutions where Black students are not the majority ethnic/racial group on campus.

More specifically, this study sought to capture their lived experience as they ascended to the presidency and collected their perspectives on what is needed to dismantle barriers that have prevented the evolution of more diverse leadership. Moreover, their stories offer salient insights and recommendations regarding what needs to be employed to increase Black leadership at higher education institutions. Lastly, the study attempts to offer a playbook for understanding this phenomenon and thus, supporting the formation, recruitment, and hiring of more Black presidents on college campuses in the future.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

> True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.
>
> Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1967)

These words by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on compassion sum up my belief in social justice and are an excellent place for me to begin, in that they carry the spirit that embodies my study. My underlying values tied to social justice come from my lived experience as a Black man, born to immigrant parents in America. I was born in Los Angeles, California and am the oldest of two children. My parents immigrated to the states from Jamaica, and both have a high school education. My father was a mechanic and spent more than 35 years working at the Metropolitan Transportation Association as a bus mechanic, and my mother spent over 20 years as a receptionist at Kaiser Permanente.

My sister and I were raised in Fontana, California, (55 miles east of Los Angeles) where my parents set out to live the "American Dream" of owning a home, becoming upwardly mobile and being able to provide a better life for their family. The consistent warnings of Fontana being a hotbed for Ku Klux Klan (KKK) groups did not stop my parents from moving there. In fact, after moving to Fontana, my parents faced harassment by local KKK members that included throwing white paint on their car and leaving a burned cross on our front lawn. What made matters even more challenging was that my father worked the night shift and my mother was a stay-at-home mom with two small kids, so she faced a cloud of fear when home alone at night. Their families told them to move, to find a more welcoming neighborhood, but my parents were

so determined to fulfill their American Dream, they decided to stay where they were. Over time, the city of Fontana became a relatively diverse city, so I grew up with families from many different backgrounds. As a child that did not mean much to me; but looking back, I have come to value that experience tremendously. That persistence, resiliency and an appreciation for diversity became the central themes in our upbringing.

My mother's dream for my sister and me was for us to graduate college, while my dream was to be a professional basketball player, so we were often at odds with each other. Eventually, I came to see that college was a means to an end and, ultimately, I wanted to make my mother's dream come true. As the first born to immigrant parents, my life has been full of being the first, playfully a test pilot, as my parents and I worked to navigate the kindergarten through 12th grade and higher education experiences, everything was essentially new to us and we were building the plane as I flew the plane. The term “bull in a China shop” describes my experience and how I navigate the world; which means making a lot of mistakes but trying, again and again, to get it right. My experience of being the first to graduate from college in my family is a perfect example of successfully graduating from college, despite making many mistakes along the way. Also, I became hyper-aware of being the only Black male in my engineering classes. I left college with an engineering degree, but what was most valuable was leaving college with the skill sets to navigate a new world where I was going to be the only Black male in many professional spaces.

My story is not unique to members of marginalized communities. The pursuit of the “American Dream” is riddled with obstacles, booby traps, indignation, hurdles, and discrimination. Often these challenges are experienced on an individual level, that is, individual racist acts versus institutionalized white racism; but as history so rightfully holds true for all that

are from marginalized groups, these problems were developed and reinforced by America's key institutions such as education, government, and business (Orelus, 2012). As social reformers work toward bringing change to these powerful institutions, I set out to contribute to this effort by studying the life experiences and struggles of Black college presidents, given the enormous potential they hold for transforming institutions of higher education.

Statement of the Problem

Historically, American higher education was influenced by the British undergraduate and German research university structures (Eckel & King, 2004). However, three uniquely American beliefs have also shaped US higher education programs. First, Jeffersonian ideals such as limited government, freedom of expression, and states' rights, are managed and established by individuals to protect such institutions from government control. Second, there is the belief in capitalism in that high quality and diverse institutions are best developed through competition and not through monopolies. Third, higher education for much of its history was established for society's elite and excluded potential students, on the basis of race, gender, religion, and social class. Relatively recently, in the 20th century, social and economic changes shifted higher education to become an important vehicle for social mobility and groups previously excluded from higher education institutions began gaining access to schools unlike any other time in America.

America's first college president was Henry Dunster, who was elected to serve as the chief officer at Harvard College in 1640 (Fincher, 1989). In many ways, he has continued to be the prototype for the selection of university presidents across the country. Kauffman (1980) noted that in the formative years of higher education institutions, the presidents were seen as

ministers, long-term faculty members, and public relations experts. In addition, unlike Europe or Asia where the college president does not have executive authority, American college presidents have a great deal of decision-making authority at the institutions they lead. The decision-making authority is often awarded to college presidents through the by-laws of the institutions and upheld by the institutions public or private board of trustees (Birnbaum, 1999). Although Duderstadt (1999) noted that in current times the role of college presidents is distinctive and complex, the racial diversity of university leadership has changed little.

As of 2016, for example, 83% of all college presidents identify as White and only 8% of college presidents identify as Black (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017). Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, and Taylor (2017) research included surveying more than 1500 college presidents, chancellors, and CEOs. Seltzer (2017) highlighted that the study includes minority-serving institutions and many minority presidents work at minority-serving institutions. In fact, if you excluded minority-serving institutions from the study, the number of institutions headed by a minority falls to 11%. Given demographic trends that show a dramatic increase in populations of color in the United States (Colby & Ortman, 2014), the student body of college campuses are increasingly becoming more racially diverse. Snyder, de Brey, and Dillow (2019) found that as of fall 2017, 56% of college students identified as White and 14% of college students identify as Black. In comparison, in 1976, 84% of college students identified as White and 10% of college students identified as Black. Considering current demographic trends, Black people are underrepresented as college presidents, while the population of Black students continues to increase on college campuses.

This is a significant phenomenon to consider in that Hurtado, Milem, and Clayton-Pedersen (1999) found that diversity in leadership ranks in higher education institutions leads to better academic outcomes for students of color. A similar study purports that diverse leadership contributes to a more inclusive climate and fewer incidents of discrimination and bias (Antonio et al., 2004).

Considering faculty, Smith (1989) stated five key reasons to diversify faculty at higher education institutions. The first is students in the minority will more likely reach out to a faculty member who they perceive understands their experience concerning gender, race, or physical ability. Second, faculty diversity on campus is an essential signal to minority students that the institution cares about the students' future and the institution's commitment to diversity. Third, a diverse campus community creates a more comfortable space for both the faculty and students. Faculty who represent diverse backgrounds face the same challenges as students from a diverse background on college campuses that include the burden of being spokespersons, mentors, support staff on campus and simultaneously performing their professional responsibilities. Fourth, a diverse faculty and staff were likely to shape who and what was deemed essential to learn, which were critical contributors to the institution. Also, a more diverse faculty and staff in decision-making positions allow the faculty of diverse backgrounds to offer their personal experiences on college campuses to help identify problematic areas. Finally, institutions with diverse faculty and staff better represent pluralistic societies in which they operate in and token representation of faculty from diverse backgrounds in leadership positions hinders institutions with goals of improving society. The research indicated that diverse leadership and faculty led to a more inclusive and represented campus climate which led to better outcomes for all students.

Such racial disparities in leadership do not only reside at the highest office in higher education, but they are also prevalent in the lower ranks in higher education and other industries as well. Bichsel and McChesney (2017) found that only 7% of higher education administrative positions were held by Black staffers, 3% were held by Hispanic or Latino administrators, 2% were Asian, and 1% identified as other. The remaining 86% of administrators identified as White. Bichsel and McChesney (2017) defined higher education administrators as top executives and administrative officers such as controllers, division heads, department heads, deans, and associate deans. Further, Bichsel and McChesney (2017) found that private industries mirror the trend observed in higher education in that 87% of senior-level executives identified as White in the private industry. Hence, minority groups are underrepresented in leadership positions within both the private industry and higher education.

According to Ryan and Haslam (2005, 2007), racial minorities and women are more likely to be appointed to leadership positions in poorly performing organizations or organizations in a crisis. This phenomenon was coined "Glass Cliff." Ryan and Haslam (2005, 2007) argued that the "Glass Cliff" phenomenon can be attributed to structural and cognitive factors that include assumptions about those perceived as "others" natural ability managing crisis, "benevolent" forms of discrimination, and evaluation bias. Emrich (1999) and Meindl (1993) stated that failure of the risky firms that women and racial minorities are appointed to lead only reinforces negative stereotypes of the ability of women and racial minorities to lead organizations. Hence, it is not surprising that Rosette, Leonardelli, and Phillips (2008) argued, in the United States, "being White" is a central characteristic of being a leader. Also, evaluators will perceive that leaders who are White are more prototypical business leaders than are leaders

who are racial minorities. Accordingly, the development of evaluators' leadership prototypes leads to the incorporation of race into the leader prototype, and as a result the belief that prototypical business leaders are and should be White.

Moreover, BoardSource (2017) reported that blind spots, due to the lack of racial diversity at the highest leadership levels at non-profit organizations, may lead to poor strategies that address societal ills or even perpetuate the challenges. Thus, college and universities working to diversify their school climate and creating a more inclusive school experience are at risk of not meeting their goals if the diversity of leadership was not part of the theory of action. Furthermore, not considering the lived experiences of Black people who have reached the pinnacle of leadership at higher education institutions, may weaken plans to address the disproportionality of Black people as leaders on college campuses. Hence, this study was an effort to better understand the phenomenon of Black university leaders, in ways that can help to address this disproportionality in the future.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of the study was to unpack the experiences of Black college presidents to better understand how they navigated the hierarchical and often biased systems of higher education to become a senior administrator. I leveraged the voice of Black college presidents to paint a composite picture of the path forward in eliminating the lack of diversity and a disproportionate number of Black administrators serving in leadership positions at higher education institutions. The study was designed to engage college presidents at a deep level to assist in capturing their rich personal history of ascendency and survival in their presidential post. Moreover, leveraging insights from individuals who are outliers could potentially lead to

the articulation of effective strategies not widely available to others who come from similar backgrounds and share parallel aspirations.

This knowledge can be used to shape policies or practices to increase diversity at higher education senior leadership levels, and it can provide just in time support for people in pursuit of the university presidential office. I can imagine higher education institutions and business organizations also using the first-hand narratives from college presidents to evaluate their current practice of increasing diversity in the leadership ranks. As an example, the stories from the participants of this study provided detailed insights that can be specifically used to assess current recruitment and hiring practices at universities. Finally, this study can potentially serve as a catalyst for future research that analyzes the phenomenon from a variety of perspectives, including women of color and other underrepresented populations such as Latinos/as and Asian-Americans.

Research Questions

The following research questions provided the driving force for this study of Black college presidents:

1. How had the lived experiences of Black college presidents shaped their professional goals and trajectories?
2. What structural and institutional practices in higher education do Black college presidents identified as barriers to increasing racial/ethnic diversity in higher education administration? and

3. What institutional changes do Black college presidents identified as needed, in order to increase opportunities for Black administrators who aspire to this top college leadership position in the future?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study incorporates two theoretical lenses. These include critical race theory (CRT) and transformative leadership. By bringing together the ideas and tenets that shape these two perspectives, the resulting conceptual framework assisted me in providing a substantive analysis regarding the lived experiences of Black college presidents and how they perceive the challenges they face and the needs that still remain, in order to support the ascendency of Black leaders to the most respected post within institutions of higher education.

Critical Race Theory

According to Martinez (2014), CRT stemmed from the field of law as a counter reaction to the critical legal studies (CLS) movement in that CLS failed to account for the role that race should play in challenging the system of laws. As a result, a select number of legal scholars left the CLS movement to found CRT. Co-founding member, Matsuda (1991) defined CRT as:

> The work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that work toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination. (p. 1331)

In pursuit of understanding the lived experience of Black people, the writings of CRT were engaged in this study to interpret the institutional and societal practices that perpetuate institutional racism and bigotry faced by Black university leaders.

Over the last two decades, CRT has made its way into education. Education scholar, Gloria Ladson-Billings (2010) defined CRT as the acknowledgment that racism was built into all aspects of American life, which include laws, institutions, media, etc. Hartlep (2009) described the five tenets of CRT as:

1. Dominant culture advocates for "color-blindness" and "meritocracy",
2. Interest convergence theory,
3. "Race" was socially constructed to disadvantage people of color,
4. "Storytelling" and "counter-storytelling" is an effective tool to critique dominant culture narratives, and
5. Whites have benefited from civil rights legislation.

These tenets played a significant role in the process of coding and analyzing data, in order to develop a better understanding of the experience and insights expressed by college and university presidents participating in this study.

Transformative Leadership

Caldwell et al. (2012) defined transformative leadership as an ethically centered leadership model that equally holds a commitment to values and outcomes by efficiently solving for the long-term interests of stakeholders and society, without losing sight of the moral duties owed by organizations to their stakeholders. In her examination of transformative leadership, Shields (2011) outlined the following seven tenets of transformative leadership:

1. Acknowledging power and privilege and their impact,
2. Focusing on moral purposes that are related to equity, excellence, public, and private good, along with individual and collective advancement,

3. Deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge frameworks,
4. Seeking to balance critique and promise that involves developing strategies to address inequities,
5. Bringing about deep and equitable change,
6. Working toward transformation (that includes liberation, emancipation, democracy equity, and excellence), and
7. The demonstration of moral courage and activism.

Shields (2011) argued that transformative leadership, in the context of education, is both concerned with academic excellence and social transformation. The tenets of transformative leadership as described here, along with CRT, guided my analysis of the data collected for this study.

Methodology

The critical narrative research employed here was grounded in a qualitative approach to address the research questions that guided this study. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2014) described qualitative research as the collection, analysis, and understanding of comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insight into a phenomenon. The qualitative approach is well suited for capturing information saturated with nuance. Critical narrative inquiry is particularly useful here in that it provides a more fluid and organic approach, creating the space for the high-profile participants to share sensitive information more freely.

Gay et al. (2014) described narrative research as the study of how different individuals experience the world around them, which provides a vehicle for individuals to share their own lived experience. Equally important, the narrative research approach collects data on the lived

experience of participants and also supports the co-construction of the narrative by the researcher and participant as to assign meaning to the subject's lived experience. Gay et al. (2014) stated that the narrative research approach is used in a variety of disciplines, including but not limited to art, psychology, education, and sociology. Last, engaging in narrative research requires a high level of trust; so, steps to increase trust between the researcher and subject should not be understated by the researcher.

Although the landscape of higher education institutions is broad, this study focused on the participation of six current or former college presidents who identified as Black. Also, the participants represented a mix of college presidents who served at four-year college institutions, where Black students were not the largest ethnic/racial group on campus. When possible, narrative sessions were completed in person. Also, all narrative sessions were recorded using a voice recorder. A critical narrative approach for this study helped to ensure that the stories of my research participants were captured and shared through my research, without external factors distorting the information gathered from participants.

Leadership and Social Justice Connection

Freire (1970) stated that the greatest humanistic and historical task of the oppressed is to liberate themselves. Thus, any strategy designed to understand the experience of marginalized communities without involving said communities will have blind spots that could damage its effectiveness (BoardSource, 2017). Delgado (2009) stated marginalized groups should strive to increase their power, cohesiveness, and representation in all significant areas of society, because they are entitled to these things and fundamental fairness requires a reallocation of power. Furthermore, Black people are a marginalized group in America. In the context of higher

education leadership, a deeper understanding of their experience brings new knowledge about an understudied group. Also, the intent of the study was not just to add new knowledge, but to also inform practice and policy for addressing the disproportionality of Black people in leadership positions.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

To assist with delineating the boundaries placed on this study and elevate the assumptions that I have made in this study, the following section address the limitations, delimitations, and assumptions incorporated in the study.

Limitations

The study focused on Black college presidents and did not incorporate the lived experiences of Black administrators who have not served as a college president. I was certain Black administrators' lived experiences included valuable and unique information that could potentially help address the research questions of this study. However, it was most prudent to focus on where power had been historically concentrated in higher education, which I believe resides in the college president. In addition, studying Black college presidents did not include the experiences of other people of color that should be investigated to capture the nuances of experiences had by others who also identify as people of color. The high-profile nature of my subjects may have required that they were careful in their responses to interview questions that might have meant fewer details were shared than in normal interviews with less high-profile subjects. As a result, it was possible that some valuable information may not have been ascertained in this study. As a person of color and someone interested in working at a higher education institution, I worked to remain objective when analyzing information gathered from

interviews conducted in pursuit of insights into the research questions. I managed my bias by incorporating peers to review results, utilizing multiple people in coding data, and utilizing peers to review findings from my research.

Delimitations

I limited my study to focus only on private or public American higher education institutions that included four-year institutions where Black students are not the majority racial/ethnic group on campus. Given America's heterogeneous population and a number of higher education institutions, I found the contrast of America's population diversity in contrast to college presidents leading higher education institutions to be stark and worth investigating. For the purposes of this study, I defined "Black" as people who identify as African American, Black American, Black Latino, Black Caribbean, African or anyone who identified as being part of the African diaspora. Lastly, I decided to utilize Black and White when referring to race/ethnicity. I believed it was important to denote the individuals who identified with the racial/ethnic classifications with dignity and respect.

Assumptions

My overarching assumption was that a diverse leadership at higher education institutions would better represent the best interest of historically marginalized groups on higher education campuses and non-marginalized groups. Thus, the policies and practices at higher education institutions that had knowingly or unknowingly marginalized specific communities would be deconstructed and rebuilt to render institutions that were fair and equitable. Moreover, it was my assumption that Black presidents of universities and colleges were best suited to articulate the

tensions at work and the best strategies for survival and thriving as a transformative leader within institutions that were not foundationally designed for their participation.

Definition of Key Terms

To be explicit about how several key terms were used in the study, the following terms were specifically defined to ensure a common understanding of the terms in relation to this study.

Higher education institutions referred to institutions in the United States commonly referred to as colleges and universities.

Minority(ies) is defined as racial/ethnic groups that are less than 50% of the racial/ethnic composition of the US population.

Transformative leadership defines leadership that sets goals and objectives that surpass traditional goal setting that may focus on profit and loss for goals that include morale objectives focused on delivering societal change.

Black(s) refers to people who identify as African American, Black American, Black Latino, Black Caribbean, African or anyone who identifies as being part of the African diaspora.

People of color refers to people who identify with being racial/ethnic minorities in the United States of America. Commonly, this includes Black, Latino (non-white), Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander.

White(s) refers to people who identify as Anglo-Saxon, Caucasian, or descendants of the European diaspora. I have decided to capitalize the term “White” to show respect and dignity to those who identify as White.

Organization of Study

My dissertation has been organized into five distinct chapters. The description of each chapter follows.

In Chapter 1, I shared my personal connection to the study and offered a background summary that addresses the context of the problem highlighting that the student body demographics on college campuses have become more diverse while leadership at the same institutions have not followed suit. Next, I described the purpose and significance of the study. This was followed by my rationale for how this study was connected to social justice. From there, I outlined my chosen methodology for conducting my research that was a qualitative study, employing critical narratives. I concluded the first Chapter by describing the limitations, delimitations, and assumptions connected to my research and defining key terms.

Chapter 2 includes a more in-depth literature review on the history of the college presidency and the history of Black college presidents in the United States. More specifically, the literature review delved into the history of college leadership, characteristics of college leaders, challenges that college leaders face on campus, the demographics of Black leadership in higher education, how leadership is different for Black leaders, and finally, the unique challenges Black leaders face in leadership positions. In addition, a review of the literature related to the two theoretical lenses that comprise my conceptual framework—CRT and transformative leadership—in a manner that provides a strong rationale for their use.

Chapter 3 offers a detailed account of the qualitative methodology and method of critical narratives used in the study and why I selected this approach versus other methods that were readily available. Also, the chapter includes a discussion of the research design, materials, tools,

and narrative prompts used to conduct the narrative sessions to develop the profiles of the Black college presidents who participated in this study.

Chapter 4 provides a descriptive account of the profiles or stories of the Black college presidents participating in the narrative sessions, in a way that centers their voices in understanding their lived experiences. From this presentation of the data, common themes shared by participants will be identified in preparation for analysis in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 provides a systematic analysis of the research, carried out by considering the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and its significance and connection to the stories collected from Black college presidents. From this analysis of the findings, conclusions are provided, along with implications and recommendations. In addition, I consider possibilities for future research, as well as the study's potentially short-term and long-term implications for the field of higher education and the question of leadership for social justice.

Researcher Positionality

As a Black male and a child of immigrant parents, I am often reminded of the bleak history of Black people in America through the media, racial disparities along the lines of wealth, income, life expectancy, health, incarceration rates, and education (Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, 2017). I am driven to play a role in disrupting those disparities. I believe leaders represent a critical role in shaping narratives, designing policies, and selecting strategies. Thus, addressing the inequalities that Black people continue to face in America must involve Black leaders in all aspects of the institutions and systems that make up America. Learning from those Black individuals who have made it to the highest office in their field is important, given

the valuable knowledge they can offer, which can contribute to the formation of new knowledge and new possibilities for expanding Black leadership across colleges and universities.

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

> Heroes, as far as I could see, were white—and not merely because of the movies, but because of the land in which I lived, of which movies were simply a reflection.
>
> James Baldwin (2017)

The issue of representation at the highest ranks of any institution has been a societal issue for centuries. The founding of the United States of America was initiated by the discontent of the American colonies not being represented in the highest rung of the British government at the time. In 1215, a group of rebel Barons wrote a list of demands for the then King John of England, which outlined a set of rights that protected them from illegal imprisonment; church rights and access to speedy justice were among a few of the demands (History.com Editors, 2009). This list of demands to the King of England is known as the Magna Carta that many historians believe had a major influence on the decision of representatives of the American colonies to draft the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

The Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence illustrate the motivation of communities to believe they have the right to be represented in the context of national, state, and institutional leadership. This is also true to the fundamental structure of US democracy, which includes representation by way of Congressmen/Congresswomen, Senators, and a President imbued with the power given to them by US citizens to lead the country in the best interest of the people. This sounds formidable in theory; however, we know that certain groups, such as women and people of color, throughout US history have been muted and, therefore, have not been properly represented within venues where power is most influential to our daily lives. Just as the

rebel Barons and American colonists critiqued the powers that minimized their representation, we must critique higher education institutions for not ensuring that the leadership of these institutions represents the diverse (gender and race) interests of their respective constituents.

With this in mind, this chapter reviews the research that focuses on the history of college leadership, characteristics of college leaders, and the challenges that college leaders face on campus. From this vantage point, it examined the current demographics of Black leadership in higher education, what makes Black leaders different and the unique challenges Black leaders face on college campuses. Also, a more comprehensive discussion of the theoretical frameworks that inform this study—namely, CRT and transformative leadership.

From Sharecropper to College President

> We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and the future.
>
> Frederick Douglass (1852)

I begin this literature review with the life story of early trailblazer William Johnson Trent because I believe his story is critical to setting the foundation for addressing the research questions that drive the heart of this study. In many ways, the life of a Black college president born to a family only one generation out of bondage is extraordinary, but it also provides rich information that explains how such an individual successfully navigated the social ills and institutional barriers of a society built on racism. Although each individual's life story is unique, many lessons can be gleaned from biographies that simply cannot be learned from other delivery systems of knowing.

The story of William Johnson Trent was told by his granddaughter Judy Scales-Trent in her book, *A Black Man's Journey from Sharecropper to College President: The Life and Work of*

William Johnson Trent 1873-1976 (Scales-Trent, 2016). Scales-Trent researched her grandfather's life extensively in order to write the book. She begins the story of her grandfather by describing the environment in which her great-grandmother, great-uncles, and great-aunts were living when they were emancipated from slavery.

> And this is where our story begins, with a woman and her children, who had lived and worked as enslaved people on a plantation in Union County, North Carolina, near the small town of Waxhaw, right on the South Carolina border—newly freed people who left that plantation behind them and headed north. . . . Harriet Massey, the mother, was born in the Carolinas, probably in the 1830s. . . . And we know that, in 1870, she had four children, all of whom had been born in South. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle location 206-208)

Scales-Trent (2016) noted, given the brutality of slavery, often women and families were ripped apart so those enslaved would often take on multiple surnames during their lifetime.

> Slave owners often manipulated the marriage choices of their enslaved Black people—sometimes for economic reasons, sometimes out of mere whim. Harriet Massey, while enslaved, had been forced into "plural marriages," one relationship after the other. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle location 219-225)

Harriet Massey's daughter, Malinda Johnson gave birth to William Johnson's Trent in 1873. His father was a White man who fought for the confederate army in the Civil War. Therefore, Williams Johnson Trent was biracial and came into the world soon after the Civil War. His biological father did not stay with his mother for unknown reasons. However, Malinda

Johnson remarried later, while Williams Johnson Trent was a child. Scales-Trent (2016) described the circumstances:

> Malinda gave birth to a son, whom she named William Captain George Washington Trent. . . . Harriet Massey had great hopes for her grandson, who represented for her the hope of the Negro race. Naming him "George Washington" was therefore an understandable choice. The baby's father, Edward Lawrence Trent, was white. Born in 1847, he was raised in a wealthy slaveholding family in King William County, Virginia. (Kindle location 330-333)

William Johnson Trent was raised in the Charlotte area where his family became sharecroppers to sustain themselves. At a young age, William Johnson Trent worked on the farm to support his family. About this, Scales-Trent (2016) wrote, "William also worked in the corn and cotton fields with the rest of his family. By the time he was ten, he was considered a plow hand, and sometimes did extra work off the family farm to earn money" (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle location 574-576).

Although Williams Johnson Trent worked in the fields, he also went to school, and religion was an important driving force in his young life. The state of North Carolina at the time maintained a segregated society where Williams Johnson Trent worked and went to school. Scales-Trent (2016) wrote of this environment in the following way:

> When he wasn't working on the farm, William went to school. North Carolina established a system of segregated black and white public schools in 1875. . . . By the time he was ten, he was attending a small school in the countryside for three months in

> winter and two in the summer, and was thus able to help on the farm when it was time for planting or the harvest. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle location 635-642)

After the Civil War, there were not many systems set up to educate those who were recently enslaved and their children. As a result, several organizations stepped in to help freed Black people adjust to a new way of life. As a result, a combination of William Johnson Trent's ambitions and timing allowed him to leverage these opportunities to guide his career and life.

> One reason Trent was able to make the journey from sharecropper to college president was his family's encouragement to get an education and become a leader of his people. Another reason was his own drive and passion, his sense of discipline and hard work, and his determination to never give up. Finally, he was able to make this journey because the black community was rapidly building churches and schools and social organizations when Trent was young, institutions that aimed to teach and guide black youth, strengthen black society, and build leaders. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle location 67-63)

Accordingly, Williams Johnson Trent left the farm and enrolled in Livingstone College. For perspective, William Johnson's mother was an enslaved Black woman and one generation later, her son was entering college in the same state that once had enslaved her family.

Livingstone College was established by the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church to help freed Black people exercise their full citizenship. Scales-Trent (2016) explained,

> The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church understood that it was education that would put black people on the path to full citizenship. And so it is not surprising that it began to create schools. In 1882 it became the first black church to build a school in North Carolina that provided instruction beyond the elementary school level, when it

> built Livingstone College—an institution that included a grammar school, a normal school, a school of theology, and a college. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle Locations 88-93)

By the time William Johnson Trent graduated from Livingstone College in 1890, he saw Black representation in Congress and local government grow during Reconstruction but also the subsequent backlash of progress when Jim Crow laws were ushered in by Southern states and supported by the Supreme Court's ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which upheld the doctrine of separate but equal as constitutional.

> In the early 1890s, when Trent was beginning his studies at Livingstone, black people in North Carolina had played an influential role in state politics. They still had the ballot. There were blacks representing North Carolina in Congress, as well as many black officeholders around the state: magistrates and councilmen, members of municipal committees, commissioners. But when Democrats lost the elections in both 1894 and 1896, they became determined to remove blacks from North Carolina politics in the November 1898 election, and used race-baiting as their tool of choice (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle Location 1785-1793).

After college, William Johnson Trent held a series of roles and positions that were preparing him for his future as a college president. It was not clear if at the beginning of his career he purposefully set out to become a college president, but it is apparent that support systems, ambition, a commitment to improving the lives of Black people, and resilience all contributed to the factors that led him to become a college president. Scales-Trent described her grandfather's trajectory in the following excerpt:

> The story of Trent's life is the story of his study and work within these institutions. He spent eight years at Livingstone as a student in the grammar and normal schools, then in college. He was a Y leader for the Third North Carolina Volunteer Infantry, a black unit with black officers, during the Spanish-American War. He then went to Asheville, North Carolina, where he led the Young Men's Institute [YMI], an organization created by white millionaire George Vanderbilt for the black men who were helping construct his home, the Biltmore Estate. The YMI, which was much like a YMCA, soon became part of the Colored Men's Department of the national Y. Trent then led the Asheville Y, after which he became director of the black YMCA in Atlanta. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle Location 109-115)

In 1925, Trent returned to his alma mater to become the president of Livingstone College. The college at the time was in disarray largely due to an ineffective former college president. Also, given the debt of Livingstone College, faculty pay issues, and facility needs gave the new College President a variety of issues to tackle from the beginning of his tenure. As such, President Trent's task at hand was to turn things around quickly.

> A debt of $150,000. So he would not only have to find the money for the school's ordinary expenses—maintenance, salaries, utilities, equipment, and food—he would also have to raise money to pay down the debt while at the same time looking for money for new buildings. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle Locations 3457-3462)

William Johnson Trent quickly moved to make significant changes to the institution, both structurally and attitudinally. He set out to raise money, improve morale, develop deeper relationships with the students on campus, and create an environment that was beneficial for both

faculty and students. Scales-Trent (2016) described his strategy and his approach in the following way:

> During that first school year, as he began his search for money for the school, Trent managed to pay the teachers their unpaid back salaries, thereby greatly improving their morale. He also encouraged the faculty to get graduate degrees. Rufus Clement later said that he had settled into the groove of an ordinary teacher until Trent encouraged him to study further . . . Trent lifted the students' morale by improving living conditions in student housing and by promising the students that the class of 1927 would be graduating from a class-A school. He also imposed higher intellectual standards on the students. (Kindle Locations 3533-3544).

Within a short period, President Trent was able to improve the school's rating from the state board of education from a class-C to class-B. His granddaughter wrote of the impact of this achievement:

> And then, in early April, came the news that they had all been hoping for: the State Department of Education had just changed Livingstone's rating from C to B, thereby allowing the school's graduates to receive three years of college credit instead of two. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle Locations 3588-3591)

The excitement over the elevation in university rank, however, was short-lived because the Great Depression was around the corner and overwhelmed Livingstone College, as it did many Americans and institutions at the time. The Trent family was personally affected by the Great Depression. President Trent was fighting to keep the doors open at Livingstone College and the roof over his family's head.

> If the Depression was hard on the school, it was also hard on the Trent family. In May 1931, all Trent's notes were called in, including the note for his car. In July the North Carolina Public Service wrote Trent to say that he had owed ninety dollars since 1929, and that his latest payment on the debt was only three dollars and sixty cents in August 1930. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle Locations 3895-3898)

The Great Depression and personal relationships took a toll on President Trent. He was not just the President of the College; he was deeply embedded in the local community. Scales-Trent (2016) noted that President Trent's lifestyle not surprisingly led him to exhaustion.

> We should not be surprised, for, as president, Trent was doing more than running the school and searching for funding. He taught Sunday school and was a preacher steward at Soldiers Memorial Church. He also was active in the College's YMCA and in the temperance movement. At times, when no faculty member was available for a particular course, he also taught at the seminary. In June 1937 he went to Hendersonville for a rest. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle Locations 3959-3963)

President Trent eventually returned to better health, but he had a huge new obstacle in front of him—World War II. The Second World War had a significant effect on Livingstone College because it decreased enrollment dramatically. As previously stated, President Trent helped Livingstone College navigate through choppy financial waters.

President Trent spent a lifetime dedicating his time to improving conditions for Black people in America at the cost of his health and well-being. Despite the ills of racism, Jim Crow laws, three wars, and the Great Depression as factors that impeded his life, he withstood those challenges to fulfill his purpose.

> The board of trustees was so grateful to Trent for shepherding the school safely through the Depression, and for raising the money to finish the Price Building, that they decided to hold a testimonial service for him. February 10, 1943 was Trent Day on campus. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle Locations 4279-4281)

Finally, in 1958, after 32 years as college president of Livingstone College, President Trent decided to retire. Prior to his retirement, the College board of trustees released the following statement that perfectly summarizes President Trent's life work.

> This humble "Country Man" has stayed on the job, stuck by his convictions and achieved miraculously for Church and College. Indebtedness has been liquidated, the institution has been awarded the highest rating, buildings have risen on the campus, the Endowment secured, an endless line of ministers and educational leaders have gone out from the school, the physical plant has been beautified, and Livingstone is fast becoming what men dreamed she would become. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle Locations 4966-4973)

Many of the struggles and issues that President Trent faced in his era remain salient issues that Black college presidents must often navigate in their work environments. The issues include racism, the expectation to turnaround institutions that are in despair, health conditions as a direct result of stress. But just as President Trent created a pathway for his successful 32-year tenure at Livingston College, so too have other Black college and university presidents. To better understand the fundamental issues related to this phenomenon the next section engages with the history of higher education in the United States.

Brief History of Higher Education in the U. S.

A variety of historical factors have had key influences on the culture of higher education in the United States. Ford (2017) posited that the catalyst for higher education stems from the religious motivations of those early European groups who arrived in North America. More specifically, the Puritans who founded the New England colonies were keenly focused on an education system that informed citizenry, increasing their capacity for self-government. Of this Ford stated, the first college in the U.S., Harvard College, was founded in 1636 with the dual purpose of expanding knowledge and godliness. In fact, this dual-purpose of intellectual enlightenment and moral enlightenment had been a central tenet of colleges and universities from the 17th century right through the 20th century.

Harvard, for example, initially focused on educating clergymen. However, the elites of the time wanted to preserve and reinforce the values of a Christian civilization, educating all individuals within a position of privilege and influence, including politicians, lawyers, and doctors, from this lens of "knowledge and godliness" as well, to ensure people considered destined for power and leadership were educated in Christian ideals. Hence, Ford (2017) asserted that liberal arts colleges were the building blocks of the American higher education system and were intentionally shaped around conservative ideals. Accordingly, liberal arts education operated to preserve and reinforce Western traditions and values of Christianity, as well as of patriarchy and racism deeply prevalent from the 1700s until the current moment.

In his work, Ford (2017) further noted that in the middle of the 19th century, the focus of higher education shifted from civilizational and morality to also meeting America's political and industrial needs. About this, Thelin (2011) explained that in the 19th century, the federal

government passed the *Morrill Act* of 1862 and the *Agriculture College Act* of 1890. The *Morrill Act and* the *Agriculture College Act* are land grants provided to states by the federal government for the specific purpose of creating state-run colleges with a focus on training citizens to meet the labor needs of the country, particularly in the areas of agriculture and technical vocation. The *Morrill Act and* the *Agriculture College Act* expanded access to higher education for many working-class citizens, also paving the way for the establishment of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

Thelin (2011) posited that, early in the 20th century, higher education in the United States became a tool to support the demands for new technology that were largely driven by the military needs associated with US involvement in World Wars. Further, Thelin (2011) confirmed that the highest growth of citizens accessing higher education occurred when military service people returned from the Second World War and leveraged the *Servicemen's Readjustment Act* of 1944, better known as the *GI Bill*, to pay for higher education. Essentially, the *GI Bill* was used to help military service people gain their footing back in the civilian world through accessing higher education, while also advancing the United States position in the world as an industrial revolution leader.

Ford (2017) noted that the University of Berlin also played an instrumental role in shaping research institutions in the United States. Founded in 1809, the University of Berlin was not a liberal arts college focused on Christian ideals or a college focused on industrialization. The main objective of The University of Berlin was to conduct research defined as the scholarly pursuit of the truth, void of ethical or moral concerns. Furthermore, the two biggest distinctions made between liberal arts colleges and research institutions were: (a) research institutions placed

greater value on research over teaching; and (b) they considered value judgments as strictly subjective, while they believed scientific scholarship had to be neutral and objective.

In the late 1800s, the University of Berlin gained popularity and many students from across the world traveled to Germany to study at this renowned institution. Similarly, many well-known research universities in the United States were fashioned after the University of Berlin. Some of these institutions, which continue to be considered prestigious, include Stanford University (1885), University of Chicago (1890), and John Hopkins University (1890). In addition, many of the historic liberal arts colleges such as Harvard and Yale also transformed in ethos and curriculum to echo these German-inspired research institutions. This same transition occurred among colleges once focused on agricultural and industrial vocation, such as the University of Illinois.

With this in mind, Ford (2017) argued that at the core of higher education there has always been a moral component. However, as higher education evolved, the expressed focus on morality and ethics receded, giving way to vocational and technical priorities and a focus on scientific research. Moreover, this adoption of German scientific ideals is most responsible for contemporary higher education's espoused value-free dictum—a dictum that permeates all expectations within institutions of higher education, including the role of the presidency.

The Role of the College President

Although the earliest higher education institutions in the United States were modeled after European higher education systems, the college president in the United States had distinctly more power and influence over their respective institutions (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). The function of higher education has changed over time. Of this, Jaschik (2014) asserted that what

we come to know as higher education today does not actually resemble higher education prior to the 20th century. As the role of higher education has changed, so too has the role of college presidents. Durnin (1961) suggested that the earliest college presidents served as educational leaders of their institution, while still serving as professors. In contrast, colonial college leaders were predominantly clergymen, professors, and fundraisers (Cohen & Kisker, 2010).

There is no question that the role of college presidents has shifted dramatically over the last four decades, largely due to economic, societal, and technological changes associated with neoliberal policies and practices within colleges and universities, which has led to a variety of challenges related to dramatic shifts in student profiles, budget cutbacks, curriculum, federal/state influences, and increasing corporate control over education (Duderstadt, 1999); Selingo, Chheng, and Clark (2017) posited that college leaders today are removed from classrooms and spend their time engaged in administrative duties, which include but are not limited to: (a) Athletics, (b) Student Affairs, (c) Business, (c) Alumni Relations, and (d) Fundraising.

With all this in mind, Rhodes (1998) argued that the role of college presidents today is the most influential position in higher education, despite the many challenges that have always been a part of the post. Giroux (2007) argued, however, that although the current neoliberal environment many appear to afford college presidents greater opportunities to be bold and effective leaders, it simultaneously places undue pressure upon them to fit into a role more akin to corporate leaders and business advocates. This, consequently, can limit opportunities to serve as educational leaders for social justice, given how neoliberal policies have captured and instrumentalized the role of the college president.

For a study such as this, it is useful to consider the current characteristics of college presidents. Gagliardi et al. (2017) surveyed 1,500 college presidents and found that 58% of college presidents are over the age of 60 and only 41% hold a degree in education or higher education. Furthermore, 25% of college presidents have previously been a college president at another institution. In terms of gender and race, 70% of college presidents are men and 30% are women. Ethnically, 83% of college presidents are White, 8% are Black, 4% Latino, 2% Asian, and 1% multiple races (Gagliardi et al., 2017).

Moreover, the pathway to the presidency can generally be described as 80% of college presidents earned a PhD or EdD. Over 30% of college presidents were previously a chief academic officer or provost. And, finally, 15% of college presidents come from outside higher education, while the majority of those who come from within higher education served in the area of academic affairs, prior to ascending to the presidency. Given that a vast majority of college presidents come from the ranks of higher education administration, understanding the demographics of senior administrators on college campuses provides further insight into the current pool of future college presidents.

Bichsel and McChesney (2017) explained that the growing gap between the United States minority population and higher education administrators can be attributed to multiple variables but one important factor is that the labor pool for an administrative position requires a college degree. U.S. Census Bureau (2015) reported as of 2015, the percentage of non-Whites who have a college degree was 21% as compared to Whites where 33% have attained a college degree. Bichsel and McChesney (2017) also revealed that 86% of higher education administrators were White, 7% were Black, 3% were Hispanic, 3% were Asian, and 1% identify as other. They

indicated that, despite decades of diversity initiatives, the underrepresentation of minorities in administration positions has been persistent, noting a similar pattern in minority representation in leadership positions at organizations across the sector.

Based on the findings of Bichsel and McChesney (2017), when isolating for administration roles there were interesting trends where minority administrators occupy roles. As an example, only 6% of chief development officers identify as minorities, which is the lowest representation of minorities in administration roles included in the study. However, student affairs had the highest representation of minorities in roles included in the study. The representation of minorities in student affairs is 22%, which is similar to the percentage of minorities with a college degree. Bichsel and McChesney also reported that over the last 15 years, the representation of minorities in administrative positions in higher education has modestly increased, while the US population of minorities and the percentage of minorities with a college degree has increased significantly. As a result, the gap between the percentage of minorities in administrative roles on college campuses as compared to minorities with a college degree and the US population of minorities is ever-widening, making disparities in leadership more apparent.

As with senior administrators, faculty play a key role on campus and are the primary pool for future college/university presidents. Also, faculty serve as important role models and mentors for students with various aspirations for careers after college. The U.S. Department of Education (2018) found that in fall 2017, for all degree-granting postsecondary schools, 41% of full-time faculty identified as White males, 35% White female, 6% Asian/Pacific Islander males, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander females, 3% each were Black males, females, Hispanic males, and

Hispanic females. As for those who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native or two or more races, each accounted for 1% or less of full-time faculty.

Equally interesting, the U.S. Department of Education (2018) found that the racial/ethnic and gender distribution between faculty roles varied depending on rank. Considering full-time professors, 54% identify as White males, 27% White females, 8% Asian/Pacific Islander males, 3% Asian/Pacific Islander females, and 2% each for Black males, Black females and Hispanic males. Also, Hispanic females, American Indian/Alaska Natives, and individuals who identify as two or more races constitute 1% or less of all full-time professors.

In comparison, as it relates to full-time associate professors, 41% identify as a White male, 35% White female, 7%Asian/Pacific Islander male, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander female, 3% each for Black female, Black male, Hispanic male, and 2% for Hispanic female. Finally, Native American/Alaska native and individuals who identify as two or more races were 1% or less of full-time assistant professors. See Figure one for an illustration of race/ethnicity and gender distribution:

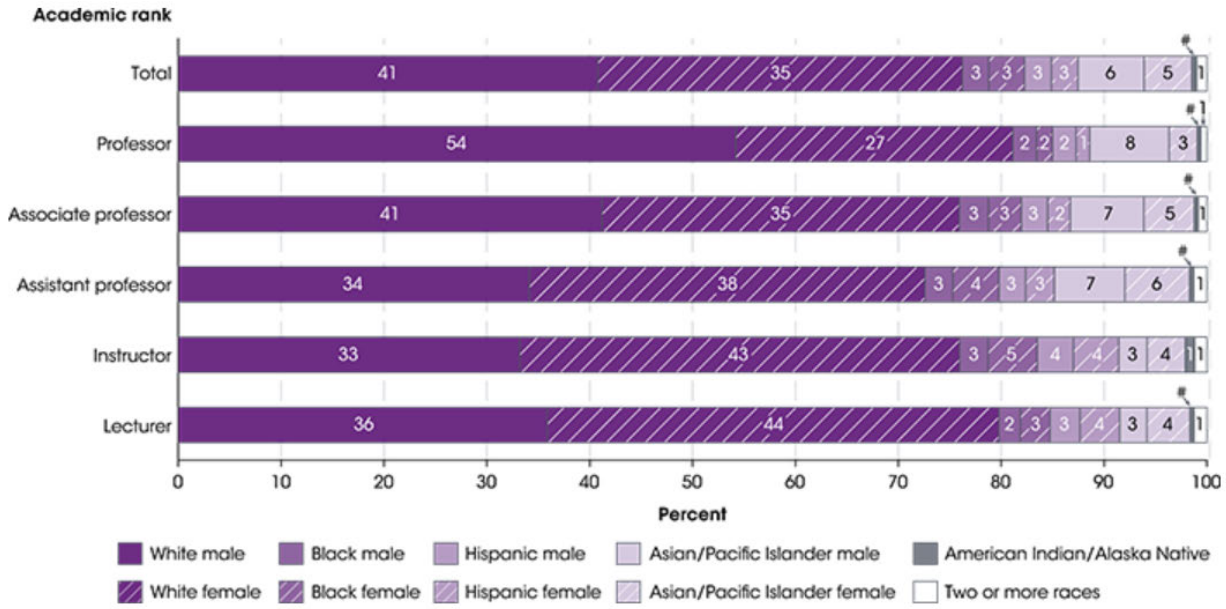

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by academic rank, race/ethnicity, and sex: Fall 2017. "Reprinted Characteristics of postsecondary faculty: The conditions of education 2018.", by U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. Washington, DC. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_csc.asp. Reprinted with permission.

Considering Assistant Professor ranks, 34% identify as White males, 38% identify as White females, 7% Asian/Pacific Islander male, 6% Asian/Pacific Islander female, 3% Black male, 4% Black female, 3% each Hispanic male, and female. Similar to the college/university presidential ranks, the faculty were not as diverse as the student body that the faculty were entrusted to educate, influence, and shape with respect to future careers. In addition, if we look to higher education and its faculty as knowledge-generating institutions: What does it mean for social justice initiatives if those institutions are predominantly White and do not reflect the student body they serve?

Leaky Pipeline to the Presidency

The "leaky pipeline" reference pertains to a specific group advancing along a relatively set path to a desired final destination. Points along the path where group members exit the

pipeline denotes the “leaky pipeline” metaphor (Berryman, 1983). As mentioned previously, 80% of college presidents have a PhD or EdD. Moreover, the pathway to a college presidency more than often includes obtaining a doctorate degree. The pipeline to a doctorate degree involves earning a high school diploma, an undergraduate degree, usually a master’s degree, and then a doctorate degree. Understanding where historically marginalized groups exit the pipeline may explain, in part, why Black people were underrepresented at the college president ranks. With respect to Black males, Jackson (2003) stated that Black males were not making it to the higher education administrative ranks, which is minimizing their opportunities to become a college president since the higher education administrative ranks are a significant precursor to becoming a college president. Moreover, African American males were not persisting through completing their graduate degree, which is effectively eliminating them from the pool of college presidents because they do not have a doctoral degree, an essential credential for consideration for the post.

Recently, Musu-Gillette et al. (2016) unveiled a report that extensively studied the status and trends of racial groups in the context of education. The study revealed insightful data related to demographic trends, high school degree completion, and post-secondary degree completion to name a few specific indicators that were studied. In particular, reviewing degree completion rates along the educational pipeline from elementary school to graduate school will help add more context to how Black students persist in completing a doctorate degree as compared to other subgroups. In addition, given that obtaining a doctorate degree is a prerequisite for being a college president, the research data potentially can serve as a preview of the pool of future candidates for the college presidency.

Musu-Gillette et al. (2016) found that from the year 2000 to 2013 America's population became more diverse particularly for school-aged children, which is defined in the study as children between the ages of 5 and 17 years old. Overall, the White percentage decreased from 62% to 53%. As a result, the minority population increased from 38% to 47%. Nearly half of the school-age children were students of color (see Figure 2).

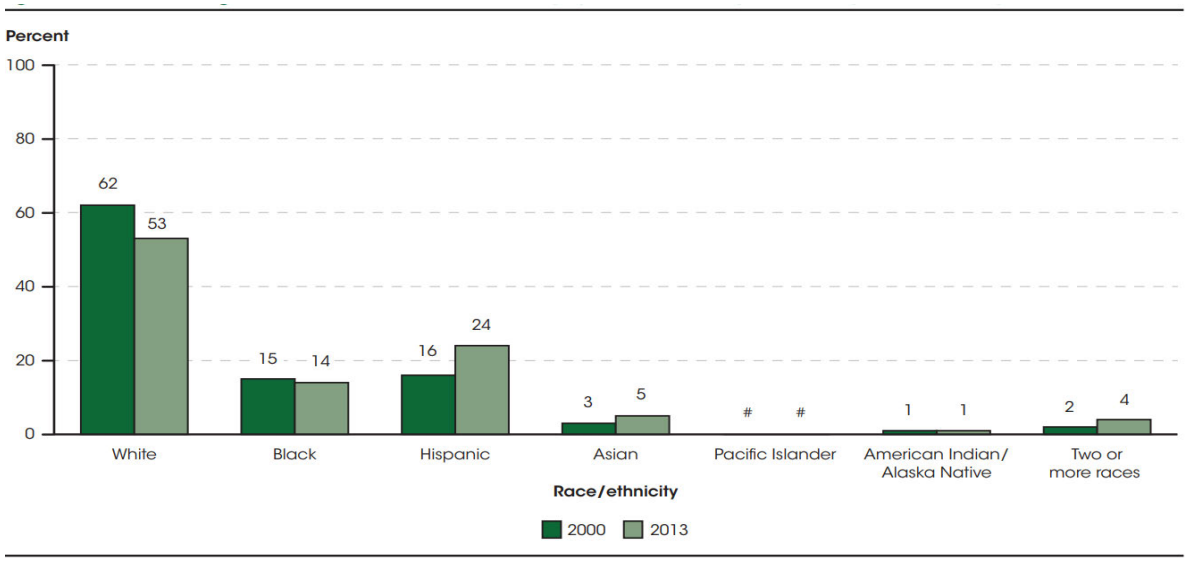

Figure 2. U.S. resident population 5 to 17 years old, by race/ethnicity: 2000 and 2013. Reprinted from "Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2016 (NCES 2016-007)," by L. Musu-Gillette, J. Robinson, J. McFarland, A. Kewalramani, A. Zhang, and S. Wilkinson-Flicker, 2016, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch. Reprinted with permission.

Typically, the completion of a high school diploma or equivalent certificate is needed for entry into college. Therefore, a high school diploma or equivalent certificate is an important first step in the educational pipeline to a doctorate degree. Musu-Gillette et al. (2016) found as of 2013, 92% of individuals between the ages of 18 to 24 years old earned a high school diploma or equivalent. As for specific subgroups, Pacific Islanders have the highest completion rate of 99% and Hispanics had the lowest completion rate of 85% (see Figure 3).

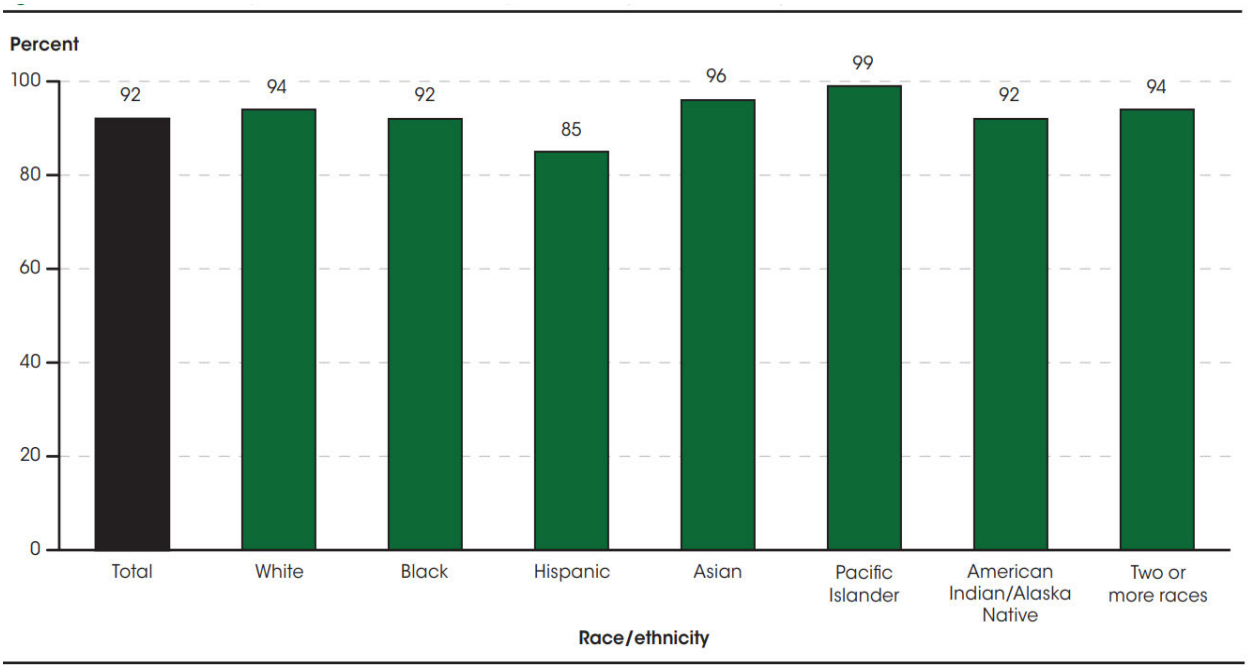

Figure 3. Status completion rates of 18- to 24-year-olds, by race/ethnicity: 2013. Reprinted from "Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2016 (NCES 2016-007)," by L. Musu-Gillette, J. Robinson, J. McFarland, A. Kewalramani, A. Zhang, and S. Wilkinson-Flicker, 2016, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch. Reprinted with permission.

Moving through the education pipeline to a doctorate degree, the next important milestone after earning a high school diploma or equivalent is enrolling in an undergraduate program. Musu-Gillette et al. (2016) reported that as of 2013, demographics of student enrollment by race/ethnicity have become more diverse with 58% of students enrolled in an undergraduate program identifying as White, which is a decrease from 79% in 1990. Black and Hispanic percentages have increased since 1990 to 15% and 17% respectively (see Figure 4 below).

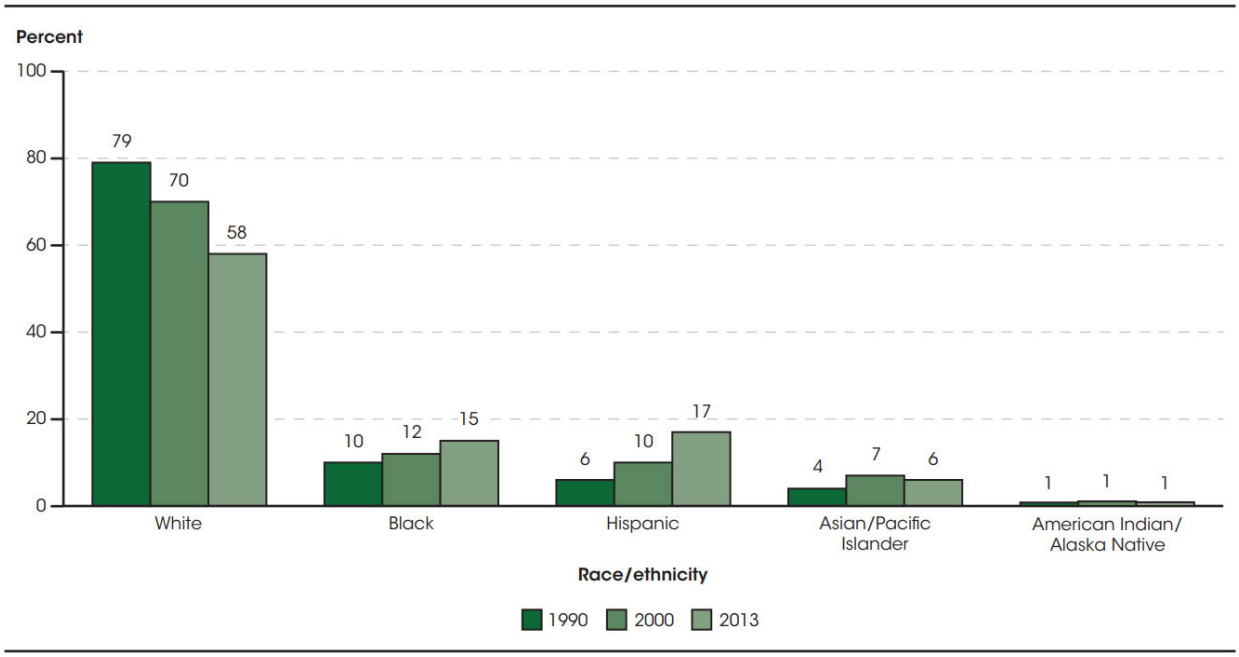

Figure 4. Percentage distribution of total undergraduate student enrollment in degree-granting institutions, by race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1990 through 2013. Reprinted from "Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2016 (NCES 2016-007)," by L. Musu-Gillette, J. Robinson, J. McFarland, A. Kewalramani, A. Zhang, and S. Wilkinson-Flicker, 2016, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch. Reprinted with permission.

Earning an undergraduate degree is a prerequisite for enrolling into a masters or doctorate program. Musu-Gillette et al. (2016) found that as of 2013, the bachelor's degrees conferred by US citizens by race/ethnicity was 69% for White students, 11% for both Black and Hispanic students, and 7% for Asian/Pacific Islander students. Figure 5 below provides more detailed information and conferral results from the 2002 - 2003 academic school year.

Comparing bachelor's degree conferred percentages to doctoral percentages by race/ethnicity in the 2012-2013 academic year, White conferred doctoral rates were 7% higher than bachelor's conferred rates, Asian/Pacific Islander conferred doctoral rates is 5% higher than bachelor's conferred rates, and Black doctoral degree conferred rates were 3% lower than bachelor conferred rates (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016).

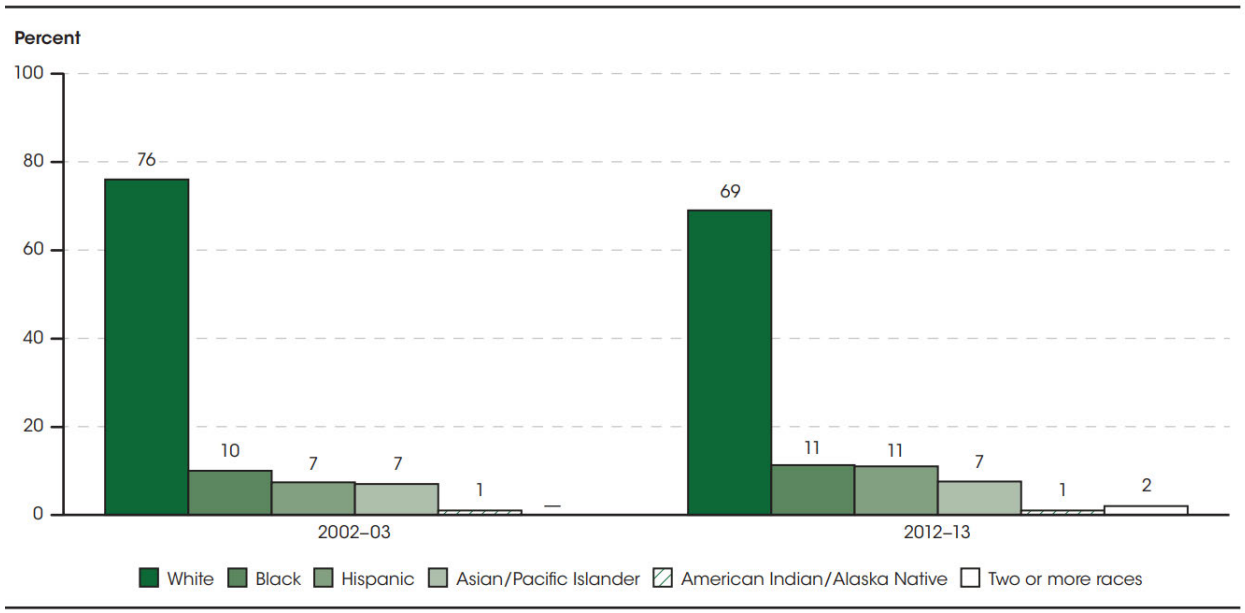

Figure 5. Bachelor's degrees conferred to U.S. citizens by degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity: Academic years 2002–03 and 2012–13. *Note.* Reprinted from "Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2016 (NCES 2016-007)," by L. Musu-Gillette, J. Robinson, J. McFarland, A. Kewalramani, A. Zhang, and S. Wilkinson-Flicker, 2016, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 6 below shows masters and doctoral degree conferred rates between 2002-2003 and 20012-2013.

When reviewing the longitudinal data regarding college enrollment rates by race/ethnicity and doctoral degree completion rates by race/ethnicity, it appears Black and Latino students were enrolling in undergraduate programs at a higher rate, but that trend is not translating to doctoral degree completion. In contrast, White and Asian students were over-represented in 2013 doctoral degree completers as compared to their representation of school-aged US residents as of 2013. While a doctoral degree is a highly sought out requirement for college/university presidents, the pool of potential candidates who were Black or Latino is small in relation to their overall representation in school-aged US citizens.

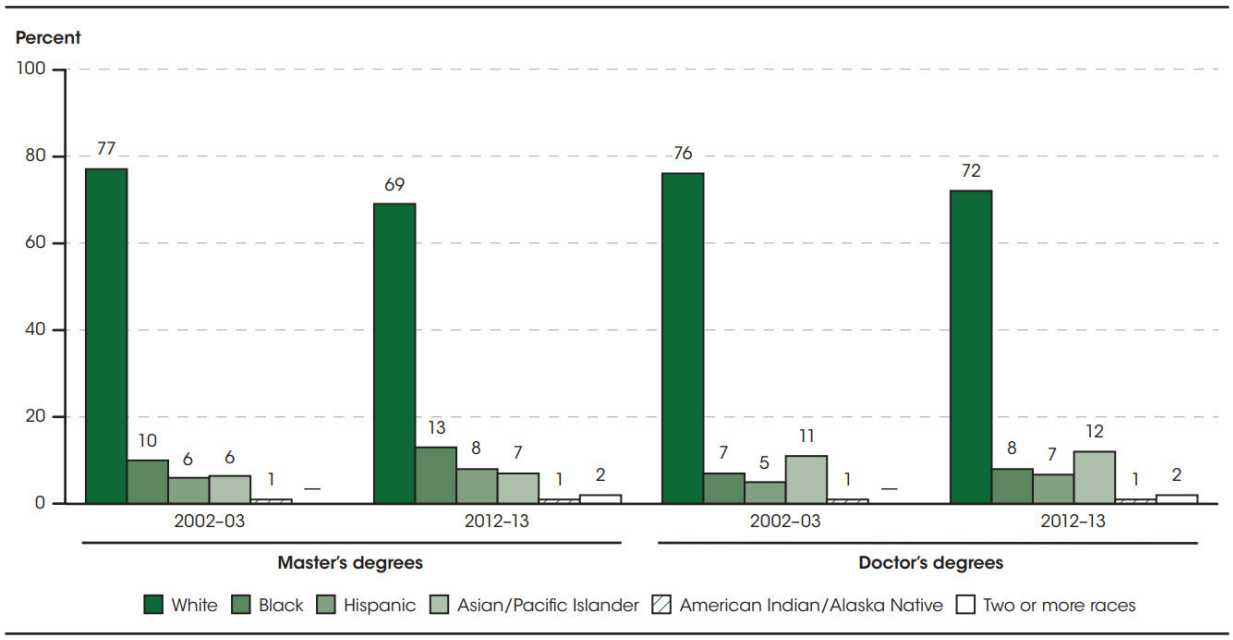

Figure 6. Master's and doctor's degrees conferred to US citizens by degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity: Academic years 2002–03 and 2012–13. *Note.* Reprinted from "Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2016 (NCES 2016-007)," by L. Musu-Gillette, J. Robinson, J. McFarland, A. Kewalramani, A. Zhang, and S. Wilkinson-Flicker, 2016, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch. Reprinted with permission.

Racial Bias and Leadership

The Rosette et al. (2008) study on racial bias focused on the phenomenon of underrepresented minorities evaluated for leadership positions. Given concerns of racial bias in leadership, their conclusions were insightful and explain what is contributing to large disparities between White and Non-White leadership in nearly every industry in the United States. Rosette et al. (2008) set the context for their study by acknowledging that progress has been made concerning racial minorities entering the workforce at entry-level positions; nevertheless, a large chasm remains when considering racial diversity at the ranks of leadership, despite the ostensible

absence of the more visible and blatant racial barriers present before the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

White Leadership Prototype

In their study, Rosette et al. (2008) argued that what has been preventing qualified racial minorities from reaching leadership ranks is what they term *White leadership prototype*. They posited that due to leadership categorization theory and leadership prototypes, White people were viewed far more favorably for leadership positions, solely based on their race. Rosette and associates (2008) explained that the leadership categorization theory is based on categorization. In other words, there were categories that people tend to use to help organize and process information efficiently. Moreover, since each category is distinctly different, this allows individuals to sort items into different categories. The items sorted into respective categories tend to be similar but not identical. Here it is useful to understand prototypes as examples of central tendencies or average trait of items or members in a category (Rosch, 1978; Smith & Medin, 1981). Essentially, all individuals use cataloging to help process information quickly and then use prototypes to represent the central theme of any category.

Lord and Maher (1991) contended that leadership categorization theory helps to explain the phenomenon by which leaders were assessed to be the most effective when they embody particular prototypical characteristics of leadership held by the evaluator. About this, Rosette et al. (2008) argued that over time people develop beliefs of what characteristics and behaviors represent effective or legitimate leadership. As a result, leadership categories were formed around these embedded beliefs and then a leadership prototype emerges from the set of

assessment categories espoused. Those leaders who embody characteristics and behaviors that were most aligned to the evaluators' leader prototype were then assessed most favorably.

Given leadership organization theory, the logical question is: What informs or influences people as a whole to believe that simply being White equates with being a leader? Rosette et al. (2008) argued that what influences the connection of whiteness to leadership is mainly two main factors. First, people with the power to select individuals into leadership positions were consistently exposed to White people in leadership positions. And, second, United States history has influenced the perception of leadership as associated with white individuals. As such, historically in the United States, most individuals in prominent leadership posts in business or politics have been and continue to be White. About this, Rosette et al. (2008) clearly stated that White leaders were overrepresented in comparison to the general demographics of the US population in many of the nation's influential institutions, such as the US House of Representatives, State Governors, US Senators, *Fortune* 100 Boards of Directors, and Chief Executive Officers.

Rosette et al. (2008) outlined the implications of this phenomenon and its impact on Black leaders. More specifically, the more evaluators represent the white prototypical characteristics or behavior, the more favorable evaluators will perceive the leader. In essence, White evaluators will typically rate White leaders more favorably because they were of the same racial group. However, given the "White Leader" prototype phenomenon, all evaluators regardless of their race or ethnicity tend to view White leaders more favorably than Non-White leaders. In fact, Rosette et al. (2008) identified subjects, who regardless of their race, rated White

leaders as more effective leaders than Non-White leaders, even when the performances of both leaders were the same.

Implicit Bias

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity (2015) defined implicit bias as attitudes or stereotypes that affect our actions and decisions unconsciously. The biases, good or bad, were triggered without awareness or intentional control. Also, it is important to distinguish between implicit biases and known biases. Known biases were intentionally hidden by individuals to adhere to political correctness. In contrast, implicit biases occur unconsciously. Moreover, the implicit biases we hold subconsciously or unconsciously impact specific attitudes about other people's race, ethnicity, and age. According to *The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity* (2015), key characteristics of implicit biases included:

- All individuals have implicit biases.
- Implicit and explicit biases are related but are different mental constructs.
- Our stated beliefs do not always align with our implicit biases.
- Implicit biases can be changed through specific training techniques.

In writing about implicit bias within the context of business leadership, Brainard (2017) stated that as of 2017, the demographics of the *Fortune* 500 CEOs were:

- 58% are six feet or taller, while only 14.5% of US men are over six feet tall.
- Just over 6% are women, while 57% of the workforce identifies as female.
- Less than 1% are Black, and none are Black and identify as female.

Concerned with the implications of these data, Brainard (2017) issued a critique by asking: Do we really believe tall, white males are more effective in their leadership than women and

minorities? Or, do our collective agreement regarding what a leader looks like favor this specific subset of people? Isolating for hiring practices, Tilly and Tilly (1998) posited that an employer's hiring approach is essentially a matching process between the organizational characteristics, job requirements, and job candidate's attributes. Rivera (2012) contended that employer hiring is an assessment of an individual's human capital, social capital, and demographic characteristics. As such, Rivera (2012) insisted,

> Despite a surge of research on employers over the past 30 years, our knowledge of hiring remains incomplete. Even after accounting for measures of applicants' human capital, social capital, and demographic traits, models of employer hiring still exhibit significant unexplained variance. (p. 1000)

In terms of evaluating merit, cultural similarities have been shown to play a crucial role in evaluating merit (DiMaggio, 1987; Lamont & Molnár, 2002). According to Weber (1978) shared leisure interest, experience, self-presentation, and other "lifestyle markers" were badges of group membership and serve as criteria for inclusion or exclusion from coveted social opportunities. In a qualitative study conducted by Rivera (2012), 120 administrative professionals who work at top-tier firms and were tasked with interviewing and hiring undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, Rivera's study also included fieldwork at participating firms. Rivera's (2012) study concluded that hiring is more than skills sorting; it is also a process of cultural matching between candidates, evaluators, and firms. Given this finding, cultural similarities and implicit biases can be said to affect candidate evaluations and therefore, their access to opportunities. Moreover, evaluators assessed merit in their image. Consequently,

the evaluators in the study considered culturally similar candidates to be better candidates or a better fit.

The Glass Cliff Theory

Another insightful study examined the *glass cliff theory* (Ryan & Haslam, 2007) from the perspective of share prices of *Fortune* 1000 companies, after a recent hire of a Black Chief Executive Officer. The study is unique in that it studies the external effects on an organization after a Black leader is appointed to head an organization. Cook and Glass (2009) found that the market reaction to Black leaders was positive at first, but became significantly more negative over time. Cook and Glass (2009) suggested that as market actors learned more about the organization that recently appointed a Black executive, the more negative the market actors evaluated share value. Cook and Glass (2009) also looked to see if the market prices would react differently if the Black executive was hired from within or was hired from outside the organization. They found that share prices go up more when Black executives were hired from within, but as reported above, market investors still evaluate share value more negatively over time.

Cook and Glass (2009) believed their results were more consistent with the *glass cliff theory* than cognitive bias theory. The rationale is that cognitive bias would have resulted in a consistent negative perception of share value when a Black executive took the helm, but the researchers found, instead, investors' reactions were more temperamental in that reactions were positive in the beginning, but over time a more negative perception of future prospects of share value persisted. Ryan and Haslam (2007) asserted minority executives were more likely than White executives to be appointed to poorly performing firms. Specifically, as market actors learn

more about the firms that have appointed Black executives, the less favorably they evaluate the company's financial prospects overall. This pattern is consistent, therefore, with the glass cliff theory put forward by Ryan and Haslam (2007) that predicted that minority executives were more likely than White executives to be appointed to poorly performing firms.

Professional Socialization

For any individual taking on a new role or profession, there are explicit and implicit rules and expectations. For people of color, there is an added burden in assuming specific roles, which have long been held by members of the dominant culture. Therefore, understanding how socializing into a new profession functions and how mentorship supports marginalized communities transitioning into roles where they are hugely underrepresented is critical to this study. Equally critical, particularly for Black leaders once in positions of power, is what leadership style do they adopt given their assumed dual role of being a leader and an advocate for marginalized communities.

According to Tierney (1997), the process of becoming a professor required socialization. Tierney (1997) defined socialization in the context of an organization as a set of norms, common assumptions, morals, and rituals that were to be adhered to within an organization. Also, Tierney (1997) described culture as the cumulative activities in the organization and socialization and the method by which people obtain and utilize an understanding of the organization's culture. Tierney (1997) further described culture as constant and able to be interpreted through reason. Thus, an organization's culture teaches its constituents what it means to thrive or fail. As a result, some people adapt and others do not. The key role of any new individual to the organization is to deeply understand the organization's culture and use it to succeed (Tierney, 1997).

As it relates to doctoral students of color, Gardner (2008) argued that socialization means passing on norms and values that have historically not served the best interest of students of color. In particular, Gardner noted that predominantly White institutions have moved slowly toward adjusting the socializing process for students of color—in a culturally responsive manner. According to Weidman, Twale, and Stein (2001), graduate and professional students were socialized into their respective professions in four stages: anticipatory, formal, informal, and personal:

1) *Anticipatory:* the process of acquiring a new role. The new students become aware of the behavior, attitudinal, and congestive expectations for the role they plan to take on. Also, students focus on understanding their roles, procedures, and rules that must be followed at the discretion of faculty and administrators.
2) *Formal:* the process of formally being inducted into a new role. Students begin to observe older students' habits and learn about role expectations and their associated implications. Moreover, students are more aware of task issues, faculty and student interactions become more integrated, and they acquire a more in-depth understanding of course material and the university environment.
3) *Informal:* the process of learning the informal expectations that come with a new role**.** Students begin to learn the informal expectations associated with their desired role. Students learn of these informal rules through individuals who are already in their desired role through behavioral clues, and observed acceptable behavior.
4) *Personal:* the process of taking on the new identity that comes with the new role. The individual has mastered the normative elements of the role while adding their

personal touch and perspective. The new professional begin to specialize in their craft and seeks to advance along with a set of measures that are generally accepted as standards in the role.

These stages of socialization provide a blueprint for deconstructing the socialization process into a new role or profession. Therefore, understanding the process provides an opportunity to adjust or fix impediments that prevent people of color from ascending to professions in higher education, such as college presidents. The research literature suggested that socialization was the bridge used to on-board individuals to a new culture. Given the significance of the socialization process, effective mentors and mentorship can effectively help usher individuals across the bridge.

The Power of Mentorship

The power of mentorship is such that without committed mentors to guide the way, movement into leadership positions is practically impossible. Roberts (2000) defined mentoring as "a formalized process whereby a more knowledgeable and experienced person actuates a supportive role of overseeing and encouraging reflection and learning within a less experienced and knowledgeable person, to facilitate that person's career and personal development" (p. 162). Similarly, Rhodes (2005) described mentorship as a relationship between an experienced person —the mentor, and the less experienced person—the protégé. Hunt and Michael (1983) posited that mentorship is not a new concept.

Researchers argued that wise people have always offered support to the young. As an example, Hunt and Michael (1983) retold an old Greek myth whereby in ancient Greece, Odysseus entrusted Mentor with coaching, counseling, and tutoring his son, Telemachus

(Hamilton, 1942). Jennings (1971) found that most corporate presidents had mentors who were critically significant to their ascent to the presidency. Orth and Jacobs (1971) argued that a mentor is necessary for businessmen to reach the pinnacle of their careers and the role of "mentor" is viewed as a prestigious role by older successful businessmen. Also, they noted that businesswomen have a lack of mentors who are women and few successful businessmen take on the role of mentoring women.

According to Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978), the most important factor in young men's psychosocial development is mentorship. For women, mentorship is equally important for career success (Hennig & Jardim, 1977). Also, Roche (1979) stated that mentors were paramount for women without family connections to make it to top management positions. Furthermore, women who reached top-level management positions had at least one mentor (Phillips, 1977), although women (and less so for individuals of color) tend to have fewer options for mentorship at their disposal.

The concept of protégé has often been employed to discuss mentorship. Hunt and Michael (1983) asserted that many terms can describe the dyadic relationship with a distinct power dynamic such as teacher/student; master/apprentice; sponsor/token; and mentor/protégé. Also, many roles such as coaches, gurus, bosses, and relatives take on characteristics similar to that of a mentor/protégé. Hunt and Michael (1983) suggested there is a difference between advisor/support roles that were available to protégés. The degree of intensity, need for power, and professional paternalism provides distinguishing factors in defining the dyadic relationship.

A useful concept is that of Shapiro, Haseltine, and Rowe (1978), who posited a continuum of advisory/support relationships that facilitate access to executive leadership or

power for mentees in traditionally male professions. They describe four points on the mentorship continuum from the least to the most intense type of mentoring relationship:

1. *Peers*: although they cannot be mentors to each other they can provide some guidance and support,
2. *Guides***:** provide an overall understanding of a system and can point out potential pitfalls,
3. *Sponsors***:** have less organizational power than mentors in promoting their protégé's careers but are still influential, and,
4. *Mentors***:** have the most influence in guiding the careers of protégés and the mentor/protégé relationship is the most intense and resembles a paternalistic relationship.

In the context of higher education, Sams et al. (2016) found that post-secondary institutions that support undergraduate mentorship programs, where faculty mentor students as opposed to a graduate student mentoring an undergraduate student, produce a competitive advantage for the mentee. This study confirmed that mentees felt that their mentorship experience was a value-add to their undergraduate experience. Also, the study revealed engaging students in mentorship programs is an effective pedagogical tool for helping shape students' perception of their ability to matriculate through top tier graduate programs and eventually successfully enter their professional careers.

Within the context of the graduate program, Felder, Stevenson, and Gasman (2014) delved into the intersection of race and the socialization of Black doctoral students. The study assessed degree completers' beliefs on how faculty members supported their doctoral experience.

Felder, Stevenson, and Gasman (2014) found that there is evidence that same-race mentoring is a value-add for Black students but also, most students found faculty members from all racial-ethnic backgrounds supportive when the faculty members were attentive to racial identity, research interests, progress towards degree completion.

As all this relates to grooming future college presidents, Freeman and Gasman (2014) asserted that becoming an effective college president is not only based on an individual's academic training and experience. Developing the skills and characteristics to be an effective president does not happen solely through a person's academic training and experiences. Mentorship emerges as an important factor in leadership development of college presidents and this is particularly evident for Black college presidents (Freeman & Gasman, 2014; Holmes, 2004). Hence, mentorship plays an important role at every stage of one academic formation and in helping individuals progress in their profession of choice. However, again, mentorship becomes even more critical for Black aspiring leaders, in that mentors can act as advocates and a safety net for those navigating a system that was not built with their best interest in mind.

Black Leadership Typology

In the context of Black leadership, researchers have described topologies to help explain the leadership styles of Black leaders. Often the leadership styles were shaped by Black leaders navigating a system designed to support institutional racism. Two prominent researchers have studied Black leadership styles. Myrdal's (1944) landmark study on the Black experience in the 1940s presented the idea of Black leaders choosing between two types of Black leadership, *accommodation* and *protest*.

Accommodating Black Leader

Myrdal (1944) described accommodation leadership as:

> Accommodation is undoubtedly stronger than protest, particularly in the South where the structure of caste is most pervasive and unyielding. In a sense, accommodation is historically the "natural" or the "normal" behavior of Negroes and, even at present, the most "realistic" one. But it is practically never wholehearted in any American Negro, however well-adjusted to his situation he seems to be. (Kindle location 4474)

Myrdal (1944) further described the accommodating Black leader as someone who acts as a translator between Black and White societies, in that the Black leader who is accommodating is used by White people to maintain the social caste system that places Black people at the lower rung of the caste system, in exchange for prestige and adulation from White people. Moreover, Myrdal (1944) explained the praxis of accommodation as:

> The whites have increasingly to resort to leaders in the Negro group. They have, therefore, an interest in helping those leaders obtain as much prestige and influence in the Negro community as possible—as long as they cooperate with the whites faithfully. On the other side of the caste gulf, the Negroes need persons to establish contact with influential people in the white group. They need Negro leaders who can talk to, and get things from, the whites. The Negroes in the South are dependent upon the whites not only for a share in the public services, but individually for small favors and personal protection in a social order determined nearly exclusively by the whites, usually in an arbitrary fashion. (Kindle location 4492)

Protesting Black Leader

The accommodating Black leader is positioned as a broker between Black and White people who maintain a caste system in exchange for personal benefits or marginal benefits for the marginalized group. In contrast, the protesting Black leader is described as Black leaders who were motivated by rebellion and overtly disrupting oppression. Myrdal (1944) couched this idea by referencing slave revolts to describe protesting Black leaders as:

> The leaders of the numerous local slave insurrections—Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, and many others, known and unknown— represented early types of pure protest leaders, "race men" in the modern popular Negro terminology. They rose against overwhelming odds and succumbed with their followers. (Kindle location 4492)

The dynamic between the Black leadership styles of accommodation and protest creates a space for disagreement as to what approach is the best for furthering progress for Black people in America. Essentially, the question here is: should change be delivered from within in an oppressive system or come from revolution? About this, Myrdal (1944) wrote:

> The chief short-range result of the persistent series of slave rebellions or attempts at rebellion was an ever closer regimentation of free and slave Negroes. These race martyrs can be said to have laid the foundations, not only for the tradition of Negro protest, but also—because of their regular and conspicuous failure—for the "realistic" theory of race relations. This theory is favored by Southern white liberals and is accepted by the great majority of accommodating Southern Negro leaders; it holds that everything which stirs up the resistance of the whites will deteriorate the Negroes' status, and that reforms must

be pushed quietly and in such ways that the whites hardly notice them before they are accomplished facts comfortably sunk into a new status quo. (Kindle location 4816)

Four Categories of Black Leadership

Robert Smith and Ronald Walters's *African-American Leadership* (1999) has captured a collection of Black Leadership identities that were posited by several researchers from the past. For example, in studying race relations in New Orleans, Thompson (1963) identified four categories of Black leadership: race diplomats, liberals, race men, and Uncle Toms:

- *Race diplomats*: hold the middle ground between race men and Uncle Toms. They focus on incremental change,
- *Liberals*: reject the caste system, but rely on morality and appeal to the national government,
- *Race men*: reject the caste system and engage in overt forms of nonviolent protest, and
- *Uncle Toms*: accept the caste system.

Other examples include the work of Matthews and Protho (1966), who studied four communities in the south. They identified three types of Black leaders: militants, moderates, and traditionalists:

- *Militants*: support immediate abolishment of the caste system through action and mass protest,
- *Moderates*: support "welfare goals" and gradual change through traditional political means, and
- *Traditionalists*: support change within the caste system.

Similarly, Ladd (1966) identified three Black leadership styles, when studying the communities of Greenville, South Carolina and Winston-Salem, North Carolina. These included: (a) moderate, (b) militants, and (c) conservatives:

- *Moderates*: seek a balance between "status" and "welfare" goals,
- *Militants*: support mass protest to end the caste system, and
- *Conservatives*: derive access and acceptability from Whites.

The categories of Black leadership have strong similarities and wax and wane between conservative ideologies that focus on maintaining the status quo and militant ideologies that call for dismantling of the systems of oppression through immediate action. Although each Black leader will adopt his or her style based on their unique lived experience and not everyone fits safely in one neat category, the research on Black leadership identity provides a framework for understanding the tensions of Black leadership in the context of American society. Also, the frameworks for Black leadership identities were largely based on Black leaders involved in social justice change. As a result, in evaluating Black leaders against the described frameworks, individuals should consider the environments that have shaped the cultural and political sensibilities of Black leaders.

Black Women as Leaders

As of 2017, U.S. Census Bureau (2018) indicated 7% of the US population was Black women. According to Gagliardi et al. (2017), approximately 3% of college presidents were Black women. Moreover, according to Catalyst (2017), Black women made up 1% of executive/senior-level officials and managers at S&P 500 companies. In comparison, White women accounted for 38% of the US population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Despite being underrepresented in a

leadership position, White women represented 25% of college presidents (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Also, 22% of executive/senior-level officials and managers at S&P 500 companies (Catalyst, 2017). This implies a higher degree of representation than afforded Black women.

Hence, Black women were severely underrepresented in leadership positions in higher education and the private sector. Scholars suggest that what could explain the disproportionality of Black women in leadership positions is described as the "double jeopardy" phenomenon. Berdahl and Moore (2006) described double jeopardy as encountering racism and sexism that is based on their gender and racial identities. Thus, the effects have a cumulative discriminatory effect on Black women. In parallel, Black women are positioned at the intersection of racial and gender discrimination which is often described as intersectionality.

Grzanka (2018) posited intersectionality as the overlapping of multiple marginalized identities. Which is to say, the experience of Black women cannot be compared to that of White women or Black men, since their experience is couched in both gender and racial discrimination. In his work, Lomotey (2019) argued for more research on Black women leaders given how little this group has been researched and the importance of understanding their unique intersecting identities to their leadership perspectives and practices Moreover, Lomotey (2019) asserted that researchers can play a significant role in eradicating oppression, by shedding light on varies forms of oppression and the benefits Black women leaders provide to the institutions they serve.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is a widely used and effective theoretical framework for evaluating matters of race and racism (Delgado & Stefanicic, 2001). The underpinning of my research involves subjects navigating a society that is based on racism. Therefore, the laws, cultural

norms, institutions, are inherently racist by design either explicitly or implicitly. Thus, CRT provides a lens for evaluating and dismantling racism. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), lawyers, activists, and legal scholars in the mid-1970s became unsatisfied with the advances made from the 1960s civil rights movement. Thus, a small group of scholars, including Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, argued that new theories and approaches were needed to address the progress made from the civil rights era and, in some cases, to prevent the rolling back of desegregation policies that were established to address civil rights issues. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) described the small group of activists, lawyers, and legal scholars who met in Madison, Wisconsin in the summer of 1989 to outline their platform and define their central issues. The years following the first conference included many more meetings that were private and public. Also, the scholars who joined over the years grew to include a wide variety of perspectives and disciplines.

The forebears of CRT come then from many different backgrounds and disciplines. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) considered the late Derrick Bell, previously a visiting professor of law at New York University, to be the grandfather of the movement. Other leaders such as Alan Freeman, wrote seminal articles to advance CRT, including a piece that analyzed how the US Supreme Court's views on race, even when considered to be liberal, legitimized racism. Other major figures in the CRT camp include Mari Matsuda, Patricia Williams, Angela Harris, Charles Lawrence, and Kimberlé Crenshaw, all of whom are major contributors to this intellectual movement. Moreover, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) reported Latino contributors to CRT included Margaret Montoya, Juan Perea, Francisco Valdes, Richard Delgado, and Kevin

Johnson. Also, prominent Asian scholars of CRT are Mari Matsuda, Neil Gotanda, and Eric Yamamoto.

Contrary to traditional civil rights, which supports incrementalism or slow progress, CRT critiques the foundation of the liberal order that includes equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Furthermore, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) stated the CRT movement was composed of activists and scholars who focus on studying and transforming the oppressive relationships generated by race, racism, and power. Critical race theory in effect is tied to activism in that it does not only try to understand social constructs or how society organizes itself against racial lines and hierarchies but also seeks to transform society for dismantling structures and systems that marginalize people based on race.

According to Hartlep (2009), there are five major tenets generally associated with CRT within the field, including how CRT is employed within education. These tenets are described as follows.

The first tenet of CRT defines racism as ordinary: the dominant culture promotes and advocates for "color-blindness" and "meritocracy" (Hartlep, 2009). The ideas of "color-blindness" and "meritocracy" are integrated and work to marginalize mostly people of color. The main function of "color-blindness" and "meritocracy" is to allow Whites to not feel responsible for the hardships people of color experience daily and, thus, it assists Whites in maintaining power and privilege within society. Color-blindness legitimizes racism's need for an "other" so that racism can spread and permeate the entire society. The notion of color-blindness tries to make the case that racism and white supremacy do not exist and is simply a figure of the

imagination to those who are oppressed. Furthermore, the idea of meritocracy enables the powerful and privileged to feel "good" and have a clear conscience, in that the plight of "others" is earned due to their individual deficit behavior and not the cause of structures or policies created to marginalize the oppressed. Also, given that the powerful maintain wealth and power in society, they only seek to relinquish power when they have nothing to lose and, in doing so, receive praise or congratulations for their actions, which generally do little to transform the hegemonic structures of society that exploit, disempower, and oppress subordinate populations.

The second tenet of CRT is interested in convergence theory (Bell, 1980) noted that the interests of Whites will always be a critical factor in Whites supporting any form of racial justice or progress associated with minoritized populations. Simply put, policies or laws that are passed by the status quo (Whites) to address social justice will always retain the best interests of Whites. Therefore, CRT can be used to examine policies that on paper proclaim to address racism or social justice, but serve the best interest of the status quo (Whites).

The third tenet of CRT is an understanding of "race" as socially constructed to disadvantage people of color. A few examples that support this notion include the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857*)* US Supreme Court case that decided that "Negroes," free or enslaved were not US citizens; or the passing of the *Social Security Act* of 1935 which ushered in what we know as Social Security in the U.S. (At the time it was designed to prevent minorities from receiving Social Security and joining unions). More specifically, the *Social Security Act* of 1935 prevented agricultural workers and domestic servants, who were predominantly Black, Latino, and Asian, from receiving assistance. Also, through the *National Housing Act* of 1934, US housing programs were created to increase homeownership. The implementation of the the *National*

Housing Act of 1934 was designed to further drive segregation that benefited White, middle-class, lower-middle class families and not African-Americans and people of color (Rothstein, 2017). The effects of "redlining" prevented African-Americans from accessing affordable mortgages created by the *National Housing Act* of 1934 (Rothstein, 2017).

The fourth tenet of CRT is storytelling, which is highlighted as a powerful tool for unlearning those hegemonic beliefs that are commonsensically seen as true (Hartlep, 2009). The idea of "storytelling" with "counter-storytelling" can be used to examine perceived "truths." As an example, Hartlep (2009) noted that schooling is widely believed to be a neutral space and everyone is treated fairly. However, the "counter-story" by reviewing school data indicated the widening of the racial "achievement gap"—which is used in the mainstream to refer to the difference between the academic achievement of students of color and Whites—as well as the school's curriculum that continues to be informed by white middle-class values. Thus, CRT's counter-storytelling is a critical tool for naming, evaluating and challenging hegemonic narratives created and perpetuated by the mainstream culture.

The fifth tenet of CRT asserts that Whites have benefited from civil rights legislation (Hartlep, 2009). As an example, Taylor, Gillborn, and Ladson-Billings (2009) argued that the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision actually benefited Whites, in that, years after the US Supreme court decision, de jure segregation was replaced with de facto segregation as Whites fled desegregated schools to so-called neighborhood schools that replicated the segregationist environment. In fact, even today, White children seldom attend schools where they are the minority. Thus, federal policy to integrate schools and dismantle a two-tier education system actually reinforced the very issue it set out to resolve. Moreover, Delgado (2009)

explained that although affirmative action was designed to address years of higher education policies that prevented people of color from attending colleges and universities, it ultimately, benefited White women far more than people of color.

Transformative Leadership

The question of leadership was central to this study. For this reason, a theory of transformative leadership, which informs this study, is particularly useful in providing an analysis of insights provided by Black college presidents participating in this study, regarding their efforts to engage issues of equity and diversity within the context of their university leadership practice. In her work, Shields (2010) looked at issues related to transformative leadership. In defining this construct, Shields (2010) noted that many people use the terminology "transformational" and "transformative" leadership interchangeably when in fact there is an important and distinct underlying difference.

Burns (1978), a seminal scholar in the study of leadership explains the difference between transformational and transformative in that transforming leadership occurs when the leader exploits the needs of a potential follower by satisfying higher needs within the follower. Burns (1978) added that transformational leadership is more occupied with the end-values of liberty, justice, and equality. In the context of education, Shields (2010) contended that transformative leadership is the more promising approach for meeting the academic and social justice needs of a complex, diverse, and broken education system. In her work, Shields described in detail seven tenets of transformative leadership that undergird the meaning of transformative leadership. These are described as follows.

Acknowledging Power and Privilege

Shields (2011) explained that often the study of leadership does not start with an understanding of power and the closely tied benefits of privilege that come with power. However, acknowledging power as a finite resource perpetuates practices that maintain the privilege of groups who traditionally held positions of influence and have had the ability to create policies for all of society. Recognizing that some groups are included in the decision making of an institution and other groups are excluded or marginalized is key to promoting individual and institutional change.

A Defined Purpose

Transformative leadership emphasizes the need for educational organizations to articulate and attain a purpose the addresses equity and excellence, public and private good, and individual and collective advancement. Furthermore, to be an effective transformative leader, it is critical that leaders have a clear sense of this purpose related to their endeavors and that they engage with others to ensure that the purpose is shared (Shields, 2011). In the context of education, Shields (2011) argued that the critical difference between transformative leadership and other leadership theories is that transformative leadership perceives equity and societal change as equal or more important than individual goals specific to the organization.

Deconstruct and Reconstruct New Knowledge

Shields (2011) asserted that paramount to a transformative leader is to intervene and deconstruct inappropriate attitudes and assumptions, including commonsense beliefs that have been held unchallenged for years. In addition, the transformative leader plays an integral role in

deep and equitable societal transformation, by reconstructing beliefs and views of marginalized communities as being knowledgeable, capable of excellence, and qualified for participation in decision making in all aspects of the organization.

Critique and Offer Solutions

To critique is an essential tool for deconstructing biased beliefs largely constructed by the dominant culture. Transformational leaders use critique to disrupt oppressive notions that are commonly held about racialized groups. In addition, transformative leaders work to develop solutions within an organization or system that not only critique harmful and inaccurate beliefs of marginalized communities but also drives toward collective action within their organization and society to address inequities (Shields, 2011).

Deep and Equitable Change

Shields (2011), in the context of education, argued that education reformers routinely focus on the latest teaching or curriculum fads, which has led to minor gains in improving educational outcomes for students from underserved communities. Instead, she noted that transformative leaders were not distracted by these fads and were resolute in organizing their resources, strategies, and plans toward deep societal change, which can potentially lead to liberation, democracy, equity, and social justice.

Working Toward Transformation

Shields (2011) confirmed Paulo Freire's (1970) notion that education is not the ultimate lever for social transformation, but without it, transformation cannot occur. She added that the common academic goals and standards that focus on standardized tests and academic performance were far removed from such goals as liberation, social justice, equity, and

democracy. Therefore, transformative leaders in education must use education to actualize societal change. This requires the system of education to focus intently on establishing policies, practices, and relationships that support and reinforce equity, liberation, and social justice. Moreover, the mode by which to achieve this is for transformative leaders in education to base their actions on moral views that are dialectic, rather than on technical strategies.

Moral Courage and Action

Shields (2011) drew on Weiner's (2003) work to describe the dilemmas in which transformative leaders find themselves when one foot is caught in the dominant culture with the other foot is pushing against the same dominate structure. Accordingly, this dilemma constitutes a mandate for transformative leaders to be courageous and not lose sight of what it means to be a transformative leader in education so that the education system can be transformed in ways that can deliver policies and practices that support emancipatory processes of empowerment, liberation, social justice, equity, and democracy.

Summary

The focus of Chapter 2 was to set the context in which Black college presidents and those interested in becoming a college president are most likely situated in the American higher education space. By starting out with the historical look to the formation and expansion of higher education institutions in America, that literature served as a backdrop for layering onto the phenomenon that has come to shape our current understanding of higher education. The literature suggested that higher education institutions have always sought to serve as an important institution force in the social and economic fabric of America. As such, America has a tumultuous history of marginalizing Black citizens, including within institutions of higher

education. Furthermore, the role of college presidents has changed over time and they have come to function more as executives of a large company rather than as a spiritual leader.

In addition, the racial and gender mix of students has become more diverse in current times, while the racial and gender identities of contemporary college presidents have continued to be overwhelmingly white males. As we look to the pool of future college presidents, the literature highlighted that the current pool is shallow, with respect to qualified Black candidates because of the leaky pipeline to doctoral completion. Black candidates who do obtain a doctoral degree and aspire to become a college president are met with a series of racial biases that significantly affect their chances of becoming a college president.

Yet, despite the many obstacles that are at the foot of aspiring Black leaders on their journey to become higher education executives, some do actually become college presidents. Thus, evaluating the various approaches in which Black leadership is employed by Black leaders in influential positions further sets the context to better understand the experience of Black college presidents. Also, a mentorship emerges as a critical component in assisting Black leaders in ascending to the president's office. Captured early in Chapter 2 was the true story of William Trent Johnson, who was a Black man who ascended from a sharecropper to college president in the late 1800s. His story served as an actual account of a former Black college president who (a) navigated many of the manufactured challenges Black people face, and (b) overcame the odds in a society rooted in racism and hypocrisy.

Finally, the chapter closed by addressing two conceptual lenses that will be used to analyze findings related to the central research questions. Transformative leadership helps explain what it means to be a leader who drives change beyond profits and share prices, in order

to affect societal change with a focus on morality, equity, and social justice. The other theoretical framework accounted for the well-studied CRT that explains how racism is used and perpetuated in America to advantage White people at the expense of Black people. Critical race theory helps explain the "why" behind racism and the methods used by the dominant group to preserve white privilege within American life. Chapter 3 reviews the methodology that was utilized to engage research participants, in an effort to address the research questions that inform this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The experiences of Black college/ university presidents in the U.S. are largely undertheorized. This study sought to help fill this gap by engaging the stories and counterstories of Black men and women who have served or are serving as college presidents. This chapter will discuss the methodology I have employed for addressing the research questions that guided this study. Given the subjects of my study, utilizing a qualitative research approach yielded rich data sourced from participants who are the most informed to speak to their experience as Black college/university presidents. Gaining access to college/university presidents can be difficult given schedules and priorities, this narrative study that focused on their life experience has provided a rare and unique opportunity to hear from a very small sub-group of individuals who are widely underrepresented in their field and come from historically marginalized communities. An important aim of this study is to contribute to the field and spark ideas for fellow researchers who seek to utilize their research in the quest for social justice, within education and the larger society.

Research Questions

The research questions that drove this exploration included:

1. How has the lived experiences of Black college presidents shaped their professional goals and trajectories?,
2. What structural and institutional practices in higher education do Black college presidents identify as barriers to increasing racial/ethnic diversity in higher education administration? and,

3. What institutional changes do Black college presidents identify as needed, in order to increase opportunities for Black administrators who aspire to this top college leadership position in the future?

Qualitative Research

Gay et al. (2014) defined the objective of qualitative research as a means to share an understanding of a social setting or activity from the perspective of the research participants. They posited four key characteristics of qualitative research:

1. Research data is directly gathered from the research subject(s). Also, qualitative researchers immerse themselves in the subjects' natural settings to ensure they are able to gather environmental and person-to-person interaction context related to the study,
2. Qualitative researchers analyze qualitative data inductively.
3. Qualitative research uses the data gathered to find themes, patterns, and relations among the data, and
4. In addition, the researcher clearly states any personal biases that are materially related to the study.

Moreover, Creswell (2013) eloquently explained, qualitative research as:

> Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/ theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places understudy, and data analysis

> that is both inductive and deductive and that establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change. (p. 44)

Further, Creswell and Poth (2018) pointed to five approaches for conducting qualitative research. These approaches include (a) narrative research, (b) phenomenological research, (c) grounded theory research, (d) ethnographic research, and (e) case study research. Given that my research focused on uncovering the stories and counterstories of the lived experiences of current or former Black college/university presidents, the critical narrative research approach for this study was fully in sync with the Creswell and Poth (2018) framework as noted above; the study can also be correctly defined as an exploration of the life of participants during their ascendency and tenure as college/university presidents.

Narrative Research

According to Godsil and Goodale (2013), narratives played an important role in racial healing. Of this, they stated, "Our challenge is both to change the dominant cultural narratives that trigger these behaviors and simultaneously to adopt internal narratives that strengthen resilience and openness to the capacity for change" (p. 21). With this in mind, this serves as a platform for participants from marginalized groups to tell their stories and shape the possibility of a future where individuals like them will have great social agency and empowerment. This echoed the Gay et al. (2014) definition of narrative research as the study of understanding how various people experience the world.

With respect to implementing narrative research, this involves capturing individuals' lived experience directly from them, by creating a space for individuals to tell their personal stories, unencumbered. Gay et al. (2014) offered seven factors that are key to conducting narrative research:

1. Focus on the individual's experience,
2. Be mindful of the sequence of life events shared by the individual,
3. Utilize interviews to construct life stories shared by subjects,
4. Use restorying to bring coherence to stories shared by subjects that may not have been shared in chronological order,
5. Provide context and a sense of place in the story,
6. Work in collaboration with the subject to reach a final text, and
7. Strive to unearth a central question: And then what happened?"

They also posited that narrative research has many forms, which depend on: (a) who is the author, (b) the scope of the narrative, (c) who provides the story, (d) what conceptual framework is used for the study, and (e) how the combination of these elements are included and employed within the study.

Given the building blocks of narrative research, I have decided to employ the restorying variation of narrative research. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined restorying as the process of analyzing the subjects' stories and organizing the stories into a framework. This restorying approach was the most effective approach given my need to understand participants' lived experiences on a deeper level and to be able to organize that information in a way that supported the construction of a useful framework that can be used to analyze the themes that emerged

across the stories. I believe this process best positioned me in the course of this study to more effectively address my research questions while remaining true to the voices and stories of the participants.

Research Design

In their description of critical narrative research design, Gay et al. (2014) posited that restorying incorporates three distinct design principles:

1. The researcher records the audio of the interview and then transcribes the audio recording.
2. The researcher then attempts to identify any key themes that appear from the transcribed recordings
3. The researcher organizes the story into chronological order while attending to setting, characters, actions, problems, and solutions.

Once I have addressed these principles, the final step is to collaborate with participants to ensure the story captured accurately represents the personal experience they shared during their narrative session. By collaborating with participants, the trustworthiness of the study is preserved by the participants. These principles were followed during the process of collecting and coding the data for this study.

Participants Criteria

The participants were six Black college presidents who identified as Black. To identify subjects, I utilized my personal and professional network. I employed a set of criteria to help select interview candidates and to obtain a good sample of Black college/university presidents in the higher education system. The criterion used included:

1. Participants who identify racially as Black,
2. The participant was or at the time of the study is a college president of an institution where Black students are not the majority, and
3. Participants were or at the time of the study is a college president of a four-year institution.

Toward this end, I attempted to curate a set of subjects that mirror the gender representation of men and women surveying as college presidents who identify as Black. This additional step mirrored stratified sampling. Gay et al. (2014) defined stratified sampling as a method for guaranteeing the desired representation of specific subgroups within a sample. The process includes strategically selecting subjects that will support comparing data from different subgroups within a specific population (p. 137). Gagliardi et al. (2017) indicated in their study, which does not exclude minority-serving institutions, that of the Black college presidents, 66% are men and 34% are women. I was successful in finding participants for this study that mirrored this gender proportion. My attempt yielded participants that were 33% Black women and 67% Black men. Given the nature of the study and the profile of the participants, I believed trust was paramount; therefore, I relied on individuals in my network who can vouch for my credibility and trustworthiness to help secure participants. In addition, the participant stories and work location remained anonymous. Pseudonyms were employed for participants and their institutions, which I then utilized in presenting their stories and including their voices in the discussion of findings, conclusions, and implications.

Narrative Site

I conducted the narrative session in person at a site selected by the participant that is convenient and conducive to audio-recording. If necessary, the narrative session was conducted over the phone, which also permitted the audio recording of the session.

Data Collection

A key component of the study was collecting the stories of current or former Black college/university presidents. I selected a restorying narrative approach to capture their lived experiences. Therefore, collecting the data involved the audio recording of the participants as they recollected key moments in their lives that they believe contributed to their making it to the college/university president ranks. I conducted narrative sessions with six participants for approximately 90 minutes. Finally, to provide some structure to the narrative process, I used prompts that helped to ensure that those issues important to addressing the research questions were engaged (discussed more below). I contacted potential participants by email upon approval of IRB to begin the sharing of invitations and scheduling of narrative sessions. The narrative sessions were audio-recorded and then transcribed. The audio-recordings and transcriptions were stored in a password-protected computer. I used field notes to capture the context of the setting or other significant features when interviewing candidates along with discussion notes from each narrative session. In the cases where I was unable to meet with the participant in-person, at the beginning of the session I asked the participant to say a few words about the personal setting in which the narrative session was being conducted.

Narrative Prompts

I designed the sample prompts to be open-ended when necessary to assist participants in recollecting past experiences or in clarifying statements made. I avoided using terms like “do you remember”. Tagg (1995) found that when interviewees are asked to remember past invents many impediments to memory can become an issue. Seidman (2013) recommended that the researcher focuses on assisting the participant in reconstructing their past experience, when necessary. Seidman (2013) defined reconstruction as part memory recall and part of what is important about past events for the study. I used the following narrative prompts to encourage participants to share their lived experiences. The choice of prompts were determined by the direction that participants took or did not take with their stories. The following are examples of prompts used:

1. Can you tell me about your professional and personal background?
2. How did your childhood experiences serve as a catalyst for choosing a career in education?
3. What key elements of your upbringing contributed to you becoming a college president?
4. In your pursuit to become a college president, what major barriers did you have to overcome?
5. Given your experience becoming a college president and serving as a college president, what needs to change for Black college presidents not to be underrepresented in the profession? and

6. What do you think Black individuals who want to ascend to a college presidency need to know?

The goal of the prompts was simply to elicit storytelling without overly prescribing questions. Also, the prompts guided participants toward surfacing useful data that assisted in addressing the research questions for this study.

Coding Narratives

Once the data was transcribed, I identified key themes that moved across the narratives, with particular attention being paid to issues that link with concerns associated with transformative leadership and CRT. The narratives or stories were organized into chronological order, attending to issues related to setting, characters, actions, problems, and solutions. Once the emergent themes were identified, these were then analyzed and discussed in Chapter 5.

Potential Challenges

Gay et al. (2014) identified two major challenges with narrative research. The challenges include (a) trust and (b) developing a mutual and co-constructed relationship between the researcher and subjects. The relationship should be built on equality, respectfulness, and care. As the researcher, I was aware of these challenges and developed systems to help navigate them successfully. In addition, given the profile of the subjects, I imagined they had to be careful about what elements of their personal life they shared and mindful of making any controversial sweeping arguments that could impact not just on them personally, but also the institutions they served.

Limitations

My study focused on one particular sub-group of college/university presidents in the United States. Thus, other sub-groups with similar under-representation among college/university ranks were not included in the study. In addition, faculty and administrative ranks are not ethnically/racially diverse, but my study did not deeply investigate that phenomenon. Also, given the high-profile status of college/university presidents, they were not able to divulge great details about their life experiences, in particular, their current role or place of employment. Therefore, there was a potential that the participants were not as forthright as they would have liked to be, because of possible concerns with job security and the wellbeing of their constituents.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Voices of Black College Presidents: The Findings

The purpose of the critical narrative study was to understand the experiences of Black college presidents and seek to understand how they have navigated a biased system in higher education to ascend to a president/chancellor role. Another purpose had been to elevate their lived experiences and perspectives to help inform future policies and best practices designed to address the underrepresentation of Blacks in executive leadership positions in higher education. Six former or current college/university presidents who identify as Blacks participated in the study. The results from the inquiry are organized in this chapter by participants and common themes, including personal stories, the role of college presidents, representation of Blacks in leadership positions, advice for pursuing a career as a college president, leaky pipeline towards doctoral degree completion, white leadership prototype, glass cliff, leadership style, mentorship, and Black women leadership.

Participant Narratives

To help provide additional context regarding each participant, Table 1 provides demographic data for each participant, in addition to the current post held, the number of years of professional experience, and demographic data of each institution led by respective participants. Also, a pseudonym was used for each participant to protect their identity. Similarly, steps were taken to not include identifiable information for each participant.

Table 1
Participants Profiles

Name/ No. of president/ chancellor positions	Gender Identity	Ethnic/ Race Identity	Current status of leadership	Years of service as a President/ Chancellor	Top two most common student race/ethnic enrollment as of 2016
Dr. S n = 2	Male	African-American	Former President/ Chancellor	16 years	Institution #1 White: 50% Latino/Hispanic: 15% Institution #2 White: 52% Asian: 14%
Dr. TL n = 1	Male	African-American	Former President/ Chancellor	17 years	White: 50% Latino/Hispanic: 11%
Dr. RC n = 12	Male	African-American	Current President/ Chancellor	More than 10 years	Institution #1 White: 74% Asian: 9% Institution #2 White: 65% Black/Afr.-American: 8%
Dr. M n = 1	Male	African-American	Current President/ Chancellor	More than two years	White: 31% Asian: 27%
Dr. C n = 1	Female	African-American	Current President/ Chancellor	More than three years	Latino/Hispanic: 43% Asian: 23%
Dr. TR n = 1	Female	African-American	Former President/ Chancellor	six years	White: 66% Black/Afr.-American: 12%

Note. The profile information of participants was gathered from interviews. The schools' enrollment data source was Data USA, 2020. Retrieved on January, 28, 2020 from https://datausa.io.

Dr. S

Dr. S was born in Kansas in the 1930s. He attended elementary schools before the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1968) ruling. Therefore, he attended one of four Black schools in the Topeka area. The *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling was handed down by the Supreme Court while Dr. S was in college. Dr. S. credited his upbringing in Kansas as playing an influential role in his pursuit of education and a successful career:

> Certainly, my upbringing and in [X] had a big impact upon my life in the decision to try and achieve an education whereby I could be productive and successful. I have been blessed. To have a supportive family both parents and sisters and family in [X]. Now, [X] currently my wife and children.

As a young kid, Dr. S never dreamed of working in education. His passion was to be an engineer. He liked to build things and tear them down, in order to better understand how they worked. In high school, his counselors misinterpreted his passion for engineering as a passion for trade school, which meant in high school he did not take the science and math courses needed to attend an engineering college immediately after finishing high school. At that time, he was too naive to know what that meant for his future goals of studying engineering in college. All the while, he became good at building and repairing radios. As a result, this skillset led him to establish a lucrative business while in high school:

> Turns out the learning how to repair and build radios and so forth turned out to be very fortunate because I was able to become pretty good at it and went into business while I was well in school.

Later, when Dr. S realized he did not have the needed course to go to engineering school, he took classes at a local liberal arts college in his town to complete the required courses he needed to go to an engineering school. After completing the required courses needed to attend a university, Dr. S transferred to a school with an engineering program and earned his degree in electrical engineering. Over the next few years, Dr. S went on to earn his master's degree and PhD, all while working full-time. At the time, his goal after completing his doctorate was not a career in education. About this he stated,

> After I got my doctorate, I really thought I wanted to head an engineering research laboratory. That was what I really thought of, I was not thinking education per se.

Dr. S was fortunate enough to get an offer to be a director at an applied physics laboratory on a college campus. Although he was not teaching faculty, this experience opened his eyes to a possible career in education, "That was when I really begin to think that I liked being part of an educational institution."

Over the next few years, Dr. S. was offered a position in Washington D.C at a foundation that led to a provost opportunity at a higher education institution. After a year and a half in the provost role, Dr. S. was contacted by the United States presidential administration to come to D.C. to lead a prominent science foundation. Thus, this opportunity led to his first appointment as chancellor of a university. Eventually, Dr. S. went on to serve as the president at another US higher education institution on the West Coast. Altogether, he had served in a president/chancellor role in higher education for a total of sixteen years.

Black people in senior leadership. Dr. S contended that to increase the representation of Black people in senior-level leadership positions in higher education, we will need to see more

Black people pursuing a doctoral degree. Dr. S acknowledged the numbers have improved but more progress is needed. Dr. S. credited the good rapport he had with fellow students and advisors in helping him not feel isolated in his college experience, as often can happen with Black students.

> But my adviser was a person who I had worked with in the past and was a friend and I had a lot of support so I didn't feel isolated and didn't feel the same experiences many Black students have of loneliness. I was fortunate in that way. Even in my undergraduate and master programs, I had, I think great rapport with the people whom I worked with and studied with. I hadn't felt discriminated against except in my early stage of not getting good advice from high school counselors.

Advice for Black people pursuing a chancellor/president career. Dr. S recommended being fully committed to the pursuit of becoming a chancellor/ president. The characteristics of being persistence, dedication, and a lot of effort are critical. About this, he stated:

> They have to really be committed. You have to set aside almost everything else. In fact, if you're going to be successful going through graduate school, it requires persistence, it requires dedication, it requires a lot of effort, it requires making it the most important thing that you're dealing with it.

In addition, the focus comes with trade-offs, personally and professionally:

> It is so tough when you have a family at the same time; you know one of my regrets is that I missed a lot of things with my children when they were young because I was trying to get a doctorate. I'm very thankful for my wife, who understood that and took a lot of the pressure off of me with parenting. So that the dedication and effort is critically

important. You just simply cannot let things distract you from things you are trying to accomplish.

Changes in the college president role. Dr. S shared that the role of a college president has changed over the last twenty years. A large part due to the negative impact of social media. The advent of social media has allowed anyone to launch a complaint about the institution even if the complaint is credible or not credible. Therefore, it places the administration team in a tough situation.

> I think social media has had a significant impact on a lot of which is negative on the ability of a person to lead a college or university. The reason I say that is because it is so easy for anyone to use social media to demonstrate their unhappiness or point out the faults as they perceived them real faults or not and this puts a lot of pressure on administrators.

Also, the college president's role has changed from being an academic leader on campus to more of a fundraising leader. The fundraising aspect of the role has been important, but it now consumes a large part of the time of a college president's time.

Dr. S stated that he would not want to be a college president during the current era of higher education. He finds having the opportunity to engage with students has been the most fulfilling aspect of the role. Therefore, he leaped at the opportunity to leave the chancellor role at a research university to take on the president role at a college. He also thought he could have a bigger impact on the lives of minority students at a college versus a research institution,

> I was concerned about the fact that too many large universities, public and private research universities, tend to focus more attention on graduate students and research

than they do on undergraduate students. So, when I was offered the opportunity to become president of a college, I jumped at it because the college was primarily an undergraduate school. Being able to assist undergraduates, and particularly to have an impact on minority students, appealed to me. This is the primary reason I took that position.

Dr. S suggested that college presidents no longer take on the role of being a moral leader. At one point in time, college presidents were looked to as moral thought leaders in society. Now, they are only focused on their respective institutions,

> College president were seen as thought leaders for society and today they're more focused on only their own institution not being the voice of morality and guidance for both public and society, I think that's a huge loss.

Leaky pipeline to doctoral degree completion.

Generally, Dr. S noted that one of the major reasons that minority students, Black students, and first-generation students do not consider pursuing a doctoral degree is because their major focus is on earning a bachelor's degree, so that they can quickly get a good job.

> One of the reasons, of course, is the fact that so many minority students, economically disadvantaged students, first-generation students, and so forth see getting an undergraduate degree as a pathway to getting a job. I know that when I graduated from an undergraduate program, I never even thought about graduate school. I needed to get a job to go to work to make some money.

Also, for those who do consider getting a doctorate degree, the cost of pursuing a doctorate degree can be very challenging. Essentially, many factors such as cost and awareness contributed to the low percentage of Black people pursuing a doctoral degree.

> The other thing is even if they do think that maybe they'll go get a graduate degree, the cost is prohibitive; and so here again, the cost of higher education is increasing and making it even more difficult.

Finally, Dr. S believed that many Black students are not encouraged to pursue a doctoral degree earlier in their academic experience. Therefore, not having mentors or career guidance affects the number of Black people who go on to pursue a doctoral degree. He explained,

> Another factor is simply there are few people who encourage Black students to go on to graduate school, they don't have the access to the mentors and the people who are truly supportive. They don't get the same level of advice that the majority of students do get by going to graduate school

White leadership prototype theory. Dr. S agreed with the White leadership prototype theory. However, in his case, he experienced having to focus more on convincing the public, donors, alumni, and parents that he was just as capable as anyone else to lead the institution. He did not feel the same burden to convince students and faculty. He was reminded of some discontent from ugly letters that the institution and he directly received from disgruntled people. This included some death threats:

> I think it wasn't so much about what a college president looks like but convincing

> alumni, the public, parents, and donors that you are capable or more capable than many who they assume should be the president of a college or university . . . You had to deal with some bigotry. I know that once I was named chancellor, the head of the system received letters from people in the state who questioned why I was named chancellor. Some ugly letters. I had experiences where people wrote me ugly letters, some death threats.

In a concise and matter of fact manner, Dr. S. explained that as a Black president at a predominantly white institution, you have to win over reluctant stakeholders.

> So yes, being an African American president of a predominantly white institution means you have to overcome some reluctance on the part of some stakeholders, that you are a person that can lead the institution.

Glass cliff theory. Considering Dr. S's two appointments as a CEO, he did not believe that the glass cliff theory was a factor in his hiring. However, he did recount an experience when he met with a newly appointed head coach at a college in a Southern US state which led him to believe in the glass cliff theory.

> Reminds me of, I visited University [X] for one year and they just hired a Black football coach and I visited him one day at practice and he said they would not have hired me unless last year they had such a horrible season. So, the theory holds true.

He also believed his selection to be president at his second institution was largely because the board of trustees, faculty, and students were pushing for more diversity and multiculturalism on the campus. He explained:

> I don't think that was really the situation either of the two cases when I became the chancellor at university [X]. At college [Y], the board of trustees was responding to the fact that there was a momentum on the part of faculty and students the institution needed to become more diverse and needed to become more multicultural. And I think to a large extent, I was appointed, I was chosen because the faculty members and students really felt that I shared their vision. And even though some of the trustees may have been somewhat reluctant. I think deep down inside they knew that the institution had to change and it has become much more progressive in terms of recognizing the importance of the change in society. So, it wasn't that that they were in trouble, it's more that they were ready for a new approach, a new direction.

Dr. S expressed pride in what he was able to accomplish at college [Y], in many ways he believes college [Y], was one of the first colleges to really focus on diversity on a large scale. During his tenure, he helped significantly diversify the faculty ranks.

> It turns out that we were ahead of the curve at college [Y]. Today, nearly every institution is at least talking about becoming more diverse, more pluralistic, more inclusive, more multicultural. I tell people that multiculturalism was a four-letter word when I went to college [Y], and so people thought that we were way out there. But I like to think that, so we sort of set the tone. College [Y] was named shortly after I came, the US News World Report named us the most diverse liberal arts college in America.

Socialization and mentorship. Given his untraditional ascent to a college president role, Dr. S stated his socialization process was "on the job training". He described the experience in the following way:

> As I said my first involvement as a full-time college administrator was when I became provost at university [X] and I began to understand some of the culture of higher education but it wasn't really until I went to university [X] and became immersed in all facets of being an educational administrator that I began to learn the steps, I had to deal with athletics, and had to deal with student affairs, and deal with financial situations, and there is just, there really isn't in my opinion, a way in which you can really understand those things prior to being involved, that's why I say it is more on the job training.

Also, he stated that mentorship was critical in his career and life:

> I had many mentors throughout my professional career, both when I was a practicing engineer. I worked for a gentleman when I was working for the Navy who supported me fully for going to graduate school. He was really grooming me to replace him and without his support, I wouldn't be in this position today.

Dr. S also described additional influential people in his life who played a critical role in helping him during his career. He, however, would not describe these people as mentors, but as "supporters":

> I had strong supporters, I wouldn't necessarily describe them all as mentors but supporters. Throughout my professional career and that has made a significant difference in the opportunities that were presented to me as well as the advice and support that I received along the way. And really made it possible for me to achieve whatever success that I have been able to attain.

Leadership and black identity. Dr. S described his leadership style as a supportive approach, in that he tries to get his staff the resources they need to be successful and helps sets

directions and goals. He also tried not to be an obstacle in the way of his staff and did not project that he knows everything.

> I think for me the most important thing is recognizing my limitations and I have always felt that the best way that I could lead is to find people who are smarter than I am, and more capable than I am doing the jobs that need to be done. Surrounding myself with them, helping them set goals, getting the resources to them that they need in order to achieve what it is they are setting out to do. And then get the hell out of the way and let them get the job done. Also, being a cheerleader.

At the intersection of Dr. S's leadership role and identity as a Black, he described a delicate balance of being aware of his Black identity in his leadership role and his environment, but at the same time not letting it overwhelm him.

> I don't think there is any way that you cannot stop to realize who you are and you may not consciously think that the fact you're African American is changing or affecting the way in which you behave or provide leadership, but unconsciously it does. I am not overly sensitive to the fact that I'm an African American in any environment but I'm always knowledgeable of it.

In addition, Dr. S spoke about this as a balancing act of always being aware of the factors that come with being a Black leader at a predominantly white institution but strives to be truly himself.

> I am always aware of it and so I try to behave in such a way that hopefully it is seen as positive; but I also try to be honest and authentic about it and not pretend that it is not a factor.

Dr. M

Dr. M was born in Missouri to a middle-class family. His mother was a K-12 teacher and his father was a postal worker. His mother was one of the first students to integrate the University of Missouri in the 1950s and his father attended college later in life, which lead to Dr. M's father graduating from college around the same time as Dr. M., as he shared:

> [C]ertainly that experience we had of pretty modest humble beginnings, from an economic standpoint, I think that experience has stayed with me . . . it tended to be, you know, fairly egalitarian as opposed to elitist; and I think a lot of it has to do with being brought up by middle-class parents, but both of my parents were highly persuasive in terms of education. They wanted my sister and I to do well in school and in college.

Dr. M never planned on becoming a college president. He did not even see himself going off to pursue any degree after a bachelor's in arts. However, in his household, he emphasized that it was an expectation that he would go to college.

> I don't think anyone that foresaw me going past the bachelor's level but I think that it was always very important in our household that, you know, you're going to do well in school and you're going to go to college someday.

Dr. M began to think about pursuing a career in education when he got an opportunity in undergrad to work in a co-op program, which allowed students to work part-time in a field related to the student's current major/interest. While working, Dr. M noticed most of the leaders at his work had advanced degrees. This experience exposed him to the idea of pursuing an advanced degree after completing an undergraduate.

> When I was an undergraduate, I was in a co-op program, so that you know, you work a quarter and then you go to school for a quarter and you alternate until you graduate. I observed in that program, the people at the company where I worked, which was [company X] in Saint Louis, the folks that were in leadership roles and decision- making roles all had advanced degrees.

In addition to his experience at company [X], he was receiving advice from mentors from his undergraduate program to pursue a graduate degree.

> I was getting lots of advice and encouragement to go to graduate School from some pretty strong mentors there at [X] university where I was getting my degree.

Given the encouragement and advice, Dr. M went to complete his PhD. He came to a crossroads when applying to jobs after completing his PhD. He could pursue a career in the private sector or academia. He weighed his options and ultimately decided to take the academic path since it had a better chance of impacting more lives. Looking back, he wonders if subconsciously, his mother's career as a teacher had a strong influence on his chosen path.

> I'm getting my PhD and deciding whether to go to academia or industry, you know I did a series of job interviews and the starting parameters were pretty much the same in terms of starting salary. . . . I very much enjoyed the culture and atmosphere of a college campus, could have a bigger impact on students' lives in a role as a professor rather than I could as an engineer working for a particular company, so I decided to go into academia. I think my mom being a teacher probably has some kind of subliminal effect and knowing educators also had an influence on me.

Advice for black people pursuing a chancellor/president career. Dr. M believed Black people interested in presidential roles in higher education can benefit from the exposure and increased awareness about what it means to serve in a presidential role. In addition, he believes this can be accomplished through mentorship.

> Well, I think a lot of it is exposure and awareness and again this whole idea of mentoring comes into play. I was fortunate enough to be exposed to what presidents do during my time coming up through the ranks as a professor.

Dr. M. described a leader at his intuition who took interest in him and provided him an opportunity to serve in a president "apprenticeship" type role that afforded him a great experience related to how to be a college president.

> President X took a real interest in me, he appointed me to a job that was essentially an apprenticeship but it was like chief of staff for him, it was called executive assistant to the president but it wasn't an administrative role is more like an apprenticeship.

Dr. M also advises those coming up through the traditional path to not rush the process. He recommends focusing on becoming a full professor and then taking on leadership opportunities as a faculty member.

> I started in 1991 as faculty I didn't become [executive assistant to the president] until 2002 so I was already a full professor. I kind of recommend that people don't take on these roles until you're fully promoted . . . [this] is one of my mantras that I tell people all the time.

Additionally, Dr. M reiterated the importance of being patient and mastering one's craft:

> Be patient is my biggest piece of advice. I think a lot of us get into administrative roles much too quickly, before we establish our credentials, our scholarship, we are fully promoted, and we wind up hitting a glass ceiling or dead end. Second piece of advice is to look for leadership experiences around the campus where that be committee chair of something or participating in strategic planning or whatever it may be and try to look for those things that are not directly in your wheelhouse or in your department or your research, because those broadening experiences are what kind of prepare you to be in a presidential role.

Finally, he recommended taking advantage of leadership fellowship programs offered across the U.S. to help broaden your experience related to administrative leadership:

> [I]f you have opportunity and you have the resources, you know, there are these various leadership workshops and cohort programs ATLU has one, there's a Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, Harvard has a bunch of 'em. There are these leadership opportunities that can give you a broader sense of what it takes to be in leadership.

Changes in the college president role. Dr. M asserted that the college president role has changed considerably over the past 20 years. Largely due to the focus of providing more services to students and a more litigious environment, the growth of social media, and the intense focus on fundraising.

> Well, I would say that because the needs and desires for services for students have increased quite a bit, I mean students in addition to the core academic services that you're providing, you are also housing and feeding them and providing mental health services and campus security. You know all those kinds of things require a pretty broad

knowledge background. We are also fairly a more litigious society now where you know there's quite a bit of legal activity which require a lot of the president's attention and time.

Dr. M additionally suggested that the growth of social media, and the intense focus on fundraising will continue to be influential factors in the role of college presidents in the future.

> I think some of those trends will continue. I mean we're certainly for public universities where the political aspect of the job is not going away and it's probably getting more important. Lots of interactions with elected officials and lots of advocating on behalf of the University, you know, for funding and other sorts of resources. . . . I think sort of getting more in control of the reputation, persona, and culture of the university. Things like social media have really made a big change in how we represent ourselves and represent the university. This is how we talk to students and prospective students more and more and that's not something that I think a lot of presidents are prepared for.

Leaky pipeline to doctoral degree completion. Dr. M credited the lack of a variety of factors in Black people not pursuing a doctoral degree or moving in pursuit of being a college president.

> Well I think it boils down to awareness, critical mass of role models, and resources. I think you have to know that's going to be an important prerequisite [doctoral degree] for achieving presidency. You have to have the resources and the time to pursue a PhD. Which I do not take for granted . . . I think that there are many people capable but you know may have other obligations, family obligations, or may not have enough time to put into it.

In addition, Dr. M recommends that individuals interested in pursuing a president role not overlook the small number of president roles in higher education. Prospective candidates should be fully aware of this factor.

> I want to make sure we don't overestimate the number of jobs available; so it would be kind of a shame if we sell this to people as a possible career, and a whole bunch of people go on to get PhDs to become a president, but that there is not that many presidencies out there . . . I think we have to be realistic about the number of jobs out there, even though obviously there's a significant under-representation of the Black people at this level . . .so you have to balance those two things.

In considering potential solutions for increasing the number of Blacks completing a doctoral degree, Dr. M recommended using specific programs/fellowships that specifically targeting undergrads from underrepresented minorities who are interested in pursuing a doctoral education.

> We had a program at university [X] called FACES, the idea was to one, recruit students to graduate school via undergraduate research as the vehicle; and two, provide various enrichment activities during their graduate studies so myself and several of my Black colleagues, were both role models and designers of programs that would raise the awareness of PhD students on our campus about, you know, very steps on getting through completion of the PhD . . . we were not only giving our time and knowledge but also providing financial resources and other things. I think those kinds of programs are still very important and necessary.

White leadership prototype theory. The White leadership prototype theory resonated with Dr. M and he shared two life experiences where he directly experienced the bias first hand. Each experience was related to his racial identity and he firmly believes he had to overcome the perception of what a college president looks like.

> Before I was a president, I was on a search committee for a president. During our evaluation of candidates, one of the other people on the committee made some comment about a particular candidate looking like a president. So, I challenged that! What does that mean? What does a president look like? Do I look like a president?

A second experience tied to the leadership prototype theory occurred while he was a president. In that, in a room full of college presidents, a colleague incorrectly believed Dr. M. was not a president, but rather the representative for his university.

> Another example, my first meeting of presidents in our athletic conference, we were going around doing introductions [and] I say my name and institution, and one of my fellow presidents asked "what is your role at university [X]?" And this is a meeting of presidents. Even now that I'm there, it's definitely a challenge that has to be overcome and you can only overcome that by continuing to be visible, accessible and approachable. Also, trying to give advice, assistance, and mentoring the next generation.

Glass cliff theory. Dr. M believed the state of affairs when he took the helm of president was mixed, some affairs were in good standing and others affairs were not in good standing. The state of affairs was not ideal, but not terrible. He believes his biggest problem was repairing trust with the community, since his predecessor did not leave on good terms.

> There was good and bad, when I came on board . . . the university certainly has some challenges budget wise with which I think we have been able to rectify. However, I think the biggest challenge for me when I came here is my predecessor left under conditions that were not optimal and there was a significant amount of distrust among the campus community for the chancellor role and the chancellor's office; and having to rebuild that trust has been a significant part of my early tenure.

Dr. M also candidly mentioned that he felt a sense of ownership to his position to do well, so that he is not the last Black to hold a president role at his institution.

> I think about it constantly; that I'm the first here [university x] and the second in the [university system x] and I don't want to be the last. So, you know, we have some degree of success in some ways that we can point to and so people won't equate any negative things that might happen with the fact that there's a black president

Socialization and mentorship. In the past, Dr. M served as chief of staff to a college president. He stated that experience was very influential in preparing him for a college president role. Also, he mentioned mentorship as a key factor, not just in academia but in the business world as you think about ascending to senior leadership roles.

> I think that goes back to what I was mentioning before about my apprenticeship with president X. I think in many ways that was a grooming, I was selected as someone who has potential, who [president x] wanted to work with, [president x] wanted to give me some exposure . . . I think that was pivotal in my own development. All these surveys of Fortune 500 CEOs and other people in leadership, when you ask what was the most important thing in them reaching levels of success, 90% of them will say mentorship.

Leadership and black identity. Dr. M considered himself to be a consensus driving leader, empathetic, and a good listener. He attributes these internal traits to his upbringing. Moreover, as he considered his identity and how that may influence his leadership, he has become more confident in being his full self in his role.

> I used to think that I had to assimilate to fit in. I am much more able to be myself as I have become more comfortable in my position. In the past, I would mull over if I should place Black art in my office or take guests to a soul food restaurant. Now that I'm more comfortable in my skin, I just do it and not think about at all. I am at my best when I am being myself. Trying to be anything but who you are will lead you to not be effective.

Dr. C

Dr. C is a Black woman who grew up in segregated North Carolina and described North Carolina as the deep south with many physical and mental barriers. However, as a child, it was instilled in her that education can be a form of freedom.

> I grew up in a segregated system; there were physical as well as mental barriers that existed in my childhood, in my view . . .in going to a segregated school my teachers were just incredible; my elementary school teachers, in particular, were so dedicated . . . what was instilled at an early age is that it was imperative to get an education; that. In fact, an education provided a different kind of freedom, even within the system that we had.

Dr. C.'s family preached the value of education from an early age. An education was seen as a way to drive change for your community and for oneself. Her mother was a high school graduate and her father received a degree from Southern Baptist ministry.

> My father died when I was four. He had gotten a degree with southern Baptist ministry. My mother was a high school graduate and then she remarried another southern Baptist minister, who was the president of the NAACP in our local community, who fought to work on integrating assistance with the education system in our community. So, we've always seen education as one of several important pathways towards one's attainment of opportunities, as well as being able to provide support for others who are coming up behind you.

As Dr. C. was finishing high school, she was recruited to attend college at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. At the time, Lincoln University was shifting to be a coed school from an all-male school. Prior to transitioning from high school to college, her stepfather had passed away. Dr. C described a philosophy she lives by that calls you to embrace the randomness of life:

> [T]hings come into your life for different reasons and you can't always explain it but just be with it . . . I left North Carolina and went to Lincoln University in Pennsylvania for college by that time my stepfather had passed away, so it was me and my mother.

Dr. C credited her guidance counselor for stepping in and being her connection to the recruiter from Lincoln University. Although her mother finished high school, Dr. C's mother had no knowledge of the higher education system. Therefore, Dr. C had to navigate the system on her own.

> My mother did not [go to college], she graduated from high school but you know she didn't. She could give me love and support and doing whatever she could to help me succeed, but she didn't have the knowledge around how to navigate systems and how to

> fill in applications and so forth. It was my guidance counselor in high school who pulled me out of class and said this guy from up North is coming to recruit students to Lincoln University. Well, I'd never heard of Lincoln University and so he met with me and talked about how Lincoln used to be all male and it was becoming coed.

Dr. C was interested in studying international relations in college. However, she has faced some skepticism, given her experience being raised in the segregated south. She knew the injustices that came with segregation and thought the world was similar to social dynamics at play in the U.S. Dr. C's mother eventually explained to her that people of color may be a minority in the U.S. but were not a minority in the world. This new understanding encouraged her to pursue an international relations degree.

> I had early on decided that I wanted to go into international relations and I remember there was a puzzlement for me being in the segregated south. . . . As I got older, as a teen, I understood segregation, what we were denied in terms of where we could go, hand me down books or poor lab equipment that we would get from the other school. . . . I had some questions for my mother . . .is there more people [in number] like us in the United States; and she said no there was not more of us in the United States, but there are more people who look like you in the world . . . so I decided that I am of the world and decided to go into international relations.

Upon starting college, Dr. C's dean advised her that studying international relations was not an appropriate major for a woman.

> I went to the dean who managed the program and again this was in the early stages of transitioning from all male to coed school and he said to me that he didn't think this was a good major for a woman; it was devastating.

Consequently, Dr. C decided to change her major but floundered in finding a new major. By chance, she took a sociology class that sparked her interest in the discipline that set her on the path of a career in higher education. An opportunity to join a research grant as a research associate gave Dr. C an opportunity to travel the United States. The faculty member managing the research grant encouraged Dr. C to attend graduate school, as Dr. C was approaching her senior year. Dr. C did not know what graduate school was and so she was a little apprehensive about attending. The nudge from the faculty member to attend graduate school pushed Dr. C. down a path that lead to completing graduate school and later a doctorate . . . On the onset of going to college, Dr. C never imagined her future career path.

> Again, at each step, I didn't intentionally say well I gotta go to grad school or I need to get a doctorate. [It was] a kind of divine guidance that moved me in various directions.

After Dr. C. graduated from her doctoral program, she moved out to the West Coast of the United States to start a career as a lecturer, and then admitted to the faculty tenure track, eventually administration, and finally became a college president.

> [T]here was always the next stepping stone that kind of led me to an opportunity. So, I started as faculty as a lecturer at university [X], then was admitted onto the tenure track, and then, as they say, the rest is history. So, there was never this intentionality; it was just how things evolved.

Black people in senior leadership. Dr. C believed that what is contributing to the underrepresentation of Blacks in senior leadership positions in higher education are various factors, such as awareness, dwindling pipeline, unconscious bias, conscious bias, policies, and more employment options for Blacks.

> Well I think, first of all for so long Black people had very few options in terms of where they could work, education was one of the few options available to us and so I think, on the one hand, because we have a very small window of other options, we don't always see education as the only pathway. So, in one case, where does the interest lie with what you want to do.

Dr. C described that the board of trustees looking for leaders who are capable of raising money. As a result, an individual's capacity to raise money through their network is a key factor for the college president's role. Dr. C also mentioned the barriers of unconscious bias and conscious bias in higher education have an effect on Blacks in leadership positions.

> You have the issue of boards of trustees who have their fiduciary responsibility . . .asking how do we bring in someone who is gonna raise money? Well, what is the network of raising money? And who is in that network? . . . bringing all of their unconscious bias as well as conscious bias; so there is no single thread you can pull that describes it.

Advice for black people pursuing a chancellor/president career. Dr. C believes that it is important for candidates to understand that the role of a college president is to ensure the academic and financial vitality of the institution. Therefore, the role requires a broad set of skills conducive to management. In particular, for candidates of color, you have to demonstrate more

than an abundance of these skill-sets, as compared to your white counterparts. She has a particularly unique perspective since she sits on many hiring committees for college presidents.

> . . . fundamentally understanding that institutions have to prepare students, deal with faculty culture, they have to help guide and support staff, they got to become and be economically viable many times [and] there is not sufficient budget understanding or the implications. If I am going to be heading an institution, I know they can say, well I just love students, I love faculty, but fundamentally when you're sitting there across the table, I need to know how you going to contribute to the financial viability and help this institution.

For candidates of color, Dr. C highlighted the additional barrier candidates of color face along the path to the presidency,

> [P]articularly people of color, because there is going to be a higher bar . . . we all know that. You gotta bring an experience and a context that is going to demonstrate how you are going to help achieve the aims of the institution.

Accordingly, for candidates in the process of interviewing for a president role, Dr. C recommends that candidates focus on how they fit into the institution's mission and values and how they are capable of moving the institution forward into the future. She contends:

> . . . you need to understand institutional culture because for me it's all about alignment and fit. I sit on interviewing committees for some of the presidents in this university [X] system. You know a person will come and have a very good resume, but what they do is they talk about what they have done, but they don't place it in the context of the institution that they are applying to be head of; so, they come with declarative statements.

But they have to guide the committee, ok I've done this, I understand that this institution at this point of this development and let me just tell you how my own experience will help to move the institution forward.

Changes in the college president role. A variety of internal and external factors were cited by Dr. C on how higher education institutions have changed over the years which have forced college presidents' role to shift and adapt to changing conditions. Primarily, factors such as demographic shifts, economic recession, a focus on diversity, and importance of philanthropy have influenced the changes to the role.

I certainly know this it has changed and I'm going to talk about it from the standpoint of a public institution, because I think private . . .may even now be more challenging. I think we've had a major recession that has required institutions to think about greater efficiencies, operational efficiency. The increased focus on people getting a college degree, you know, just generally in the country, universities need to be clear about their distinctiveness because there are other options that people have to look at.

Dr. C described how the focus on diversity has shifted the focus of many college campuses pertaining to students and faculty.

[I]n some areas, I don't think it's the case across the country, but in some areas just the demographic shifts of the background of students is also requiring a different focus, making sure that your campus is welcoming and the climate is an inclusive climate. I also think that there is a focus on trying to diversify what may have been traditionally disciplines with few women and people of color. So how do you expand that and . . .the focus on diversification of faculty.

Philanthropy and technology were points of emphasis for Dr. C. Such that, a college president now has to be able to raise money and technology has shifted the way students, faculty, and administrators engage on campus.

> I think the philanthropic requirements have just significantly expanded. Presidents cannot afford to not be out also fund-raising technology alone, but it's online learning. You know we traditionally have been so focused on communicating to students through emails. I was asking students to tell me why you have not read my email, so tell me how I need to communicate to you? "Well why don't you snapchat us" well that is only 13 seconds [and] I got more to say than 13 seconds worth.

Leaky pipeline to doctoral degree completion. Dr. C attributed finances and higher education recruitment efforts as key factors contributing to the leaky pipeline of Blacks pursuing a career as a college president. Given the difficulties of achieving a doctoral degree because of financial reasons and the lack of higher education institutions' commitment to recruiting for diversity at the doctoral program level represent two major deterrents.

> Well, I think again, depending upon where you sit economically and socially. When you think about the timeline, you get four years undergraduate, maybe two years Masters, and another five years, let's say, to get your doctorate and I'm including the time to write a dissertation and so forth. There is an economic base that one needs to have in order to be out of the labor market for that period of time; and when you think about it, the changing nature of federal financial aid, when you think about the economic environment and systems, and having to take out loans and what all that intends, it is rare for an individual

to be able to get a full ride to just study and work continuously towards that degree. Life happens!

In addition to the challenges of the affordability of pursuing a doctoral degree, Dr. C. stated that higher education institutions can be more proactive in recruiting for diversity for doctoral degree programs.

> I don't think that higher education has been as proactive around the recruitment and the intentionality of diversifying the pools of individuals . . . a confluence of factors and even now institutions not feeling compelled or feeling fundamentally that they need to be worried about diversity.

White leadership prototype theory. Dr. C. agreed with the White leadership prototype theory. Also, Dr, C. advocates for a mindset to help manage the biases that come with the white leadership prototype. The shift in mindset involves understanding that as a Black individual, you will be viewed as not equal; but as a Black, you should believe you are equal. The shift in mindset arms you for being prepared for the bias, but it prevents you from believing the bias. Dr. C attributes that mindset was developed from her personal history of growing up in the South.

> Oh, you know it's going on. I think it has been challenging for this generation. I really hurt for them. Coming out of the 60s and in the 70s and you know the love fest, having grown up in the South, I never expected to be seen as equal. You engage it from a different mindset, I see myself as equal, but I never expected to not have the stereotype, the greater expectation of proving oneself; so, in some ways it's how one mentally engages with what you know is going to be.

Dr. C shares that she has a number of experiences when people have preconceived that she was not a college president. In particular, she describes an experience where a donor had to step in and explain to an individual that Dr. C was the college president and not a department administrator at her university.

> Yes, I have so many scenarios, you know that they are surprised when I say that I am the college president of university [X], I had one situation where I was out at a very exclusive restaurant with a donor, one of the donor's friends stopped by the table and so the donor introduced me to her friend and said you know this is the president of the university of [X]. So, the friend of the donor said which department at the university [X]? I am not saying anything. The friend kept saying is that a division? The donor then said, she is the president of the whole damn university. The friend just could not imagine that.

Glass cliff theory. Dr. C felt fortunate that she did not experience the glass cliff theory when she took the helm of the presidency at her university. At the time, Dr. C's university was coming out of a recession and she was able to use her experience at her previous university to continue to navigate her current university out of the recession

> I felt fortunate at the point of intersection with me and the University, because the university was just beginning to come out of the recession. I was a provost and vice president during the recession at a different university and I knew the challenges, both with managing that. It actually honed my leadership skills and we were able to get through it. . . . Coming to university [X], I felt blessed and fortunate that I was coming as we were just emerging out of recession so I have not had that particular challenge.

Socialization and mentorship. Dr. C credited her experience coming up through the ranks with helping her prepare for the college presidency role. In addition, she believes mentors served a key role in her getting access to opportunities to further develop her professional experience.

> Well again, I'm very fortunate because I was a faculty member, I was involved in many activities on campus, then I became a dean and being involved with the provost council and so forth, but I think really the role of provost [prepared me]. I am very grateful for the president. Who you know, I was for a year and a half the provost but also the interim vice president for university advancement . . . so it was the responsibilities that I was given, which really helped groom me.

Dr. C believed in the importance of mentors, but also values individuals she defines as "sponsors", who are individuals that may provide support but may not have the same level of emotional involvement as a mentor. She believes we sometimes dismiss sponsors at our own detriment.

> I think sometimes we miss opportunities to engage in relationships with people, certainly when we think about mentors we think about not only the sharing of information, but there's an emotional support . . .I have had sponsors, people who don't care how I feel today but they see something in me that they want to support; but if I'm only going to engage with people who want to know how I feel today, I'm gonna miss opportunity and benefit. But when I talk about people who are mentors, there's kind of that emotional ongoing connection and support; then when I talk about sponsors or individuals who are willing to help open doors, I talk about people who have a wealth of information that are

willing to share, so I've had the benefit of all of those. . . . I've had, you know, the combination of people that have contributed to me getting where I am.

Leadership and black identity. Dr. C's leadership style was based on principle leadership. A mentor recommended a book early on in her career that had a profound effect on how she developed her leadership style based on principled leadership.

> There is a very old book it may now actually be out of print but it was *Leadership from the Inside Out*. Certainly, you got to have the skills and so forth, it's probably a mix of styles based on the circumstances, but it's going to be principled driven. When I first went into administration, I felt like I needed a beacon statement and I developed my beacon statement . . .[it] has been, whether a dean, provost, or president to remain student centered, faculty/staff focused, and community minded; and so that understanding and all of that is about people.

Given Dr. C's identity as a Black woman, she described a balance she has to strike as a leader of an institution. On one hand, she is challenged by male colleagues in ways that a male leader would not be challenged and she has to navigate the biases that come with being a Black leader at a higher education institution.

> . . . there's a difference, kind of a different mode of interaction that is expected. For some it is an uncomfortable place because being challenged in an open meeting—asking me why do you want that? There is no way they would have asked a male president in this open meeting: why do you want that? You cannot allow that to take you off your game, sometimes you get angry; but you always have to be mindful . . .everybody's watching

> and how you respond will reinforce or shut down the potential for people to engage and feel part of the team that you're trying to build.

As a Black woman president, Dr. C described a level of expectation that comes with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion that her white counterparts do not have to wrestle with as a president.

> Even in terms of things we're trying to do around pushing inclusivity and diversity, I believe a White male leader who comes in and says, ok we don't have a diverse campus, is going to have a different reception and not have the same pushback as a person of color coming in and says we want a diverse and inclusive campus.

Dr. RC

Dr. RC was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and spent many summers in his parents' hometown in Kentucky. At the age of three, his parents bought a home in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in Cincinnati. Dr. RC describes the neighborhood as a middle-class neighborhood and explains that at that time, once Black families moved into a white neighborhood, you would experience white flight.

> I'm originally from Cincinnati. Oh, that's where I was born and lived all my life, until I went to college. I was raised in Cincinnati and Kentucky, which played a role because I spent my summers in Kentucky for the first few years of my life and, in fact, for two years I actually lived in Kentucky with my grandparents. . . . I was three when my parents bought a home in a middle-class neighborhood that was predominantly Jewish. Actually, at the time, was 1950, like so many neighborhoods in those days, you know as soon as

> black people started moving in, everyone else started moving out. So, within 10 years the neighborhood was predominantly black.

Dr. RC grew up in a neighborhood that was experimenting with different forms of education which provided him a wide range of learning experiences. The experiences included an opportunity to learn a second language, run a student television station, and students being placed in homogenous groupings.

> [A]lso [I] benefited from going to school and, at the end, the school system in Cincinnati was experimenting with homogeneous groupings for students . . .so I benefited by being placed in the top group intellectually. We got to do all kinds of very interesting things. We learned Italian, we learned French, we got to television commercials, educational television stations.

Church and music were significant influences in Dr. RC's life from an early age. He described singing in church, as his first experience with performing musically. A random chance at elementary school led to Dr. RC choosing to play the cello. As a result, the decision to play the cello set his life on a path that would eventually bring unique opportunities to his life, which have served him well for over 60 years.

> Like a lot of black families rooted in our church, we spent our entire Sundays basically at Zion Baptist Church in Cincinnati. . . .I was introduced to my musical background. I had this; I started singing in the church when I was six years old. In a sense, when I look back at it today, that was the root of my musical background.

Dr. RC sang in a small choir which one day in eighth grade led to a random opportunity for musical instrument training. The serendipitous event put Dr. RC on a path to a very unique opportunity for a young musician

> I was in the 8th grade and I was singing at the Samuel Lot Junior High School choir which at the time in the state of Ohio was one of the best junior high choirs in the state. The conductor was the first black graduate from the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music. One day randomly the band director came into choir rehearsal and he announced that the Cincinnati schools had a program this summer where you could learn to play an instrument and he asked if anybody was interested and I raised my hand. I was one of three students who raised their hands. I have no idea why I raise my hand. He told us to come to his office at the end of the day and he gave us a test and he said to me you have almost perfect pitch; you can choose any instrument that you wanted, and I chose the cello because I love the string instruments and because I was quite overweight at the time and I thought playing the violin I had to stand up if you play the cello you could sit down.

At a local event where Dr. RC was playing the cello, a local college professor was impressed with Dr. RC's ability to play the cello. The professor offered Dr. RC. The opportunity for one-on-one training, if he made his way to the college campus on Saturdays. Given the unique opportunity, Dr. RC's family agreed to the training and Dr. RC. Made the hour commute each way and spent all day on a college campus receiving one-on-one cello training from a music professor. The experience opened Dr. RC's eyes to the possibility of a career as a professor, since he admired his instructors' lifestyle and job.

> [S]he offered to teach me free of charge, if my parents would get me from Cincinnati to Oxford every Saturday morning. At the age of 14, I started taking a bus; the Ohio bus lines, 7:40 in the morning. It would take an hour and a half to get there because the bus went from Cincinnati to Hamilton, which is really going East in order to go West. . . . I would spend my entire day on the campus of Miami University, from 9:00 o'clock and leave at 4:50 in the afternoon. Professor [X] became the most important mentor in my life other than my parents. Observing her, it was then I got the idea, in watching her the way she impacted the lives of students, the kind of life she led, she had a beautiful home, she was a world traveler, and I was already thinking of what could I do in my life that would make contributions to the betterment of others' lives, you know this seems like a great way.

Dr. RC credited his parents for instilling in him strong values in self-confidence, education, and work ethic. Also, his parent's monetary investment in his passion for music greatly paved the way for his future accomplishments which include a first-generation college graduate earning a bachelor in arts, masters in music, and doctorate in music. In addition, he served as president of two different higher education institutions

> I learned later on that my father and mother took out a loan to buy this cello for me and of course I was young, almost 15 and I was clueless; I mean, all I know is I had a great cello. I stayed up all night playing the instrument and I didn't go to bed that night. I was just so excited but that was a real sacrifice for them to buy that instrument for me.

Black people in senior leadership. Dr. RC believed mentorship was the key driver for increasing the representation of Black people in senior leadership positions in higher education. He believes mentorship has played a critical role in his career choices and achievements:

> [R]eally makes a big difference, having a mentor, having someone who can help you think through and encourage you. I mean that's how I became a president. I did not intend to become a president, but I had a mentor who said you are going to become a college president, I thought he was crazy.

Given the impact of having a mentor has had on Dr. RC's life, he prioritizes mentoring young talent. The process of mentoring for Dr. RC can manifest in many ways, including cross cultural mentoring.

> [T]hat's why when I see talent, I at least have a conversation about have you considered being a full-time administrator or considered being a president and I've mentored many people, many young men and women over the years. I think that mentoring has to be cross-culturally because there are not enough Black presidents to do it.

Advice for black people pursuing a chancellor/president career. A few recommendations for Blacks in pursuit of a college president career shared by Dr. RC largely hinge on temperament, persistence, mentorship, and resiliency. Dr. RC believed that a president's significant other must share in the candidate's aspiration, since significant others play an important role in a college president's role.

> Some people don't have the temperament, I try to be as honest as possible; for instance, I'd say if you are thin skinned and you want everybody to be your friend then this not a

job you can do . . . one of my mentors said to me once, if you want to be well-liked as a president buy a dog.

Dr. RC suggests that potential candidates have to be willing to move frequently and the path to the presidency is not a straight line.

First of all, this is not a straight line journey; it's circulative particularly for Black people, for women as well, unless you're lucky, so that means you probably have to move around a lot and at a minimum be in lots of different positions and also that its likely going to take several tries.

Also, for individuals who are finalist for a presidential role, the difference in the finalist and other candidates or the role comes down to chemistry, since it is assumed that the final candidates meet the professional qualifications.

. . .when you get to the level of being interviewed, of being part of a pool of let's say two or three finalists for the presidential position, the search committee's decision to appoint one of the two people as president has less to do with qualifications, than it does with that kind of *je ne sais qua*.

Changes in the college president role. President Dr. RC has seen the role of the college president shift from focusing on students and faculty to a more public facing role that calls for significant fundraising and communicating with local community stakeholders.

Twenty years ago, I was the provost at university [X] and what I would say is that the biggest change is that the president of any college these days, rather than be a large research one or a small liberal arts college, has to be much more externally faced than 20 years ago; which means then that you're taking more away from the business . . .which is

> students . . . specifically what I mean by that is you have to spend more time fundraising and friend-raising because, particularly at both private and public schools, the funding has not increased [and] you also need to have to spend more time with your congressional delegation issues and you spend more time locally, just trying to help people understand what we do in higher education.

The fundraising and public facing role has become such a priority that President Dr. RC had a strategy for how he schedules his time a year in advance, so that he can maintain relationships with faculty and students.

> [U]nlike twenty years ago when presidents had more time to spend with faculty and students, [what] you have to do now is to be really intentional about how you spend your time with faculty and students . . . as a result of that, when I put my calendar together every year, I request from the vice presidents that they send me the most important events where they request my presence . . . because I am gone at least two or three days a week.

Leaky pipeline to doctoral degree completion. President Dr. RC attributed awareness, mentorship, and familial aspirations as factors for the low percentage of Black people completing a doctorate degree. The factors are a confluence of hurdles.

> [U]nless people in their undergraduate years had an opportunity to speak with someone about particular pathways, it's not something that necessarily would occur to them; on the other hand, it's particularly if you know someone who's in their first or second or third year, you can have a conversation with him about: "Have you ever considered going on to get a doctorate?" Then, being in higher education, that can be very helpful; again mentoring is the key.

President Dr. RC articulated that most Black students are focused on getting an undergraduate degree, so that they can immediately get a good job after completing college; and, therefore, are not necessarily looking past an undergraduate degree.

> The numbers of Black students entering college universities haven't gone up that much, but they have increased somewhat. But I think, in most cases, with all the emphasis today on getting a college degree in order to get a job, there are very few people had the experience I had at the age of 14 . . . to be mentor by a college professor and that's the first time I started thinking about that as a possibility

In addition, President Dr. RC believed familial aspirations is an important factor leading to Black students choosing to pursue a doctorate degree and work in education.

> [There are] lots of different factors, mostly economic quite frankly. Parents are saying to their students, ok whatever you do be sure you can get a good job when you get out and being a teacher is not usually considered to be a good job. It doesn't pay that much. I mean it's not something that at least in my experience, I've seen many of my middle and upper middle-class black friends encouraging their students to do.

White leadership prototype theory. President Dr. RC believed the perception of White leadership prototype is real, but prided himself in not believing in the perception and looks to his self-confidence and self-worth for how he defines himself.

> I didn't have to overcome it even. What I mean by that is I didn't have to overcome it because I never believed it; again, not to say that the perception is not out there, it is; but it's not a perception that I buy into and that's just my own sense of self-worth and self - confidence.

The White leadership prototype theory resonated with President Dr. RC in another section of his life pertaining to his music profession. President Dr. RC was attending a funding opportunity for a music program that he was involved in his community. At the time, President Dr. RC was not a college president. The potential funder casually told President Dr. RC that he did not know he was black.

> [T]hen I was in Texas, I went to visit. Now, I wasn't a president then. I went to visit the CEO of an oil company to ask him for some money to fund a violin student and as I was shaking his hand, no actually we shaken hands already, I was sitting down [and] he looked at me and said I had no idea you were black. . . .He said this to me literally, as I was kind of lowering myself to the seat and so, I remember thinking to myself: ok, let's just see what comes next." And, then, he said to me, perhaps, you could help me out, my wife and I have been going to the Aspen Music Festival for 30 years and we rarely see any black violinist.

Glass cliff theory. Dr. RC shares that the glass cliff theory has not been his experience serving two separate as a college president at two places. He described the state of affairs at each institution as in a steady state when he assumed leadership Although, at one institution as the president, the institution went through a troubling time due to the "great recession."

> That's not been my experience in both places where I was at both places when I arrived were on a steady trajectory.

Socialization and mentorship. President Dr. RC believed his career path and key mentors prepared him to take on a president's role. As he progressed through the traditional steps of leadership in higher education, the more he was socialized to become a college president. The

steps included being a professor, chairing a committee, assistant provost, provost, and vice president

> [M]y wife was assistant to the president and I was a professor and one day I was complaining about something and my wife said to me, “why don't you stop complaining and do something about it?” That motivated me enough to get myself elected to the Faculty Senate as an at large member. I was very engaged with the faculty governance and eventually got elected to the promotion and tenure committee; and in my eight year at university [X], the provost asked me if I would serve as an associate provost; and she asked me because she knew that I had been interested in a full time administrative position.

Also, President Dr. RC shared that being proactive in developing relationships with those who he admired assisted him in preparing for the role and participating in professional development opportunities.

> I took advantage of professional development opportunities took advantage of, you know, talking to people, just reaching out to folks whom I admired who were Deans or Provost.

Part of the socialization process is learning about the implicit and explicit expectations of the role. President Dr. RC credited his mentor who was a college president for teaching him implicit expectations that come with the role of president. Particularly, the ability to be mindful of how situations are perceived by the public.

> What I learned from him was the importance of being aware of the optics because, you know, what you may be doing is something that's not illegal and yet, from the outside,

someone looking in, it might appear to be something that's out of the ordinary or it shouldn't be done; always be thinking through that antenna.

Leadership and black identity. President Dr. RC described his leadership style as an approach borne out of his 40 years' experience as a chamber music player. Thus, he described his leadership style as collaboration vs. conducting.

> My leadership style has been informed by my 40 years' experience as a chamber music player; chamber music is very different than orchestral music . . .chamber music is defined as two or more on an instrument without a conductor; that's the big difference between making chamber music with someone and playing in an orchestra. In an orchestra you have a conductor who's leading you . . . [in chamber music] he or she isn't telling you how fast to go or how slow or how loud . . . chamber music is made collaboratively but that doesn't mean it's just there, that it is there made by consensus . . . you can't play music that way . . . someone has to read obviously the kind of situation and that's the way I try to operate.

President Dr. RC understood his identity as a Black male in a leadership position came with challenges but he does not let that interfere with how he chooses to lead.

> . . . part of that is just that my expectation is that, if you work with me, that you will treat me with a certain level of respect and if you don't, you won't be working with me, you know that's just my expectation.

He described that this parents' upbringing shaped this mindset. President Dr. RC told a childhood story that encapsulates how his sense of self was shaped.

> My first encounter with racism . . .we are coming back from church, my mother, my father, my brother; at any rate we are coming back from church, the bus see us coming as we were just rounding the corner, he sees my father wave at him and the bus kept going; but you know, the bus had to go down and he turned around, so we went a couple streets over and waited for him to come back and we got on the bus and my father laid into this bus driver: "I know you saw us there, you don't pretend that you didn't and I know why you didn't stop 'cause we are black." When we got home he sat us down and said, "you need to understand that not everybody in this country is going to appreciate who you are as a black person, regardless of the way they view you, you need to know that you have just as much right as they do, everything that this country has to offer you just have to work for it." That was imprinted in my brain.

Dr. TL

Dr. TL was raised in East Harlem, NY in a public housing project by a single mother who was a public health nurse. He recalls that he may have seen his dad once a year. Education has been an institution in his family's history. Dr. TL shared that his great-grandfather on his mother's side was responsible for setting up a school in Saint Kitts, in the West Indies. He believes this demonstrated a commitment to strong education values.

> I was raised essentially by my mother and my mother's family. My great grandfather on my mother's side had been an educator in the West Indies, he apparently set up a school and so this was in Saint Kitts and he must've done this probably sometime in the 1880s and 1890s; so, there was something of a historic connection to education and to the value of education.

Dr. TL believed his grandparents on his mother's side valued education despite the fact that neither grandparent finished high school, but his grandparents saw to it that their children finished high school.

> My grandfather worked in the coal yards in New York as a manual laborer and my grandmother on that side was a seamstress and an evangelist in East Harlem; so neither of them got beyond high school. So, while there had been a kind of tradition of education, it wasn't one that was manifest in my grandparents, except to the extent they saw to it that their three daughters all had [a] high school education.

An interesting story of personal growth, Dr. TL told the story of his mother spending 20 years as a public health nurse and one day deciding she wanted to be a teacher. So, she enrolled in college, doing one or two classes a semester, which led to her graduating from college at the same time as her son, approximately 10 years after starting college.

> My mother started out, as they say, a public health nurse and worked for about 20 years as a public health nurse, but then decided that she really wanted to be a teacher and so when she was in her, I guess, early 40s she decided to go back to school to get the credits that she needed to supplement what she had as a nurse, in order to then change careers and she did that at City College of New York. She started that when I was in middle school, okay, and because she was like taking one or two courses a semester for years; but as it worked out she graduated from college in the same year that I did and to her credit, she continued studying and she got her masters before I got my law degree

Dr. TL attended New York public schools and finished high school at a young age. He was advised to attend a prep school for a year before applying to college, which he did, and

eventually attended [University X]. He described his experience in high school, prep school and college as always being the only Black student in a white setting.

> The high school I went to was primarily white, the prep school was entirely white, I was the first African American to graduate. When I started as an undergraduate at university [X], there were 16 of us who started in that undergraduate class out of 1050 and there was so few of us that they distributed us across all the residential colleges so that we barely ever got to see each other . . .so, I was always the black guy in a class full of white students. I was comfortable in that role.

While in college, Dr. TL dropped out of college in his sophomore year because he felt he was losing a sense of self. He returned to Harlem for a year and worked in social services. The return home inspired him to go back to school at university [X]. Upon his return to university [X], Dr. TL finished undergrad, and then went straight through completing a master's and law degree.

> I dropped out after my sophomore year, I went back to Harlem. I did social work for a year that reinforced my sense [that] I really needed to finish college and from that point, I finished university [X] and then went straight through law school and architecture school and in 1973, I came out of [city of X] with a law degree and a master's in environmental design and I moved to Boston to work at a law firm that represented a lot of architects.

As an attorney, Dr. TL continued to think about education and the social impact one could have in the education space. He recalled his college president at [University X] that he admired for his ability to be an activist college president and someone who became a college president as a trained lawyer. Dr. TL recalled this as what pushed him into education.

> The turning point to really decide to go into education for me had taken place at university [X] during the 60s, when as an activist I encountered Yale's then president Kingman Brewster, okay and Brewster was a very active and engaged college president, who had gotten to be a president by first being a lawyer and teaching in law school and then becoming a president. So, he didn't take a traditional academic route into the presidency; he took a professional route into the presidency and I always looked upon him as a national leader, who is willing to take on all kinds of major ethical issues.

Dr. TL made the shift to education by teaching part-time at local colleges and universities. Eventually, he got an opportunity to work at Harvard on a facility project, which exposed him to the inner workings of the business side of a higher education institution. Over time, he came to realize the large universities are very much set-up to function as a research arm for the government or private industries and undergraduate students are nice to have for these research universities.

> That gave me a sense of how a university operates as a corporate entity and I came to understand it for a great many universities, certainly this is the case at university [X] where I taught, the students could disappear tomorrow morning and the work at the university continue, without skipping a beat; so a place like M. I. T. or Caltech or even Northeastern, much of the revenue is flowing in because of research, much of that research is defense related and having students around is a wonderful thing, particularly if you need graduate student research assistants, but for many universities the real work of the university is doing research for the government or for private entities.

Through his experience working with universities as a teacher, on facilities projects, and his fondness of college presidents who were socially active, he decided to pursue a college president career, but he realized that he needed a doctorate since many college presidents at the time held a doctorate degree. He went back to school part-time to earn his doctorate. He successfully applied for a college president role through a search firm and landed the role and served as a college president for 17 years.

Black people in senior leadership. For Blacks pursuing college president roles in predominantly White spaces, Dr. TL stated that the individuals have to be overly qualified and possess a strong mix of public and private sector experience**.**

> From my experience, the presidents who end up being hired in primarily white environments have to be super well qualified and what that means is that they not only need to really know and understand the internal machinations of the academic side of the house, but they really need to be well grounded in what it means to run a nonprofit institution of a scale and impact that most higher education institutions have. And, so the person who, for example, understands the intricacies of fundraising with the details of financial management around capital planning and completing building projects or the complexities of human resources management and the challenges of working in environments where some of your staff maybe unionized and all the staff aren't or who has extensive publicly oriented business expertise.

DR.TL also adds that individuals need to understand the college president role is a full time and public facing job. Therefore, when assuming the role, you are becoming a public figure and taking on all the negative aspects of public life.

> A second thing is that the individual really needs to understand that being college president is a 24/7, 365 full scrutiny job; there is no opportunity to go to a golf course and have one beer too many, because everywhere you go, you are the representative of that college or university and everywhere you go, particularly now, you never know when you're going to encounter the parent of a student, an alum, a potential donor, and of course everyone carries a camera with them. So there is no private time and it is important to understand the level of scrutiny that you face all the time and what that means is that you have to develop both a series of ethical approaches to all the work and play that you do and you need to have a diversified portfolio of work in professional skills that enable you to stand out from others that may be applying for the same position.

Finally, DR. TL recommended developing the skill sets of using private and public industries strategies to solve problems.

> Structuring your professional and personal experiences in a way that enable you to see both the public sector and private sector approaches to help people solve problems and how people strategize and then deliver on their promises.

Advice for black people pursuing a chancellor/president career. Dr. TL advised that becoming a college president does not happen overnight. Also, there is a need to develop leadership qualities that are valued outside and inside higher education, which engender trust by key stakeholders. About this, he noted,

> [I]t generally doesn't happen quickly unless you were in a business where you have a relative or someone else who can mentor you into a key position, it happens because you have distinguished yourself as much outside of higher education as within it as a leader;

and it happens because you have a leadership or management style that inspires confidence in a diverse group of stakeholders.

Given the nature of colleges and universities to be situated in a community, Dr. TL believed that a future college president must develop the ability to engage the local community in an authentic way.

> [C]olleges and universities, by and large, may expand their footprint but they are inevitably rooted in one geographic place; you can't just sort of pick up the factory and move it to Mexico because of the new tariff. So, the way you demonstrate the ability to interact with local communities and to provide benefit to those is also an essential part of providing leadership on that campus.

Changes in the college president role. Dr. TL believes the role presidency has changed due to the public scrutiny of higher education's role in student debt and influence on housing costs in surrounding neighborhoods.

> I think the key change has arisen from two factors, one is the level of public scrutiny that higher education is under now in part because of student loans and the impact universities may have on new business development or on housing development in the adjacent communities sort of those kinds of things.

The biggest shift in the president role according to Dr. TL is the way college presidents are responding to the shifting of higher education towards a focus on creating a viable revenue generating entity.

> Another sea change taking place and I would say that the most successful college presidents over the last five, six, seven, eight years have been those who have understood

> the higher education institution as an entrepreneurial entity that is able to generate multiple, parallel, sometimes reinforcing revenue streams that support the school beyond . . . sometimes including student tuition revenues.

Leaky pipeline to doctoral degree completion. Dr. TL stated that part of addressing the leaky pipeline to the presidency is a skillset or savviness in navigating politics. Especially, since academic politics are extremely challenging.

> [A]nyone pursuing a doctoral degree has to be willing to negotiate academic politics; being smart is not a sufficient criterion in and of itself to complete a doctorate. Yes, you also have to understand how you choose your mentor, how you work with them in order to get their greatest support, both while you're in school and then once you've completed, because they become your key references into your first jobs. Academic politics are the most brutal and vicious politics of any field that I've encountered, and I say that because the price is tenure, which is a job for life.

White leadership prototype theory. Dr. TL shared that he believed in the White leadership prototype theory and he indicated two approaches he used to help navigate the bias which include possessing a specific set of skill sets that are valued by his board and utilizing opportunities to share his accomplishments through third parties, in order to help solidify his credibility and value to his board.

> Yes, that tension was ever present, I dealt with it by, I would say, doing two things. One is by having a specialized skill set that enable me to anticipate and to answer questions that my board and other people who might have been doubters couldn't answer; so part of the goal was to stay a step ahead of them so in that regard my law degree proved to be

> extremely helpful, particularly, in terms of little things that other people on the board might not necessarily have thought of; for example, if every so often I would mention the details of procurement of energy for our school facilities.

In building up his credibility and value to the board, Dr. TL used subtle actions to connect his leadership to the public recognition the school received.

> [S]econd thing I did that was useful was to connect myself to national organizations that would be willing to give either the school or me recognition for the work I was doing with them, so I made a point of connecting with the [X] or with the [Y] or with a group called the [Z] in a way where every so often there would be an article that would show up in some publications somewhere that would mention me or the school and whenever that kind of PR came out, I would just gently let people know that the school had gotten recognition because I had been connected and that recognition might then lead to higher enrollments and higher revenues.

Glass cliff theory. Dr. TL believed in the glass cliff theory and has learned a few lessons from his experience. He shared a story about an American city mayor to illustrate his belief in this theory.

> Yes, that is absolutely the case, you know, would Coleman Young have become the mayor of Detroit if Detroit weren't in bankruptcy when he became mayor? Probably not.

When Dr. TL took over the president's role, his institution previously came close to losing its accreditation and was receiving a lot of bad press at the time. He was tasked with turning around a struggling institution.

> Funding was an issue, the school just barely avoided losing its accreditation; I mean just barely. It was getting some bad press locally, enrollment needed to be built, facilities needed to be improved.

As a key lesson learned from serving in a leadership role where the state of affairs is dire Dr. TL advocated for delivering on early wins fast and in areas that stakeholders feel a change. The quick wins in key areas will help with building trust with the community and trustees.

> There are a couple of things that I've learned and observed from being in that situation. One is you got to quickly identify what the core issue is, whether it's finance or enrollment, crumbling buildings, or whatever, and immediately develop and implement an affordable strategic plan to address that, so that no one could say that you have ignored the key issue and you've got to begin to put that in place within the first year.

Socialization and mentorship. Dr. TL did have the traditional path into a college president role. Thus, he did not have a mentor in the field of higher education. However, he shared that he has always been an observant person, so he found himself observing individuals he admired in roles that he found interesting. In doing so, he found a few characteristics that were important in being a leader, the characteristics were calmness, confidence, great listeners, collaborative, decisive. Moreover, being observant helped him prepare for the president role.

> I did not have a direct mentor, that is, it's not like I was a provost or a senior dean at that school; but I try to be a keen observer of the people I thought of as particular leaders in higher education, but also leaders in public affairs . . . there's certain things that were clear to me. One was that all of those leaders exuded a sense of calm and confidence that encouraged everyone around them to believe that, if things got bad, this is the person you

could follow because things were going to get better. So, it became important to reflect a sense of self assurance and confidence that was not cocky . . . you couldn't be arrogant, you had to be willing to listen, you had to turn to people and ask them: “What do you think of this” You had to be inclusive, but you also had to be decisive.

Dr. TL did not mention any specific mentors by name, but he did share that mentors were key to his success. Also, his mentors were not necessarily individuals from higher education, but individuals from other industries. Interestingly, he mentioned that having a significant other could be helpful in having a trusted partner who can give you unbiased advice.

> My mentors were not necessarily people in higher education, as such. Some were, a small handful; but even there they were as likely to be in development and facilities, as in the academic side of the house . . . So part of the mentorship comes again from having a diverse group of people who you can have confidential conversations with . . . I have been single for a long time. I was single throughout my presidency, but it helps to have a partner who is not being used by other people on campus, who can occasionally give you useful feedback and information on whether you are adhering to your values

Leadership and black identity. Dr. TL described his leadership style as collaborative, inclusive, decisive, and strategic. He credits some of his leadership style being developed through his legal training. The legal training allowed him to map out what others may say on the other side of an argument and this allowed Dr. TL to have a planned response. He described his style in the following way:

> Collaborative and inclusive . . . deferential to listening but authoritative and decisive in decision making, having my ducks lined up that is to say having logical arguments as to

why we should go in one direction or another and here my legal training was extremely helpful because it helped me to line up what the opposition would be likely to ask my client; so I always knew, almost always knew what the opposition would say or question and I was always ready with an answer.

As a leader of color in predominantly White spaces, Dr. TL found it important to find common ground, and be aware that white people do not like to be excluded.

White people don't like to feel excluded; none of us do, but yet you know most of us who are professionals of color have been excluded most of our lives, so we adjust to that. White people in positions of authority or perceived positions of authority don't like to feel excluded and therefore, it's essential that one go to them and consult with them whether or not you wind up taking their advice.

In terms of finding common ground, Dr. TL spoke to how valuable the approach of finding common ground has helped him galvanize support and move people towards a single goal.

I always found it was useful to try to find and reference back to areas of common ground that I had with white peers and staff. . . . I always knew the people who worked for me we're not going to be my friends, they were the people who work for me; and, as a team, we were going to deliver a product or service or mission . . . that meant I had to find areas where we shared certain values that, among other things, identifying either place or class or interest, intersections that we could always get back to talking about.

Dr. TR

Dr. TR was raised in a major northeastern city as the oldest of three daughters. She suggested that her younger sisters would describe her as bossy. Dr. TR was 12 years older than her youngest sister and credited going to an all-girls Catholic school as helping shape her identity as a woman. She stated, “Being in an all-girls school made me aware that girls could do anything.”

After completing high school, Dr. TR attended a major HBCU. She started out studying pre-med but took a psychology class and fell in love with the discipline. She changed her major to psychology and graduated in that field. She believed that her undergraduate experience at an historically Black institution gave her the confidence that she can do anything as a person of color. After her college graduation she went on to earn her master's degree and then a doctorate degree from an Ivy League university. On the personal side, she married in her junior year, and gave birth to her two children during her graduate career. . . . She mentioned that she had her second child while completing her doctoral dissertation.

Dr. TR described her career largely as a “trailing spouse” which is a scenario where one spouse follows the other, usually due the lucrative job offers one spouse has received. As her husband's career took the young family to new locations, Dr. TR was able to carve out a remarkable career that eventually led her to becoming a college president. The journey does not come without grit and hard work or the support of family.

> I was in the position where my husband was getting very highly paid offers and so as a psychologist, I followed his lead. . . . For example, when he received an offer of a prestigious fellowship, I applied and with the help of my advisor secured a job at a

university in the same city. Interestingly the education department at first wouldn't hire me but happily the psychology department did.

As a Black women professor, Dr. TR encountered environments where the men were not used to working with women as equals and, particularly not women of color as faculty. In one position she was among a very small number of women hired.

> Most of the faculty were white men. There was one senior woman on the faculty but she was on sabbatical that first year I got hired and they hired me and two other women, one was an African woman, and one was a white woman. I remember one time I was in the main office, they had mailboxes in the main office, one of the senior men, African-American actually, walked in and saw me getting my mail, and the only other person was the female secretary. He loudly commented, "We, have so many women here now."

She recalled another time when an older colleague berated her for not attending colloquia. She stood up for herself and made sure he knew that he could not speak to her in that manner.

> My kids were in school, my daughter was in elementary school, my son was in preschool. The department would hold the colloquium regularly at 3:30 in the afternoon. It wasn't a good time because I had to leave to pick up my daughter from school. One day, one of the senior men stopped me in the hall and began to chastise me about not getting to the colloquia. He was really yelling at me and all of the sudden, I just stopped and I said "Wait a minute. I am not your graduate student!"

Even while following her husband's career, Dr. TR served in many faculty roles and administrator roles, as she ascended to the college presidency. One particular story, illustrates her grit and persistence in attaining tenure as a professor.

> When it was time for me to come up for tenure, the men in the department hadn't paid attention to the fact that I had received three years on the tenure clock, so they had not built a case against my promotion. I think I had five publications that year, even while teaching four courses a term, and I was active in my professional association and was on a national committee and had national conference presentations. When it was time for me to apply for tenure, because of my national involvement, I was able to have several eminent outside professors write letters of support for me. Nevertheless, the department voted unanimously not to give me tenure. Although the dean voted to support me, the provost and acting chancellor also voted against me. After an internal university appeal was denied, I took my case to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. They indicated that I had more of a case as a woman, than as an African-American. Eventually, after a very tension-filled year, the administration instructed the department to vote again. This time they voted positively, and I got tenure.

Dr. TR's ascent to the presidency included faculty positions, administration positions from department chair to provost, and working at more than four higher education institutions. This culminated in her serving for seven years as a university president.

Advice for black people pursuing a chancellor/president career. Dr. TR recommended Black/African Americans with aspirations of being a college president to recognize the importance of every job interview. A person should not take the interviewing process for the president role lightly. A person must be deeply committed to the role and to the position they seek to obtain.

> I would say the first thing is you have to take every interview very seriously and you have to want it and you have to show that you want it. That means, do your homework and be prepared.

Given the nature of the president's role, Dr. TR believed you have to develop the ability to understand the breadth of information that is needed in running an institution, which is a shift from a faculty role where you are required to focus deeply on a specific content area.

> The journey is the preparation, and preparing means learning about things outside your field. Understanding faculty colleagues, their needs and pressures is a place to start. . . . As a professor, you typically focus only on your field, your students, your classes and you become very specialized. . . . However, as an administrator you have to understand areas outside your field. . . . As a dean, a provost or a president and you have to understand the needs of faculty and staff in a wide variety of areas. . . . You must care as much about what's going on in the natural sciences, as in social science, as in humanities. . . . Additionally, there are other areas and activities such as enrollment, fund-raising, athletics, finances, facilities maintenance and more.

Changes in the college president role. The college president role has changed significantly, according to Dr. TR. The biggest area of change over the last 20 years has been the contentious environment. Dr. TR spoke to the concerns of staff and administrators' mistakes going viral and the feeling of students and the community trying to catch administrators making a mistake.

> It's harder than it looks. I think it continues to get more difficult. People are more suspicious about things. There are many more confrontations. . . . People are ready to be

> critical and they're not giving each other the benefit of the doubt. Of course, this is not to say that there aren't conditions which need to change or be remedied. But people are more ready to complain and every little complaint can go viral now. She gave the example of a student calling a television help program because showers in the residence hall were not hot.

Dr. TR spoke to the small room for error faculty, staff, and administrators have in the current environment.

> Our whole society seems to be so polarized this is now spilling into the university so you have students videotaping class, trying to do "got ya" on professors. Some professors are young adults and they make mistakes, but now some are ready to catch those mistakes and hold them up for ridicule.

It is clear from Dr. TR, presidents, too, walk a fine line trying to protect their students, support their faculty, and build the reputation of their institution. Sometimes these goals are just not compatible, since the needs of faculty may not always be aligned to what students desire and vice versa.

Leaky pipeline to doctoral degree completion. Dr. TR believed a major contributing factor to the leaky pipeline is lack of adequate financial resources. Additionally, Black people still face discrimination and are not getting accepted into doctoral programs when they are qualified. She noted that minority students aren't getting the scholarships and financial assistance that they need.

> Or perhaps, they receive some aid, but the scholarships but they may have children or other obligations to their families, so they need more support than is typically offered.

Dr. TR shared a story from her past experience that illustrates the challenges Black/African-Americans face getting accepted to doctoral programs

> The other thing is that the schools don't accept them . . . I was at university [X] and I was on a committee for reviewing applicants and deciding who would be accepted into the doctoral program. One year a couple of students were put on the committee. The resulting situation was that there were white graduate students critiquing applications of Black students with comments such as, “Oh I don’t think they would be a good fit.” I was apoplectic. I was furious because I thought that current graduate students did not have the experience, the knowledge, or the right to say who would fit into the program. I ended up storming out of the meeting because these students’ opinions were overruling my opinion as a faculty member. They were rejecting African American students who were totally qualified in my opinion.

White leadership prototype theory. The White leadership prototype theory resonated with Dr. TR and she believes in the theory due to her professional experience. She articulated that she wished she had other attributes to help counter white leadership prototype, but she advocates for working with what you have and being confident.

> It's difficult but, I just tried to assert my authority. . . . I wish I had a Maya Angelou voice or some other marker that seems authoritative. I'm not 6 feet tall or imposing in any way. So, I have to work with what I have; so, I just have to be confident, be ready, be prepared and I know that I know what I'm doing.

Dr. TR recounted a past experience that a subordinate was purposely disrespectful while she was in her president role. The individual was her Chief Financial Officer and he worked to undermine her as the college president.

> I had a CFO who was a White man who was working to undermine me from the minute I walked in as president . . . a vice president for finance really has a lot of power and typically trust. You can tell people what to do but they don't have to like it. From the very beginning, this man was disrespectful. I would hold a cabinet meeting of my vice presidents, he would actually sit with his back to me. I mean it was not even subtle, I would sit at the head of the table and he would position his chair so he would have more of his back to me and face the other people at the table.

Glass cliff theory. Dr. TR has experienced the glass cliff theory entering her presidential role. The predecessor to Dr. TR left the president's office following a number of controversial stories.

> Yes, my immediate predecessor was an interim president. She was there because the relatively new president was terminated after she was arrested for drunk driving. She was just in her second year so coming to a campus with that much instability was a real challenge.

Dr. TR shared that there were additional reasons that led to her predecessor being let go in the middle of her term. An interim president was put in place to fill position for the remainder of the year. Thus, Dr, TR was appointed president becoming the fourth president in as many years. She entered a campus where faculty, staff, and students felt the lack of institutional leadership. She needed to get things back to normal and to counter the negative publicity of the past events.

Socialization and mentorship. Dr. TR prepared herself for the role by being very observant of how others conducted themselves in leadership roles. In each progressive role she was further prepared her for her next role. About this, she stated,

> [S]pecifically watching what happens, for example, how a meeting is run what kind of activities work and what doesn't work for a leader. So, at each level, I feel I learned a little more and at each level I was getting ready to go to the next level. Nowadays, it is not just the president who must get out there looking for money and recruiting students; everyone has a role to play. This is not just for the elite universities, but everyone at the comprehensive institutions and smaller institutions, faculty, everyone.

Leadership and black identity. In reflecting on her leadership style as a Black person, Dr. TR indicated her leadership style evolved as she became more confident and successful in her decision making. She described herself as someone who balances being collaborative and directive.

> I think my style probably evolved into to having more confidence in my own decisions and saying things with confidence. I try to be collaborative but I also want to direct people where I want them to go. It's kind of a balance, where I'd like to consult, I like to inform people, and keep people up with what my thinking is. In that sense, when I say collaborative, it doesn't mean that I only just go with decisions based on consensus, but I try to win people over to thinking my way.

Dr. TR described her leadership approach as a Black person was honed in predominantly white institutions, so she only knows what it is like to be a leader in predominantly white

settings. Therefore, her approach of leading has largely been in the context of navigating predominantly white institution.

> I think, except for my years at the HBCU, I've almost always been in predominantly white settings, so I don't think it's different. . . . In my experience every institution has its own culture. The only difference I can readily cite is that people in majority institutions people seem much more comfortable being casual and informal. Faculty and administrators in HBCU's, probably out of necessity, routinely use formal titles.

Black women and leadership. As a Black woman in a leadership position, Dr. TR described a mental hurdle that others have to get over to believe in her abilities, especially when it comes to decisions involving financial matters. She described her experience of always being questioned about her financial competency and the challenges of engendering trust among colleagues. About this, she spoke about

> [A]utomatically having to prove myself in business areas, in making financial decisions and with things that have financial implications for the institution. I think there's more questioning for African-American women or perhaps, just women, unless there is some proven economic credential. This lack of trust, of confidence, made it very difficult to get people to agree to develop programs and spend money. I think I had to try harder than a white male would have, to try to get people's confidence. They would not automatically believe that my idea or proposal was going to work, or that it was even a good idea

Despite the challenges, Dr. TR was able to successfully change the name of her institution, started a new school at the institution, and she felt she left her institution in a better place.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 4 I presented the stories of six current and former Black college presidents. The qualitative data they provided can help us better understand their lived experiences and trajectory of ascendency to the post of the college president. In Chapter 5, I will analyze and discuss the salient interrelationships of their stories to assist in responding to the research questions that informed this study. To do so, the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations will employ insights from the literature provided in Chapter 2 and provide my interpretation of what these stories tell us and how they can contribute to our existing knowledge of the phenomenon.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to understand the experiences of Black college presidents who have successfully navigated the hierarchical and often biased systems of higher education to become a college president at institutions where Black students are not in the majority. It has been an attempt to create a composite picture of the path forward for closing the disparity of Black college administrators in leadership positions at higher education institutions. The method used to conduct the research was a qualitative study with a critical narrative approach. I believed it was essential to capturing the lived experiences and perspectives of the six Black College presidents who participated in this study—individuals who in their own right are individuals in a rare class of college presidents. The findings from the study are discussed through focusing on the following five areas: (a) lived experience; (b) increasing diversity at the college president level; (c) shifting of the college president role (d) experiences with racial and gender bias; and (e) leadership style.

Lived Experience

In sharing their lived experience, two out of the six participants stated they went to segregated K-12 public schools. Also, three of the six were raised in the Midwest, two out of the six were raised in Northeast, and one of the six was raised in the South of the United States. The two women participants were the only subjects that attended historically black colleges and universities for undergraduate degrees. In addition, four out of six shared that they were the first in their family to graduate from college; and four out of the six never aspired to become a college president when as an undergraduate student. Most of the participants described nurturing family

members who encouraged their pursuit of going to college despite not having parents who were college graduates themselves. This brings to mind President Williams Trent's experience many years ago.

> One reason Trent was able to make the journey from sharecropper to college president was his family's encouragement to get an education and become a leader of his people. (Scales-Trent, 2016, Kindle location 67-63)

All participants spoke of having experienced some form of racial or gender discrimination in their personal or professional life. I understood this experience to illuminate that no matter personal accomplishments or status, Black people cannot escape the thralls of racial discrimination. About this, Ladson-Billings (2010) has argued, through the perspective of CRT, that racism is built into all aspects of American life which include laws, institutions, media, etc. Two of the six ascended to the college president's role from a non-traditional background, while the other four took a traditional path of faculty to administrators. Finally, interestingly, two of the women indicated that earlier in their career they had to move and find new roles due to their spouses' job prospects. Therefore, some of the shifts in their careers were influenced by their spouses' career journey. Despite the "trailing spouse" phenomenon, described by Bernhagen (2017) as the career goals of one member of a couple takes a back seat to their partner's goals and given the gender biases in the workforce, women tend to be the trailing spouse. The two women in this study were able to still rise to the college president role, despite being a trailing spouse. In fact, for one participant, her experience as a wife of a college president seems to have served her well in familiarizing herself with the role of a college president and the expectations attached to the post.

Diversifying the College Presidents' Ranks

All six of the participants shared the importance mentors played in their own personal and career journeys. The value all of the participants placed on mentorship echoes the findings of Freeman and Gasman (2014) and Holmes (2004), who argued that mentorship emerges as an important factor in leadership development of college presidents and that this is particularly evident for Black college presidents. The subjects all believed that having mentors, early on, can guide and open doors for prospective higher education faculty or administrators. Four of the six participants expressed the need for more financial support for Blacks pursuing graduate degrees. Finally, four of the six participants spoke to the need to increase the awareness of young Black students the potential career in higher education, career pathway, and salary potential of faculty and administrators in higher education, as Dr. M described,

> Well I think it boils down to awareness, critical mass of role models, and resources. I think you have to know that's going to be an important prerequisite [doctoral degree] for achieving presidency. You have to have the resources and the time to pursue a PhD.

College President Role

Four of the six subjects indicated the college president's job is a difficult and challenging role. Also, four of the six participants shared that the role calls for a generalist skill set given the current work environment requires an individual to be well versed in academics, business, politics, management, fundraising, public affairs, and crisis management. This sentiment is aligned with the research posited by Selingo et al. (2017), who argued that college leaders today are removed from classrooms and spend their time engaged in administrative duties, which

include but are not limited to Athletics, Student Affairs, Business, Alumni Relations, and Fundraising.

Four of the six subjects stated social media has influenced how the college president role has changed over the past 20 years. Social media creates a venue for bad news that may not be factual or true but can go viral. As a result, college presidents have to be prepared to respond to viral criticism emerging from social media. The views shared by the presidents are similar to those of Gardner (2016) who stated:

> This new normal has transformed the college presidency, intensifying its demands. Fueled by the breakneck pace of social media and its broad reach, controversies and protests build quickly, and campus leaders are scrambling to adapt their policies, practices, and teams to get ahead of it all.

Finally, it was clear that four of the six subjects shared in their belief that the college president's role is more external and more public-facing than ever before.

Racial and Gender Bias

All subjects shared encounters with racial bias in their personal or professional life. All subjects who identify as women indicated experiencing the negative effects of gender bias in their role or personal life. The women in the study shared that they were questioned by colleagues or subordinates in ways that they believe men are not questioned by their colleagues or subordinates. The experiences shared by the two female participants in the study are consistent with the double jeopardy phenomenon posited by Berdahl and Moore (2006), who described double jeopardy as encountering racism and sexism that is based on their gender and racial identities. Thus, the effects have a cumulative discriminatory effect on Black women.

At least half of the subjects shared similar stories of encounters in social settings with people not believing they were the college president of an institution or a senior administrator given their racial/ethnic identity. One participant in the study shared the story of receiving death threats when he accepted his first president role. Five of the six candidates concurred with the White leadership prototype theory. Dr. RC's response to the notion of White leadership prototype theory was particularly insightful,

> I didn't have to overcome it even. What I mean by that is I didn't have to overcome it because I never believed it; again, not to say that the perception is not out there, it is; but it's not a perception that I buy into.

What seems clear from this study is that this perception of self was shared by all participants, in order to believe one can be a college president despite being significantly underrepresented in the field of higher education executive leadership.

While three out of the six subjects expressed experiencing the effects of the glass cliff theory more specifically, many of the participants assumed the presidency of their organization during a difficult moment in the institution's history. This was evident in Dr. TR statement regarding the state of affairs when she took over the president role,

> I followed my immediate predecessor because the person was only there for 18 months, she got arrested for drunk driving. So that was a real challenge.

Leadership Style

All participants were conscious of their racial and gender identities in leadership roles in predominantly White spaces and had experienced some form of racial or gender discrimination in their personal or personal life. Meaning they were aware of their unique identity in a space

that overwhelmingly is inhabited by White males in higher education. Dr. S's reference to this duality or of being conscious of his racial identity in underrepresented spaces but not letting it affect one's sense of self speaks to this phenomenon,

> I am not overly sensitive to the fact that I'm an African American in any environment but I'm always knowledgeable of it.

Four out of the six subjects described their leadership style as collaborative and/or inclusive. The stories shared indicate that the participants arrived at this leadership style due to their lived experience. In that, they all come from marginalized communities and so talked about having firsthand experience of navigating the world and the higher education system as their students, faculty, and administrators with similar backgrounds. Hence, they found value in being inclusive and collaborative and they all expressed, in a variety of ways, its effectiveness in leading an organization. As such, all subjects in their own right reflected being transformative leaders, in that the very fact of being a leader of color, in some ways, signaled to the broader community that leaders of color can lead institutions and be just as successful as their White peers in doing the job. This also echoes the role of transformative leaders as described by Shields (2011), in that transformative leaders play an integral role in deep and equitable societal transformation, by reconstructing beliefs and views of marginalized communities as being knowledgeable and capable of excellence. Dr. M's statement punctuates the notion of striving for success, but also dismantling negative perceptions and illustrating through their practice what Black leaders can achieve in leadership positions:

> I think about it constantly; that I'm the first here [university x] and the second in the [university system x] and I don't want to be the last. So, you know, we have some degree

of success in some ways that we can point to and so people won't equate any negative things that might happen with the fact that there's a black president.

Conclusions and Recommendations

I would be remised not to call out that participants in the study navigated systems, institutions, and a country built on racism. As mentioned, two out of the six participants attended segregated public school systems and all participates described experiencing racial bias/discrimination in their lives. CRT explains that racism is built into all aspects of American life which include laws, institutions, media, etc. (Ladson-Billings, 2010). Therefore, the lived experiences of the participants include the all-encompassing backdrop of racism. This suggests, racism must be a prevailing factor in the underrepresentation of Black executive leaders in higher education and any solutions formed to address these issues must address racism. Furthermore, the root cause of underrepresentation is the legacy of racism and barriers such as income/wealth disparities, racial discrimination/bias, etc. are borne out of this legacy.

There is no doubt, given stories of participants in this study, that the lived experiences of Black college presidents shaped their professional goals and trajectories. Their lived experience gave them the first-hand experience of many of the students, faculty, administrators they have served, who come from similar backgrounds. In this sense, they seem to express a strong sense of empathy and a broader approach to how they measure success. Hence, their lived experience led to a leadership style that tended to be collaborative and inclusive, mirroring a transformative leadership philosophy.

The second question of this study focused on what structural and institutional practices in higher education Black college presidents identify as barriers to increasing racial/ethnic diversity

in higher education administration. Many of the participants here spoke to the need for more financial aid resources for students pursuing masters and doctoral degrees and creating more awareness among students in K-12 about this possible career pathway as they consider higher education. The thought here is that with heightened awareness more students will choose a career in higher education because they will be more familiar with the earning possibilities and career opportunities at higher education institutions.

The last focus of the study related to the institutional changes Black college presidents identify as significant, in order to increase opportunities for Black administrators who aspire to this top college leadership post in the future. It is evident from the participants' stories that mentorship was a vital game-changing factor in their trajectories. A majority of the participants in this study expressed the profound effects mentorship had on their career and how that experience led them to return the favor by mentorship others.

Recommendations

Based on the research, the following recommendations can contribute to a playbook for diversifying the college president ranks at higher education institutions.

Increase the Awareness of the Profession and Career Pathway to the College Presidency

Most of the subjects in the study indicated that becoming a college president was not an early aspiration and pursuing a master's or doctoral degree was not a goal coming out of high school. This suggests that there is a need to bring greater awareness to this career choice in higher education to students across the educational enterprise. Also, there is an opportunity to tie a career in higher education to a sense of service as similar to what we see with public school teachers and other roles in K-12 public education. An approach to help tie higher education to a

sense of service is to develop a stronger connection between K-12 and higher education. Senior administrators and faculty at higher education institutions can play an increasingly significant role in sharing their lived experience and career journey with K-12 students. K-12 students with a better understanding of the career pathways and salaries of higher education faculty and administrators is bound to result in more Black students pursuing a career in higher education.

Significantly Increase Financial Aid Resources to Graduate Students

Financial aid support for graduate school was a theme shared by the participants in the study as a major obstacle for Blacks students. It is recommended that financial aid vehicles be developed to support meeting graduate school expenses for masters and doctoral degrees. If we know that wealth and income disparities exist between Black and White students and we know there is less access to graduate school financial aid resources, then there is a need for access to graduate school financial aid resources to mirror access needs of undergraduate school financial aid resources, especially for students who demonstrate financial need that would prevent them from advancing to a doctorate—clearly, an important step in the college presidency trajectory, as expressed by all the participants. Reducing the financial burden of Black students pursuing a doctoral degree will ensure larger enrollment into doctoral programs and increase degree completion.

Disrupt Racial and Gender Bias/Discrimination on Higher Education Campuses

Participants in the study experienced racial and gender bias/discrimination in their ascent to the presidency. The gender and racial bias experienced was largely in the context of societal discriminations that manifested in their daily life as a college president. More specifically, the racial and gender biases experienced were experienced in the participants' work roles and their

private lives. Which is to say, higher education institutions can play a key role in creating an environment that disrupts racial and gender bias, becoming a refuge from racial and gender bias experienced in the broader context of society. This to say, higher education institutions need to play an influential role in creating a welcoming climate or environment for students and staff. Developing and implementing practices to disrupt gender and racial bias, such as campus climate surveys, ensuring diverse hiring committees, and embedding diversity/equity/inclusion initiatives into the fabric of the institution, must be enacted by higher education organizations. Lastly, the hiring and promotion process of senior leaders on higher education campuses should be evaluated and effective measures should be put in place to minimize racial and gender bias.

Develop Strong and Quality Mentorship Programs on Campus for Faculty/Administrators

A majority of the participants expressed the importance of mentors in their ascent to the presidency. Mentors and supporters who advocated for the college presidents in this study prepared the subjects on the ins and outs of being a college president and nudged the subjects towards a career in higher education. Higher education institutions interested in developing their workforce talent must consider developing, establishing, and adopting effective mentorship programs for Black faculty and staff. Mentorship programs for students and faculty/administrators should be embedded in work that is underway in the area of diversity/equity/inclusion. Mentorship programs for students and current faculty/administrators are important in that having an effective mentor as a Black student is just as important as having an effective mentor as faculty/administrator. Given the obstacles, Blacks have to navigate to complete college and rise in the leadership ranks in higher education, mentors serve as effective guides in helping Black individuals navigating a system wrought with racial and gender bias.

Resiliency and Persistence

This study has afforded me the unique opportunity to personally speak with six Black college presidents. If I were to summarize the mental fortitude to pursue and become a college president, I recommend that the characteristics of resiliency and persistence are key. Becoming a president or CEO in any industry is difficult, but layering on the added barriers of race, gender, and class makes the path to the presidency event more difficult. Therefore, the tools of resiliency and persistence are the most valuable tools one can wield. Also, I would add that a strong sense of self is equally important, which it seems each participant in my study had but may have attained this strong sense of self at different points in their careers.

Future Research

An area of future research related to policy and tied to diversity in senior leadership is evaluating policies that have effectively diversified hiring committees and executive recruitment firms. The functions of hiring committees and executive recruitment firms play an important role in who is hired for the college president role, so understanding policies and practices that have made these bodies more diverse should be studied. Second, a study on how aware K-12 students are of career pathways in higher education and how are higher education careers are viewed in terms of status, salary, and interest compared to other similar professions such as K-12 career pathways (e.g. teachers, principals, etc.) would be valuable knowledge. In addition, it would be useful to expand this study further along with gender, racial, and income characteristics, in that perceptions and awareness of higher education career pathways seem to be shaped by identity markers like gender, race, or income. A deeper understanding of how gender, racial, and income characteristics shape the perception or awareness of higher education career pathways could lead

to a nuanced approach to solution generation. The "trailing spouse" phenomenon was experienced by both women in the study. Thus, a study on the effects of the "trailing spouse" on the trailing partner's career and lifetime earnings may illuminate disparities by gender. Finally, a psychological study on subjects from marginalized communities who have successfully navigated a maze of bias/discrimination could lead to findings that reveal the needed mindsets to succeed in environments that are not designed for the subjects' best interests. More specifically, a study that investigates what allows subjects to persist in a difficult career pathway? How do subjects contend with the psychological triggers of lived experiences with issues of race, gender, and class?

Epilogue

Conducting this qualitative study on the Black college presidency brought me both comfort and aspiration. I say comfort because it was a relief to know that individuals with such esteem have faced similar challenges as I have faced and, yet, succeeded in making a difference. I say aspiration because they served as a beacon of what is possible. As I think about eradicating systemic oppression, I firmly believe that those who come from communities who are oppressed must be able to see themselves in a position of power and be able to relate to individuals in leadership. By doing so, we create hope and tangible actions for dismantling oppression. we cannot dismantle oppression with just hope, in that we cannot reach positions of power in an oppressive structure without action.

Through this study, I have come to understand that higher education has served many roles in America. The roles have included being an institution that builds character for the elite, shepherding the common man/woman through the industrial revolution, and a source of

innovation in the areas of technology and political policies. Higher education has also perpetuated institutional racism and gender bias. It is evident that higher education can pivot and shift its focus all the while being innovated to meet the need of the current times. Higher education has the capacity to transform its policies and practices to ensure that it does not only open its doors to diverse learners but also opens its doors to diverse senior leaders. In doing so, higher education can utilize its capacity to study a problem and develop solutions. In particular, as the students on college campuses become more diverse and higher education institutions work to become more inclusive and equity-minded, focusing on diversity in its leadership ranks is just as necessary, in order to avoid hollowness of commitment and to ensure its efforts in embracing diversity/equity /inclusion are authentic endeavors.

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