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Black Women in Higher Education Leadership: Examining Their Lived Experiences Utilizing Cross-Race and Cross-Gender Mentorship

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by

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Dedication

I dedicate this research study to one of my biggest fans, my loving and supportive husband, Gary Guidry. You are a constant depiction of what grit and grind look like, and you continue to stimulate my heart, soul, and mind, and for that, I adore you. “We” did it! I love you immensely.

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Additionally, I dedicate this research study to my mother, Joyetta Nickerson. You told me I would earn my doctorate, and I literally chuckled in your face. I guess you are the one laughing now saying, “I told you so!” Thank you for always believing in me, pushing me beyond limitations I have placed on myself, and praying for me when I just could not do it. You are the real M.V.P. I love you so very much.

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Ephesians 3:20 states, “Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” Jeremiah 29:11 states, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not evil, to give you an expected end.” Proverbs 3:5-6 states, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” First and foremost, I thank God for ordering my steps throughout this journey. God has truly kept me every step of the way!

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Abstract

Literature has suggested that mentorship is one of the most crucial and influential components for career advancement. However, Black women leaders in higher education are faced with a difficult task of selecting a mentor based on similar characteristics, which leads Black women who are seeking mentoring opportunities to select a mentor of a different race or gender. This phenomenological qualitative study was conducted to understand and describe the lived experiences of cross-race and cross-gender mentorship for a select group of Black women leaders in higher education, using Black feminist thought and intersectionality as the theoretical framework. A purposive sample of eight Black women leaders in higher education participated in in-depth interviews that were video recorded through Zoom. The collected data were transcribed and used to construct four major themes and 11 subthemes through the processes of using initial coding, in vivo coding, and descriptive coding. The major themes included the mentor's contributions, organic connections, relational experiences, and dual role. The findings from this study imply that for this select group of Black women, cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both types of mentoring were pivotal in their professional and leadership development but were not without challenges. The results of this study could encourage individuals faced with the difficulty of identifying and selecting a mentor based on the characteristics of same-race and same-gender to seek out mentors who possess other essential qualities to aid with their career and leadership development and advancement.

Keywords: Black women, Black women leaders, higher education, mentorship, mentoring relationships, cross-race mentoring, cross-gender mentoring, Black feminist thought, intersectionality

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Mentoring relationships involve rich interpersonal interactions guided by someone (i.e., mentor) who is usually in a position of power and wisdom and can effectively guide the path of a person (i.e., mentee) seeking growth and learning opportunities (Humberd & Rouse, 2016; Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016). As stated by Johnson and Ridley (2018), mentoring correlates with many personal and career outcomes, such as promotions, increased salaries, upward mobility, enhanced professionalism, increased job satisfaction, peer acceptance, reduced work anxiety, lower turnover rates, improved creativity, and healthier collaborative efforts; these advantages are beneficial for mentees, mentors, and organizations. Although it does not guarantee success, promotion, or progression, the evidence supporting mentorship has been cited as an essential component for an individual's growth and development, especially when mentors and mentees are matched on similar characteristics, such as race and gender (Gardner et al., 2014; Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016). Additionally, mentoring relationships have been a vital component of many women's professional career advancement and have received a great deal of attention in the research field, especially for those who have been able to secure a mentor based on similarities, such as race and gender (Searby et al., 2015).

However, according to Beckwith et al. (2016), Black women seeking leadership positions often lack influential mentors based on similarities such as race and gender, which contributes to the shortage of Black women in executive positions, particularly in higher education. It is noted that many Black women are highly qualified for leadership positions in higher education, but very few are granted the opportunity to serve in positions such as chancellor, vice or associate chancellor, president, provost and vice president, and dean (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Jordon, 2014; Miles, 2012; Wright & Salinas, 2017). Statistics reported by Gagliardi et al. (2017) in the

American College President Study 2017 revealed that 30% of presidents in higher education are women and only 5% of those are Black. The shortage of mentoring has been cited as a crucial reason for women's lack of advancement in leadership (Beckwith et al., 2016; Bynum, 2015; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Dunn et al., 2014), when mentor matching based on similar gender, racial, and cultural background is not always feasible (Tran, 2014). According to Hague and Okpala (2017), it is beneficial for Black women to identify prospective mentors as those who currently serve or have served as higher education administrators. These mentors will most likely be individuals from a different race or gender based on the statistics revealed by Gagliardi et al. (2017), which stated that 83% of college presidents are Caucasian, White, or White American and that the typical profile of an American college or university administrator continues to be a White male in his early 60s. It is important to examine cross-race and cross-gender mentorship for Black women leaders in higher education to understand these relationships and their impact on the mentees better.

Background

According to Hill and Wheat (2017), mentoring, whether initiated professionally or personally, is a development tool used to promote growth and enhance leadership skills and is especially important for career advancement. Research has proven that mentorship can aid in not only leadership attainment but can also provide networking opportunities (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gardner et al., 2014; Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016). However, a lack of mentoring opportunities within organizational relationships and systems leads to differential experiences for women and minorities in organizations (Miller, 2015). Due to the lack of available mentors for Black women, based on similarities such as race and gender, in higher education, some Black women have had to seek out mentorship from White men and women and Black men. However,

a review of the research literature indicates that within the last decade, no studies have addressed the lived experiences of Black women leaders in higher education regarding their utilization of cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. Additionally, cross-race and cross-gender mentoring has not been traditionally included in references to literature in the field of higher education (Grant & Ghee, 2015).

Public recognition of Black women's status is framed by professional images such as administrative assistants, directors, and aides in higher education; Black women are often framed by images such as poet, novelist, advocate, and philanthropist (Henderson et al., 2010). Generally, Black women face negative stereotypes and oftentimes end up in staff and low-level leadership positions in higher education (Combs, 2003), which minimizes their chances of advancing their careers. Negative stereotypes, particularly, can interfere with their leader behavior, which in turn can cause uncertainty and challenge their confidence and eagerness to advance into a top-level leadership position (Kark & Eagly, 2010). Therefore, much of the available research that focuses on Black women in higher education examines the negative stereotypes, barriers, underrepresentation, and challenges that tend to hinder career advancement into top-level leadership positions (Beckwith et al., 2016; Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gardner et al., 2014; Jordon, 2014; Wright & Salinas, 2017).

Black Women in Higher Education

It is notable to state that colleges and universities were created for affluent White men (Thelin, 2011), but due to the aftermath of the Civil War, Black women were granted access to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), as well as some predominantly White institutions (PWIs) as a socialization tool to help their families (Perkins, 2015). Despite the slow

progress of equal opportunity, Black women have accomplished many achievements in higher education since desegregation.

Black women have continuously earned college degrees, even surpassing their male counterparts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017); however, Black men achieve higher professional status or position within the work environment in comparison to Black women (Miles, 2012). Black women, in particular, desire more, if not equal, Black female leaders in higher education. This was shown in a 2017 study of community colleges in North Carolina, which found there was a "critical need to increase the number of African American women in top-level leadership positions" (Hague & Okpala, p. 7). Many of the participants in Hague and Okpala's (2017) study expressed delayed leadership growth due to barriers, such as discrimination, race and gender, and limited mentoring opportunities. According to researchers, one of the primary contributors to the shortage of Black women leaders in higher education is the lack of influential Black female mentors in executive positions (Beckwith et al., 2016; Bynum, 2015; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Dunn et al., 2014). Although it does not guarantee success, promotion, or progression, mentorship has been proven to be an essential component for one's growth and development, especially when mentors and mentees are matched on similar characteristics, such as race and gender (Gardner et al., 2014; Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016). A lack of available mentors makes it difficult for Black women, who aspire to be in higher education leadership, to select a mentor based on similarities, such as race and gender. Therefore, as stated by Hague and Okpala (2017), "African American women should seek out mentors by identifying individuals who are current and past top-level administrators [in higher education] to serve as mentors or sponsors" (p. 7). The selection of the identified mentors will most likely fit the description of a White American based on the statistics disclosed by Gagliardi et al. (2017).

Ragins and Cotton (1999a) echoed this notion by generally stating, “women are often faced with having to approach mentors of the other gender” (p. 940).

Cross-Race/Cross-Gender Mentorship and Black Women in Higher Education

According to Grant and Ghee (2015), “Mentors are more likely to select mentees who share the same ethnic, religious, academic, gender, and/or social backgrounds” (p. 767), which makes it difficult for Black women mentees to be selected in higher education. As a result, Black women in higher education find themselves participating in nontraditional mentoring relationships, which refers to a mutual bonding and the gratification of career needs (Grant & Ghee, 2015) that results in cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. Kent et al. (2015) found that cross-race and cross-gender mentorship to be valuable for mentees based on the ability to establish networks, secure resources, build mutual trust, increase knowledge, and navigate the tenure and promotion process. Ghosh (2014) concluded that a shared understanding must be developed and frequent interactions must take place in order to minimize misconceptions regarding cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. Additionally, cross-race and cross-gender mentoring has not been included in traditional references (Grant & Ghee, 2015), but it is said to be a successful approach that enhances Black women’s completion in a doctoral program and faculty advancement in higher education leadership at PWIs (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001; Grant & Ghee, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Black women have created a presence in higher education (Penny & Gaillard, 2006), but there continues to be a small representation of Black women leaders in higher education (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Jordon, 2014; Miles, 2012; Wright & Salinas, 2017) compared to White men and women and Black men. As stated by Penny and Gaillard (2006), “As African American

women continue to rise in the ranks of higher education administration, the need for mentorship for these women becomes ever greater. This is a slow process" (p. 196). Despite this need being identified over a decade ago, this process and the examination of mentoring for Black women in higher education leadership still need attention. Much of the more current research addresses significant barriers, such as the lack of mentorship based on gender and race faced by Black women leaders in higher education, as well as successful strategies, such as leadership programs, employed by Black women in higher education leadership (Beckwith et al., 2016; Davis, 2009; Gardner et al., 2014; Lim et al., 2015). However, there is a lack of research exploring the experiences of Black women with cross-race and cross-gender mentors and how these relationships are formed, carried out, and possibly beneficial for Black women who have attained a leadership position in higher education.

A lack of available mentors makes it difficult for Black women, who aspire to be in higher education leadership, to select a mentor based on similarities, such as race and gender. The experiences of Black women leaders in higher education and the use of cross-race and cross-gender mentorship are important to explore because it will contribute to the literature that examines Black women's experiences with mentoring, as well as the individual journeys and perceptions that are crucial to Black women's leadership growth.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand and describe cross-race and cross-gender mentorship for a select group of Black women leaders in higher education. Black women who have been able to reach a dean's position or higher in higher education leadership and have utilized cross-race and cross-gender mentorship had valuable insight for other aspiring Black women leaders in higher education who are possibly faced with similar

challenges. Black feminist thought and intersectionality were used to frame my inquiry by examining the lived experiences of Black women leaders in higher education and the possibility of cross-race and cross-gender mentorship creating opportunities that enabled them to overcome the challenges and barriers that are associated with being a Black woman within the academy.

This study featured in-depth interviews via video conferencing with Black women in higher education leadership positions (dean or higher), who have directly experienced cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. The collected data were used to construct themes through the processes of using initial coding, in vivo coding, and descriptive coding. Each of these coding passes was useful for analyzing the data, as they helped to provide awareness and expound the meaning, structure, and essence of the phenomenon, their lived-experiences (Patton, 2015), and provided insight for other Black women leaders in higher education.

Research Questions

RQ1: How does a select group of Black women in higher education leadership describe their lived experiences of cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring?

RQ2: What features or characteristics of cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships have a select group of Black women in higher education found beneficial or detrimental to their careers?

RQ3: What mentor and mentee behaviors and practices do a select group of Black women leaders in higher education view as most influential in their cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships?

Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are provided to assist the reader in understanding their use and application.

Barriers. Factors that hinder Black women's ability to engage in career advancement or upward mobility (i.e., gender and racial discrimination, lack of mentoring relationships, and negative stereotypes; Beckwith et al., 2016).

Black women. American women of African descent or any American woman who identifies as being of African descent; used interchangeably with African American women due to other researchers use (Grant & Ghee, 2015; Seo & Hinton, 2009).

Career advancement. Climbing the corporate ladder and gaining upward mobility of one's career, moving from entry-level positions to top-level leadership positions (Combs, 2003).

Higher education leadership. Positions that are considered to be a pinnacle within two- and four-year institutions used interchangeably with top-level positions (i.e., chancellor, vice or associate chancellor, president, provost and vice president, and dean; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Jordon, 2014; Miles, 2012; Wright & Salinas, 2017).

Low-level position(s). Positions that fall into a first-line supervisor of a division within two- and four-year institutions (i.e., director, manager, registrar, and coordinator; Seo & Hinton, 2009).

Mammy/mammy-sapphire. A historical stereotype and negative image created by Whites during slavery used to justify the economic abuse of Black women, which continued postslavery, thus promoting a racist and dehumanizing belief that Black women are only fit to be domestic servants (Henderson et al., 2010; Collins, 2000; Walkington, 2017).

Mentor. An individual in a position of power and wisdom and can effectively guide the path of another person who is seeking growth, career advancement, and learning opportunities (Johnson & Ridley, 2018).

Top-level position(s). Positions that are considered to be a pinnacle within two- and four-year institutions, used interchangeably with higher education leadership (i.e., chancellor, vice or associate chancellor, president, provost and vice president, and dean; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Jordon, 2014; Miles, 2012; Wright & Salinas, 2017).

Chapter Summary

The introduction for this study provided initial insight regarding mentorship and its benefit in advancing professionals' careers, especially when mentors and mentees are matched on similar characteristics, such as race and gender. However, plenty of evidence has revealed that Black women are unlikely to secure a mentor based on these similarities and, as a result, have had to utilize cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. Although this is a phenomenon that has been occurring for Black women, there do not appear to be any studies within the past decade researching the lived experiences of Black women leaders in higher education regarding their utilization of cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of a select group of Black women in higher education leadership who utilize or have utilized cross-race and cross-gender mentorship.

Chapter 1 also introduced the use and reasoning for a phenomenological qualitative approach, which allows for the use of interpersonal interviews to ask open-ended questions and probe for in-depth responses about participants' lived experiences, perceptions, barriers, and knowledge as a Black woman in higher education leadership having participated in cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. Qualitative studies not only contribute to existing literature, but

they also describe experiences, themes, and stories for marginalized groups by investigating a significant phenomenon that leads to in-depth analysis and understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Chapter 2 introduces the conceptual framework and provides a comprehensive review of Black women in higher education, organizational leadership programs, and mentorship. The chapter provides useful insight for understanding Black women in higher education leadership and the examination of cross-race and cross-gender mentorship.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review for this study is focused on and divided into four major sections: Black feminist thought and intersectionality, Black women in higher education, organizational leadership programs, and mentorship in higher education. Although this dissertation research focuses on Black women in higher education leadership and their experiences with cross-race and cross-gender mentorship, it is important to promote an understanding of the content by examining the theoretical framework of Black feminist thought and intersectionality and review Black women's presence in higher education, followed by a detailed insight into organizational leadership programs and mentorship in higher education. Utilizing Abilene Christian University's online library, the following key terms were used to conduct the search: Black women in higher education leadership, cross-race mentorship, cross-gender mentorship, Black feminist thought, and Black women's lived experiences and mentorship.

Black Feminist Thought

Black feminist thought and intersectionality is the theoretical framework for this study. Created by Patricia Hill-Collins in 1989, Black feminist thought is a standpoint grounded in the experiences of Black women's everyday struggles (Alinia, 2015). According to Alinia (2015),

> Black feminist thought exposes the way that domination is organized and operates in various domains of power. It also shows the path of struggle and to empowerment, while at the same time highlighting the challenges and difficulties in combating intersecting oppression, since the multipositionality of social agents, on the one hand, and the simultaneity of multiple and intersecting sites of oppression, on the other, make the relationship between domination and resistance highly complex. (pp. 2334–2335)

An assortment of embarrassments and humiliations Black women face has been examined in the context of higher education (Grant & Ghee, 2015). Therefore, Black feminist thought is relevant to the examination of Black women leaders in higher education and the utilization of cross-race and cross-gender mentorship as it aligns with the goal of allowing Black women administrators to share their lived experiences and reveal their truth. Black women in academia are continuously expressing their significance and value as educated and qualified individuals but are still faced with selecting the voice and stance they will demonstrate once heard and accepted (Grant & Ghee, 2015). Collins (2000) stated,

> exploring six distinguishing features that characterize Black feminist thought may provide the common ground that is so sorely needed both among African American women and between African American women and all others whose collective knowledge or thought has a similar purpose. (p. 22)

The six distinguishing features posited by Collins (2000) include,

1. Regardless of where Black women reside, they experience intersecting oppressions that produces similar results.
2. Black feminist thought appears from a strain connecting encounters and beliefs; however, not all Black women share and interpret their lived experiences in the same manner.
3. “Black feminist thought concerns the connections between U.S. Black women’s experiences as a heterogeneous collectivity and any ensuring group knowledge or standpoint” (p. 29).
4. Black feminist thought promotes the vital contributions of Black women intellectuals; “Black women intellectuals are neither all academics nor found primarily in the Black middle class but are those who contribute to Black feminist thought as a critical social

theory" (Collins, 2000, p. 14) and are able to create and provide a platform for Black women's experiences to be revealed.

5. Black feminist thought focuses on the significance of change; "as social conditions change, so must the knowledge and practices designed to resist them" (Collins, 2000, p. 39).
6. Black feminist thought concerns its relationship to other projects to promote equity that are not solely concerned with Black women or Black women issues.

Black feminist thought as a critical social theory brings an awareness of intersectionality and examines experiences and contributions to empowering Black women, especially Black women leaders in higher education.

Intersectionality

Within Black feminist thought is intersectionality, the connection of gender, class, and race, which was introduced by Kimberlè Crenshaw (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). Crenshaw (1989) introduced this term over 30 years ago "to describe how Black women's experiences of the unique combination of racism and sexism were obscured by treating race and sex discrimination as separate matters in U.S. law and in feminist and antiracist activism" (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017, p. 502). In a recent interview with Steinmetz (2020) of *TIME* magazine, Crenshaw clarified the following regarding intersectionality and its modern-day use of the term:

> These days, I start with what it's not, because there has been distortion. It's not identity politics on steroids. It is not a mechanism to turn White men into the new pariahs. It's basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality, or immigrant status. What's

> often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts. (p. 82)

In her interview with Steinmetz (2020), Crenshaw continued to advocate for the fact that "intersectionality is simply about how certain aspects of who you are will increase your access to the good things or your exposure to the bad things in life" (p. 82). Intersectionality is generally used as an analytic tool to address discriminatory barriers faced by marginalized individuals (Collins & Bilge, 2016). According to Stitt and Happel-Parkins (2019), "When intersectionality is ignored, researchers discount the experiences of individuals who may be affected by more than one of these categories, thereby silencing their voice by not understanding the nuanced ways that different identity categories influence lived experiences" (p. 63). By ignoring the intersection of race, class, and gender, generally, Black women have had to choose between one of the categories they want to primarily identify with because society has crucified those who have stood before the masses and demanded to be known as both Black and female (Stitt & Happel-Parkins, 2019). By forcing Black women to stand in this crossroad and choose, many Black women continue to experience oppression and miss opportunities due to the lack of understanding of how race, class, and gender overlap (Lewis et al., 2017). As it relates to mentoring, intersectionality can provide insight into how race and gender effect mentors' identities and how they mentor mentees (Mondisa, 2014).

The advances of Black feminist thought and intersectionality have disclosed Black women's distinctive experiences of exclusion, oppression, resistance, discrimination, and empowerment between self, society, and social structures (Alinia, 2015; Grant & Ghee, 2015; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). Black feminist thought explores the intersection of social identities and how Black women examine their lived experiences while eliminating stereotypes and biases

that create barriers associated with oppression (Grant, 2012). Research has shown that Black women do not experience race, class, gender independently, but that these categories are interwoven and act as one barrier that has suppressed Black women's ability to break through (Crenshaw, 1989; Grant, 2012) the glass ceiling (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

Black Women in Higher Education

Mosley (1980) conducted one of the earliest studies published on the experiences of Black women leaders in higher education. Based on her research, she found that Black women leaders were "an endangered species" at PWIs (Mosley, 1980, p. 308). Since Mosley's (1980) study, Black women have been able to evolve academically, which has provided them with the educational qualification for most leadership positions in higher education. Garibaldi's (2014) research demonstrates how women of all racial groups have made significant strides in their academics, as well as in attaining a higher education degree. Particularly, Black women in higher education are not only making notable progress based on participation and degree attainment, but also, they are surpassing their male counterparts in those areas (Bartman, 2015; Garibaldi, 2014). However, the road to these achievements has not always been accessible or easy to navigate.

History of Black Women in Higher Education

Historically, Black women have suffered the most in roles such as student, faculty, and leader regarding higher education and have not always received the equity and opportunity it offers. Although Mary Jane Patterson, the first Black woman to overcome barriers in higher education, earned her college degree in 1862 (Baumann, 2010), it would take another 25 years before a wave of notable Black women broke the barrier and reached this pinnacle (Perkins, 1998). Black women earning a college degree occurred in northern regions of the U.S. at women's seminaries, such as Seven Sisters colleges; however, these institutions were not aware

of their incoming students' ethnicity until after they arrived (Perkins, 1998, 2015). The reason for Black women attending Seven Sisters colleges stems from the struggle of a political and human rights era for Black people (Perkins, 1998). Although several cases, such as *Murray v. University of Maryland* (1936), *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938), and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), contributed to the desegregation of schools, it did not end the segregation among individuals (Perkins, 1998). The Black women, such as Harriett Alleyne Rice, Alberta Scoot, Otelia Cromwell, Hortense Parker, Jessie Fauset, Anita Florence Hemmings, and Zora Neale Hurston, who were able to complete their higher education degrees at the Seven Sisters colleges, did not do so without suffering. According to Perkins (1998), discrimination in housing was a constant problem for Black female students at every Seven Sisters institution, even when finally granted the opportunity to live on campus. However, these women remained steadfast, graduated, and were able to be set apart from other Black women during their time as "it gave them the freedom, exposure, and opportunity to prove themselves intellectually on the same basis as Whites and opened a wider range of careers, including medicine, science, and law" (Perkins, 1998, p. 108).

Representation of Black women professionals in higher education is largely seen in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Bartman, 2015). However, "the exact number and percentage" (Harley, 2008, p. 20) of Black women professionals in predominantly white institutions (PWIs) continues to vary depending on the source and data collection year, and PWIs continue to hire the first Black women in their history (Harley, 2008). For example, Tracey L. Meares joined Yale Law School as the first Black woman to ever join their faculty in 2007 (Harley, 2008). Black women are continuously striving to be granted positions, such as a faculty member, at PWIs, but are often looked upon as the "maids of academe" (Harley, 2008, p. 20) by

placing Black women in roles that can mark the box for diversity requirement checklists. According to Henderson et al. (2010), Black women in higher education are often given diversity-related tasks and fill the role of being the voice of the minority viewpoints on committees, which result in additional duties, known as the "dirty work," that are not taken on by most of their White colleagues. Walkington (2017) echoed this notion by stating that Black women faculty are expected to mentor Black students more than their White and male colleagues, which leads to overextension and exhaustion due to the imbalanced ratio of Black women faculty to Black students; this demand impacts their ability to complete their tenure requirements in a prompt manner. In other words, since there are more Black students on campus than Black women faculty, Black women faculty have to simultaneously complete all other required tasks and uphold the responsibility of having a higher number of mentees compared to their male counterparts and White colleagues.

Leadership for Black women in higher education can be traced back to 1903 when Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune became the founding president of Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls, later known as Bethune-Cookman College and was the only Black female president until 1955 (Jackson & Harris, 2005). In 1956, higher education officially received their second Black female college president as Dr. Willa Beatrice Player was appointed president of Bennett College for Women (Jackson & Harris, 2005). However, it was not until 28 years later that a Black woman would become a college president. In 1984, Dr. Yvonne Taylor was appointed as the new president at Wilberforce College in Ohio. Although these appointments were not an equal representation of higher education leadership, Black women continued to make slow but steady strides in attaining college presidency positions. From 1974 to 1992, the following women reached the pinnacle in higher education by earning a presidency

position and at the specified institution: Dr. Mable McLean, Barber-Scotia College; Dr. Johnetta Betsch Cole, Spelman College; Dr. Gloria Dean Randle Scott, Bennett College for Women; and Dr. Niara Sudarkasa, Lincoln University (Jackson & Harris, 2005). However, in 1978, Dr. Jewel Plummer Cobb became the first female to reach the final candidacy round for the president of Spelman College, but was not appointed to the position (Jackson & Harris, 2005). This created much-needed dialogue because the position went to a Black male and the community, alumnae, faculty, staff, and student body desired a Black female to be appointed at the all-female institution (Jackson & Harris, 2005).

In addition to the Black women who have left historical marks as college presidents, Lucy Diggs Slowe also broke barriers by being the first Black woman dean at Howard University in Washington, D.C. (Perkins, 1990, 1996, 2015). Slowe became an advocate for career advancement and strongly believed that Black women played a vital role in leadership, which lead to the formation of two significant organizations for the promotion of Black women with a college education: the National Association of College Women (NACW) in 1910 and the National Association of Women's Deans and Advisors of Colored Schools (NAWDACS) in 1929 (Perkins, 1990). Through these organizations, Slowe was able to create opportunities for Black women to be able to develop the skills and knowledge needed for leadership opportunities (Rasheed, 2012).

Barriers & Challenges of Black Women in Higher Education

Research indicates that Black men and women still lag behind in leadership attainment percentages in American higher education and oftentimes face racial discrimination and lack the same opportunities as their White counterparts. Gagliardi et al. (2017) reported a high percentage of college presidents fitting the category of being an older, White male. The challenge in

attaining a leadership position for Black women may not stem from being incapable or unqualified but rather from the attitudinal barriers present within the mindset of chief administrators (Cox, as cited in Palmer & Johnson-Bailey, 2008). Gasman et al. (2015) unveiled an encounter between Amy Gutmann, a White woman and the president of the University of Pennsylvania, and a group of distinguished Black faculty that challenged her academic administrator hiring record and the lack of attentiveness to diversity. Gutmann, in her defense, made a claim about the lack of qualified individuals to fill these positions (Gasman et al., 2015). Gasman et al. (2015) stated the following:

> Quite often, the word *qualified* is used as a euphemism, which allows people to ignore the need for diversity and thus discriminate in hiring. To understand the way qualified is used more fully, consider the phrase 'the neighborhood is changing.' At this point in American history, most educated people understand that this phrase is a euphemism for 'too many Black people [or other people of color] are moving into the neighborhood.' Oftentimes, the word qualified does not actually pertain to qualifications but instead to *fit*, with upper-level administrators assessing candidates on the likelihood that they will be pleasant in social situations and hold similar intellectual and cultural views. (pp. 1–2)

Black women are more likely to experience this type of discrimination based on race, gender, social class, and prejudgments (Davis, 2009) even though they are as educationally qualified for these leadership positions in higher education.

One major credential for leadership positions in higher education is an advanced degree (i.e., master's or doctorate degrees). Gasman et al. (2015) indicated that earning an advanced degree is customary for fulfilling executive positions in higher education, yet, despite a substantial increase in the number of Black women with advanced degrees, they remain

marginalized in higher education leadership. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, between 2013 and 2014, Black women earned 70% of master's degrees and 64% of all doctorate degrees, compared to their Black male counterparts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Although this data confirms that Black women earn more college degrees compared to their Black counterparts, according to Miles (2012), Black men have a significantly higher professional rank than that of Black women. Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) stated that there is current gender bias because society associates men with being natural leaders due to their dominance and assertive masculine traits. Therefore, Black men may only face racial discrimination; however, Black women must overcome both racial and gender discrimination. The absence of Black women in top-tier positions preserves the dominant male culture in leadership, and more Black women need to occupy leadership positions in order to inspire Black women to top-level leadership positions (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

Workplace discrimination has also been identified as a contributing factor that hinders the increased visibility of Black women in higher education (Walkington, 2017). However, workplace discrimination is central to the understandings of Black women in higher education, including female leadership styles, which are viewed as facilitative and collaborative, whereas male leadership styles are viewed as "command and control" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 173). Although both forms of leadership are important, society still appeals to the masculine style of leadership (Gagliardi et al., 2017). It is far more complex when a Black woman leads with passion and is invested because she will be perceived as problematic and highly opinionated. Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) argued that White women are able to undoubtedly focus entirely on gender biases and dismiss the recognition of racial discrimination since they tend to identify as the same race of most male leaders. On the other hand, Black

women are faced with overcoming the prejudices of being both Black and female, which operates as a site of intersectionality, and have to navigate their identities in order to advance their career in higher education.

Another challenge Black women in higher education face are the historical stereotypes, such as the Mammy-sapphire continuum of existence (Henderson et al., 2010; Walkington, 2017); being labeled as incompetent, intellectually inferior, and hostile (Hall et al., 2012); barriers, such as lack of privilege compared to their White counterparts (Henderson et al., 2010; Shields, 2012); and the distinct realities that differ for Black women, which are difficult for them to overcome. Due to these stereotypes and barriers, Black women are limited to administrative assistant positions and lower-level leadership positions (Blake-Beard, 1999), such as managers and directors, and are still underrepresented in mid- to upper-level leadership positions, in comparison to Black men (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Early images of Black women in America portray Black women as the Mammy, which was created to validate White people's commercial mistreatment of Black women during slavery, which continued postslavery (Walkington, 2017). Later, "Sapphire" was added to Mammy's label because of Black women being identified as welfare queens, matriarchs, angry, threatening, and unintelligent (Henderson et al., 2010). Placing emphasis on welfare queens and unintelligence, Black women have been carrying these historical, yet negative, images since the 19th century (Harley, 2008; Henderson et al., 2010). Daufin (as cited in Wilson, 2012) explained how some White men and women, including students, can only imagine Black women as servants, caretakers, and aides, which in turn gives them the inability to accept and adjust to Black women in authoritative positions, such as faculty members and leaders. Due to these stereotypes and conditions that were set before Black women, it has created a challenge for Black women to connect with White men and

women, whether they be supervisors, managers, colleagues, students, or neighbors. These images do not present Black women as being intellectual and competent enough to advance (Henderson et al., 2010). Rather, they present Black women as fillers for less valued positions in higher education (Henderson et al., 2010).

Organizational Leadership Programs

Black women have faced barriers and challenges that have caused many hardships that are beyond their control; however, these hardships did not stop their will and determination to succeed and gain higher positions. Some Black women have been able to achieve leadership positions by enhancing their skills through organizational leadership development programs. Gardner et al. (2014) recommended additional studies are needed to encourage higher education institutions to find ways to be more inclusive, welcoming, and actively engaged in multicultural diversity efforts by implementing leadership development programs, where mentorship is integrated, with respect to minorities. The implementation of organizational leadership programs with mentoring components, specifically for Black women, is pivotal in their professional and leadership development path (Gardner et al., 2014). Ensuring such opportunities are available can serve as a bridge for reducing discrimination and enhancing Black women's chances of obtaining a leadership position (Davis, 2009; Evans & Cokley, 2008; Lim et al., 2015; Palmer & Johnson-Bailey, 2008; Patton & Harper, 2003). It is important to note that organizational leadership development programs with combined mentoring opportunities committed to the progression of minority women are more necessary than ever to tackle the obstacles facing today's institutions of higher learning (Teague & Bobby, 2014). What helps create important networking and mentorship opportunities often can be found through organizational leadership development programs (Gardner et al., 2014). Existing literature implies that informally

developed mentoring relationships are more effective than formally assigned relationships (Ragins & Cotton, 1999b). Organizations can increase opportunities for informal mentorship to take place by collecting a pool of prospective mentors and mentees, then connecting these individuals through trainings, specifically those that focus on diversity issues and best practices for diversified mentoring (Ragins & Cotton, 1999a).

Organizational leadership development programs designed to meet the needs of Black women leaders are essential to specifically address the challenges Black women face in being able to secure a mentor, which in return can increase their visibility in higher education leadership. White (2014) opined, "The greatest need and challenge for women's leadership development—as in higher education itself—is access. Particularly acute is the need for organizational leadership development for women faculty and administrators of color and those serving minorities and first-generation college students" (p. 92). According to Davis (2009), institutions can advance their mission and diversity and inclusion policies by devoting significant resources to closing the mentoring gap and constructing leadership programs. Sulpizio (2014) stated at the Women's Leadership Academy in the Department of Leadership Studies at the University of San Diego, inclusive programs have been created to advance women leaders through pioneering approaches, such as mentor pairing based on career goals rather than humanistic characteristics to leadership development. Sulpizio (2014) continued by revealing that the programs are based on sampling research from different disciplines and businesses. As the programs continue to grow, program developers have been able to adjust the programs based on more current and applicable research, which continues to be exclusively created for women in higher education leadership or aspiring to be in higher education leadership (Sulpizio, 2014). Institutions can benefit from the approach that the University of San Diego has taken by

constructing organizational leadership development programs with respect to Black women and creating content based on lived experiences, leadership identity and theory, networking and mentoring, and forward-thinking practices that are most relevant and useful for them.

Literature has confirmed that organizational leadership development programs, including mentoring, are essential to increasing career advancement. According to Kutchner and Kleschick (2016), mentoring is a powerful source and analytical process in career and personal growth. Mentorship empowers a more qualified individual to transfer knowledge, formally or informally, which can benefit both the mentor and the mentee by sharing new perspectives on various ideas (Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016; Palmer & Johnson-Bailey, 2008). For example, Baby Boomers are essential providers to organizational leadership development programs that include mentoring since they hold a wealth of knowledge that can be useful to mentees. Leubsdorf (as cited in Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016) noted that Baby Boomers, specifically those born after 1960, would not reach full social security eligibility until 2031, but economic instability may mean that these individuals may have to work longer, thus providing more opportunity for knowledge transfer. Higher education institutions that take advantage of shared knowledge through mentoring are utilizing a vehicle for filling leadership gaps that may be a result of unforeseen circumstances (Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016).

Mentorship

Mentorship involves rich interpersonal interactions guided by someone (i.e., mentor) who is usually in a position of power and wisdom and can effectively guide the path of a person (i.e., mentee) seeking growth and learning opportunities (Humberd & Rouse, 2016; Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016). Although many individuals intentionally seek out potential mentors to guide them, mentoring relationships often develop in unintentional ways (Hardcastle, 1988; Penny &

Gaillard, 2006), such as networking, organic connections, and dual roles. Career or instrumental mentoring, defined as focusing on the skills and knowledge that are crucial for effective work performance; sponsorship, defined as active advocacy and provides open access to professional networks; and expressive or psychosocial mentoring, which provides emotional support and encourage, have all been proven to be associated with increased self-efficacy and positive career outcomes (Curtin et al., 2016). Many mentoring relationships are comprised of more than one mentor for a mentee, providing a wide range of guidance, experience, sponsorship, and support for mentees who are seeking career advancement (Brown, 2005; Curtin et al., 2016; Evans & Cokley, 2008; Scanlon, 1997). According to Johnson and Ridley (2018), mentoring correlates with many personal and career outcomes, such as promotions, increased salaries, upward mobility, enhanced professionalism, increased job satisfaction, peer acceptance, reduced work anxiety, lower turnover rates, improved creativity, and healthier collaborative efforts. These advantages are beneficial for mentees, mentors, and organizations; however, they are not without barriers.

Barriers to mentorship exist for mentors, mentees, and organizations. Along with the benefits, being aware of the obstacles can yield a proactive approach rather than a reactive approach. Although not desired, researchers have identified the following barriers to mentoring: personality, competing demands, time restraints or availability, lack of formal training, and unrealistic expectations (Cross et al., 2019). Additionally, Tran (2014) posited the following barriers: the assignment of a mentor may not always transform into successful mentoring relationships, and mentoring relationships oftentimes neglect cultural, emotional, and personal support.

Mentoring Characteristics, Behaviors, and Practices

Mentees tend to prefer proven characteristics, such as the same race and gender, when selecting a mentor (Gardner et al., 2014). However, Hardcastle (1988) concluded some time ago that mentees are also attracted to mentors who are honest, wise, caring, and dedicated to their professions. Additionally, high expectations, sponsorship, and having a sense of humor were also attractive characteristics for mentees (Hardcastle, 1988). Penny and Gaillard (2006) opined that mentees should look for mentors who have the ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses, while Shea (1994) stated that mentors should be able to encourage and motivate them to: (a) develop professionally; (b) be available, especially when a mentee is in need; (c) be supportive and transparent; (d) be able to maintain consistent contact; (e) show mentees new approaches; (f) listen with empathy; (g) deliberately build a relationship; (h) be informative and aware of existing or emerging opportunities; and (i) be reflective and willing to disclose their own experiences. Mentors, to ensure a productive relationship, can also seek mentees who are: (a) willing to listen, learn, and grow; (b) realistic in their expectations; (c) open to feedback; (d) attentive to the plan; (e) willing to communicate openly; and (f) able to recognize mutual respect, trust, and committed to their own development (Shea, 1994). Penny and Gaillard (2006) stated:

> One of the most important aspects of a good mentoring relationship is to meet on a regular basis—at least once a month. Mentors and mentees cannot develop a good relationship if they don't get to know each other. Therefore, they should take and make time to meet. The mentor will know when the mentoring relationship should come to a close based on the progress of the mentee. (p. 196)

Penny and Gaillard (2006) continued to explain how mentees need to have a plan and should always be prepared for mentoring meetings because "it is frustrating for the mentor to ask the

mentee what she thinks and hear her say, 'I don't know'" (p. 196). In return, mentors should identify developmental needs and provide proper guidance in those areas, but most of all, the greatest characteristic, behavior, and practice of a successful mentoring relationship is trust (Penny & Gaillard, 2006).

Chan et al. (2015) echoed the findings of the past literature presented by Hardcastle (1988), Penny and Gaillard (2006), and Shea (1994), and were able to categorize these characteristics and behaviors into individual, relationship, and institutional/professional/societal dimensions and concluded that the functions within each dimension are reciprocated behaviors in mentoring relationships. Table 1 exhibits Chan et al.'s (2015) dimensions, functions, and mentor practices. Additionally, Johnson and Ridley (2018) highlighted many of the same approaches and characteristics presented in the table, including: (a) accessibility; (b) spend time with mentees; (c) identify mentees' talents and strengths; (d) listen thoughtfully; (e) recognize and affirm dreams and aspirations; (f) model excellence and expectations; (g) instill confidence; (h) speak highly of one another; (i) guide, direct, and provide opportunities; (j) be open to discussing and exploring mentee concerns and difficulties; (k) validate mentees' experiences; (l) provide exposure and promote visibility; (m) challenge mentees with demanding assignments, but avoid demands that exceed their performance capabilities; (n) nurture creativity; (o) address public perceptions; (p) model humility and be personable; (q) respect and safeguard privacy; (r) practice cultural humility; (s) define boundaries; (t) carefully consider the match; (u) schedule periodic reviews and evaluations; (v) appreciate and honor gender differences; (w) provide sponsorship; (x) shape new behaviors; (y) capitalize on teachable moments; (z) embrace humor; (aa) be dependable; (bb) establish measurable goals; (cc) be trustworthy; and (dd) accept endings.

Table 1

Dimensions, Mentor Functions, and Mentor Practices

Dimension	Mentor function	Mentor practices
Individual	Providing support, coaching, and resources for individual professional and career development	Discussing possible careers, goals, and dreams Building protégés skills and providing opportunities in research, teaching, counseling, writing, publishing, presenting, editing, and reviewing Providing quality feedback on student work Assisting protégés with planning and crafting curriculum vitae Writing detailed letters of recommendation Affirming and building protégés' confidence
Relationship	Building trust and rapport within the relationship	Talking about cultural differences Listening Having a holistic understanding of protégés that includes their racial/ethnic/cultural identities Maintaining good communication practices Self-disclosing when appropriate Using appropriate humor Acknowledging limitations and mistakes Giving small gifts to support protégés' careers Behaving with integrity and staying true to their word
Institutional, professional, and societal	Providing protection	Protecting when issues of race, discrimination, and racism occur Providing support for acculturative stress and coping
	Providing validation	Making positive remarks, expressing confidence in protégés Empowering protégés and changing negative beliefs about their capabilities; providing reassurance that they belong in the profession Writing letters of recommendation Nominating protégés for awards Providing emotional support
	Building supportive networks	Introducing protégés to influential people to build community/family
	Providing access to the inside story	Giving advice on negotiating unwritten rules Being available and accessible Giving time Being proactive Giving protégés new opportunities within and outside academia Role modeling and coaching Expanding vision of protégés Providing financial assistance and support

Note. Adapted from "Mentoring Ethnic Minority Counseling and Clinical Psychology Students: A Multicultural, Ecological, and Relational Model," by A. Chan, C. Yeh, and J. Krumboltz, 2015, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *62*(4), p. 596 (https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cou0000079).

In addition to the behaviors and practices presented, many mentees secure more than one mentor in order to experience all that mentorship has to offer. Having multiple mentors has been proven to provide a wide range of development opportunities and support for mentees who desire guidance as they climb the leadership ladder (Brown, 2005; Curtin et al., 2016; Evans & Cokley, 2008; Scanlon, 1997). Over two decades ago Scanlon (1997) concluded that women who had several mentors experienced extreme value in attaining their goals. Almost 20 years later Commodore et al. (2016) echoed that conclusion by asserting that having a variety of mentors with diverse backgrounds are beneficial for the mentoring experience. Mentees should select mentors at their current institution to help navigate and understand their policies, as well as other institutions and different organizations, so that they are knowledgeable based on a variety of unique circumstances (Commodore et al., 2016).

Dual Role Mentorship

Mentors often do more than provide guidance, sponsorship, and growth for their mentees; many mentors also serve in an additional role such as professor, colleague, or supervisor (Boswell et al., 2017), which produces some unique outcomes for mentees. Scanlon (1997) cautioned against having a supervisor serve as a mentor, regardless of gender, due to the danger that the mentor might become more of a friend and in return jeopardize their jobs when challenges and conflict arise. Meeuwissen et al. (2019) found that multiple-role mentoring relationships experienced conflict; however, they highlighted that the conflict was relatively linked to lack of trust, workplace-based assessment, and having to judge secondary information provided by the mentee. Additionally, it is the thought that a mentor serving in a dual role might provide biased feedback and "serve as a gatekeeper for the profession" (Boswell et al., 2007, p. 5). However, researchers have revealed that dual role mentorship does provide beneficial

outcomes. Pan et al. (2011) concluded that mentors who also serve as a supervisor are well-informed of their mentees' career goals and aspirations and are better equipped to provide the opportunities needed within the workplace to enhance their skills and expose mentees to needed networks. As stated by Evans (2019), "In the dual roles of supervisor and mentor, supervisors may have the power to assign leadership roles where other mentors could not. By showing confidence in their employees' abilities, supervisors can support and inspire their leadership skills" (p. 404). Since supervisors who also serve as mentors have an impact on decision making processes, supervisors as mentors can properly guide mentees and can identify and help advocate for leadership opportunities (Evans, 2019).

Mentorship in Higher Education

In the modern day, Black female students have been granted opportunities in higher education institutions somewhat easier than their ancestors who attended the Seven Sisters colleges; yet, Black female students are still facing obstacles that hinder inclusion. One contributing factor is the lack of Black women faculty and administrators working in higher education (Bartman, 2015). In general, given the low number of Black faculty and doctoral students, the opportunity to have a same-race mentor is unlikely to be found (Fries-Britt & Snider, 2015). As Black female students seek relatable mentors in higher education, they often have to settle for someone outside of their cultural group due to the small representation of Black women in faculty and leadership positions (Bartman, 2015).

When mentoring opportunities for many aspiring female leaders in higher education do exist, mentoring seems to occur cross-gender because females have been underrepresented in higher education leadership (Searby et al., 2015). The Searby et al. (2015) study found that cross-gender mentoring relationships were informally formed because the participants were not

awarded the opportunity to engage in a formal mentoring program, nor were they assigned to a mentor. Generally, most first-time faculty members at an institution are provided support only by their department chairs (Tenuto & Gardiner, 2013). However, due to this informal mentoring arrangement, many faculty members are faced with challenges that do not allow beneficial mentoring to take place (Tenuto & Gardiner, 2013). A study conducted by Louis and Freeman (2018) revealed that for Black male faculty members, the mentors provided social capital, but they encountered limited availability from their mentors. The authors also discovered that the participants were shocked by the positive development of the cross-race mentoring relationship; although it took extensive time to develop, they also expressed their desire to be a mentor for other Black males within higher education and with their role in transferring the knowledge they gained in a more relatable manner (Louis & Freeman, 2018). Louis and Freeman (2018) and Searby et al. (2015) all acknowledged that support and mentoring needs for the participants were inconsistent and generally initiated by the mentees (participants).

Bartman (2015) stated there is an ongoing need for applicable strategies that will promote the continued growth and success of all Black women, including students, staff, faculty, and administrators, in higher education. As Black women enter college, many find support and positive influence from peers through membership in a Black sorority (Bartman, 2015; Bova, 1998). According to Patton and Harper (2003), "[Black] women who join these organizations during their collegiate or post undergraduate years are exposed to opportunities for involvement and a host of leadership experiences" (p. 70). A participant who is a member of Delta Sigma Theta in Bova's (1998) study stated, "Even though as members we are in a variety of professions, this sorority gives us the emotional support that we do not get in the workplace" (pp. 8–9). Black sororities have generated social capital for their members by building a community

and providing a sense of belonging (Bartman, 2015) through emotional, spiritual, and educational advisement.

Mentorship of Black Women Leaders

Black women are slowly rising in the ranks of higher education leadership and the need for mentorship for these women is crucial; however, "there is a paucity of research on African American women as administrators in higher education" (Penny & Gaillard, 2006, p. 194). Crawford and Smith's (2005) study examined a select group of African American women who, at the time, currently held or previously held senior-level administrative positions in higher education in the state of New York. Using the traditional definition of mentoring, the respondents did not have and have never had a mentor (Crawford & Smith, 2005). However, respondents in Crawford and Smith (2005) identified individuals who accompanied them throughout their careers, such as parents, family members, church members, and teachers; these individuals were also identified as supporters who would do so from afar and indirectly (i.e., make suggestions, provide encouragement, say a prayer, and offer assistance although some did not necessarily possess the skillset to assist).

Penny and Gaillard (2006) opined about how much work still needs to be done, "which makes one wonder if minority women aren't suffering some disadvantages by not benefitting from mentorship from their peers; it becomes obvious that these women make their own opportunities for mentorship and support" (p. 196). Just as the Black female students seeking mentorship in Bartman's (2015) study are having difficulty securing Black female mentors, Black women faculty and administrators in higher education are also having trouble securing Black female mentors based on similarities such as race and gender. The shortage of mentoring has been cited as a crucial challenge for women's lack of advancement in higher education

(Beckwith et al., 2016; Bynum, 2015; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Dunn et al., 2014; Gamble & Turner, 2015). However, some Black women in other professions have been able to participate in a mentoring relationship and share their experiences.

Participants in Bova's (1998) study placed a high emphasis on mentoring relationships and echoed the productive influence it had on their professional development; however, obtaining an experienced professional to be their mentor had been a difficult task (Bova, 1998). Available literature suggests that supportive mentoring relationships have successfully guided mentees through strategic pathways that yield to social capital and other benefits such as networks, visibility, inclusion, job satisfaction, and pay increases (Bova, 1998; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Hill & Wheat, 2017; Johnson & Ridley, 2018). The respondents in the Crawford and Smith (2005) study echoed one benefit and "believed that if they had been mentored, they would have had greater job satisfaction" (p. 65). Kutchner and Kleschick (2016) identified mentoring in higher education as a vehicle for filling the gaps that exist in leadership, which may be an outcome of Baby Boomers retiring and budget and operations cuts. Kutchner and Kleschick (2016) continued by asserting that mentoring is a significant part of achieving transformative operational changes that are taking place in higher education.

Women Mentoring Women

Women who are mentored by other women refer to their mentoring relationship as that of a mother and daughter (Patton & Harper, 2003). According to Patton and Harper (2003), "These maternal mentoring relationships consisted of nurturing, care, concern, worry, and honesty" (p. 71). Female mentors are valuable assets and can serve as role models, regardless of race, and understand the value of a work-life balance. Facilitative, collaborative, emotional intelligence, and nurturance are in agreement with females who seek mentors who are motivating and

inspirational, hence, the female leadership style (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). However, women mentoring women can lead to negative outcomes due to stereotypes that perpetuate female rivalry, including jealously, fear, holding higher standards, resentment, and limited space in the workplace for another female leader (Kiner, 2020). In addition, there tends to be a lack of female representation in leadership positions who can guide the path of aspiring female leaders (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Parker & Kram, 1993). Due to this barrier, many women seek peer mentoring and turn to family, friends, and women in different professions for support, guidance, and advice (Dunn et al., 2014). Blake-Beard et al. (2011) posited that many researchers have found that female mentees enjoy female mentors more than male mentors due to the extent of emotional support received, greater comfort in family-work advice, and their experience in handling challenging situations as a female leader.

Same-Race Mentoring

Same-race mentorship tends to be a desired characteristic for mentees when identifying and selecting a mentor (Blake-Beard, 1999; Kofoed, 2019). Same-race mentorship has also shown valuable outcomes for mentees due, in part, to their shared background experiences (Blake-Beard et al., 2011). Researchers have implied that selecting a mentor of the same race might be particularly beneficial for minorities because same-race mentors may produce the best results, are more relatable, and increase mentees' self-efficacy based on concerns related to race (Blake-Beard et al., 2011). However, Hernandez et al. (2017) found that same race in a mentoring relationship did not impact the participants' perceptions of mentorship quality and that what participants desired more than proven characteristics, such as same race and gender, was their mentor's ability to be instrumental in properly guiding them.

Mentorship of Black Women

Black women experience mentorship differently than their White counterparts and are faced with many challenges from the initiation phase to the dissolution phase; yet, they are able to reap many of the same benefits that mentorship offers (Penny & Gaillard, 2006). Bova's (1998) study interviewed 14 African American women, who all implied that mentoring was essential to their professional upward mobility; however, securing a traditional mentoring relationship within their organization was challenging due to stereotyping and racism. Yet, a great deal of learning did take place as one of the participants stated, "I learned a lot about White norms and he (mentor) also learned about me in the process" (Bova, 1998, p. 9). Lim et al. (2015) found the African American women in their study experienced a lower number of valuable mentoring relationships compared to their male counterparts, yet the mentoring relationships were of higher quality than that reported by their male counterparts. Lim et al. (2015) also found "that the higher perceived benefits from mentoring do not translate into higher current job positions" (Lim et al., 2015, p. 201) and the African American women in their study revealed a more positive impact on current job positions from informal mentoring than formal mentoring.

Johnson and Snider (2015) stressed the importance of having a mentor who mirrors "social backgrounds and professional interests" (p. 10) in order to relate to the educational and social challenges faced in higher education. When Black female mentees are granted the opportunity to be mentored by another Black woman, they are able to "learn survival skills such as how to maintain professionalism, dress properly, successfully navigate political environments, and reject negative stereotypes that have been traditionally used to characterize African American women" (Patton & Harper, 2003, p. 71). However, due to the underrepresentation of

Black female faculty and administrators, Johnson and Snider (2015) stated, "White female mentors provided support in terms of helping us gain a better understanding of the gendered roles and responsibilities and changing expectations for women in the field" (p. 11). In addition, their experiences with Black and Latino male mentors were also beneficial in certain ways, such as academic success and career support in which these individuals assisted with creating opportunities to network, attend conferences, participate in speaking engagements, and secure internships (Johnson & Snider, 2015). In contrast, participants in Patton and Harper's (2003) study expressed how as African American women being mentored by someone of a different race, they often masked their feelings and circumstances so that they would not be perceived as weak and incompetent due to the "fear of being ridiculed, misunderstood, and misjudged" (Patton & Harper, 2003, p. 73). Although cross-race and cross-gender mentoring can be challenging, they are common and can provide mentees with a wealth of knowledge needed to endure and flourish in educational and professional settings (Bova, 1998; Johnson & Snider, 2015; Patton & Harper, 2003).

Cross-Race and Cross-Gender Mentoring

Studies have recognized the role mentorship has in women's career advancement (Bartman, 2015; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Fries-Britt & Snider, 2015; Palmer & Johnson-Bailey, 2008). Yet, there is still a need to explore the role of mentorship for Black women since some Black women are unsuccessful when searching for a mentor based on proven characteristics, such as same race and same gender (Gardner et al., 2014; Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016). Blake-Beard (1999) stated, "The emergence of studies of gender and mentorship has been particularly important as this research provides a necessary challenge to the traditional male-focused studies that characterize the mentoring literature" (p. 21). Studies of mentorship continue to apply

standardized and unrelatable data (Scott, 1989) that tends to refer largely to White men and women (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990), which fails to identify racial differences as a critical component for prospective research attempts (Ragins, 1999). Blake-Beard (1999) asserted, "The literature on gender and mentoring is characterized by an implicit assumption that the experiences of White women represent the experiences of all women" (p. 22), thus, the importance of utilizing intersectionality. Cox and Nkomo (1991) examined Black Master of Business Administration graduates (MBAs; men and women) and White female MBAs accessibility to mentoring relationships in comparison to White male counterparts and emphasized that minimum data exists about qualified mentors and individuals of different race and gender groups. Cox and Nkomo (1991) found that Black men and women had less access to mentors and no significant difference in mentor assistance between White men and women.

Carroll and Barnes (2015) highlighted the difficulty within cross-race mentorship in which mentors of that pairing tended to avoid conversations with mentees that are centered on race and how that approach serves as a barrier for a mentee's success and progression. However, Carroll and Barnes (2015) presented various broaching styles, both beneficial and detrimental, that could help mentors address difficult or sensitive topics, such as race, with mentees. The broach styles include avoidant, which is ignoring the issue; isolating, which withholds information based on fear of the mentee's reaction; incongruent, which is a sense of openness but also lacks empathy; congruent, which accepts and encourages mentees to interpret their concerns based on cultural support; and infusing, which is the attempt to actively eliminate oppression and promote equity and fairness (Carroll & Barnes, 2015).

Additionally, Noe (1988) presented the following barriers that exist when establishing cross-gender mentorships, which may hinder its development for women: lack of access to

information networks, tokenism, stereotyping, socialization practices, norms regarding cross-gender relationships, and reliance on inappropriate power bases. Based on the noted barriers, Noe (1988) suggested future research to examine the characteristics of mentees who have benefited from mentoring relationships. Additionally, Noe (1988) stated "male mentors may be more willing and confident in providing career (e.g., protection, exposure, and visibility) rather than psychosocial functions (e.g., counseling, friendship) for protégées" (p. 73). Noe (1988) concluded by stating the importance of gathering information from successful women who have been exposed to mentoring and its beneficial use that needs to be further examined for reducing the outcomes stereotypes have in selecting mentees. Ragins (1997) opined, "stereotypes, attributions, and perceptions of competence, combined with increased visibility and negative work group reactions, restrict minority members access to mentoring relationships and the outcomes associated with the relationship" (p. 513).

Ragins and Cotton (1999b) hypothesized the following: (a) mentees in same-gender mentoring relationships would report more psychosocial functions than mentees in cross-gender mentoring relationships, (b) mentees with male mentors would report more career development functions than mentees with female mentors, and (c) mentees with a history of male mentors will report more compensation and promotions than mentees with a history of female mentors. Ragins and Cotton (1999b) found evidence supporting female mentees with female mentors to report high levels of engagement in social activities than female mentees with male mentors. No support was found assuming that male mentors would be associated with more career development functions than female mentors and limited support discovered mentees did receive greater compensation and higher promotion rates with a history of male mentors than those with

a history of female mentors, but the differences were not statistically significant (Ragins & Cotton, 1999b).

Ragins and Cotton (1999a) and Simon et al. (2008) identified potential disadvantages of cross-gender mentoring relationships such as "sexual harassment, sexual relationships, and unwarranted assumptions by peers that the relationship is sexual" (p. 11). Scanlon (1997) stated that women who are mentored by males, especially those who also serve as a supervisor, often become victims of "role entrapment" and "tokenism" (The Drawbacks of Mentoring Women section, para. 2), which potentially lead women to be too dependent upon male mentors causing a strain in the relationship where they feel obligated to continue the mentoring relationship. Additionally, Palmer and Johnson-Bailey (2008) explored the possible conflicts that could arise from cross-gender and cross-race mentoring but found their Black female participants from corporate settings to benefit more from White male mentoring. As stated by Palmer and Johnson-Bailey (2008), White males tend to be more effective mentors, given their power and rank in organizations and their ability to direct the mentee through organizational politics. In addition, a great deal of learning tends to take place within cross-cultural mentoring relationships on the part of both the mentor and the mentee (Bova, 1998). Bova (1998) presented the following organizational benefits that were indicated by mentors and mentees who engaged in a cross-cultural mentoring relationship: "change in organizational culture, improved communication, increased knowledge of other cultures, increased team building, and enhanced career development" (p. 11).

Kent et al. (2015) stated that cross-race and cross-gender mentorship for female and minority representation has been a result of very few females and minorities available to mentor. However, Kent et al. (2015) found that cross-race and cross-gender mentorship to be valuable for

mentees based on the ability to establish networks, secure resources, build mutual trust, increase knowledge, and navigate the tenure and promotion process. Ghosh (2014) concluded that a shared understanding must be developed, and frequent interactions must take place to minimize misconceptions regarding cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. Additionally, cross-race and cross-gender mentoring has not been included in traditional references (Grant & Ghee, 2015), but it is said to be a successful approach that enhances Black women's completion in a doctoral program and faculty advancement in higher education leadership at PWIs (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001; Grant & Ghee, 2015). Davis (2007) asserted that the small number of minority faculty existing in higher education to mentor Black students magnifies the importance of cross-race mentorship. Exploring if and how cross-race and cross-gender mentoring for Black women in higher education leadership has been beneficial for their career advancement will allow the opportunity for Black women seeking mentorship to be paired with or to select a mentor based on other characteristics such as tasks, personality traits, social skills, communication style, writing ability, personal values, short- and long-term career goals, and desired career trajectory (Johnson & Ridley, 2018).

Chapter Summary

After examining the literature presented on Black women in higher education, mentorship, and mentorship of Black women in higher education, a phenomenon arises because attention to intersectionality has exposed barriers and challenges that hinder career growth (Beckwith et al., 2016), specifically the unavailability of Black women mentors in higher education leadership. Although research does show that many Black women have overcome these challenges, a deeper examination of this phenomenon will allow Black women leaders in higher education to share their lived experiences and perceptions regarding key factors, such as

cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. Much of the recent literature that addresses cross-cultural or cross-racial and cross-gender mentorship in higher education focuses on the relationship between faculty members and students (Barker, 2016; Bartman, 2015; Fries-Britt & Snider, 2015); however, an examination of this type of mentoring for Black women in higher education leadership may not reflect the same experiences and outcomes. In return, this can promote organizational leadership-based strategies and approaches, such as leadership development programs and mentorship that will benefit Black women in their career paths toward higher education leadership. Studies have indicated that more mentoring is needed to support Black women in gaining visibility and opportunity for career advancement (Beckwith et al., 2016; Palmer & Johnson-Bailey, 2008; Patton & Harper, 2003; Penny & Gaillard, 2006). Dual mentorship presented beneficial opportunities but also some drawbacks, which might impact not only a mentoring relationship but also the workplace and the mentees' career trajectory. Increased access can be accomplished for other Black women in that sector by examining the lived experiences of Black women in higher education leadership who have utilized a proven key component for success—mentoring.

The following chapter will provide the methodology used to examine cross-race and cross-gender mentorship for Black women leaders in higher education to understand these relationships and their impact on the mentees better. Chapter 3 presents the overarching research questions, as well as provides information regarding qualitative research and its rationale.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In support of this phenomenological study of a select group of Black women leaders who have utilized cross-race and cross-gender mentoring in their higher education careers, the previous chapter explored available research literature that provided insight into Black feminist thought and intersectionality, Black women in higher education, organizational leadership programs, and mentorship. This chapter identifies the study's research questions, research design, population, setting, data collection and analysis, sample, trustworthiness and reliability, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, and ethical considerations.

Research Questions

Through a phenomenological approach to this research, my goal was to highlight the lived experiences of a select group of Black women in higher education leadership, as they relate to cross-race and cross-gender mentoring by exploring the following research questions:

RQ1: How does a select group of Black women in higher education leadership describe their lived experiences of cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring?

RQ2: What features or characteristics of cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships have a select group of Black women in higher education found beneficial or detrimental to their careers?

RQ3: What mentor and mentee behaviors and practices do a select group of Black women leaders in higher education view as most influential in their cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships?

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative studies not only contribute to existing literature, but they also describe experiences, themes, and stories for marginalized groups by investigating a significant phenomenon that leads to an in-depth analysis and understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A number of authors have conveyed characteristics of qualitative research, including collecting data in a natural setting for participants, utilizing key activities such as observing behaviors, studying documents, gathering multiple forms of data, inductive and deductive data analysis, comprehending participants' meaning and value about the problem or issue, approaching the research as an evolving design, being reflective as a researcher and understanding personal contributions and analyses, and accurately reporting multiple perspectives and the central idea (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hatch, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Strengths of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a well-known mode of inquiry for social sciences and applied fields, including education (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Through qualitative research, researchers gain an in-depth understanding, have firsthand experience with participants, to record information as it occurs, allow challenging topics to be explored in confidence, obtain the language and words of participants through documents, gather historical information, control over the line of questioning, maintain flexibility, and make notable observations (Creswell, 2013). Another strength of qualitative research is validity and the ability to determine the accuracy of findings based on the perspective of researchers, participants, or readers (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Additionally, qualitative research can be inexpensive compared to quantitative research that can allow more time with participants and the creation of rapport, connectedness, and respect (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Qualitative Approach: Phenomenology

Once the researcher understands the strengths and characteristics of qualitative research, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that the design and process for qualitative studies are formed by the approach the researcher implements since there is no prearranged structure. I have determined that a phenomenological qualitative approach, which conducts in-depth interviews with individuals who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest, also known as lived experiences (Patton, 2015), will best serve the purpose of this study. Mapp (2008) emphasized that phenomenology searches for meanings and essences of lived experiences and finds descriptions through first-person accounts during one-on-one interviews. Phenomenological research allows for the use of interpersonal interviews to ask open-ended questions and probe for in-depth responses about participants' lived experiences, perceptions, barriers, and knowledge. Wilson and Washington (2007) highlighted how phenomenology is considered to be a suitable and comprehensive approach for conducting research with African American women. Data derived from phenomenological research provides understanding and meaning that is rich, thorough, and allows the researcher to view the experience from African American women's perspective (Wilson & Washington, 2007). The intent of this research is to collect data regarding the lived experiences of cross-race and cross-gender mentorship for Black women leaders in higher education.

According to Moustakas (1994), when choosing to conduct a phenomenological study, researchers must first overcome the challenge of selecting a topic and question that has not only social meaning but also personal significance. Due to the nature of the small representation of Black women in higher education leadership and the effectiveness of mentorship regarding career advancement, examining cross-race and cross-gender mentorship holds both social

meaning in terms of examining a viable option for Black women seeking leadership in higher education, as well as personal significance being that I am a Black woman in higher education, completing my doctoral degree with a White, male dissertation chair in hopes of fulfilling the educational requirement for most top-level leadership positions in higher education. After a topic and research question has been constructed, researchers need to examine the types of phenomenology that will benefit the study and production of valuable results in which the interpretive process will yield significance based on participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

The type of phenomenology that served this study best was Moustakas' (1994) interpretation of Edmund Husserl's transcendental or psychological phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) stated, "Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is intimately bound up in the concept of intentionality," which refers to being cognizant and mindful to participants' lived experiences and the ability to "recognize that self and the world are inseparable components of meaning" (p. 27). Another key concept of transcendental phenomenology is intuition, which "is essential in describing whatever presents itself, whatever is actually given" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 31). In order to concentrate on what is given directly to an individual's intuition, "Husserl contended that no assumptions should inform phenomenology's inquiry; no philosophical or scientific theory, no deductive logic procedures, and no other empirical science or psychological speculations should inform the inquiry" (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 92). Additionally, Moustakas (1994) asserted that all objects, including participants, must have an experience with the phenomena because the knowledge of it resides within self and can be "discovered through reflection on subjective acts and their objective correlates" (p. 44). Transcendental phenomenology emphasizes preferences and uncovers the essences of an experience and offers a

logical and disciplined approach for the derivation of those experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell and Poth (2018) opined that this type of phenomenology focuses more on narratives disclosed by participants and less on the analyses of the researcher. It is also imperative for researchers to refrain from incorporating their experiences and approaching the phenomenon with a fresh perspective, which is known as epoche or bracketing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological researcher must recognize and reject any personal experiences and biases relating to the phenomenon of the study and remain objective to allow the essences of participants' lived experiences to emerge.

As a Black woman in higher education who is intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to research cross-race and cross-gender mentorship for Black women in higher education leadership, it was imperative that I not allow my personal experiences to overpower the experiences of the participants. Therefore, the use of transcendental phenomenology, which, according to Moustakas (1994), is when everything is freshly observed as if it were the first time, was crucial for the authenticity of the interview process and the analysis of the results. I believe I successfully bracketed my views and willfully embraced the experiences of these other Black women in higher education leadership by actively and attentively listening to inquire about their lived experiences so that my personal experiences did not become part of their narratives.

Population and Sample

Outside of defining the type of research that is to take place, the population to be examined is another crucial element to consider. Participants in this study were required to have experienced the phenomenon being explored, which is cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring and were able to effectively describe their past and present experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The criteria for key participants, Black women in

higher education leadership, in this study included those who: (a) have earned a master's or doctoral degree; (b) currently work in four-year or two-year institutions in the USA, serving in positions of a dean or higher; and (c) have or are currently utilizing cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship as a tool to or in hopes of advancing their career.

According to Ivankova (2015), in order to promptly address a sensible problem within a professional setting, researchers are allowed to use a small number of participants that are limited to an identified group. Patton (2015) asserted there are no specific rules when determining an appropriate sample size in qualitative research, but it can best be determined by the following: time allotted, available resources, and study objectives. Sampling strategies for phenomenological studies should ensure that all participants have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposeful sampling, which selects participants based on certain criteria and is "information rich" (Schreier, 2018), was used during the process. As stated by Schreier (2018), information rich depends on the topic, research study, and the overall goal that the researcher wishes to accomplish. Additionally, to collect a sufficient amount of rich participant data to understand the essence of this phenomenon better, I determined that the ideal sample size for a study of this nature be between four and eight participants, who use or used cross-race and cross-gender mentorship during their career.

In phenomenological research, scholars believe that studies should have at minimum three participants (Englander, 2012) and focus more on quality than the quantity of the sample size and detailed account of each participant's experience (Smith et al., 2009). These participants were located at my place of employment, through recommendations, and prior connections or relationships with Black women in higher education leadership. For a phenomenological study,

participants may or may not be located at a single site, but more importantly, participants need to have all experienced the phenomenon and be able and willing to accurately explore and express their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that when the characteristics of the participants are more diverse, the more challenging it would be for the researcher to discover mutual experiences, themes, and the general essence of the phenomenon.

Participants' Profiles

Participant profiles were developed based on responses gathered from the introductory question at the beginning of each interview, as well as the structural descriptions generated for each participant as part of the phenomenological reduction process (Moustakas, 1994). Each participant has been assigned a pseudonym by which they will be addressed throughout the study to ensure their privacy and confidentiality and the data collected. Table 2 displays participants' demographics followed by profiles, which validates the conditions for meeting the criteria for participation.

Table 2

Demographics of Participants

Participant's Assigned Pseudonym	Leadership Level	Type of Institution	Highest Level of Attained Education	Number of Cross-Race Only, Cross-Gender Only, and/or Cross-Race and Cross-Gender Mentors Discussed
Melissa	President	Two-year college	Doctorate	4
Sara	Dean	Two-year college	Doctorate	1
Chloe	Vice President	Two-year college	Master's	1
Elizabeth	Vice President	Two-year college	Doctorate	4
Jennifer	Vice President	Two-year college	Doctorate	3
Kennedy	Executive Director	Two-year college	Master's	2
Brittany	Executive Director	Two-year college	Doctorate	2
Ashley	Chief of Staff	Four-year university system	Doctorate	3

Melissa

Melissa has been in higher education for 13 years. Starting as an adjunct professor, Melissa has served as faculty, dean, provost and vice president, and now a president. As she advanced in her career, Melissa quickly realized the need for other people to help her make it to the presidency level. She stated that real mentorship started later in her career, once she became a senior administrator. During her interview, she revealed the utilization of one White female, one Middle Eastern male, and two Black males as mentors. After being sought out to be mentored by the White female, race and gender became very important in securing additional mentors. Melissa stated, "I tried to align myself with people who had vision, and I wanted people of color who would advise me on what I need to know."

Sara

Sara's first career was in the field of social work, where she was a domestic violence counselor. After becoming a mother and having a series of risky cases, she accidentally fell into higher education in 1997 as a part-time advisor, known then as a counselor. After many years in that position, she found herself having one title but wearing many hats and carrying out administrative duties. During that time, her colleague, a Black male turned mentor, became a driving force in her desire and ability to progress as a leader in higher education. In a unique turn of events, Sara eventually became her mentor's supervisor; however, that did not stop the mentoring relationship from succeeding. Based on the demographics of her institution at the time, Sara stated, "I didn't have a choice but to have a mentor who was Black. Now, the choice became, was it going to be male or female?" During her tenure, Sara has served as an assistant dean, associate dean, and dean on both the student services and instructional sides. After

relocating to another state, Sara continues to serve as a dean at a two-year college and has kept in contact with her mentor, who continued his journey as a part-time advisor until retirement.

Chloe

Chloe is completely new to higher education in which she transitioned from an executive leadership role located in a medical center corporation, which involved oversight of all revenue-generating entities. She brought with her 28 years of experience serving as assistant vice president, vice president, and senior vice president for various budgetary systems. As she stated, "The transition from a campus environment in the medical field to a higher educational campus environment seemed appropriate for me." Being in a White, male-dominated field for so many years, Chloe felt race and gender were not a factor as she searched for a mentor, and after identifying certain characteristics she desired in one, she was able to secure a White male, who was her supervisor.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth recently celebrated her 20th year in higher education, serving in enrollment management, student affairs, and advising offices; she is currently serving as a vice president. Throughout her career, she has worked at both four-year and two-year institutions and believes her path to having been ordained by God. Although she is a fourth-generation educator, she first desired a career in education after reading a book about Mary McLeod Bethune in third grade. Elizabeth stated, "I figured here is a woman that looks like me. She's dark-skinned like me, and if she could start her own school with $1.50, I want to be like that!" Earlier her in career, race and gender were important in identifying and selecting a mentor but stated, "… because I was way more naïve, way more wet behind the ears." During her interview, Elizabeth noted a Middle Eastern female and three White males as her mentors.

Jennifer

Jennifer has been in higher education since 2006. What attracted her to a career in higher education was her community college experience as a first-generation college student. She stated,

> I remember specifically meeting with [the advisor for athletes] for an advising appointment and telling her, 'I want to do what you do, like how do I become an advisor?' She really helped me understand and navigate college and was instrumental in me transferring to a four-year institution.

Over the years, Jennifer has served in multiple roles such as advising, enrollment management, academic affairs, and currently serves as a vice president of instruction and student services. Additionally, Jennifer's perspective has shifted, and although she initially desired a mentor who looked like her, as she has had to navigate higher education from a political standpoint, she has recognized and applied the need to diversify her mentors. However, Jennifer believes that different mentors are needed in different situations and has not only asked for someone to be her mentor but also has been pursued by mentors. The mentors she disclosed during her interview included one Hispanic female, one Hispanic male, and one White male.

Kennedy

Kennedy started her career in higher education in 2008 as an adjunct instructor while she simultaneously taught high school English. What attracted her to the position was the opportunity to make extra money. In 2011, a full-time position at her institution became available, and although she was hesitant to apply due to her commitment to her high school students, as a single mother, she was drawn to the flexibility higher education afforded. Kennedy overcame her hesitation, applied for and accepted the position, and since has served in many

capacities and now serves as an executive director. As she reflected on her mentors, she revealed that those relationships were established based on connection and similar interests; race and gender were not factors in developing those mentoring relationships. During her interview, Kennedy stated that her mentors were a Black male and a White female.

Brittany

Brittany's background started in K-12 public education, but after careful consideration, she quit teaching there and became an adjunct professor in higher education. While searching for another full-time position, Brittany added to her higher education experience by becoming a tutor and eventually a full-time faculty member, followed by lead faculty. After doing some extra work that focused on adjunct development, Brittany was afforded the opportunity to work at her institution's systems office with a program that supported new faculty. The work she did there was so outstanding that she became an executive director. As Brittany started to develop mentoring relationships, she stated, "I didn't even consider race and gender." At this point in her career, Brittany shared that her most notable mentors have been two White females.

Ashley

Ashley has been in education for 20 years, including her time as a K-12 teacher. As she searched for what she considered to be "her thing," she has held positions in public affairs, media relations, and now as chief of staff for a university system. As she reflected on her time in higher education, she stated,

> It's the big boys club, and so for women, it's been a lot more difficult to move up the ladder of success sometimes as quickly. Initially, I wanted a mentor who looked like me. Unfortunately, though, it didn't happen like that.

After letting go of the strong desire to have a Black female mentor, Ashley was able to secure one White male and two Black males to serve as her mentors.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Approval from Abilene Christian University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted in February 2020 (see Appendix A). Shortly thereafter, 42 Black women in higher education leadership were contacted by email (see Appendix B) soliciting participation in this study, based on networking, recommendations, conference/organizations, and institutional websites. Seventeen potential participants replied to the email; however, only nine agreed to participate and met the criteria, which required Black women in higher education leadership to: (a) have earned a master's and/or doctoral degree; (b) currently work in four-year or two-year institutions in the USA, serving in positions of dean or higher; and (c) have or are currently utilizing cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship as a tool to or in hopes of advancing their career. Attrition occurred early on in confirming and scheduling participants. Although nine participants agreed to participate, eight of them confirmed a scheduled date and time for their interview, all preferencing the use of Zoom, a web-video conferencing platform. However, attrition did not affect the results of this study due to the need of between four and eight participants.

Prior to the scheduled interview, electronic informed consent forms were sent, signed, and returned to the researcher and each participant through the HelloSign.com platform, which provides an audit trail of documents and keeps track of its history including: requests of signatures, when recipients have reviewed the document(s), when recipients have signed the document(s), and when all signatures have been submitted and the document(s) is/are complete. Any questions regarding the informed consent form and nature of the study were welcomed at

the beginning of each scheduled interview to reaffirm their voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, reduction of stress, and understanding of data collection procedures, including encouragement to respond openly.

Interviews provide researchers an opportunity to understand how participants decode their lived experiences and are essential when behavior cannot be observed, especially when examining past events (Merriam, 2009). To elicit the description of the lived experiences, phenomenological interviews are moderately unstructured and open-ended, and may be conducted by one or two interview questions (Roulston, 2010). A total of 16 semistructured, open-ended questions (see Appendix C) were designed to elicit participants' lived experiences with the phenomenon. Video interviews, based on all participants' preference and approval, was used to collect and digitally record the data. Interviews were conducted between February 8, 2020, and March 23, 2020. Each interview was scheduled to last up to two hours to ensure questions were answered thoroughly; most of the interviews lasted between 40 and 80 minutes. At the end of each interview, participants expressed their appreciation for the questions asked and their anticipated interest in the results of the study.

While analyzing the data and constructing themes from the participants' responses, it was essential that I provide pseudonyms when reporting the data, as protection of the participants should include researchers masking their participants names early in order to avoid the presence of identifiable information in the analysis files (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The themes were created through a process of coding, condensing the codes, and presented in the results section, including tables (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that coding involves thoroughly categorizing concepts, themes, events, and topical markers so that the researchers can easily retrieve and assess all the data that discusses the same subject across all interviews. Initial,

in vivo, and descriptive coding were used to analyze the interviews, “extracting general and unique themes from all of the interviews and making a composite summary” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 50).

Initial coding is an open-ended approach to coding in which the researcher codes for their “first impression” words or phrases; it’s an opportunity for the researcher to begin to deeply reflect on the contents of the data, break it down into discrete parts, and examine them for similarities and differences (Patton, 2015). Typically, phenomenological practice of *bracketing* or *epoche* can be appropriately coupled with this method (Patton, 2015), which can also make use of other coding methods, such as in vivo coding or process coding. In vivo coding when a code is taken verbatim directly from the data and placed in quotation marks and is particularly well suited for extracting and highlighting indigenous terms or jargon (Ivankova, 2015). Descriptive coding is considered to be a straightforward approach used to assign basic, descriptive labels to data that will provide a portfolio of topics (Patton, 2015). It summarizes the primary topic of the excerpt in a word or short phrase and is often retained as a first step in the data analysis, which is considered a good technique for beginners (Ivankova, 2015). Each of these coding passes were useful in my data analysis, as they helped to provide awareness and expound the meaning, structure, and essence of the phenomenon (cross-race, cross-gender, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship), their lived-experiences (Patton, 2015), and for other Black women in higher education leadership.

All data collected, including personal information, recorded interviews, and transcribed interviews will be kept confidential, safeguarded, and stored in a locked file in my home office, as well as in a secure electronic storage system on Abilene Christian University’s server. After the required three years of storage and protection are complete, all information will be destroyed.

Trustworthiness/Reliability

The trustworthiness and goodness of qualitative studies should be considered not only by its design competency but also by the specified plan for how the researcher will ethically acquire and analyze the topic and its results (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). As stated by Marshall and Rossman (2016), "Researchers must think beyond being careful about procedural matters and documentation for the protection of human subjects" (p. 50). Also, researchers should aim to reveal data that are transparent so that other researchers and readers can determine what is a statement of the interviewee and what is interpreted by the researcher (Flick, 2011). In order to carry out Flick's notion, it was necessary that I fully understood the objective of the study and the insight I was trying to provide regarding the phenomenon; this study must be credible, valid, and rewarding to increase its trustworthiness and authenticity. To establish trustworthiness, I committed to having an explicit focus on participants' lived experiences with the phenomenon, rather than a commitment that focused on social injustices Black women experience within the higher education leadership system, which are in part due to political and dominant structures that are present (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

To determine content reliability, interview questions were evaluated and approved by my dissertation committee. Throughout the interview process, I probed participants for clarity on points that needed additional information or support. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were asked if they would like a copy of their interview transcript to review for accuracy. Additionally, to support my reliability as a researcher, I offered to provide certificates of completion for the Protecting Human Research Participants and Ethics Core trainings and the approval form from Abilene Christian University's (ACU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) so that participants would be aware of my understanding and compliance to protect them and how

the study follows their guidelines for conducting ethical research (Creswell & Poth, 2018); all participants declined the offer to receive a copy of their interview transcript, my completion of required training certificates, and the approval letter from ACU's IRB. Informed consent forms were provided through HelloSign.com in which participants reviewed the form and completed the signing process. In addition, participants were able to download the completed form, with my signature, for their records. As stated by Flick (2011), "The reliability of the whole research process can be developed by its reflexive documentation" (p. 16). The reality of the researched phenomenon is ever-changing, which will result in multiple practicalities when researched. However, past literature and the results of this study imply that if repeated, this study can yield similar results.

Additionally, as the primary analytic tool, I have to bracket my own experiences, prior knowledge, and assumptions. Lauterbach (2018) kept a journal throughout the stages of data collection and analysis, which helped identify personal interpretations of participants' lived experiences that reflected prior understanding rather than the information from the interviews and the experiences discussed. I deem this approach to be useful as I build trustworthiness throughout my research and will also keep a journal as the researcher and one who is engaging on a cross-gender/cross-race mentoring relationship with my dissertation chair.

Assumptions

According to Terrell (2016), assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are included in a dissertation on an "as needed" basis. It is assumed that participants who voluntarily agreed to contribute to this study did so willingly, to the best of their ability, and provided responses that were a reflection of their lived experiences. I did not have any control of participants' that potentially provided false responses, but I must inform readers that there was a possibility of

participants falsifying their experiences. Finally, it is assumed that studying the lived experiences of Black women in higher education leadership and the utilization of cross-race and/or cross-gender mentorship provided practical information related to an underrepresented group and served as a catalyst for future research and other groups.

Limitations

Limitations are beyond the control of researchers and have the potential to affect the generalizability of the results, such as incorrect contact information, time limit restrictions placed on the interviewer by the interviewee, lack of elaboration in interview responses, misinterpretation of interviewees' responses, and inability to validate the realness of their lived experiences. One limitation was that some participants requested face-to-face interviews in their initial email response when agreeing to participate, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews had to take place via Zoom video conferencing. This possibly limited the ability to interview participants in what they considered a natural setting for them, as well as caused distractions for participants including interruptions from family, pets, emergency calls, and unidentified external noises. Additionally, some interviews were interrupted due to lost and slow internet connections. Although, interviews reconvened once connection was established, this limitation possibly interfered with participants' initial thoughts and answers. In addition, slow internet connections caused the video interview to be pixelated, with delayed audio. Participants were asked to repeat information when this occurred; however, it is impossible to determine if the initial thoughts, again, were shared.

Lastly, most of the participants were able to describe more than one mentor. In answering the interview questions, although participants were asked clarifying questions, it is possible that they did not align examples/stories/narratives with the correct mentor they were discussing.

Although I do not believe participants combined their lived experiences with all of their mentors, unless specified, I do believe participants possibly mismanaged information based on the mentor they were discussing at any given moment. Many of the participants emphasized and focused on one particular mentor more than other mentors, for unknown reasons, which potentially impacted the validity, analysis, and interpretation of participants' lived experiences with cross-race, cross-gender, or both mentoring relationships. While analyzing and interpreting the data, I was only able to apply the participants' lived experiences to the mentor they identified in which I clarified with a follow-up question or paraphrased statement.

Delimitations

This study was solely interested in understanding the lived experiences of Black women's use of cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. This study was not designed to understand the lived experiences of any other race or those of men. Because participants were a select group of Black women in higher education leadership, their lived experiences should not be viewed as a representation for all Black women, whether in higher education leadership or not. This study was limited to Black women in higher education leadership, serving in positions of dean or higher. The responses provided, which helped answer the three research questions, were accounts given by participants as mentees in the mentoring relationship. Participants' mentors were not included to participate; the mentors lived experiences and a comparison between the two could have possibly generated a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research has several ethical considerations, as it relates to the overall quality of the research being conducted. To ensure beneficence, respect for persons, justice, and

autonomy was achieved according to the Belmont Report, as the researcher, I ensured answers from participants were not shared with other participants and I was the only one with access to the information collected, in regard to their identity being attached to their responses. All transcripts have been uploaded to ACU's secured server for a required three years; however, their pseudonyms were assigned prior to each upload. Additionally, I safeguarded the interview files in a locked file cabinet at home and adhered to the code of conduct outlined in the Belmont Report. Each participant received an informed consent form for my records acknowledging their agreement to participate and a copy for themselves; questions and concerns were not presented by participants at any time prior, during, or after the interviews. The intent of the form was to provide awareness of the purpose of the study and their rights as a participant. All participants were treated fairly, given the same rights, privileges, and opportunities equally; no participant's time was cut short and all participants were offered face-to-face and video interviews.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 presented and described the research design to help readers better understand what phenomenology is and why it was chosen as the research methodology. This approach is favorable for understanding the described lived experiences of Black women in higher education leadership who utilize or have utilized cross-race and/or cross-gender mentorship during their career. Throughout this chapter, I also provided insight on the population, setting, data collection and analysis, sample, trustworthiness/reliability, assumptions/limitations/delimitations, and ethical considerations. The following chapter will reveal the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of cross-race only, cross-gender only, and/or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship for a select group of Black women in higher education leadership. Purposeful sampling was used to select between four and eight Black women in higher education leadership who: (a) have earned a master's and/or doctoral degree; (b) currently work in four-year or two-year institutions in the USA, serving in positions of dean or higher; and (c) have or are currently utilizing cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship as a tool to or in hopes of advancing their career. Eight Black women serving in leadership roles in higher education agreed to participate in this study by completing in-depth interviews. All interviews were conducted through Zoom, a web video conferencing platform. Semistructured interview questions consisting of 16 open-ended questions were created to assist in eliciting the participants' lived experiences related to cross-race only, cross-gender only, and/or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. Initial, in vivo, and descriptive coding were used to analyze the interviews, "extracting general and unique themes from all of the interviews and making a composite summary" (Groenewald, 2004, p. 50). The incorporation of direct quotations gave weight to participants' experiences with cross-race only, cross-gender only, and/or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship; each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Chapter 4 presents the results of this study, including overarching and subthemes, supported by significant statements from the in-depth interviews. This will result in research questions being answered through an overview of the study's major findings in Chapter 5.

Research Questions

Data collection and analysis provided the details for answering the following research questions:

RQ1: How does a select group of Black women in higher education leadership describe their lived experiences of cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring?

RQ2: What features or characteristics of cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships have a select group of Black women in higher education found beneficial or detrimental to their careers?

RQ3: What mentor and mentee behaviors and practices do a select group of Black women leaders in higher education view as most influential in their cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships?

The study's eight participants (see Table 2) were encouraged to discuss one or more of their mentors who were cross-race only, cross-gender only, and/or both cross-race and cross-gender to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon. Table 3 provides the demographic characteristics and the total number of the mentors that each participant discussed in their interview. To aid in the understanding of cross-race only, cross-gender only, and/or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship for a select group of Black women in higher education leadership, the following section will present the findings of this study by first revealing overarching themes, including subthemes, that emerged through the analysis of the data. In-depth descriptions with significant statements from participants will be included to help illustrate their lived experiences with this phenomenon.

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Mentors

Type of Mentorship	Race of Mentor	Gender of Mentor	# of Mentors
Cross-race only	Hispanic	Female	1
	Middle Eastern	Female	1
	White	Female	4
Total			6
Cross-gender only	Black	Male	6
Total			6
Cross-race and Cross-gender	Hispanic	Male	1
	Middle Eastern	Male	1
	White	Male	6
Total			8

Overarching Themes and Subthemes

Data analysis of the lived experiences of a select group of Black women in higher education leadership revealed four overarching themes and two to three subthemes for each (see Table 4). All eight participants (100%) made statements that formed the basis of all four themes and most of the subthemes. Each overarching theme and subtheme offered an understanding of cross-race only, cross-gender only, and/or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship.

Table 4

Overarching Themes and Subthemes

Mentor's Contributions	Organic Connections	Relational Experiences	Dual Role
Vision and Outlook	Transparent and Communicative	Connections Based on Race and/or Career Paths	Supportive and Willing to Invest
Ability to Guide, Advocate, and/or Sponsor	Trust and Rapport	Inability to Relate Based on Race, and/or Gender Differences	Frequent and Convenient Meetings
Network and Exposure Opportunities	Personable		Problematic and Risky

Theme 1: Mentor's Contributions

Each participant discussed the positive contributions made by their mentors throughout the mentoring relationship. The first overarching theme emerged as participants considered the

influence their cross-race, cross-gender, and/or both cross-race and cross-gender mentor had on their career and the impact on their development as a leader. As each participant shared their lived experience, they all discussed how their cross-race, cross-gender, and/or both cross-race and cross-gender mentor(s) displayed: (a) vision and outlook; (b) the ability to guide, advocate, and/or sponsor them; and (c) network and exposure opportunities.

Subtheme 1: Vision and Outlook. Six participants (75%) emphasized their mentor's ability to have a vision and an outlook regarding their career path and trajectory. For Melissa, it was evident to her that she would reach the pinnacle and become a college president. However, for the other seven participants they all talked about how a mentor saw something in them that they necessarily did not see in themselves. Elizabeth and Brittany both shared how their mentors have caused them to think bigger and to reach for upper-level, senior administrative positions. Elizabeth stated, "As I started off in higher education and got my first leadership position in enrollment management, I thought I'd made it and wasn't much else to shoot for. My White male mentor saw and thought otherwise." Brittany echoed a similar experience by stating:

> The first White, female mentor knew a lot of things that I didn't know, and she still does. She knew politics of the college, had been faculty before, she'd been on the student services side and the academic side. So, I knew she'd be a good fit for me. Race and gender didn't matter because it was about her experience throughout her career in higher education and I was confident that she could help me navigate the system. She's honestly the reason I became a full-time faculty member and has been very instrumental in the positions I've held since then and even the position now. She taught me to consider myself as a leader even before getting my first leadership position. So, it's like she kind of knew where I was going to go. She's had experiences at other colleges and has worked

> with presidents, vice-chancellors, and chancellors so she's had that exposure and a seat at the table to know it's possible. I've only been at one college so my ability to think beyond where I was, where I am, and where I can be hasn't been a strong suit for me. She's given me so much to consider as I still figure out what I want to be when I grow up.

Sara shared how her Black male mentor pushed her beyond the limitations she had placed on herself early on in her career, which ignited the thought of career advancement. She stated:

> We all self-doubt sometimes, but when I would do it while in his presence, he would immediately stop me right in my tracks and tell me how great of a leader I was and how I could do any job within the institution especially vice president. It was during moments like that that I started thinking about becoming a dean and even a vice president.

Kennedy's Black male mentor also envisioned more for her and has constantly encouraged her to groom her leadership skills by suggesting different leadership institutes and as she recalled "proposing that I can in fact be a college president."

Subtheme 2: Ability to Guide, Advocate, and Sponsor. All participants were able to vividly recall their mentors at some point providing guidance, advocacy, and sponsorship. Ashley was adamant about stating, "A lot of times your mentors don't have to be directly in the career you're in because guidance and leadership seem to have the same process in how one develops and matures, based on my experience." Almost verbatim, Jennifer, Kennedy, and Ashley described their mentor's contributions as "seeing something in me and having a desire to guide me on my journey to ensure I got to where I wanted to be." Jennifer, Kennedy, and Ashley alluded to the idea that mentors should not only have a vision for their mentees but also be willing to guide them down their career path. Melissa enthusiastically discussed how

appreciative she was of her White female mentor and "the guidance of giving insight into White spaces and the interview process, especially knowing that those interview rooms would be occupied by the majority of White people."

> One of Brittany's White female mentors was described as a huge advocate and she stated: She not only helped me find my voice but has stood in the gap and has been a voice for me. I really think she was able to be my front mirror because I was stuck being in my rearview mirror. She never makes anything demanding but will always provide a suggestion for me to do one thing, in order to enhance my chances of achieving another thing. She's literally Dorothy and I'm following her down the yellow brick road but in higher education it's a maze and it's not because I can't figure it out on my own, but she's been a guide so that the maze is achievable.

Chloe disclosed that since her White male mentor recognized that there were areas where he could not help in, he sought out training and development programs for her to attend and would cover the costs and fees. Elizabeth shared her lived experiences with her mentors and the alignment of mentorship and sponsorship:

> At the beginning of my mentoring relationships, they each saw me for where I was, as far as my career, but recognized the talent I had and where I could be and helped me maneuver. Often, we think that there's a huge difference between mentorship and sponsorship and there's not. A mentor is guiding you where you are, and a sponsor is introducing you, throwing your name out there, putting their name on yours for recommendations, and inviting you into networks so that you can get to where you want to be. Why have someone who is willing to guide you but not willing to advocate for you? And so, I think I've been very fortunate and blessed to have mentors that have

> bundled and married the two. They are being a mentor and a sponsor together to support me.

Elizabeth mentioned how sponsorship can be as simple as someone recommending you at any moment and Sara echoed that statement by stating that her Black male mentor was the first person to throw her name into the recommendation bowl when an interim leadership position became vacant.

Subtheme 3: Network and Exposure. As Elizabeth continued to discuss how her mentors also sponsored her, she quickly transitioned into how network and exposure opportunities were created by one of her mentors. She stated:

> I was pushed and forced in a good way to network, especially by the Middle Eastern female mentor. She and I happened to be at the same conference I decided to attend at the very last minute, and she was doing an invitation-only luncheon with a keynote speaker. She's like, oh, you're coming to my invite-only and you're sitting at my table in the front with all the big names that are here. We've got to get your name known so that as you advance and start thinking about becoming a president, you have access to others for reasons that aren't even known yet. Now mind you, I hadn't said a word about becoming a president. I'd just gotten into enrollment management, but I liked the feeling I felt in that moment and I was intrigued and inspired.

Melissa stated how her White female mentor has put her in places and positions that have produced positive outcomes and have connected her with individuals along the way that has increased her network. Jennifer revealed that her Hispanic female mentor helped her get out of her comfort zone by forcing her, in a good way, to network and be more visible. On the other hand, her Hispanic male mentor put her in different spaces, invited to her certain meetings, and

allowed her to have certain seats at certain tables that he particularly had an influence on. One of Ashley's Black male mentors continuously invited her into the realm that affords her the exposure and network opportunities she needs, both locally and nationally, in order to continue to advance her career. Through those mediums, she has been able to expand her network and "meet some really good people." To that, Jennifer emphasized the exposure within itself to have a mentor other than a Black woman. She discussed how having access to cross-race only and both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship exposed her to different leadership styles and qualities of people in general. It was beneficial for her to experience the perspective of a cross-race/cross-gender mentor to better understand how people navigate situations, not just based on stereotypical men or women's actions. She stated:

> As I think about exposure to cross-race and cross-gender mentors, it has given me a more global or larger perspective on how to lead, how to work, how to interpret and process working in higher education. I think that if I only looked for Black females who have the same trajectory as me, my approaches, leadership, and analytical skills might kind of just be one-sided.

In describing their lived experiences, each participant revealed the influence of their mentor's contributions and how their vision, guidance, sponsorship, networking, and exposure opportunities either advanced their careers or developed their leadership.

Theme 2: Organic Connections

The second overarching theme that emerged from the interview data was each participant's experience with at least one of their mentoring relationships evolving organically. Chloe shared how the mentoring relationship with her White male mentor was an organic process. Although he was her supervisor and they had already worked closely together, she did

allow the mentoring component to "take its course." Although she noticed "mentoring moments happening," she was intentional about not forcing it. She stated, "It was important for me to explicitly know that he was willing to mentor me and he did that through his actions but I also allowed it to happen without much effort on my part." Although Melissa, Jennifer, and Ashley did mention the use of various leadership programs that formally created mentoring opportunities for them, they all emphasized the importance of having the mentoring relationship blossom genuinely and organically. However, Sara did state, "You want to make sure you're not picking someone who has a bad reputation in the institution or someone who is surrounded by controversy or conflict because all you're going to do is put yourself in it." Each participant highlighted how their connections with their mentors beyond the professional setting not only humanized their mentors but also helped strengthen their ability to trust and communicate more openly, as well as afforded the opportunity to discover their mentors' pleasing personality.

Subtheme 4: Transparent and Communicative. The participants stated that open, honest, and transparent communication was not only important to them but also carried out by their mentors. Melissa recalled a mentoring moment with one of her Black male mentors and how she wanted candid feedback, "but at the time he got down and dirty with it." He was so transparent that she stated she "had to grow thicker skin" because if she truly wanted to work with him, which she did, "he was going to tell it like it is." At a point in Elizabeth's interview, she discussed a conversation she had with her White male mentor and remembered a story he shared with her about an old colleague he worked with who had become a college president and had changed his style based on his predecessor. However, "when he changed his style, it didn't work." Elizabeth stated the moral of the story from her White male mentor was:

> As you move up, don't change who you are. You got the job because of who you are. No need to frame being an African American woman. Being your authentic self, including your appearance because you like to wear your hair curly, although people will tell you have to wear it straight or you that you have to do this or that, will take you out of your comfort and that's not fair to you and it's not healthy. Having humor and being clear and concise is who people will pick, whether your hair is curly or straight. Don't try to fit in by being something you're not, including a leadership style that isn't necessarily your style.

Jennifer discussed a "huge lightbulb" moment for when she asked her Hispanic male mentor about a decision that was made during a hiring process and a committee she did not serve on. She did not understand why the candidate was selected, so as to both her supervisor and mentor, she wanted him to help her understand. She stated:

> In his ability to be truthful and honestly tell me that it was a hard decision, but it was what's best for the institution at that moment was conflicting at first. He said that he wasn't thinking five, 10 years from now but that he was just trying to get through year one and three and the person they selected, they believed, would get us there. So, I think naturally we gravitate to not sharing stuff because we don't want to be vulnerable or judged, but in that moment, he felt comfortable enough and trusted me enough to allow himself to not only be honest but also vulnerable.

Not only did participants reveal their mentors' ability to be transparent but also discussed how forthcoming and willing their mentors were when advice, guidance, or a simple conversation was needed. Chloe, in particular, expressed how not only did she expect and receive this from her White male mentor, but he too expected her to be "forthcoming, didn't

tolerate any backbiting, and had a saying where he'd say, 'always consider good intent.' I observed him use the same principles in the way he worked with everyone. He was honest."

Subtheme 5: Trust and Rapport. Not only did Jennifer's Hispanic male mentor demonstrate transparency when she asked him about a hiring decision that was made, but she also shared another instance in which their trust was tested and strengthened. She shared the story of one of her family members, who was an employee at the institution she and her mentor worked at, and how her family member had done something extremely bad. The Hispanic male mentor gave her the "liberty of disclosing the situation and outcome privately by pulling me to the side and not in an executive meeting where he had every right to do so." After this particular instance, she gained another level of trust because "he not only handled it privately but shielded that situation from becoming campus news, meaning campus gossip, and protected my reputation, knowing that I was affiliated with that individual as a family member." She added, "I appreciated his level of consideration and I think it allowed me to trust him as a person, both professionally and personally, a lot more. I think having that relationship with him helped me have those honest conversations."

Jennifer emphasized how an effective mentoring relationship cannot experience a harmonious connection if trust is not at the core. Melissa echoed this by stating, "You can't have a mentor and be the mentee and not be willing to tell them what's on your mind. Because I've been in situations where an alleged mentor tried to hold me back and tell me something that wasn't helpful." Using that experience, Melissa asserted that she used this as a foundation once connecting with what she calls her "real mentors." She is transparent in her conversations with them and felt a sense of acceptance not only once her White female mentor established "whatever is said in this space stays with us and you can say whatever comes to mind and I will

ride or die with you through that" but also demonstrated it in her actions. However, she did stress that this took time. When comparing this approach to one of her Black male mentors, she stated:

> With him, it probably took a good third time we had our conversation for trust to be there and this was like within a few weeks. It just naturally happened. The way he would give his feedback was just so raw and candid that we had no other reason but to trust each other. He demonstrated trust for me immediately and I'm not sure if it's because we were able to relate to one another's Blackness. However, with the White female mentor, it took a little longer, but there was a degree of separation where she had to take care of her family issues. But I'm still not sure if trust would've happened as quickly because I needed her to really prove herself to me. I'd been burned one too many times by a White administer and I had my guard up in spite of what she said.

In addition, Chloe, Kennedy, and Ashley all screamed, "Trust!" when asked about behaviors and practices that strengthened and weakened their mentoring relationships. While discussing a situation in which a vote of censure made involving her took place with her vice president, Kennedy stated:

> Trust can literally strengthen and weaken the relationship all at the same time. My Black male mentor literally put his job on the line for me by standing up to the entire executive council when that vote by our peers took place. I knew I could trust him because his livelihood was at stake just for speaking up for me. However, had he done the opposite of what he did and not stood up for me, I know that would have tainted our relationship to some extent simply because he's in an authoritative position where he has a voice and his voice carries weight.

Subtheme 6: Personable. Chloe, Elizabeth, and Jennifer directly stated how personable their mentors were, which enhanced their connection. Others used words such as "good-hearted, "relatable," "charming," and "likable" in the same regard. As Elizabeth revealed experiences and observations of her White male mentor, she stated, "For him, you don't need to tell people his title because you feel it once he enters a room. People should feel your presence. He's so personable that when he walks in a room you just know he's the [college] president, but you also quickly realize how approachable and down-to-earth he is." Jennifer recalled a campus visit she took with her Hispanic male mentor where he previously worked and was at least five years removed, but how they "literally could not walk the campus because everybody who seen him wanted to stop and hug him and talk to him." She added to that story by recalling a completely different trip she accompanied him and visited another college he'd worked for almost 20 years prior and how as they were walking through that campus, "people literally still remembered him and wanted to just have a casual conversation. He made that much of an impact." So, for Jennifer, she was able to see the footprints her Hispanic male mentor left, "how relatable he was to people and just how his personality is something that somebody trusted."

By allowing certain situations to manifest, each participant revealed an instance in which transparency, trust, rapport, and personality was demonstrated and carried out properly by their mentor. Their description of their lived experiences with the phenomenon results in similar explanations.

Theme 3: Relational Experiences

Based on participants revealing their cross-race only, cross-gender only, and/or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationship, all shared some similar experience when

analyzing the type of mentoring relationship and the ability and inability to connect and relate, based on race and gender differences, as well as career paths.

Subtheme 7: Connections Based on Race and Career Paths. Each participant acknowledged that in order for a mentoring relationship to be initiated and carried out, there must first be a connection. As these mentoring relationships developed, participants revealed a connection to their mentor based on race, gender, and/or career paths. Melissa stated how important it was for her to align herself with individuals who not only had vision but who were also a person of color. This was not only important for her, but her White female mentor as well because she knew she could not mentor her on that level and when issues centered on race would arise. Ashley echoed this notion by stating the connection with her Black male mentor has been an essential asset to her growth and development simply because they are able to share some experiences that stem from being Black, and although he is a Black male, he still has a sense of understanding in such a way that he can make what he is saying resonate. She shared:

> His communication with me is so tailored that when we converse, I am able to accept the guidance he is providing from a space that I know has my best interest at hand because we both have to be careful with how to navigate and some of the things we'd say because we are Black.

For Melissa, Chloe, Elizabeth, Jennifer, Brittany, and Ashley, they all expressed a career path connection with mentors who were not Black. Precisely, each one of them shared how the mentoring relationship matured due to the mentor having experience in their aspired or current leadership position. Brittany stated, "I needed someone who traveled the path I am currently on. As I mentioned earlier, one of my White female mentors is guiding me through the Maze so that I can achieve a leadership position." Elizabeth added, "Having a mentor who is familiar with

what it takes to reach the top and has reached the top themselves is almost a requirement for any person that wants to be successful, no matter what the goal is." Jennifer even mentioned, "Having a mentor who has not only succeeded but also failed at some point humanizes this journey. At times, I feel like I have to be Superwoman and invincible when in actuality, no man nor woman is." She affirmed that her White male mentor constantly shares his journey with her as a way to encourage her and it has been inspirational to realize how much they do have in common and how his experiences, as he ascends to the top, have been nothing short of admirable.

Subtheme 8: Inability to Relate Based on Race and Gender. All participants who discussed a White mentor revealed their mentors' inability to relate to them based on race. Chloe recalled at the beginning of her mentoring relationship with her White male mentor, she struggled with accepting that "it's not his experience" when she would seek guidance from him. In one particular instance, she went to him for coaching regarding some conflict she was experiencing, stating:

> He could not necessarily relate to me being a female and a woman of color nor could he give me the feedback that I needed. With what I was facing, I needed to hear particular words from him. He was very honest that he couldn't relate to it, but he tried to come at a different topic. He tried to coach me from a different perspective, but that part was difficult. I don't think it was the fact that I was female. It was because I was Black and the more time we spent together and those occasions occurred, I noticed how uncomfortable he was with having discussions centered on race.

Although Chloe alluded to her White male mentor's inability to relate to her based on race and gender, she continued to highlight her mentor's inability to relate based on race since she felt he

did a great job at providing her guidance and because "it was very important to him to use everything he had learned to elevate females" within their organization. She provided another example about a time she brought an issue to her mentor's attention.

> I was more disappointed in the outcome of that conversation because I wanted him to appreciate the difficulties I was having as the new assistant vice president, the only African American assistant vice president, and I disclosed to him the conversation that another White colleague was having with me was inappropriate. I was expecting more of a defense for me than I got.

Elizabeth revealed some struggles she faced with her White male mentors and combined the inability for them to connect based on race and gender. She stated:

> There are things that they shared with me that work easily sometimes for White men and I just had to know, there's no need to say it to them because they may not understand in that space when they're mentoring you, but I just had to know to take that later, process it, figure out how to massage this for me because how it worked for them is not completely how it's going to work for me. I just know that the process is still what the process is, but it just might mean there's a little divot in it that I have to adjust for because when I walk into a room, I'm not racially ambiguous. There's no could she be Black? No, I am. So, their advice would not always be something that served me best because I am Black, and I am also female.

Each participant with a White mentor, whether male or female, discussed similar challenges that Chloe and Elizabeth faced in regard to being a Black woman. However, participants with Hispanic and Middle Eastern mentors did not reveal any lived experiences when issues centered on race were disclosed. However, what was consistent in seven of the

participants with responses about their White mentors (one participant did not discuss a White mentor) was that all of their White mentors recognized their inability to relate to them based on race and brought it up to the participants at some point in the mentoring relationship. To fill this gap or disconnect, the seven participants revealed that their White mentor(s) recommended to them, and some even invested in, a membership, program, or conference that specifically focused on Black leaders' development. Melissa stated that her White female mentor's suggestion and investment to attend the Lakin Institute for Mentored Leadership for African American leaders serving in senior-level administrative functions at community colleges, where she met (and discussed in this study) one of her Black male mentors, exceeded her expectations and allowed her to connect with other Black people in higher education. Chloe, Elizabeth, and Ashley all shared that their White male mentors actively and continuously searched for training and development opportunities that specifically highlighted Black women as leaders. Ashley stated:

> He always had an opportunity for me that focused on me as a Black woman leader in higher education. Since he's a government official, he had connections that would inform him about these opportunities before they went live to the public. Even if a deadline passed for me to register, he would make it happen with a simple phone call.

Although Melissa, Sara, Kennedy, and Ashley all revealed their lived experiences with cross-gender mentorship, Kennedy and Ashley were the only ones to reveal specific gender differences. Kennedy stated that she and her Black male mentor recognized their shared limitations early in the relationship. She stated, "We both acknowledged that as a male, there were things that he could do that I necessarily couldn't do because I'm a female." She shared an example in which he was trying to advise her on what to do while faced with a certain issue, but

how they "kept hitting roadblocks because the angle he was coming from, was more acceptable coming from a man." From that example, she was referring to initial suggestions that were described as being "aggressive" and "assertive," but that their leaders and work environment would not accept that type of approach from a female, less a Black female, because it would mostly likely create a "hostile and uncomfortable environment" for their White colleagues. Ashley extensively discussed the gender differences that were present in her cross-gender only and cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationship. She stated:

> My male mentors conduct a lot of their business in very different places, for example, football games, golf courses, and late-night dinners at high-end restaurants. I have been invited to those networks and settings, but my reality is I am a wife and a mother. I have to choose career or family and my family comes first. So, when these meetings would happen after work hours, I would either have to stay briefly just to show my face and be introduced or decline the invitation. By the time I would leave, if I was able to attend, the real business wouldn't have even started yet. So, because I am a wife and a mother, I'm not able to stay to most dinners' or events past 8:00 p.m. or attend a golf session on a Saturday or Sunday because that's family time. My son and my husband also have expectations of me because of my role in their lives. So, it becomes frustrating because for my male mentors and even for my husband, there are some behaviors that they can demonstrate that are more acceptable because they're men. Even for someone on the outside looking in, if they see me too engaged with my male mentors, the narrative becomes 'she's sleeping her way to the top.' That's unfair to me because if the roles were reversed, that never becomes the narrative for the man.

Within this excerpt, Ashley also indicated some behavioral differences as well. However, Jennifer asserted that although her Hispanic male mentor was a minority like her and they could relate on some race issues, he still was a man and that "there was some privilege that he was able to experience" that she would not have. She gave the example:

> Whether there's a joke he can make in a meeting, spaces he can navigate that I can't, or even something as simple as at a conference dinner, staying at the bar to drink. There are just certain things that as a young Black female, I'm not gonna do, but a Hispanic male can, and a White female does.

Brittany briefly discussed some behavioral differences that she observed with her White female mentors that dealt with appearances. Some outfits that she had seen her White female mentors wear, she would have been "disowned and crucified for" had she worn them. In addition, she mentioned how White women can be "touchy-feely" with men, especially White men, but if she was to demonstrate those same behaviors she would come off as "flirting" or "sensual." She continued to add that her White female mentor's acceptance of certain actions, such as challenging an authoritative leader, would be viewed as being "passionate," whereas her approaches "would be viewed as being an angry Black woman."

These relational experiences for all eight participants highlighted unique, yet significant realities for them all. No matter the experience each participant revealed, there were similarities and a connection they shared while revealing their lived experiences with cross-race only, cross-gender only, and/or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship.

Theme 4: Dual Role

All participants revealed that the mentors disclosed in this study have served them in another role. Melissa, Chloe, Elizabeth, Jennifer, Brittany, and Ashley all shared that their

mentors also served as their supervisors, before or during their leadership occupancy. Jennifer also shared that one of her mentors was a colleague and Sara and Kennedy shared that all of their mentors were colleagues. By having a dual title, the participants revealed subthemes including (a) supportive and willing to invest, (b) frequent and convenient meetings, and (c) problematic and risky.

Subtheme 9: Supportive and Willing to Invest. Due to the nature of these mentoring relationships, participants revealed the amount of support received and their mentors' willingness to invest in them. Melissa obtained her White female mentor by securing the position of vice president and provost at the institution the White female mentor was the president of at the time. She shared a conversation she had with the White female mentor/president during her interview:

> The president in the job profile for the vice president and provost position specifically—she was looking to mentor the candidate. That was something really special because you don't really see that in job descriptions. So, when I interviewed with her, the first question she asked me was, "Do you want to be a president?" I thought, oh, damn, how am I gonna answer this? Is this a trick question? If I say yes, am I going to get backlash because of my resume and how I've moved around these two to three years. I'm telling the truth. I say, "Yes, I want to be a president." And she was like, "Good, because I don't want to hire anybody who doesn't want to be a president." And I thought that was really cool or great of her to do that and that's when real mentorship starting for me.

Since Melissa had the goal of one day becoming a college president, it was refreshing for her to have that support of not only her supervisor but also someone she could learn from as a mentor. Chloe stated how based on the qualities that she saw in her vice president/supervisor, ignited the desire to want to be mentored by him: "I was very intentional about who I wanted to

mentor me. I looked for certain qualities and over the years, my supervisor had not only demonstrated but also executed the qualities and skills I was looking for in a mentor," she stated. As the mentoring relationship grew, so did his support of her advancing to the next level and equipping her to be able to do so. She stated, "He was really invested in me and he saw a future for me. His support helped me move to that next level, which said a lot about him as a leader and mentor." Jennifer also shared an example where the support from her supervisor/mentor was demonstrated when she first aspired a different leadership position at another institution. She stated:

> When I called the Hispanic male mentor to talk about the job opening and my desire to apply, he was just really open and honest, and he helped me navigate that move. Of course, he didn't really want me to go, but he understood the importance of the move and how it would help my career. Again, that relationship piece was there so having this type of conversation wasn't as difficult.

The participants whose mentor also served as a supervisor interchangeably used the words "sponsor" and "invest" that either demonstrated the mentors' will and action to financially sponsor or invest in their career and leadership development by either paying for their membership, program, and conference fees or being that reference that is needed in order to get to the next level. Jennifer mentioned of her Hispanic female mentor:

> If I needed her influence, she would sponsor me and put her name on mine. She also had a certain budget that she had to use each year, and she told me that whenever I needed funds to cover a conference I wanted to attend or an institute I found to be beneficial, she would just pull the monies from that budget and sponsor it. She, or should I say the institution, would cover everything from flights, hotel, and registration. She didn't have

> to do that for me, and I noticed that she really didn't do that for anyone else. I have been in the room or on the other end of a call where someone asked for funds to attend similar things and she would, without a thought, say, 'No!' When I mustered up the courage to ask her why she is eager to do that for me and not someone else, she'd simply say, 'Because you got it. You got what it takes to excel, and I know you will. I have a strong desire to get you where you want and need to be because leaders, with your potential, don't come around too often. Besides, I know you'll attend these conferences and things of that nature and will actually learn something, come back, and apply it. Others will simply see it as a free trip and a vacation.' Because of this transparency and level of trust, I knew I had her support and didn't take it for granted.

Subtheme 10: Frequent and Convenient Meetings. All eight participants shared a dual role with their mentor, whether it was supervisor, colleague, or professor and all participants stated how the latter role made meetings with their mentors more frequent and convenient. As Chloe discussed her White male mentor's support and will to invest, she also discussed her appreciation of his time. She stated:

> He took a lot of extra time with me. I had a normal one-on-one with him, but he also allowed me to come in early so that he and I could meet before the department actually got going. In those moments, I could share whatever I was needing extra help with or he would share things with me that I needed to know as a future leader. He was so open and willing to invest that extra time. He also saw beyond what I was seeing at the time and increased my confidence as aspired to be a vice president.

Elizabeth shared that when she first asked one of her White male supervisors, who was a college president at the time, to be her mentor, she asked by adding, “You don’t have to meet with me often.” Elizabeth stated he responded by saying:

> Oh, no! We’ll meet weekly, even if it’s just over coffee and for me to check-in briefly to see how you’re doing, but we’ll also have a monthly meeting where I’ll put you on my schedule for two hours and we can discuss all the good stuff. But if something is pressing and you can’t wait for days or even weeks to pass by, let me know so that I can get you on my calendar before then.

Sara and Brittany shared that since their mentors were also their colleagues, they frequently found themselves engaging in mentoring discussions as the casual conversation took place. As Sara revealed her experience with her Black male mentor she stated, “It’s almost like I had a mentoring moment daily, which I probably wouldn’t have gotten had he been in a leadership role.” Participants engaged in frequent and convenient meetings both formally and informally with their mentors and received “nuggets” and “useful pointers” that aided their success as leaders.

Subtheme 11: Problematic and Risky. Although for the participants, it seemed to be beneficial for their mentors to also serve as their supervisors or colleagues, it was also revealed to be problematic and risky for five of them. When Melissa discussed one of her Black male mentors and her Middle Eastern mentor, which were her president and vice president at the time, she shared that those mentoring relationships did not last long, and it was because of the dual role. As she continued to discuss them, she said, “As I now talk about them, I don’t really think they fit the description of mentorship.” However, she continued to share her experience with them because at the time, she did consider them to be her mentors. When discussing both men,

she shared how they both wanted her to stay in a certain position for five years and that they would eventually make a deal with her. At the time, she also served as faculty senate president so that relationship between the college president and faculty senate president was crucial. However, she felt as though she did not need five years to be in one position before she could advance her career. She said:

> They were both looking out for themselves. Initially, I didn't know that. It's not anything negative against them, it was just in their best interest that I stay there. A real mentor wouldn't and shouldn't do that and it wasn't revealed to me until I experienced the mentoring relationship with my White female mentor.

When discussing her White female mentor, however, Melissa stated, "Sometimes it would be hard because I didn't always agree with some of the decisions that she made as my supervisor." As she continued, she disclosed a comparison between herself and her peer, who also served in a senior-level administrative role, and in her opinion her president/supervisor/mentor:

> She never held her to the same standards as she held me. This chick could get away with murder and my supervisor would say, "I didn't see her doing it" and she'd be at work the next day if the cops hadn't already arrested her. She'd hold me to a totally different standard. So, in those instances I would frequently get annoyed about the way she managed the campus and it had me sometimes reevaluate whether or not I thought she would be the best mentor for me just by some of the decisions that she made.

Sara shared that although her colleague, a Black male, mentored her throughout her career, once she became a leader and his supervisor, the relationship changed. She asserted:

> I couldn't take away the connections he had, the influence he had on-campus and in the community, and the fact that he knew how to navigate the different systems that existed

> within the institution. But I do think that because he had seniority and was established in his role as an advisor, the fact that I started where he was, and he helped me progress in my career made it difficult for us. I still would go to him for guidance, but I had to learn to take what I could based on his perspective. I had to change my mindset and think like a leader and that's not always in the personal best interest of those that you lead. So, in his role, he had a difficult time understanding why decisions were being made and why I didn't do certain things. It got to the point that he would get upset sometimes if he gave me advice and I didn't do exactly what he said. That would hurt me because our relationship exceeded the workplace environment.

Jennifer's Hispanic female mentor created moments when she felt as though their relationship was being tested. She revealed, "There was a moment she had crossed the line and it wasn't so much in the mentorship, but the daily work. She spoke as if I was incompetent, unreliable, and ineffective. She screamed and talked to me as a child." After one too many times of the Hispanic female mentor doing this, Jennifer had a "heart to heart conversation" with her, and it never happened again. However, in between that time of her not saying anything, the trust and respect she had for her Hispanic female mentor were briefly tainted and she questioned whether or not she not only wanted to continue to work under her but also if she was a good person to mentor her.

Ashley discussed the difficulties she faced with her White male mentor and one of her Black male mentors. To summarize her experience with the dual role, she stated:

> They're men! They don't truly understand empathy, they don't have to choose between career and family, and by also being my supervisors, rumors started to spread that I was sleeping with them. The fact that I worked with the White male mentor in a government

> capacity and the Black male mentor in higher education just goes to show how gender and sex differences exist. What made it more taxing was that I had to go to work every day knowing that my reputation was on the line. However, since I knew that there was nothing more going on between neither man, I took that risk and to this day allow them to mentor me because of the capital they bring being mentors.

The dual role theme for participants revealed beneficial and detrimental aspects of the mentoring relationship. However, each participant confirmed that none of their mentoring relationships were dissolved or have been dissolved due to any of the examples they disclosed. Melissa, Sara, Chloe, and Jennifer all alluded to the fact that even when they faced challenging times because of the dual role, they were able to overcome and learn a very valuable lesson.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reported the overarching themes and subthemes that emerged from the interviews with eight Black women leaders in higher education, who have used or are currently using cross-race only, cross-gender only, and/or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship in hopes of advancing their career. The qualitative, phenomenological research study utilized 16 semistructured, open-ended interview questions to help better understand their lived experiences with the phenomenon. The exploration of the eight participants' lived experiences resulted in descriptions of how their mentor's contributions, organic connections, relational experiences, and dual role intersected and produced some rewarding, yet challenging experiences. The following chapter will present the discussion as it relates to the three research questions, past literature, and theoretical framework, as well as recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Literature suggests that mentorship is one of the most crucial and influential components for career advancement (Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016). However, Black women in higher education leadership are faced with a difficult task of selecting a mentor based on similar characteristics, such as race and gender (Gardner et al., 2014). Much of the current research describes significant barriers that Black women leaders face in higher education, such as the lack of mentorship based on race and gender, as well as successful career advancement strategies, such as leadership programs, to the respect of Black women in higher education leadership (Beckwith et al., 2016; Davis, 2009; Gardner et al., 2014; Lim et al., 2015). There is a lack of research exploring the experiences of Black women with cross-race/cross-gender mentors and how these relationships are formed, carried out, and possibly beneficial or detrimental for Black women who have attained a leadership position in higher education. Using Black feminist thought and intersectionality as the theoretical framework, this phenomenological study was conducted to understand and describe the lived experiences of cross-race and cross-gender mentorship for a select group of Black women leaders in higher education.

Chapter 5 includes interpretations of the results, based on participants' responses, as they relate to the three research questions and to past literature. In addition, this chapter will address the relationship between findings and the theoretical framework, as well as recommendations for further research.

Discussion

This section will provide an overview of the major findings in relation to this study's research questions and past literature. Appendix D provides a matrix that shows the connection between the themes and subthemes to the three research questions.

Research Question 1

How does a select group of Black women in higher education leadership describe their lived experiences of cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring?

Eight participants described their lived experiences with cross-race, cross-gender, and/or both types of mentorship in many ways any mentoring relationship might be experienced. They found their mentors to care about and be invested in their leadership development and professional success. They also described connections they had with their mentors that were based on the mentors' leadership qualities, career paths, and professional experiences that the mentor shared with them within the context of the mentoring relationship. Their description echoed Johnson and Snider's (2015) depiction of having a mentor who mirrors "professional interests" (p. 10), as well as Johnson and Ridley's (2018) recommendation to select a mentor based on characteristics such as social skills, communication skill, short- and long-term career goals, and desired career trajectory, which benefited their career outcomes in a positive way. One of the participants stated, "I recognized the qualities my Hispanic male mentor had that I wanted to achieve, which is one of the reasons I wanted him to mentor me."

Almost all the participants discussed having more than one mentor and deemed it beneficial due to the various qualities each mentor possessed. This supports the assertion that having multiple mentors provides a wide range of development opportunities and increased support (Brown, 2005; Curtin et al., 2016; Evans & Cokley, 2008; Scanlon, 1997). Participants in this study gained mentors at their workplace, as well as from other organizations, which illustrates Commodore et al.'s (2016) assertion that mentees should select mentors at their current institution, as well as different organizations. Additionally, the participants found their

mentors to be helpful in connecting them to other resources when they found themselves unable to help the participants in the particular ways they needed. This finding echoes Kent et al.'s (2015) conclusion that found cross-race and cross-gender mentorship to be valuable for mentees based on the ability to establish networks, secure resources, increase knowledge, and navigate the tenure and promotion process.

Most of the participants described experiences with mentors who were also their supervisors. Although Scanlon (1997) advised against this, to a large extent, the study's participants experienced satisfaction and gratification with their mentor's dual role. This allowed them to see their mentors in action and to experience their mentor's leadership styles first-hand. Additionally, the participants shared how their dual role mentors were aware of their career goals and how they were instrumental in helping them achieve those goals, which supports Pan et al.'s (2011) assertion that mentors who also serve as a supervisor are well-informed of their mentees' career goals and aspirations and are better equipped to provide the opportunities needed within the workplace to enhance their skills and expose mentees to needed networks. The participants did experience both positive and negative aspects of having a mentor with this dual role. They benefitted from the fact that their mentors who also served as their supervisors obviously valued their professional development and were motivated to invest in them. Many of the participants shared experiences where their mentors recommended and funded their attendance and participation at various conferences, institutes, and programs that aided in their continuous professional development efforts. These opportunities, combined with mentoring that is committed to the progression of minority women, help them tackle the obstacles facing today's institutions of higher learning (Teague & Bobby, 2014). Additionally, the study's participants being afforded the opportunity to attend conferences, programs, and institutes is consistent with

Sulpizio's (2014) statement about inclusive programs advancing women leaders through pioneering approaches, such as mentor pairing based on career goals rather than humanistic characteristics, to leadership development.

Another advantage was the amount of access the participants had to their mentors, which they reported as leading to frequent and convenient mentoring meetings. This differed from the experiences of the two Black male faculty members in Louis and Freeman's (2018) study who revealed that they had limited access to their mentors. Mentorship meetings for the participants in this study provided them the opportunity to receive extra influence, gain access to "exclusive information," and learn more about "the internal politics" of their institution. Palmer and Johnson-Bailey (2008) stated that mentors provide "inside information and access to the informal organization" because "the mentor understands the internal politics, fully knows the business, and has the power and political savvy to strategically position" (p. 46) the mentee.

The participants described experiencing other unique benefits of being mentored by someone of a different race and/or gender. Several found their White mentors to be better-connected to people and opportunities, compared to their mentors of another race. They described their White mentors inviting them or helping facilitate ways for the participants to earn a "seat at the table" to help them advance in their careers. One participant stated, "My White male mentor was well-connected and very active in many professional associations." This seems to have helped, as the participants with White mentors described making greater professional strides due, in part, to their experiences with this increased access and social connection. Another participant made an assertion that revealed the significance of having a White mentor by stating, "He was very responsible for one of the appointments I received," later mentioning that her Black male mentors were not as connected as the White male mentor and how they were not able

to “pull a few strings” like the White male mentor did. These findings are in agreement with Palmer and Johnson-Bailey’s (2008) research that found Black female participants from corporate settings benefitted more from White male mentoring. Thus, Palmer and Johnson-Bailey (2008) concluded that White males tended to be more effective mentors, given their power and rank in organizations and their ability to direct the mentee through organizational politics.

The participants also described some difficult experiences connecting to their mentors based on matters relating to race and/or gender, hence, the presence of Black feminist thought and intersectionality in which these theoretical frameworks show “the path of struggle and to empowerment, while at the same time highlighting the challenges and difficulties in combating intersecting oppression” (Alinia, 2015, p. 2334). For most of the participants, their mentors recognized the challenges they encountered being both Black and female; however, the mentors had difficulty providing practical guidance to help them overcome the oppression they faced. While the mentors could inform the mentees about some organizational culture differences unknown to the mentees, which has proven valuable, their mentors were unable to offer helpful insight regarding the unique challenges Black females encounter within these cultures. For some participants, their cross-race mentor would avoid the conversation or would focus on something else.

This broaching style was highlighted in Carroll and Barnes’ (2015) study stated that avoidant strategies tend to serve as a barrier that hinders mentees’ success. However, for the participants in this study, the avoidant broaching style did not create a barrier that hindered their success, and participants accepted that their race issues were not topics that their cross-race mentor could advise them on. One of the participants described how she initially struggled with

accepting that "it's not his experience" when seeking guidance on issues that she felt were dealing with her race. Fortunately, the participants found that at least some of their mentors recognized this deficiency and actively sought to make connections with others who could provide them mentoring in those areas. This infusing broaching style was also highlighted by Carroll and Barnes (2015), in which the mentor attempts to actively eliminate oppression and promote social justice. These connections made by participants' mentors were from other professionals they knew and included recommended conferences, programs, and institutes that focused on Black women leaders.

The study's participants made it clear that their mentoring relationship was no different than any other mentoring relationship in which they experienced, what Humberd and Rouse (2016) and Kutchner and Kleschick (2016) described as interpersonal interactions guided by someone (i.e., mentor) who is usually in position of power and wisdom and can effectively guide the path of a person (i.e., mentee) seeking growth and learning opportunities, regardless of race and gender differences. Participants echoed two of the distinguishing features of Black feminist thought, which Collins (2000) posited:

1. Regardless of where Black women reside, they experience intersecting oppressions that produces similar results.
2. Black feminist thought appears from a strain connecting encounters and beliefs; however, not all Black women share and interpret their lived experiences in the same manner.

If race and/or gender was a valuing factor for these participants, many stated that they would not have gotten this far in their careers without the mentors they have shared their lived experiences with because as one participant stated, "I don't think a Black woman would have been nearly invested and committed because it would've turned into a competition. You know, it's only room

for one Black woman at the top." Early in their careers, almost half of the participants sought a Black female mentor; however, they quickly realized that there are other important factors to consider when selecting a mentor such as their willingness to make time, workplace experiences, exposure, trust, and the ability to properly guide, sponsor, and advocate for them. Although in some moments of concern race and gender did intersect based on the need to receive guidance from their mentors pertaining to challenges they faced outside of the mentoring relationship, participants did not have to choose between a category they would identify with, such as race or gender. Stitt and Happel-Parkins (2019) opined that Black women have had to choose between one of the categories they want to primarily identify with because society has crucified those who have demanded to be recognized as both Black and female. Participants revealed that for the most part their mentors recognized the oppression of being both Black and female; however, in looking at intersectionality and its effect on cross-race and cross-gender mentoring, intersectionality did provide insight on how race and gender influenced their mentors' ability to effectively guide them in moments of concern.

Overall, these participants revealed that as Black women in higher education leadership, they are not disadvantaged when seeking meaningful, beneficial, and to some extent relatable mentoring relationships because their true needs for success and climbing the leadership ladder in higher education far exceeds the relation to an individual based solely on race and gender. Although challenges did arise in the cross-race only, cross-gender only, and both cross-race and cross- gender mentoring relationships, all participants attested to the positive impact they made in their careers and their ability to overcome those trials, which made them stronger and capable of "working with flawed people because we are all flawed in some way."

Research Question 2

What features or characteristics of cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships have a select group of Black women in higher education found beneficial or detrimental to their careers?

Overall, the research participants revealed an assortment of features and characteristics pertaining to their cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships in which they found to be beneficial and detrimental to their careers. The participants shared how each of their mentors had a vision regarding their career trajectories and saw fit to assure those visions became realities. They also talked about how their mentors saw something in them that they did not necessarily see in themselves. One participant stated, "As I started off in higher education and got my first leadership position in enrollment management, I thought I'd made it and [there] wasn't much else to shoot for. My White male mentor saw and thought otherwise." Another participant shared how her Black male mentor pushed her beyond the limitations she had placed on herself early on in her career, which enabled her to start thinking about career advancement. The vision that mentors had for the participants in this study included the belief that these women could advance in their careers, which pushed the participants out of their comfort zones and challenged them to network more, increase their visibility, and think about other leadership positions. This aligns with the findings from the research literature that suggests that supportive mentoring relationships are successful in guiding mentees through strategic pathways that yield to social capital and other benefits such as networks, visibility, inclusion, job satisfaction, and pay increases (Bova, 1998; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Hill & Wheat, 2017; Johnson & Ridley, 2018).

In addition to the benefit of having a mentor with vision, the participants also described how their mentors' guidance, advocacy, and sponsorship benefitted their careers with network and exposure opportunities that either involved attending a program, conference, or institute. Curtin et al. (2016) reported that career or instrumental mentoring, defined as focusing on the skills and knowledge that are crucial for effective work performance; sponsorship, defined as active advocacy and provides open access to professional networks; and expressive or psychosocial mentoring, which provides emotional support and encourage, have all been proven to be associated with increased self-efficacy and positive career outcomes. Almost all the participants discussed being invited to serve on committees, attend events and functions, as well as participate in important meetings in which their mentor had influence. For many of the participants, these invitations resulted in an increased network, knowledge, or a job opportunity that benefited their careers. One participant asserted, "I was invited to settings that granted me access to influential people because most of the boards my mentors report to consist of a male-dominated board."

Having a mentor who is forthcoming, honest, and pleasant to be around is also revealed to be beneficial (Hardcastle, 1988; Johnson & Ridley, 2018; Shea, 1994). The participants stated that "open," "honest," and "transparent" communication was not only important to them but also a characteristic held by their mentors. The participants revealed that it was necessary for both the mentees and mentors to be honest with one another to produce a lasting relationship. Around half of the participants described how they found that they had to be open and honest about their needs as mentees to receive it from their mentors. One participant stated, "You can't have a mentor and be the mentee and not be willing to tell them what's on your mind. Because I've been in situations where an alleged mentor tried to hold me back and tell me something that

wasn't helpful." In addition to that statement another participant stated, "I think, naturally, we gravitate to not sharing stuff because we don't want to be vulnerable or judged." All of the participants cited open and honest communication to be beneficial in their mentoring relationships, helping foster professional opportunities and success.

All the study's participants found favorable attributes in their dual-role mentors regarding their mentoring relationships and careers. Many participants revealed how their mentors, who also served as supervisors, provided advocacy or sponsorship of some form that has helped or helped them learn, grow, and develop as a leader, and for some, to attain a leadership position. Evans (2019) stated that dual role mentors have the ability to assign leadership positions and other beneficial tasks when the mentor is also a mentee's supervisor. This study's participants believed that they received certain privileges because their dual role mentors had the power to make certain decisions and were connected to other individuals with that same power. The participants stated how this sponsorship can lead to being personally recommended for career opportunities. One participant expressed, "He was the first person to throw my name out there when an interim leadership became available, to push me forward, to keep growing. He wouldn't let up on me."

Despite the benefits, dual role mentorship was also revealed to be detrimental to the participants' careers and mentoring relationships. The participants described instances where they faced challenges because they were Black and female; however, the intersection of race, class, and gender was not a contributing factor for them in obtaining a cross-race, cross-gender mentor. Participants chose substance and significance, including leadership qualities, sponsorship, and their mentors' experiences, over symbolism, which is the connection based on external characteristics, such as race and gender. The participants did not disclose feelings or

experiences of being excluded, oppressed, or discriminated against by their mentors during the mentoring relationships, but the influence of intersectionality revealed some of the mentor's inability to directly guide them based on challenges that occurred outside of the mentoring relationship.

The data revealed that some of the mentors could see through the lens "in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate one another" (Steinmetz, 2020, p. 82), but their mentors did not know how to address these forms on inequality. Some of the participants stated that their mentors would simply avoid such conversations. This avoidant broaching style was revealed to be detrimental in cross-race mentoring (Carrol & Barnes, 2015). However, the participants revealed that they experienced some positive change from mentors who did attempt to not only acknowledge but also confront their oppression, and in return participants did not have to choose between portraying their race or their gender; they were able to be both Black and female during their mentoring relationships. The mentors who attempted to provide guidance in those challenging times did so by sharing their own personal struggles that were not relatable but did connect participants with individuals who shared similar experiences. Participants who sought guidance from their cross-race, cross-gender mentors gained insight on overcoming challenges related to obtaining leadership positions; however, those stories from their mentors did not relate to the essence of being a Black woman seeking leadership opportunities.

For participants who experienced the presence of intersectionality directly with their mentors, some of them felt as though it was because they were oblivious to the guidance they were providing in relation to their race. As one participant stated, "I just know that the process is still what the process is, but it just might mean there's a little divot in it that I have to adjust

because when I walk into a room, I'm not racially ambiguous." Although some participants considered their mentors to be "privileged," all of those with a White mentor stated that their mentors recognized their inability to relate to them based on race but were advocates for them as female leaders.

Just as intersectionality was a contributing factor in these participants' mentoring relationships, their experiences with cross-race and/or cross-gender mentoring were consistent with the range, scope, and complexity of the Black female experience described in Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000). Black feminist thought suggests that although Black women experience social change, they do not do so without struggles and challenges (Collins, 2000). The participants in this study were able to obtain leadership positions within what is known as "a White-male dominated culture" (Penny & Gaillard, 2008, p. 197), yet, they experienced challenges when trying to seek advice from their cross-race and cross-gender mentors on sensitive subjects, such as race. Participants with a Black male mentor also revealed experiences in which the men could not relate to them because of perceived gender differences and roles, like how our society associates men with being natural-born leaders due to their dominance and assertive masculine traits (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). The participants stated that although their Black male mentors could recognize the oppression they faced in certain situations, their mentors could not relate due to their masculinity overpowering their Blackness and providing them with "a hall pass," authorizing them of being able to do, say, or be something without consequences. Despite their Black males' inability to relate to their experiences, the participants found their mentors' recognition of the oppression to be good enough for them. As one participant described this recognition, "It humanized leadership, validated my feelings, and acknowledged my presence as a person."

Most of the participants found themselves in challenging and "awkward situations" with their mentors who also served in another capacity. One participant stated, "Sometimes it would be hard because I didn't always agree with some of the decisions that she made as my supervisor." For many of the participants, they found the dual role to be "a blessing and a curse."

One participant shared that although her colleague, a Black male, mentored her throughout her career, once she became a leader and his supervisor, the relationship changed. Participants discussed the difficulties they faced with mentors who had a dual role and at some point, in the mentoring relationship, questioned if whether or not they wanted to continue to collaborate with their mentor in that capacity. When asked about how they would address those difficulties with their mentors who also served as their supervisors, almost half of them said, "I didn't."

These participants did not address their concerns simply because their mentors also had influence regarding their "livelihood and paycheck." One participant stated, "I never addressed them. She was my boss and I was on a yearly contract," which echoes Scanlon's (1997) warning of role entrapment and feeling obligated to agree with certain actions or stay in a certain role due to the dual relationship. However, depending on the situation and their level of concern, a few of the participants retracted their original response and stated, "Well it did depend on what the difficulty was." The participants emphatically stated that they first had to be honest with themselves and their mentors, based on how they felt. In those moments, it was not about the supervisor and employee roles, but about the rapport they had built with their mentors and the reciprocation of respect, trust, and honesty. Past literature presented genuineness, the establishment of trust, and the ability to be transparent as crucial behaviors from both mentors

and mentees, in order to build a solid foundation in mentoring relationships (Chan et al., 2015; Johnson & Ridley, 2018).

Many of the participants did not want to provide details in describing the difficult situations they faced with their mentors; however, what they alluded to was that race differences influenced most, if not all, of the difficulties they faced with a White mentor. This finding supports Johnson and Snider's (2015) assertion that having a mentor who "mirrors social backgrounds and professional interests" (p. 10) is of great importance to the mentee. Based on the participants' accounts, their Black, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern mentors mostly recognized the racial challenges they faced from a minority perspective and a few "shared similar experiences and feelings," but the White mentors avoided the conversation, "did not want to hear it," or "just couldn't relate." For the participants in this study, the similar experiences shared with some of the Black, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern mentors supported Johnson and Snider's (2015) assertion that experiences with other minority mentors are just as beneficial as those with a mentor who possesses the power to advance a mentee's career.

The difficulty in navigating mentoring relationships due to race and gender differences relates to Black feminist thought and intersectionality. One participant revealed how her White female mentor would share her "climbing the leadership ladder stories;" however, her stories only revealed her experience as a White, lesbian woman. She stated, "I think she was trying to come from an angle where my Blackness related to her being part of the LGBT community in the 60s." The participant recognized the effort her mentor was attempting to put forth, but "it just didn't connect for me because her strike against her was her sexuality only. My strikes are I'm Black, female, and [deleted content] by choice. There's no correlation there for me." This example illustrates the influence of intersectionality and how Black women experience the

unique combination of racism and sexism, equally and not separately (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). The statement made by the participant echoes an argument made by Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010), which states that White women are able to undoubtedly focus entirely on gender biases and dismiss the recognition of racial discrimination since they tend to identify as the same race as most male leaders. Additionally, this participant's statement connects to Johnson and Snider (2015), who found, "White female mentors provided support in terms of helping us gain a better understanding of the gendered roles/responsibilities and changing expectations for women in the field" (p. 11).

For participants with a White mentor, they often found their mentors avoiding conversations that involved race in regard to discrimination and the disrespect they experienced in the workplace. These participants found it unfortunate that they were not able to find comfort and answers from their White mentors, when many of them simply wanted their mentor's perspective on a situation or issue as a White person. Carroll and Barnes (2015) highlighted the difficulty within cross-race mentorship, in which mentors of that pairing tended to avoid conversations with mentees that are centered on race, and how that approach serves as a barrier for mentees' success and progression. However, some of this study's participants did reveal that their White mentors attempted to address their concerns centered on race and gender and would try to tailor the information based on customizable and appropriate approaches, although some were more successful in their efforts than others.

All of the participants stated how they had to carefully approach each conversation with "poise" and "grace" in order to avoid being characterized as "an angry, Black woman," a stereotype that portrays intersectionality in relation to Black feminist thought and how the experience and struggle of overcoming that label is a constant oppression that resides, regardless

of a Black woman's position or title (Collins, 2000). The participants' conscious method was not only during "sensitive conversations" with their mentors but also with the feedback approach their mentors would suggest, given the situation. Almost half of the participants stated that their mentors would recommend "how you should go in there and let them have it" in approaching a workplace situation. The participants understood that "letting someone have it" could easily place them in a stereotypical category that could "blackball" them and jeopardize their reputation and possibly their careers. For the participants, the most challenging part of this was their mentors' inability to understand that, as one stated, "Although you can go in there and let them have it, you'll be viewed as passionate and determined. I'll be viewed as loud, ghetto, angry, and an incompetent communicator." Careful actions taken by the participants confirm Henderson et al.'s (2010) assertion that Black women are still carrying historical stereotypes that society has assigned some centuries ago, dating back to slavery and the creation of the Mammy label. Patton and Harper's (2003) study found similar types of careful actions, with its participants expressing how as African American women who were being mentored by someone of a different race, they oftentimes masked their feelings and circumstances so that they would not be perceived as weak and incompetent due to the "fear of being ridiculed, misunderstood, and misjudged" (p. 73).

Overall, race and gender differences did intersect concurrently for participants in their mentoring relationships, but it did not impact the mentoring relationships to the extent of wanting the dissolve them. Several participants recognized the capital that their non-Black, specifically White, mentors brought to the relationship including their connections to people and opportunities. These White mentors invited them or created ways for the participants to earn a "seat at the table" to help them advance in their careers. This seems to have helped, as the participants with White mentors described making significant professional strides due in part to

their experiences with this increased access and social connection. This connects with existing literature that suggests supportive mentoring relationships help to successfully guide mentees through strategic pathways that yield social capital and other benefits such as networks, visibility, inclusion, job satisfaction, and pay increases (Bova, 1998; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Hill & Wheat, 2017; Johnson & Ridley, 2018).

Research Question 3

What mentor and mentee behaviors and practices do a select group of Black women leaders in higher education view as most influential in their cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships?

Throughout each interview, participants revealed actions and routines that were, at times, initiated and carried out by their mentors. All participants stated how frequent and consistent meetings with their mentors increased the rapport, which was an essential component of the mentoring relationship growing and blossoming (Chan et al., 2015; Penny & Gaillard, 2006; Shea, 1994). Ghosh (2014) concluded that a shared understanding must be developed, and frequent interactions must take place to minimize misconceptions regarding cross-race and cross-gender mentorship.

Participants highlighted the frequency and convenience of having access to their mentors inside and outside of the workplace, which created beneficial formal and informal meetings. One participant stated, “The fact that we could talk about sports, the news, Netflix, and food allowed me and my mentors to really build a relationship.” She continued by stating, “What’s funny is that these conversations happened at work and the work conversations happened elsewhere. Whether it was in the car on the way home, the golf course, or an off-campus event.” However, when formal mentoring meetings did occur, all the participants revealed the importance of

having an agenda with a list of questions to ask and specified information to address/gather.

Johnson and Ridley (2018) and Penny and Gaillard (2006) opined that mentees should always be prepared and have a plan when meeting with their mentors. One participant stated, "My mentors wanted to maximize their time so when I would send an item list before the meeting, I would always get great feedback for keeping the meeting on track and sticking to the schedule." Participants revealed that their mentors appreciated the investment they had in themselves and their "will to do the leg work" when occupying crucial minutes of their day. Past literature supports mentees who have taken ownership of the mentoring relationship by maximizing the time spent with mentors, being prepared, and contributing ideas about various topics (Chan et al., 2015; Penny & Gaillard, 2006; Shea, 1994).

Participants stated how "the importance of building and gaining trust" with their mentor was "crucial for the relationship to grow." Penny and Gaillard (2006) stated, "Mentors and mentees cannot develop a good relationship if they don't get to know each other" (p. 196) and that "above all, the most important element of a successful mentoring relationship is trust" (p. 196). As more and more meetings took place, whether they were formal or informal, participants increased the trust they had with their mentors, which contributed to the relationship growing. Participants noted that consistent interaction with their mentors aided in trust being built because they were able to get to know their mentors "on a deeper level." When asked how trust was built, participants reported, "Time. It just takes time" in which Penny and Gaillard (2006) stated is part of the process when developing a sustaining mentoring relationship. Additionally, participants looked for their mentors to prove themselves first by addressing some workplace challenges and sharing vulnerable information about themselves. However, once it was established that the mentoring relationship was a safe haven, followed by supported actions on behalf of their

mentors, participants revealed that trust became the foundation of their mentoring relationship growing. Penny and Gaillard (2006) also echoed this notion by stating, “Mentors and mentees should not betray confidences. When the mentor tells the mentee something [and vice versa], she should remember that it is for her ears only, and not for distribution” (p. 196).

As many of the participants discussed their lived experiences, it was uplifting for them to have their mentors not only support them but also invest in them as stakeholders and mentees so that they could learn, grow, and develop as leaders and aspiring leaders. Chan et al. (2015) and Johnson and Ridley (2018) identified the importance of mentors providing sponsorship, in order to aid in mentees’ professional and leadership development. Participants emphasized how their mentors sponsored them and afforded them opportunities to attend various functions, programs, organizations, and institutes in which Johnson and Ridley (2018) emphasized how mentors “can endorse mentees’ membership in important organizations” (p. 21), but more importantly how “effective sponsorship requires thoughtful intention” (p. 22).

The intentional actions of participants’ mentors providing sponsorship to various organizations and events resulted in them meeting “some pretty amazing and awesome people,” including Black professionals who worked in higher education from mid-level leadership all the way up to executive-senior level leadership. This served as bridge for many of the participants, which addressed some of the racial challenges they faced as Black female leaders including workplace discrimination (Davis, 2009), difficulty securing same race and/or gender mentors (Evans & Cokley, 2008), receiving less support and fewer benefits compared to their counterparts (Lim et al., 2015), valuable access and insight (Palmer & Johnson-Bailey, 2008), and emotional support (Patton & Harper, 2003).

In addition to sponsorship, guidance was another major influential behavior that engendered a great deal of discussion from participants. One participant discussed how she appreciated her White female mentor and "the guidance of giving insight into White spaces and the interview process, especially knowing that those interview rooms would be occupied by the majority of White people." This experience matched one in Bova's (1998) study, in which a participant stated, "I learned a lot about white norms" (p. 9), as well as Palmer and Johnson-Bailey's (2008) study in which all six of their Black female participants highlighted how "invaluable" and "instrumental" (p. 48) their White mentors were in providing insight and navigation tools regarding how to execute job tasks in "uncharted territory" (p. 48).

Participants praised their mentors, mainly the cross-race mentors, who acknowledged the intersection of race and gender and their attempt to combat it. This behavior echoes Chan et al.'s (2015) findings that are presented in Table 1, which presents the following mentor practices: "self-disclosing when appropriate, acknowledging limitations, protecting when issues of race, discrimination, and racism occur, providing emotional support, and introducing protégés to influential people to build community/family" (p. 596). Although most the mentors did not directly defuse the challenges participants faced, they did admit to being unable to rectify those challenges and connected the participants to people and resources that could. Intersectionality added dimensions to examining the experiences of cross-race, cross-gender, and both types of mentorship, but it did not create intentional difficulties in which one category was purposefully overlooked.

Limitations

Limitations are beyond the control of researchers and have the potential to affect time limit restrictions placed on the interviewer by the interviewee, lack of elaboration in interview

responses, misinterpretation of interviewees' responses, and inability to validate the realness (Harley, 2009) of their lived experiences. One limitation was that some participants requested face-to-face interviews in their initial email response when agreeing to participate, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews had to take place via Zoom video conferencing. This possibly limited the ability to interview participants in what they considered a natural setting for them, as well as caused distractions for participants including interruptions from family, pets, emergency calls, and unidentified external noises. Additionally, some interviews were interrupted due to lost and slow internet connections. Although, interviews reconvened once connection was established, this limitation possibly interfered with participants' initial thoughts and answers. In addition, slow internet connections caused the video interview to be pixelated, with delayed audio. Participants were asked to repeat information when this occurred; however, it is impossible to determine if the initial thoughts, again, were shared.

Lastly, most of the participants were able to describe more than one mentor. In answering the interview questions, although participants were asked clarifying questions, it is possible that they did not align examples/stories/narratives with the correct mentor they were discussing. Although I do not believe participants combined their lived experiences with all of their mentors, unless specified, I do believe participants possibly mismanaged information based on the mentor they were discussing at any given moment. Many of the participants emphasized and focused on one particular mentor more than other mentors, for unknown reasons, which potentially impacted the validity, analysis, and interpretation of participants' lived experiences with cross-race, cross-gender, or both mentoring relationships. While analyzing and interpreting the data, I was only able to apply the participants' lived experiences to the mentor they identified in which I clarified with a follow-up question or paraphrased statement.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this phenomenological study are similar to those of prior studies; however, they are unique in combining the lived experiences of a select group of Black women in higher education leadership and the use of cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. This study contributes to the literature in that it not only examines mentorship broadly defined but also Black women's experiences with mentorship, specifically cross-race only, cross-gender only, and/or both types of mentorship. The findings in this study are consistent with what is known about mentorship and that regardless of race and/or gender, mentorship is a useful tool that is used to promote growth (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Johnson & Ridley, 2018; Penny & Gaillard, 2006; Shea, 1994), enhance leadership skills (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hill & Wheat, 2017; Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016), and is especially important for career advancement (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gardner et al., 2014; Tran, 2014).

Current research is more limited in the understanding and application of mentorship for Black women in higher education leadership (Bartman, 2015; Penny & Gaillard, 2006), which was addressed by this study. Given the critical need to not only diversify top leadership positions in higher education but also connect with its diverse student population, additional studies should focus on examining both the lived experiences of diverse mentees and mentors. Additionally, future studies should examine the leadership style of mentors who also serve as supervisors, which is a possible contributor for the mentee's selection process. Participants in this study revealed an attraction to their mentors' personable personality, which correlates, in my opinion, to charismatic leadership. The exploration of a mentor's leadership style can yield a deeper understanding of mentoring pairing and leadership development of the mentee.

As this study only focused on utilizing Black women in academia, future studies can examine lived experiences of Black women leaders in government, business, and medical sectors, as well as K-12 education, to expand the literature that focuses on Black women leaders and mentorship. Their experiences can also provide rich data about their mentoring experiences, including behaviors and practices, selection and identification of mentors, and features and characteristics deemed beneficial or detrimental to their careers and the mentoring relationship. Based on the results from this study, future research can build upon the findings with a large quantitative study to test, and possibly confirm, what has been presented. By examining a broader selection of Black women in different professions and increasing the number of participants, this might lead to more generalizable findings.

Additionally, it might be useful to examine the lived experiences of Black women who have been able to secure another Black woman as a mentor, regardless of the organization. Examining mentoring relationships amongst Black women as both mentor and mentee can unveil the advantages and disadvantages of same-race and same-gender mentorship, including but not limited to, having a better understanding of their struggles and issues as Black women (Davidson & Foster, 2001; Gamble & Turner, 2015), as well as understanding those who experience Black female rivalry, based on the perception of "one seat at the table drives unhealthy competition" and how "women hold women to higher standards" (Kiner, 2020, p. 13). This will provide insight into the statement, "It's only room for one Black woman at the top," which was made by one of the participants in this study.

Lastly, examining the lived experiences of Black female college students (e.g., undergraduate and graduate students) and their experiences with cross-race and cross-gender mentorship will add to the much-needed literature that highlights the nature of mentorship,

outside of sororities, family and church members, and friends (Crawford & Smith, 2005), while seeking a college degree. Bartman (2015) called for such a study, stating that although Black female students have achieved success academically, their success has overshadowed the crucial need for effective mentorship approaches that are designed to promote their continued development and achievement in all aspects of their higher education experience and beyond.

Recommendations for Professional Practice

Creating a culture of diversity and inclusion can be addressed by many professional practices by implementing programs that emphasize mentorship. Careful consideration should be at the forefront of the pairing process, including the gathering of detailed information from both the mentor and mentee that will highlight strengths, weaknesses, desired characteristics, career paths and goals, personality traits, work ethic, desired outcomes, personal values, and communication style (Johnson & Ridley, 2018). As stated by Johnson and Ridley (2018), "Mentorships that are poorly matched in these areas are sometimes doomed to fail. For instance, the mentor will be frustrated by the mentee's lack of ambition, or the mentee may find the mentor too complacent or relaxed" (pp. 107–108). Specifically, institutions can benefit from the approach that the University of San Diego (Sulpizio, 2014) has taken by constructing organizational leadership development programs with respect to Black women and create content based on lived experiences, leadership identity and theory, networking and mentoring, and forward-thinking practices that are most relevant and useful for them.

Practitioners might use this study to increase their cultural competence and engage in training and conversations that produce awareness regarding all racial groups. According to Johnson and Ridley (2018), "Sometimes mentors [and mentees] hesitate or even avoid entering into mentorships with mentees [or mentors] from other cultures. They fear they lack the

competence to mentor [or be mentored] across cultures, or, worse, they fear appearing to be culturally incompetent" (p. 140). In order for cross-race mentoring to be effective, it is imperative for the mentors and mentees to be active learners in the process and have a holistic understanding of racial, ethnic, and cultural identities (Chan et al., 2015).

In addition to cultural competence, mentors and mentees need to "appreciate and honor gender differences" (Johnson & Ridley, 2018, p. 147). Particularly, male practitioners should disregard any implicit biases and misperceptions that society has embedded about men working with women. As stated by Johnson and Ridley (2018),

> What's the solution? Exposure! Rather than quarantine women from male mentorship for fear of rumors, attraction, or making a misstep, men need to initiate *more* interaction and mentorship with women. Mere exposure, sincere gender humility, and a learning orientation will work wonders in lowering anxiety. And here's an insider note to men: if you mentor women often and deliberately, you benefit as well. Evidence suggests that not only can the mentorship make a huge difference in your career, it can improve your own emotional intelligence, communication skill set, and professional network. To tell the truth, you'll probably also become a better partner, husband, and friend-in a word, an all-around better *man*. (p. 149)

Men and women should approach cross-gender mentorship with an open mind and the will to overcome the challenges that will arise due to gender differences. However, avoiding cross-gender mentorship is not the approach to take when constructing change that will increase diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Conclusions

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived of experiences of a select group of Black women leaders in higher education who have had experience with cross-race, cross-gender, and/or both types of mentors. Eight participants revealed their utilization of cross-race only and/or cross-gender mentorship and its impact on their career and leadership position. Participants made it clear that their unique mentoring pairing/selection was not determined solely by race or gender, but by certain qualities and characteristics that they desired in a mentor. Although these mentoring relationships evolved organically due to the dual role of the identified mentors, participants revealed that these mentoring relationships did not flourish overnight and were not without challenges, uncertainties, and difficult situations.

Intersectionality influenced some of the interactions between participants and their mentors, but these challenges were not strong enough for the participants to dissolve the mentoring relationships. Additionally, participants revealed the struggles they faced while highlighting the difficulties in reducing the intersection of race and gender, which proved Collins' (2000) assertion that regardless of where Black women reside, who they are, and what their title is, they experience intersecting oppressions that produces similar results. The participants stressed the importance of having a mentor with the ability to guide, advocate, and sponsor; provide network and exposure opportunities; who is open, honest, transparent, trustworthy, personable, supportive and willing to invest, accessible, and able to connect with a mentee based on principles that they deemed to be important. Understanding mentoring experiences for Black women and the intersection of race and gender provides an understanding of the impact a mentor has, or does not have, in mentees' climb up the leadership ladder.

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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

February 4, 2020

Jerica C. Nickerson
Department of Educational Leadership
Abilene Christian University

Dear Jerica,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Black Women in Higher Education Leadership: Examining Their Lived Experiences Utilizing Cross-Race and Cross-Gender Mentorship",

(IRB# 20-003)is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Appendix B: Participation Solicitation Email

Hi, _____.

I hope this email finds you well. This is Jerica Nickerson and I am currently seeking participants for my research dissertation that I am completing at Abilene Christian University in which I will examine the lived experiences of a select group of Black women in higher education leadership who have utilized or are currently utilizing cross-race only, cross-gender only, and/or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship (i.e., a mentor other than a Black woman).

To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be a Black woman in higher education leadership who (a) have earned a master's and/or doctoral degree, (b) currently work in four-year or two-year institutions in the USA, serving in positions of a dean or higher, and (c) who have or are currently utilizing cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentorship. Do you fit these criteria, and have you experienced at least one, if not all, of these types of mentoring? If so, are you willing to effectively, vividly, and accurately to the best of your ability reflect on that experience and participate in my study by agreeing to a recorded, in-depth interview? The interview(s) and data analysis will be strictly anonymous.

The recorded, in-depth interview can take place either face-to-face or video conferencing (via Zoom). If you select a face-to-face interview, we will arrange for it to take place in what you consider a natural setting; however, this depends on your location. To honor and respect your time, on average, the interview will last up to one hour, not to exceed two hours. Do note, there may be a possibility for a follow-up, recorded interview to get clarity on previous answers you provided; this will also be done face-to-face or video conferencing and can last up to one hour, not to exceed an hour and a half. The recorded interview(s) will be arranged according to our availability, keeping in mind the need for a two-hour block of time for the official in-depth interview (evening and weekend schedule is available). I encourage you to take some time, (no more than three days, please) to consider your participation and amount of effort on your behalf this study will entail. If you agree, I want to assure you that all data collected will be anonymous and you will be assigned a pseudonym. Additionally, you have the right and ability to terminate your role at any point during this process. Do email me at xxxxx@acu.edu to inform me of your decision to participate, or not, in my study.

If you agree to participate, do state whether or not you would like for the recorded, in-depth interview to take place face-to-face or by video conferencing, as well as a minimum of five (5) possible dates and times (remember, two-hour blocks of time) we can schedule the recorded, in-depth interview between now and March 29, 2020 (if these dates do not fit into your schedule, please let me know; the sooner the better). If I have not heard back from you within the next 3-4 days, I will do a courtesy follow-up call or email with you.

I appreciate you taking the time to consider your participation and look forward to hearing from you soon!

Appendix C: Semistructured Interview Questions

Introduction Question: Please tell me about yourself. How long have you been in higher education? What attracted you to have a career in higher education? What was roles have you held while in higher education? What is your current role in higher education?

Interview Question 1: First, discuss your perspective of mentorship as it relates to attaining a leadership position. What actions did you take to obtain a mentor during your career and rise to leadership?

Interview Question 2: Describe how you were able to identify your mentor(s), noting any particular aspects that helped or made it challenging.

Interview Question 3: How important were race and gender in identifying/choosing a mentor?

Potential Probe Question:

Did you consider race and gender when identifying a mentor? Why or why not?

Interview Question 4: How did you meet/connect with your mentor(s) of a different race/gender? Describe that initiation in great detail. If you have/had more than one cross-race/cross-gender mentoring relationship to describe, be sure to specify them, as well as the point in your career in which the relationship was established.

Interview Question 5: As a mentee, at what stage in your career did you secure your cross-race/cross-gender mentoring relationship and tell me about your experience. Describe that in as much detail as possible.

Interview Question 6: Tell me about the influence your cross-race/cross-gender mentor had on your career. How did your cross-race/cross-gender mentor(s) impact your development as leader and your career advancement?

Interview Question 7: Tell me about any experiences with your cross-race/cross-gender mentor(s) that you found to be helpful and difficult. Explain why.

Potential Probe Questions:

What steps, if any, did you take to address the difficulty?

What bearing did it have on the relationship moving forward?

Interview Question 8: Provide an example of how/when you benefitted from your cross-race/cross-gender mentoring relationship.

Interview Question 9: Tell me about a difficult situation you faced and disclosed to your cross-race/cross-gender mentor and how s/he was a guide.

Interview Question 10: What did the cross-race/cross-gender mentoring relationship reveal to you about your mentor?

Interview Question 11: What did the cross-race/cross-gender mentoring relationship reveal to you about yourself?

Interview Question 12: Describe the opportunities your cross-race/cross-gender mentor provided.

Potential Probe Question:

Were there any opportunities you provided to your cross-race/cross-gender mentor that you can describe?

Interview Question 13: What traits did you adopt from your cross-race/cross-gender mentor and how have these traits influenced your career?

Interview Question 14: Tell me about any practices and behaviors that enhanced your cross-race/cross-gender mentoring relationship as a mentee and from your mentor?

Interview Question 15: Tell me about any practices and behaviors that weakened your cross-race/cross-gender mentoring relationship as a mentee and from your mentor?

Interview Question 16: If there is any additional information you would like to add regarding the experience(s) with cross-race/cross-gender mentoring, do share at this time.

Appendix D: Matrix of Research Questions, Connected Themes, and Subthemes

	Overarching Themes	Mentor's Contributions			Organic Connections			Relational Experiences		Dual Role		
	Subthemes	Vision and Outlook	Ability to Guide, Advocate, and/or Sponsor	Network and Exposure Opportunities	Transparent and Communicative	Trust and Rapport	Personable	Connections Based on Race and/or Career Paths	Inability to Relate Based on Race and/or Gender Differences	Supportive and Willing to Invest	Frequent and Convenient Meetings	Problematic and Risky
Research Questions												
RQ1			X					X	X	X	X	
RQ2		X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X
RQ3			X	X		X				X	X	

Note. This matrix reveals the mapping of the various themes and subthemes to the three research questions. The research questions are:

RQ1. How does a select group of Black women in higher education leadership describe their lived experiences of cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring?

RQ2. What features or characteristics of cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships have a select group of Black women in higher education found beneficial or detrimental to their careers?

RQ3. What mentor and mentee behaviors and practices do a select group of Black women leaders in higher education view as most influential in their cross-race only, cross-gender only, or both cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships?