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GROUNDED THEORY BLACK WOMXN LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES IN NATIONAL ACADEMIC PROFESSIONAL

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by

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

"Now the days stretch before you with the dryness and sameness of desert dunes. And in this season of grief we who love you have become invisible to you. Our words worry the empty air around you and you can sense no meaning in our speech.

Yet, we are here. We are still here. Our hearts ache to support you.

We are always loving you.

You are not alone."

— Maya Angelou, Letter to My Daughter

This work is dedicated to my mother, Danielle "Phyllis" Jackson. You have always believed in me and loved me without conditions and without expectations. You inspired me with your words and led me with your examples. You allowed me to become truly great and without you I would not be here today. We did it.

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God is good. Dear lord, thank you for protecting me, shielding me, and guiding me through this process. For surrounding me with support and love when I needed it most. For blessing me with and surrounding me with the right people who have encouraged me to grow and become better. Thank you for all the blessings you have sent my way.

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Finally, thank you to all my participants who took time out of their lives to sit with me and talk about your experiences. I am grateful to all the Black womxn who came before me and honored to pave paths for Black womxn who are next. You have and will continue to be the greatest gift to academia and multiculturalism. I continue this work in your honor.

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ABSTRACT

Research exploring the lived experiences of Black womxn as leaders in national academic professional organizations is absent. The goal of this dissertation was to explore Black womxn's unique personal and academic experiences while holding national leadership roles in professional academic organizations. Using Critical Race Theory (Haskins & Singh, 2015), Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2010), and Leadership Identity Development Model (Komives et al., 2006, 2009), this constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006, 2014) sought to answer following research questions: (1) How do Black womxn experience leadership in their roles as board members within a national academic professional organization? (a) What is the process of leadership development for Black womxn in national academic professional organizations? (b) How salient are mentorship experiences, academic requirements, or personal circumstances in the decisions to take on leadership roles? (c) In what ways do national academic professional organizations impact Black Womxn in their academic roles? Utilizing semi-structured interviews Twenty-Two Black womxn participated in this study. Findings suggest Black womxn first identify as leaders as young girls who learn leadership skills from their matriarchal grandmothers, mothers, and sisters. Participant quotes, research themes, and a proposed model of Black Womxn Leadership Identity is included. Implications for counseling theory and practice, counselor education and supervision, and future research have been provided.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the Black woman. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman."

Malcom X, 1962

There is a lack of agreement about how well Black womxn are represented in academic spaces (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012). However, Black womxn are disproportionately called upon by colleagues and students to do diversity, equity, and inclusion work (Culpepper et al., 2021). According to Culpepper et al. (2021), gender and racial inequalities often lead to extra work and less recognition for Black womxn in academic spaces. Hirshfield and Joseph (2012) report the work required of Black womxn comes in the form of mentoring students of color, leadership roles, and diversity work. The hidden unrecognized work is referred to as an identity tax (Culpepper et al., 2021; Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012; Padilla, 1994). "Identity taxation occurs when faculty members shoulder any labor (physical, mental, or emotional) due to their membership in a historically marginalized group within their department or university, beyond that which is expected of other faculty members in the same setting (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012, p.214). For Black Womxn who hold multiple marginalized identities, they often find themselves navigating hostile environments, racial inequalities, racial battle fatigue, microaggressions, cultural stereotypes, and gendered racism. According to Dade et al. (2015),

> The burden of being a double – minority person when both race and gender intersect cannot be ignored. Race always trumps my gender in a country whose number one problem is racism, but sexism does impact me and when the two are present at the same time it is doubly devastating (p. 138).

Furthermore, as noted by Culpepper et al., (2021), while Black womxn often fulfill diversity and mentorship roles for this community their work is not recognized, acknowledged, or rewarded. This dissertation seeks to understand how national leadership is integrated into the different roles Black womxn take on and how they navigate these experiences while working within academia.

The use of Womxn

The term womxn has continuously grown in popularity (Reyes et al., 2021; Wu, 2016). Replacing the "a/e" with an "x", challenges sexism and cisgenderism, while expanding the use of the term womxn to feminine presenting people who may be transgender, gender non-binary, or gender nonconforming (Wu, 2016). Kunz (2019) states, "This term stems from the orthographic "woman", which is rooted in the patriarchal power structure that still systematically excludes womxn. "Womxn" is an intersectional concept that seeks to include transgender womxn, womxn of color, womxn of Third World countries, and every personal identity of womxn" (p. 2). The use of womxn is in line with the tenants and understandings of both Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2010; Haskins & Singh, 2015) used in this study.

Need for the Study

The research on Black womxn in national organizational leadership positions is underdeveloped. The research on womxn in higher education has previously focused on womxn who have successfully navigated academia achieving senior level positions (Carlton et al., 2016). For womxn unable to reach senior level positions within their universities may face leadership challenges such as balancing motherhood, other professional barriers, and lack of mentorship (Lewitt, 2010). Furthermore, Black womxn working to move through academic spaces to obtain senior level positions do not receive academic credit for their involvement in leadership positions (Davis et al., 2011). More research is needed on how they are valued and what is invested into

their career protectory within national organizations. While organization membership continues to include large numbers of Black womxn they lack mentorship structures or governance that support them into leadership positions and throughout their positions once elected (Davis et al., 2011).

The goal of this dissertation is to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the leadership experiences of Black womxn serving in national organizations. The literature within higher education leadership has focused on strategies and supports to help womxn overcome environmental challenges (Davis et al., 2011). However even with research shinning a light on the challenges Black womxn pursuing leadership positions face, there still lacks an understanding of how national academic professional organizations leadership effects their overall career protectory. A more holistic and critical examination of these issues is necessary to influence change.

Statement of the Problem

Within academic spaces a discrepancy exists between the importance of national leadership service from the beliefs of the organization and the low priority academia puts on leadership and service (Matthew, 2016). Furthermore, pathway inadequacies of how womxn are recruited, mentored, and supported throughout their academic experiences exist (Collins, 2000; Matthew, 2016) which can ultimately shape leadership experiences as well. Matthew (2016) refers to the certain roles (mentors, inspirations, guides, and racial conscience) Black faculty most occupy as "invisible labor". When womxn ultimately enter leadership positions there is uncertainty and a lack of transparency on responsibilities of organizational leadership and service commitments.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the interrelated aspects of Black womxn experiences in national leadership to better understanding any factors that influence their decisions around pursuing leadership positions and their overall experiences within these positions. The research question guiding this study is, "How do Black womxn experience "leadership" in their roles as board members within an academic national organization?" Moreover, the purpose of this study is to understand how national leadership positions fit into their career aspirations and how leadership has impacted their overall experiences.

The scope of this dissertation was limited to focus on Black womxn who held any level of leadership within three national organizations (American Education Research Association, American Psychology Association, American Counseling Association). Additionally, to gain a better understanding of their experiences one interview was conducted via Zoom with a follow up member check occurring via email. The first interview focused on a semi-structured interview guide addressing their experiences with leadership. The follow up member check allowed participants to review their interview transcription and gave them opportunities to clarify or add additional information to the study (Tracy, 2010). These interviews were be used to create a foundational understanding of the issues and concerns womxn in leadership positions might have. Moreover, the semi-structured interview questions were used to clarify if mentorship, support, and recruitment are important factors for Black womxn when joining organizations and obtaining these positions.

Research Questions

The focus of this study is to understand the experiences of Black womxn with academic positions who hold leadership positions within national academic professional organizations.

1. How do Black womxn experience leadership in their roles as board members within a national academic professional organization?
    a. What is the process of leadership development for Black womxn in national academic professional organizations?
    b. How salient are mentorship experiences, academic requirements, or personal circumstances in the decisions to take on leadership roles?
    c. In what ways do national academic professional organizations impact Black Womxn in their academic roles?

Researcher Position in the Study

Throughout my master program in mental health counseling the importance of leadership and becoming a leader within the counseling profession was an integral part of my training. As I transitioned into a Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral program one of accredited programs training goals are to "equip students to assume position of leadership in the profession and in their areas of specialization" (CAREP, 2016, p. 38). Like most graduate students, in 2012 I too joined my professional organizations and became a member of professional organizations I felt would best guide me in my career. Through these experiences I felt that student members were not a valued resource of national organizations and that our voices often were silent. This was the catalyst that began my eight-year journey of advocacy for student voices within national organizations.

By acknowledging the training and mentorship I received through my leadership experiences, I realize my bias as a Black woman and Black therapist gives me the unique positionality to better understand the experiences of other womxn of color in leadership roles (Collins, 2001). I, African American woman, became interested in organizational leadership

upon experiencing microaggressions, racial slights, and racial insults as a graduate student. I have been exposed to racial microaggressions throughout my lifetime, but it wasn't until I entered graduate school that I truly realized how these encounters were affecting me spiritually, mentally, and academically. I realized that I was invisible (Franklin, 1999) within my academic department as well as on my university campus, because I lacked validation, recognition, and understanding from my White counterparts.

These beginning experiences shaped my development as a counselor educator but also as a leader and change agent. The more experiences I had where I felt isolated and disconnected from the profession the more it pushed me to look for supportive spaces. I found myself looking for an academic community of color who were also engaged and committed to changing systems long term. Even though I am currently a graduate student, I have felt called to create spaces of change for other graduate students worldwide. Overtime I began to build a community of academic leaders who were committed to changing these systems but also dedicated to making space for scholars to contribute. I began to understand that leadership was not only changing the systems for those currently involved but was also mentoring the next generation of leadership who would move us even further. For long term change to take place and effect the profession long term, policies at the national level needed to reflect social justice action. Serving at the national level as a graduate student representative, gave me the access I wanted to impact change for others while also allowing me to create spaces for new graduate students to move us even further. None of this would have been possible without the many womxn of color in leadership who offered me support and mentorship.

My personal experiences and training in Black psychology are what I believe qualify me to do this work. This also requires special attention on my part as a clinician to ensure that my

thoughts, feelings, and experiences do not only guide my clinical outcomes or objectives but also the research helps shape the narrative. Morrow (2005) would argue that investigators always believe something about the phenomenon in question and that a greater grounding in the literature mitigates the effects of bias by expanding the researcher's understanding of multiple ways of viewing the phenomenon. Using reflective journaling and peer debriefs are ways I will maintain the trustworthiness of this study.

Assumptions of the Study

Given my personal and professional experiences with leadership identifying the assumptions of this study is important to address trustworthiness. For this study it is the belief that the importance of leadership and service is not supported within academia. This assumption comes from academic processes such as tenure review and the minimal supports given to faculty who hold leadership positions. Black Womxn are more likely to hold leadership positions and often become resources for marginalized students within their universities (Davis et al., 2011). Although they contribute to the success of academic spaces by their service work, they often do not receive credit, supports, nor are honored for this work. Furthermore, it is the assumption of this study that Black womxn are not supported or mentored within academic spaces. Therefore, it is the belief that a lack of mentorship exists in the recruitment and retentions of Black womxn within leadership positions.

Limitations of the Study

According to Creswell (2013), empirical inquiry of any kind is created with the knowledge of potential study limitations. Access to Black womxn who have served in national leadership positions willing to disclose their full experiences is a potential limitation of this study. As Johnson and Christensen (2013) noted, qualitative study results are not easily

transferable to other populations or settings due to the uniqueness of the sample that is studied. This study relies on the testimonies of Black womxn and therefore will rely on snowball sampling to recruit participants (Berg, 1983; Creswell, 2016). While the researcher has access to multiple national organizations, participation is voluntary and is limited to Black womxn who have served within them. Constructivist grounded theory is research intensive and often time consuming. A limitation to the study is the interview semi-structured interview protocol which requires time from the participant. Given the depth and breath of the study, some participants may not wish to participate in the interview, member check, or the study at all.

Definitions of Terms

There are multiple terms I will frequently use in this study. The following definitions will serve as a reference to increase understanding and provide clarity of these terms.

Black Feminist Thought (BFT) states that Black women understand their marginality and role as the "outsider within" the larger context of society (Collins, 2000). Black womxn experience marginalization from various aspects requiring the need for BFT with three foundational themes: (a) Black women clarify the thoughts of other Black women, (b) display interchanges of unique commonalities, and (c) have different outlooks within identified commonalities (Collins, 2000).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an interdisciplinary approach that seeks to understand and combat race inequity in society. The approach views race as a socially constructed identity that plays a hugely important role, which goes largely unrecognized by members of the majority population (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2019).

Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM) is a leadership model that seeks to understand where participants identify themselves developmentally as leaders (Komives et

al.,2009). In applying the LID model, researchers must also acknowledge the ways leadership identity intersects with other dimensions of identity such as race, culture, sexual orientation, gender, disability, religion, and social class (Komives et al.,2006).

Mentor is a person who provides counsel and advice that is beneficial in assisting another person in the progression of their life.

Mentorship is an asymmetric relationship with the mentor as the provider and the mentee as the receptor; the mentee is the primary beneficiary of the experience, mentorship is distinct from sponsorship (Hewlett, 2013, pp. 19-20).

National Leadership is defined as actions by an individual which contributes to the realization of our individual and collective capacity to serve others competently, ethically, and justly. National leadership is limited to participants who have served in a position directly connected to a national board, division, or special interest group (sig) of American Psychology Association (APA), American Education Research Association (AERA), or American Counseling Association (ACA).

Sponsor is "powerfully positioned champion" within an organization who uses their influence to actively advocate for the advancement of qualified and talented individuals (Hewlett, 2013).

Sponsorship is defined as a reciprocal relationship with the sponsor leveraging the relationship to their advantage; sponsorship is an advanced form of mentorship in which both the sponsor and protégé invest in the relationship for mutual advantage; sponsorship is distinct from mentorship (Hewlett, 2013, pp. 18-20).

Womxn is defined is an intersectional concept that seeks to include every personal identity of womxn regardless of sex assigned at birth or sexual preference (Kunz, 2019).

Organization of Dissertation

Chapter I introduced Black womxn in academic and leadership spaces. It included an overview of the impact of Black womxn experiencing a double marginalized identity. Then, the use of Womxn and its significance within the study was defined. Then the need for the study, statement of the problem, and purpose of the study were explored. The chapter included the researcher positionality, assumptions of the study, and limitations within the study. Finally, definition of terms was presented. Chapter II was a review of the literature use to create the foundation for this study. The theoretical framework was presented including in depth guide of how Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Thought, and Leadership Identity Development Model was used. A visual of the summary of integration of the theoretical framework was presented. The literature review included gendered racism, Black womxn in leadership and academia, and mentorship and sponsorship.

Chapter III presented Constructivist Grounded Theory as the methodology for this study. The theoretical lens, description of participating organizations, research participants, and sampling and recruitment strategies. The chapter closed by covering the data collection and analysis plan. In Chapter IV, the findings of the study including salient categories and themes related to Black womxn in leadership and an overview of the theoretical model based on the summation of results related to the guiding research questions. Chapter V, the significance of the findings and implications for the counseling profession were covered.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the previous chapter, an introduction of Black womxn in leadership including the challenging facing this group was explored. The chapter provided an understanding of the problem, research questions, and terms that were used throughout the study. This chapter explores the existing currently literature as well as the theoretical framework used for this study.

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative research design consisted of three theories as the framework for this literature review and the overall study as it relates to this population. While there were multiple theories that could be used for this research, Critical Race Theory (CRT), Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM), and Black Feminist Thought (BFT) are the most widely used and assumed by the researcher to be the most appropriate theories for this study (Collins, 2000; Haskins & Singh, 2015; Komives et. al., 2006). These theories are grounded in research and have been applied to the chosen population in this study.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) Tenets
The overarching goal of CRT is to address racism and white hegemonic societal practices that silence the voices of marginalized ethnic and racial groups (Haskins & Singh, 2015).
Permanence and Intersectionality of Race and Racism:
Posits that racism is deeply ingrained legally, culturally, and psychologically and intersects with sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation
Critique of Liberalism and Color Blindness
Challenges traditional claims of color blindness and meritocracy., which is defined as opportunity granted based on individual merit and is inaccessible to certain individuals.
Counterstorytelling
Allows individuals to challenge claims of meritocracy, color blindness, and the dominant culture's discourse
Interest Convergence
Encourages individuals to be cautious in examining and interpreting the civil rights victories for individuals from marginalized populations
Whiteness as property
Indicates that social, educational, and economic value is associated with being white.

Figure 2: Critical Race Theory Tenets (adapted Haskins & Singh, 2015).

Taylor (2009) stated, “As a theoretical framework, CRT examines the “unequal and unjust discrimination of power and resources along political, economic, racial, and gendered lines'” (p.1). An overarching goal of CRT is to bring awareness to the white hegemonic practices that continue to silence the voices of marginalized racial and ethnic communities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Haskins & Singh, 2015). While CRT was established from critical legal studies scholarship (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), CRT reminds us of the importance of understanding systems (universities, national academic professional organizations) as a reflection and function of a racist and racially hierarchical society (Lisle-Johnson & Kohli, 2000). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) suggested CRT could be used to unravel the argument that all people experience equity because we instead ignore the marginalization and racial segregation experienced by people of color within educational settings. CRT has been the foundation for marginalized groups seeking justice while retaking control over their own personal stories and narratives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

As defined by Haskins and Singh (2015) (Figure 2), CRT has five major tenants: permanence and intersectionality of race and racism, critique of liberalism and color blindness, counterstorytelling, interest convergence, and whiteness as property (p. 289-290). CRT provides a useful viewpoint of the various ways in which race, social class, and gender shaped the experiences of Black womxn serving in national leadership positions. The first tenant, permanence and intersectionality of race and racism “posits that racism is deeply ingrained legally, culturally, and psychologically and intersects with sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation” (Haskins & Singh, 2015, p. 289). This tenant highlights racism as being ordinary and the manipulation of institutional systems such as governance practices and policies on which national organizations base their voting, election, and daily practices on. Throughout literature,

this tenant is described as ordinary but not aberrational (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Haskins & Singh, 2015). For Black womxn serving in leadership positions, the literature suggests they are likely to experience racism while the system diminishes their experiences by creating new policies through the shifting of pre-existing laws (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Tenant one affirms feelings of despair and alienation felt by individuals with marginalized identities when navigating through privileged educational systems and settings (Hartlep, 2009; Haskins & Singh, 2015).

The second tenant is a critique of liberalism and color blindness (Haskins & Singh, 2015) challenges mediocracy and colorblindness as applies to theories supporting beliefs that opportunities are merit-based when many opportunities are inaccessible. Often known as race blindness, colorblindness is a sociological term referring to the disregard of racial characteristics in social settings. Proponents of "color-blind" practices believe that treating people equally will inherently lead to a more equitable society or they engage in practices that deny the relevant impact of racism and racial privilege (Neville, 2011; William, 2011). For Black womxn an example of colorblindness in leadership are the beliefs that Black womxn are receiving the same mentorship, sponsorship, and support as their colleagues. A colorblind perspective suggests that all people are the same and therefore have the potential to live the same life with the same opportunities.

Counterstorytelling (Haskins & Singh, 2015) is the third tenant of the model. Challenging history and insisting on contextual and historical examination of institutional policies through social thought, social relations, and socially reconstruction of concepts and perceptions that benefit dominant groups is how counterstorytelling is a powerful tool for marginalized identities. Centering the testimonies of their experiences within our discussions as examples of how to

combat oppressive structures, we can ensure that we are fighting for their liberation, not just to conjure conflict with the oppressor. Throughout this dissertation counterstorytelling, in the form of interviews, will allow for participants to share their unique stories from their identities as Black womxn. Counterstorytelling is elevating marginalized narratives primarily to ensure the documentation and existence of the oppressed and their lived experiences.

The fourth tenant, interest convergence, "encourages individuals to be cautious in examining and interpreting the civil rights victories for individuals from marginalized populations" (Haskins & Singh, 2015, p. 290). Interest convergence argues that Black interests are only attended to when white interests can be as well (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). It frames how whites in positions of power only advance the interest of marginalized groups if it aligns with their own self-interest. For national organizations offering additional initiatives (mentorship programs, membership waivers or reduced fees, fellowships) aimed at the recruitment, retention, and promotion of Black womxn within the organization portrays them as supporting marginalized voices. Interest convergence however would highlight how the organization benefits in the long term from a more diverse membership.

Whiteness as property, the fifth tenant, is described as something of value that only those who were white could possess (Harris, 1993; Haskins & Singh, 2015). It maintains that whiteness itself is treated as something of value and is therefore grounded in the "…parallel systems of domination of Black and Native peoples out of which were created racially contingent forms of property and property rights" (Harris, 1993, p. 1714). Black womxn are labeled with stereotypes (angry Black womxn), can be seen as unprofessional, or disorganized if their leadership standards are not clear matches for behaviors based on white norms, holding the power to exclude them (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Not only does CRT deconstruct intersections of identity but it also demystifies systems of oppression offering a perspective on logistical means for combatting those structures. Black womxn in leadership have distinct experiences that lend themselves to improving the culture and infrastructure of academia. The tenets of CRT analyze individual components of the system from the people who operate within them to the historical nuances specific to that social structure. Through this lens, this work looks at the narratives of Black womxn with respect to their individual experiences throughout their time in leadership. Exploring their distinct experiences of intersectionality, particularly race, gender, and class as it impacts that journey. Finally, utilizing this theory offers an opportunity to establish guidelines for navigating and overcoming despotic obstacles and information necessary for organizations to increase recruitment and retention of this population.

Leadership Identity Development Model

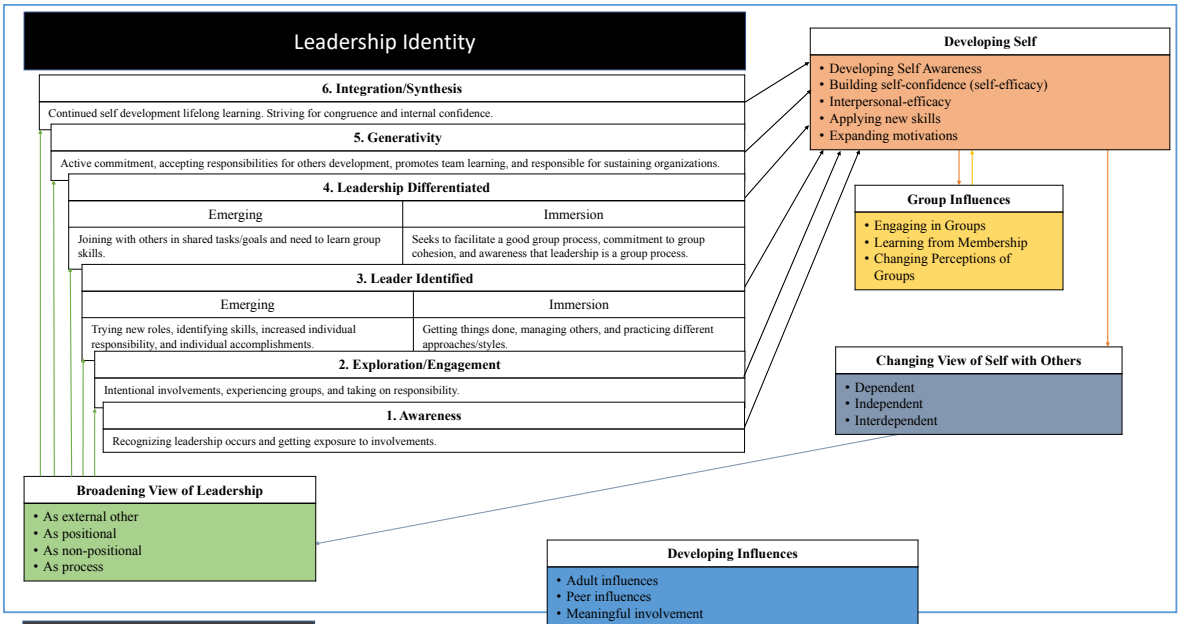

Figure 4: Leadership Identity Development Cycle (adapted from Komives et al., 2005)

The Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM) is informed by a grounded theory approach, created to understand the processes a person experiences in creating a leadership

identity (Komives et. al., 2006). Leadership identity is grounded in how people view themselves as leaders and use those views to guide individual engagement with other people in positions the person may hold (Lord & Hall, 2005). LIDM is broken up into six stages, each stage explaining how an individual understands their leadership development. The theory was developed with leadership development theory as its foundation (Komives et. al., 2006). Komives et. al. (2006, 2008) suggested that the leadership development theory forwarded the notion that leadership is something to be learned and developed until one is confident enough to lead in a larger capacity than in one's current condition. The model is linear, stage-based, and circular allowing leaders to move through one stage before embarking on the next stage or shift between stages based on their leadership experiences (Komives et. al., 2008). Leaders could potentially cycle through stages several times, each time gaining a deeper understanding of the stage. The stages of LIDM are the following: awareness, exploration/engagement, leader identified, leadership differentiated, generativity, and integration/synthesis (Komives et al., 2006). All stages have a transition that is activated by the beginning of the next stage (Figure 2).

The stages of leadership reveal a movement from understanding leadership as something broad and elusive to a set of skills and dispositions that one can internalize to inspire others. Thus, someone journeying through these stages moves from seeing leaders as someone who is a mentor to seeing themselves as leaders and mentors. For Black womxn in leadership positions, LIDM helps identify what stage of leadership identity the participants are. Black womxn have the potential to hold various leadership positions regardless of where they may be within their leadership identity.

Black Feminist Thought

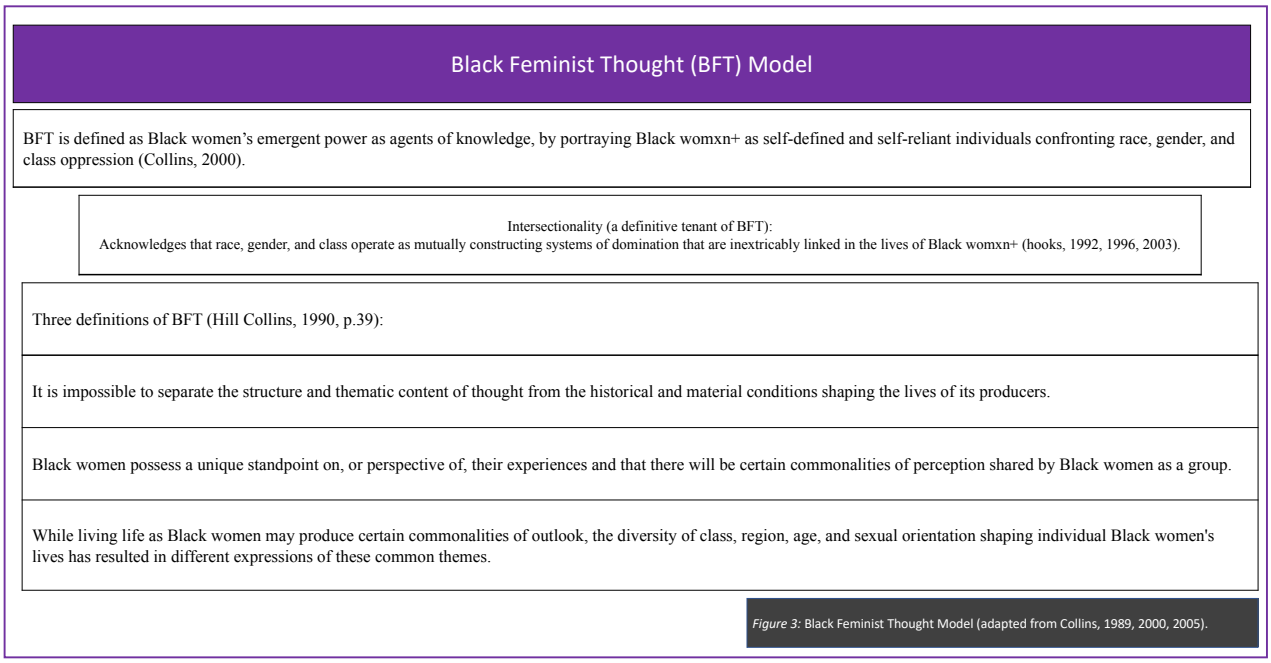

Figure 3: Black Feminist Thought Model (adapted from Collins, 1989, 2000, 2005).

Few theories have been specifically designed to capture what it means to be young, Black, and female within a society that is markedly racist, misogynistic, and capitalistic (Davis, 2011; Lorde, 1993). BFT (Figure 3) is defined as Black women's emergent power as agents of knowledge, by portraying Black womxn as self-defined and self-reliant individuals confronting race, gender, and class oppression (Collins, 2000).

Intersectionality, a definitive tenet of BFT, acknowledges that race, gender, and class operate as mutually constructing systems of domination that are inextricably linked in the lives of Black womxn (hooks, 1992, 1996, 2003). Hill Collins defined BFT with three definitions, "it is impossible to separate the structure and thematic content of thought from the historical and material conditions shaping the lives of its producers, "Black women possess a unique standpoint on, or perspective of, their experiences and that there will be certain commonalities of perception shared by Black women as a group," and "while living life as Black women may produce certain commonalities of outlook, the diversity of class, region, age, and sexual orientation shaping

individual Black women's lives has resulted in different expressions of these common themes" (Hill Collins, 1990, p.39).

BFT asserts that Black womxn's every day, taken-for-granted knowledge is required to fully understand their marginalized status (Collins, 1995; 2005; Harris-Perry, 2011). Hill Collins suggested that although other people may be recorders of BFT it can only be produced by Black womxn. This concept remains controversial because it takes the focus away from white feminism and focused on Black feminism as thoughts and ideas produced by Black womxn as counterstorytelling. In Talking Back: Talking Feminism, Talking Black, hooks (1989) argue for the reclaiming of Black voice by stating "to speak about feminism, those of us who are coming from different ethnic and racial backgrounds must first work to overcome the racism, sexism, and class exploitation that has socialized us to believe that our word is not important" (p.154). For this study, BFT coupled with CRT provides a strong foundation of the lived experiences of Black womxn in leadership positions from an intersectional and contextual understanding. CRT provides a strong foundation for how racism within national organizations might impact Black womxn leaders while BFT provides scaffolding for a more accurate depiction of their experiences. By adding Leadership Identity Development Model, a clearer understanding of how Black womxn navigate multiple identities while fulfilling their leadership roles will unfold. Clearer understanding of the integration of the theoretical framework into the data collection and data analysis (Figure 5) is explained in chapter 3.

Reviewing the Literature

Gendered Racism

Gendered racism was coined by sociologist, Philomena Essed (1991) and refers to the simultaneous experience of racism and sexism (Lewis et al., 2013). Gendered racism explains the

complexity of oppression specific to Black women based on gendered and classed forms of racism. Under the assumption that an intersectional gendered racial identity is more salient than the separate racial and gender identities, gendered racism provides a framework to understand how sexism and racism work together to create a unique lived experience (Essed, 1991; Thomas et al., 2011). Gendered racism includes oppressive experiences such as discrimination, inferiority racialized stereotypes, racialized sexual objectification, and discrimination (Collins, 1991). Experiences of gendered racism among Black womxn have been related to higher levels of psychological distress (Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2008) and poor mental health (Carr et al., 2014). Gendered racism manifests through constructed ideologies and stereotypes of Black womanhood (Collins, 1990). For example, Black women have been stereotyped as the Strong Black Woman (SBW). The construction of the SBW is based on the intersecting oppressions between racism and sexism. While it might be considered by some as a positive image, it can also be understood as the super-human capacity to endure inordinate amounts of stress and lead to essentialist notions that all Black womxn are strong (Woods-Giscombe, 2010). This projected and internalized stereotype is thought to lead to suppressed emotions and negative health effects that are specific to Black women (Collins, 1990; Woods-Giscombe, & Black, 2010).

The inherent strength understood in Black womxn was born out of the historical demanded denial of their own emotional, physical, and material needs to attend to the needs of others (Mollow, 2006). Collins (2000) explains that the construction of the SBW equipped to endure hardship served as the justification for oppression, in the form of gendered racism. The SBW ideology requires the ability to accomplish multiple tasks, overcome adversities, and be a leader in her family and community while managing racism and sexism. Internalizing the stereotypical myth of the SBW is the belief that Black womxn possess a greater degree of

emotional strength than other womxn. Furthermore, Black womxn are more likely to set high expectations and less likely to express psychological distress (Nicolaidis, et al, 2010). At the intrapersonal level, internalizing gendered racism is also described as endorsing this ideology. Research suggests that the belief in the SBW significantly increased anxiety for Black womxn and gendered racism most often occurs at the interpersonal level (Watson & Hunter, 2015). These include being sexually harassed, hearing inappropriate jokes related to being a Black womxn, and being mistaken for "the help" (Essed, 1991; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2008). Gendered racism grew out of intersectionality theory and taps into oppressive sexual experiences and racism among women of color (Buchanan, 2005). BFT and CRT uses intersectionality to describe the simultaneous experiences of oppression, whereby race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age intersect and form mutually constructing features of social organization (Collins, 1998).

Understanding how SBW and gendered racism is embedded into the lives and experiences of Black womxn in leadership roles provides context to the experiences the face within academic and national organizations. Savigny (2017) and Lewis et al. (2019) suggest that due to the masculinized and patriarchal nature of universities, womxn tend to experience sexism regularly with Black womxn experiencing racism simultaneously. Moreover, Black womxn occupying academic spaces are also often expected to fit projected stereotypes; are silenced and marginalized (i.e., struggle for respect and with invisibility); and are expected to fit assumptions about style and beauty (i.e., assumptions about communication styles and aesthetics) (Lewis et al., 2016). Naming acts of gendered racism and creating counternarratives is an important political act of resistance and liberation for Black womxn because it allows us to define how they

are oppressed in a manner that does not make the oppressor feel more comfortable. Lewis et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative study that revealed that:

> Black women reported experiencing others treating them as stereotypes, the angry Black woman-Sapphire, or the hypersexualized Jezebel, resulting in them being silenced and marginalized in the workplace, school or other professional settings and people making assumptions about how Black women speak or making negative comments about Black women's natural hair, skin tone and facial features (p.767).

Moreover, Black womxn within academic spaces may experience gendered microaggressions making them recognize their work environments as hostile. Racial microaggressions create serious emotional consequences for the recipient of the microaggression because the recipient is expected to not overreact because the aggressor presumes innocence as a response (Wang et al., 2011). Wang et al. (2011), describes the impact as debilitating and harmful to the recipient as they must reckon with their inability to response or react to the bias because of the stereotypes associated with being a Black womxn. It is important to realize that while these experiences may happen predominately in academic spaces, more research is needed to understand how, when, and in what ways these experiences show up in national academic professional organizations.

Black Womxn Leadership

Black womxn in leadership positions has not been effectively remediated with legislation or policies (Collins, 2010). Scholarship about Black womxn experiences details how they have experienced the effects of policy from discipline sanctions, desegregation, and with promotion and tenure (Culpepper et al., 2021, Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012; Miles & Peters, 2020). A study conducted by Agosto et al. (2015) revealed several policies that hindered the improvement of

underrepresentation of Black womxn by promoting colorblind policies in recruitment methods (using race-neutral practices) when recruiting for leadership positions. “Addressing the disproportionate rates of rejection for Black womxn entailed major efforts to notice, intervene, and advocate for equity” (Agosto et al., 2015, p. 19). Moreover, White leaders who have traditionally held positions of power have not induced a proportionate representation of racial and gender diversity in the organizations they lead because they have often been reluctant to move beyond their self-interests, biases, and allegiances to white patriarchy (Haskings & Singh, 2015; Kimmel, 2013; Shelton, 2013). According to Shteynberg et al. (2011), the racial beliefs of White leaders affect whether they perceive race-based affirmative action policies as being biased against them and that they are averse to policies they believe may hinder their groups’ chances of receiving favorable outcomes such as being hired or promoted. Leaders often select, groom, and promote those who remind them of themselves, creating a disadvantage for Black womxn who are reliant on the recognition of those whose race and gender are different from their own (Hewlett & Wingfield, 2015).

Research on womxn’s leadership development programs directly has addressed some of the unique needs of womxn in leadership (Debebe et al., 2016; Ely et al., 2012). Additionally, the research on supports and barriers for womxn in higher education leadership, while influenced by women’s identity development, illustrates some of the salient identity characteristics women bring to leadership (such as the role of primary caregiver) but does lack explicit discussion of how womxn develop identity and how that development might influence leadership experiences. According to Debebe et al. (2016) Women’s Leadership Development Programs (WLDPs) offered by organizations should move away from global perspectives and instead situate learning towards the participants “natural day-to-day projects and work relationships” (p. 243).

Furthermore, WLDPs are often used by organizations as a one-time effort to increase womxn leadership and engagement but require more after programming mentorship and sponsorship follow-up to see womxn leaders be successful long term. High quality customized WLDPs "ensure links back to the organization via senior male and female director speaker slots, professional coaching, executive sponsorship, and structured feedback sessions to top management on the issues raised during the program (all anonymized to protect the participants)" (p. 244). Moreover, research has examined several factors, including individual characteristics, institutional influences, and proactive efforts to increase the representation of womxn in leadership. The literature on womxn in higher education leadership examined environmental factors including role conflict, exclusion, mentoring, and supportive relationships to develop an ecological understanding of their leadership experiences (Ely et al., 2012).

Josselson (1996) studied 30 womxn in their senior year of college. These womxn were one of the earliest generations intending to build a career as well as a family, and through three rounds of in-depth interviews conducted over 22 years (Josselson, 1996), their experiences and reflections provided insights that have been invaluable to researchers studying women's development. The results of Josselson's (1996) extensive research revealed themes in the paths that women followed throughout their post-college lives. These paths are characterized by competence, connection, and revision and describe participants' (a) sense of effectiveness (b) sense of self, and (c) change over time for competence and connection. Josselson (1996) observed that characteristics of these paths influence how womxn engage in public and define their interrelationships with family, children, spouses, and friends. Identity development was connected to making and fulfilling commitments to others and the deepest aspects of participants' identity are tied with others. That at times womxn struggled to translate their

ambitions into achievable goals over time, whereas others struggled to find role models (Josselson, 1996).

Recent scholarship used in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding of women's experiences, and these studies have found that family, mentoring, and support are important in women's career development (Josselson, 1996). Womxn decisions about pursuing leadership positions seem to be influenced by several factors (including interests, educational preparation, opportunities, and barriers). Notably, the challenges discussed in the research constitute attitudinal and systemic barriers to womxn's progress; whereas the supports and strategies tend to be individual, relational, or behavioral changes that women can make of themselves. Although the researchers often note the cultural, environmental, and systemic nature of the barriers, few discuss ways to change the system. Differences in institutional climate, leadership development opportunities, and support influence career outcomes (Maranto & Griffin, 2011; Singh et al., 2009; Whitmarsh et al., 2007). Although scholars have examined personal and contextual factors that have influenced women's leadership experiences (Eagly & Carli, 2007), additional studies that combine analysis of experiences and contexts are needed. Research on womxn's identity development has provided insight into the unique career challenges that primary caregivers face illustrating the developmental influence of gender role expectations and the role conflicts that can emerge when women are expected to make both children and career a priority. Advising Black womxn to adopt the strategies and behaviors of others' successes as best practices related to leadership advancement but does not account for institutional or attitudinal barriers held by those gatekeeping advancements. Although this strategic perspective is intended to be empowering to them, it places sole responsibility for change on Black womxn while neglecting the systemic barriers that remain.

Unfortunately, even when women achieve equality in numbers, stereotypes that preclude equity around treatment may very well still exist. Research must address ways to reduce the impact of stereotypes on all marginalized and oppressed groups. Leadership development programs have the potential for addressing the barriers that influence occupational segregation in leadership but are exclusive by nature possibly excluding many women from research. The goals and objectives of formal leadership development programs include (a) developing participants' competence as well as their confidence and self-perceived leadership potential (Bonebright, Cottledge, & Lonnquist, 2012; LaFreniere & Longman, 2008), (b) "fitting in and breaking through obvious barriers" (Ruderman & Ohlott, 2002, p. 1) or (c) identifying, training, and mentoring potential leaders and providing opportunities for networking and career goal setting (LaFreniere & Longman, 2008). Womxn's leadership development has evolved and expanded especially in the context of higher education. Ruderman and Ohlott (2002) suggest when womxn were interviewed after an intensive five-day leadership program their interview results indicated that womxn emphasize authenticity, agency, wholeness, self-clarity, and connections in their leadership (Ruderman & Ohlott, 2002). These leadership programs are experiential, reflective, goal-based approaches intended to develop skills, improve competencies, create a network of supports. Networking opportunities tend to expand greatly during these programs; however, no studies have examined that outcome in the long term. Leadership development programs often help womxn more concretely shape their aspirations, struggling womxn have previously encountered (Jossleson, 1996).

Black Womxn and Academia

For faculty in higher education, stress stems from high self-expectations, interdepartmental and faculty relations, and lack of time and resources (Thoreson et al., 1990).

Research suggests stress levels in higher education has dramatically increase within the past five years due to a lack of resources, high workload, poor management and leadership, job insecurity, a lack recognition and reward; and salary (Tylerleigh et al., 2005). While levels of good or bad stress might depend on how everyone manages it, negative stress, has been found to be the most impactful in higher education yielding prominent issues with burnout, attrition, job satisfaction and performance (Smith et al., 2015). Despite research on increased student attendance, retention, and matriculation rate, Black womxn are underrepresented in all facets of higher education. Given the racial disparity within higher education, higher levels of racial stressors have included tokenism, hostile racial campus climate, and micro-aggression (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Research suggests that people of color experience many types of racial microaggression including being treated as a second–class citizen, invisibility, and experiencing assumptions about cultural identity and communication styles (Lewis et al., 2016). In the United States, Black women faculty who are full–time professors only make up 2% while the majority are concentrated within the ranks of adjunct, lecturers, instructors, or other faculty (U. S Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018a). According to Overstreet (2019), "Although Black women have greater representation than Black men, as of 2011, 23.5% of Black men academics were tenured or tenure–track versus 16.2% of Black women; additionally, 83.8% of Black women were contingent (or "term" faculty) versus 76.5% of Black men" (p.21). Black womxn are less likely to deem their campus climate as positive, diverse, or welcoming ultimately determining how comfortable they feel on campus (Harvey, 1999).

A contributing factor to comfortability on campus are ethnic invisibility which relates to feeling invisible or hyper-visible, diminishing, challenging, or undermining of their credentials

or authority, inadequate support from university administration and immediate supervisors, and race-based assignments (i.e., leading a diversity training or mentoring a same race student) (Franklin, 2016). When considering intersectionality, invisibility can be extremely harmful when experienced due to Black womxn's race and gender and their multiple marginalized identities. Black womxn have experienced racism, discrimination, and racial microaggressions most of their lives, the added faculty and life stressors can create a sense of overwhelmed feelings (Franklin, 2016) leading to lower levels of job satisfaction. According to Flowers (2009), Black womxn were very satisfied with their benefits but dissatisfied with their jobs overall, particularly in with salary and support. Moreover, the workload for Black womxn is often more demanding than White, because of the responsibility related to establishing and reinforcing diversity and non-specified duties related to services for students of color (Flowers, 2009). Black womxn expressed a greater feeling of isolation, worse treatment, fewer opportunities for advancement, a greater lack of support from university leadership, and less funding for research (Schulze, 2008). The feelings of invisibility or underappreciation for Black womxn have been found to correlate directly to levels of job satisfaction in higher education (Wesley, 2018; Williams, 2012). Furthermore, issues of gender inequity still exist and were often cited as reasons womxn were leaving their positions. Flaherty (2016) reports research surrounding attrition in higher education is skewed, because many studies found that participants were disinterested in divulging complete truth due to a desire to maintain collegial relationships with their institutions. One aspect of continuing to support Black womxn on campus has always been how, when, and from whom Black womxn receive mentorship or offer mentorship to others.

Mentorship and Sponsorship

Mentorship for this study is described as an asymmetric relationship with the mentor as the provider and the mentee as the receptor, i.e., mentors listen to issues, offer counsel, and review problem-solving approaches with their mentee (Hewlett, 2013, pp. 19-20). In this example, the mentee is the primary beneficiary of the experience. Black womxn see and understand mentorship differently than White womxn due to their experiences which can include sexism, racism, and discrimination from the normative societal individualistic standpoint. Moreover, mentorship has been seen as a prerequisite for Black womxn to prosper within student affairs (Burke & Carter, 2015). According to Burke and Carter, “mentoring offers social capital, career benefits, and resources entrenched in career networks, which impart information, sponsorship, and professional skills afforded through mentoring relationships” (p.142). These programs are often formal or informal however those who participate typically develop a cohesive relationship within the organization. Moreover, research shows Black womxn often had a hard time dividing their "personal and professional lives," in the Black tradition, 'social units' in contrast to mentor partnerships serve as safeguards against an adverse world and a means of maintaining a sense of balance (Burke & Carter, 2015; Hewlett, 2013). Furthermore, given the cultural identity and positionality of Black womxn pursuing leadership positions clear models of what those pathways might look like are missing.

Hewlett (2013) described mentorship as an asymmetric relationship with the mentor as the provider and the mentee as the receptor, i.e., mentors listen to issues, offer counsel, and review problem-solving approaches with their mentee. With mentorship, the mentee is the primary beneficiary of the experience. sponsorship is a more advanced form of advocacy that involves a “powerfully positioned champion” within an organization who uses their influence to

actively advocate for the professional advancement of qualified and talented individuals (Hewlett, 2013). Internal advocacy among members within an organization is what distinguishes sponsorship from mentorship, making sponsorship a critical factor in career progression for Black womxn. They can follow the research recommendations for career advancement; however, influential people within an organization who can advocate for them or directly install them in positions of leadership must recognize their efforts. Having a mentor that represents the mentees' background and interest with a deeper understanding of the mentee's goals and challenges offers a holistic experience Black womxn are not receiving (Johnson & Snider, 2015). When Black womxn are mentored by someone who looks like them, they can be vulnerable, learn valuable survival skills in the profession, and navigate the social and political waters properly without succumbing to hostile characterizations of Black womxn (Patton & Hayes, 2018). Patton and Hayes research suggests that when their mentor looks like them, there is an absence of "fears of being ridiculed, misunderstood and misjudged" (p.7).

Sponsorship is defined as a reciprocal relationship with the sponsor leveraging the relationship to their advantage. Sponsorship is an advanced form of mentorship in which both the sponsor and protégé invest in the relationship for mutual advantage; protégés cultivate strategic alliances with individuals capable of propelling them into leadership positions and protecting them from other contenders (Hewlett, 2013, p. 18). Hewlett suggested that sponsors can develop their protégés into leaders advancing their own career, organization, and vision and help build their professional brand and legacy. In certain aspects, mentorship can prepare Black womxn for sponsorship. However, the lack of Black womxn in leadership positions may lead to a lack of mentorship and sponsorship, which makes it “more difficult for them to obtain mentors and build the type of developmental relationships necessary to long term career development” (Giscombe

& Mattis, 2002, p.104). Black womxn have less access to role models, which decreases their ability to network and build relationships with potential advocates who can help advance their careers (Giscombe & Mattis).

Summary

This chapter offered an in-depth view of the theoretical framework and existing literature on the experiences of Black womxn with leadership, mentorship, and sponsorship. While Black womxn have been and will continue to occupy leadership roles, this dissertation seeks to understand how mentorship and sponsorship might have played a role. As research suggests, Black womxn experiences are different from their direct counterparts. By building this study on the foundation and scaffolding of Black Feminist Thought (BTF), Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM) there is an opportunity to explore how Black womxn experience leadership when merging their multiple identities. Scholarship throughout this chapter was used to inform the research questions of this grounded theory study. Moreover, the theoretical framework will be used as a guide for the methodology section of Chapter III.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The previous chapter revealed how the existing literature of Black womxn within national academic professional organizations was limited. There is limited information of how Black womxn navigate their roles within academia while serving in leadership roles. Therefore, this grounded theory study aimed to explore the experiences of Black womxn. Using constructivist grounded theory as the methodological framework, the goal of this study was to examine the lived experiences of Black womxn within national academic professional organizations leadership roles and to construct a theory of Black womxn leadership identity development based on emerging data. This chapter provides an overview of the methodology and research design. Included in this chapter is the description of constructivist grounded theory and methodological frameworks' essential components. This chapter closes with the plan for purposeful and theoretical sampling, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Methodology

Grounded Theory was employed for this project as it is consistent with the purpose of this dissertation which is to examine the interrelated aspects of Black womxn overall experiences in national leadership. Cooney (2010) stated that the goal of grounded theory is understanding, "how social circumstances could account for the interactions, behaviors, and experiences of the people being studied" (p. 8). In education research, grounded theory is one of the most influential research traditions with a high degree of structure which focuses on gathering large amounts of data (Hays & Wood, 2011; Patton, 2002). For this dissertation, constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006, 2014) will be the specific methodology used.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

By nature, qualitative research is constructivist, allowing individuals to look for an understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Wood, 2011). Mills et al. (2006b) stated, that for research design to be strong the "researchers must choose a paradigm that is congruent with their beliefs about the nature of reality" (p. 2). The researcher will use a constructivist epistemology to acknowledge their own person experiences with the experiences of the participants. Mills et al. (2006b) shared constructivist grounded theory "is a delicate balancing act, enabling participants' accounts to retain a degree of visibility in the text so that the reader can make the connections between analytical findings and the data from which they were derived" (p. 2). According to Mills et al. (2006a), a constructivist approach requires

> (a) The creation of a sense of reciprocity between participants and the researcher in the co-construction of meaning, and, ultimately a theory that is grounded in the participants' and researchers' experiences (b) The establishment of relationships with participants that explicate power imbalances and attempts to modify these imbalances (c) Clarification of the position the author takes in text, the relevance of biography and how one renders participants' stories into theory through writing (p. 9)

Creswell (2007) suggested social constructivism was appropriate for use in grounded theory research. Using qualitative methods can give participants a voice which is why constructivist grounded theory is appropriate.

Throughout qualitative research there have been compelling arguments for using critical inquiry (Charmaz, 2017, 2016; Denzin, 2016; Levitt, 2021) when conducting a qualitative study. Charmaz (2016, 2017) argues that "with constructivist Grounded Theory you can't hide" (p. 165). The use of "critical inquiry assumes that researchers rely on existing critical theories to

shape the study while entering the research with the objective of conducting a critical study" (Charmaz, 2020, p. 167). Therefore, critical inquiry of this study comes from the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Feminist Thought (BFT) within the theoretical framework. Moreover, in *Critical-Constructivists Grounded Theory*, Levitt (2021) asks researchers to consider the relationship of their study to: (a) how and why meanings are formed interpersonally; (b) how privilege, oppression, and systemic differences influence experiences; and (c) how the research context (and its power dynamics) shapes findings (p. 14). Levitt (2021) citing pervious literature (Charmaz, 2017) makes a compelling argument for researchers not incorporating critical approaches (queer, multiculturalism, feminism) into their studies to dismantle dominate beliefs while implementing critical self-reflection into their work. This study was created on the foundation of Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2017; 2020) upheld by the pillars of CRT, BFT, and Leadership Identity Development (LIDM). The core beliefs of CRT and BFT (Figure 2 and Figure 3) are allowing Black womxn platforms to create counternarratives against dominant white cultural narratives (Haskins & Singh, 2015). While Levitt (2021) creates a call to action for researchers not engaged in critical inquiry to start their reflective process, Charmaz (2017; 2020) better supports researchers further in their personal reflexivity process to push further. A change in focus from how the researcher might use critical inquiry to in what ways can the researcher use their findings to dismantle systems.

Charmaz's (2006, 2014) constructivist grounded theory centers researcher's ability to maintain a reflective stance when analyzing their research, experience, decisions, and interpretations. According to Charmaz (2006, 2014), familiarity with the research topic will provided the researcher with a vantage point or "point of departure" (p. 17). While researchers can initiate the study from their vantage points, there is still a need to stay open and flexible to

whatever discoveries emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2006, 2014, 2020). Charmaz (2006) reported that "sensitizing concepts and disciplinary perspectives provide a place to start, not to end" (p. 17). Constructivist grounded theory traditions prioritize seeking multiple perspectives and diverse types of data with special attention given to promoting the voice of the participants (Charmaz, 2006, 2020; Lincoln & Guda, 1984). Charmaz (2014, 2020) suggested the creation and dissemination of knowledge is not neutral; instead, it is created under the influence of pre-existing structural conditions, and surfaces in emergent situations. Diving deep into the research process, with an attempt to understand both the diverse perspectives of the participants and our research perspectives is necessary to provide a deeper, more complex, and reflexive analysis (Charmaz, 2009). This dissertation will strive to create a theoretical explanation of a phenomenon that is credible and useful, within the historical and sociopolitical context of Black Womxn in professional leadership positions.

Theoretical Lens

It is believed that both Black womxn's gender and race are considered factors in their experiences within their held leadership roles (Shavers & Moore, 2019). Womxn is an intersectional concept that seeks to include every personal identity of womxn regardless of sex assigned at birth or sexual preference (Kunz, 2019; Reyes et al., 2021; Wu, 2016). To understand the intersections of race and gender in leadership, Black Feminist Thought (BFT), Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM) will be used as theoretical frameworks. The researcher believes that these three frameworks will better capture the experiences of Black womxn while examining any influences of racism.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Taylor (2009) stated, "As a theoretical framework, critical race theory examines the "unequal and unjust discrimination of power and resources along political, economic, racial, and gendered lines" (p.1). The framing offered by CRT allows for the exploration of how race and racism is deeply embedded within the social structures of American society (Hannon et al., 2019; Haskins & Singh, 2015; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Solorzano and Yosso (2001) reported that "a critical race methodology generates knowledge by looking to those who have been epistemologically marginalized, silenced, and disempowered" (p. 488). A CRT perspective guides counselor educators in identifying and analyzing aspects of education that maintain marginalized positions for BIPOC groups as educators work to transform their curriculums and teaching practices (Haskins & Singh, 2015).

Black Feminist Thought (BFT)

Black Feminist Thought is an integral part of this framework because it was developed by Black womxn for Black womxn as a tool of empowerment (Collins, 2000). Collins (2010) stated BFT represents the knowledge of Black womxn, which is oppositional to the imposed standpoints about them created by a dominant group. This is a standpoint designed to redefine and reconstruct a new framework of Black womxnhood that allows for the internalization of positive perceptions of themselves, their experiences, and their communities (Collins, 2000; Shavers & Moore, 2019). It is the collective knowledge of Black women that creates a new understanding to portray Black womxnhood accurately in the United States (Collins, 2000).

Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM)

According to Domingue (2015), "The ways in which Black womxn have had access to, define, and practice leadership at colleges and universities have been based upon their social

location within multiple systems of oppression where widely accepted notions of leadership do not fully capture their experiences" (pp. 457-458). LIDM is informed by a grounded theory approach, used to understand the processes a person experiences in creating their leadership identity (Komives et al., 2006). For emerging leaders, "experience with people different from themselves was a crucial pathway to the interdependent stages of leadership identity" (Komives et al., 2006, p. 413). It is critical to consider how a leadership identity integrates seamlessly into the existing sense (Komives et al., 2013). As Black womxn develop their identities as leaders, various life experiences, culture, gender, ethnicity, and interactions with peers impact this process. Particularly for individuals with marginalized racial or ethnic identities, ethnic culture plays a role in their identity development as leaders (Komives et al., 2005). While CRT and BFT creates the beginning ideas of what Black womxn in leadership might experience, LIDM tells the story of why they now serve within these national academic professional organizations. The theoretical influence of CRT, BFT, and LIDM emphasize any barriers prevalent in the experiences of Black womxn in leadership positions.

Research Questions

Creswell (2016) suggested that when conducting a grounded theory study, it should be guided by one overarching question supported by sub-questions. This study will address the following overarching question and three related sub-questions:

2. How do Black womxn experience leadership in their roles as board members within a national academic professional organization?
    a. What is the process of leadership development for Black womxn national academic professional organizations?

b. How salient are mentorship experiences, academic requirements, or personal circumstances in the decisions to take on leadership roles?
c. In what ways do national academic professional organizations impact Black Womxn in their academic roles?

Description of Participating Organizations

American Education Research Association (AERA), American Counseling Association (ACA), and American Psychology Association (APA) were chosen as the national academic professional organizations to recruit participants. The organizations membership is comprised of between 25,000 and 121,000 members identifying as scientists, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students. All three national academic professional organizations headquarters are in a large metropolitan area on the east coast but consists of members located worldwide. The researcher is a paying member of each of these organizations and therefore will have access to the listservs to recruit participants. Furthermore, the researcher has served in leadership compacities within these organizations giving them insider knowledge and connections with other Black womxn who have held leadership positions. Use of national listservs and other methods within these organizations will be used to recruit participants as shown in the *Initial Recruitment Strategies* section.

Research Participants

Sample Size

When determining the sample size of a qualitative research study several factors including the research topic, demographics of the participants, as well as availability to reach participants is important to consider. When using constructivist grounded theory however, an argument for focusing on the saturation of theoretical categories instead of number of

participants can be made (Charmaz, 2014). According to Charmaz (2014), theoretical saturation is the point in category development at which no new properties, dimensions, or relationships emerge during analysis (p. 143). The concept of data saturation can cause the number of participants to vary greatly depending on when data saturation is reached (Charmaz, 2014). Data saturation (Charmaz, 2014) can be achieved by the continuous collecting and analyzing new data until the investigator reaches a point where no new information, themes or categories appear. This strategy builds up to the previous data collected and continues providing information until no new information is obtained. When utilizing this strategy, it is imperative that the categories and themes developed are "well defined and explained" to determine the point where data saturation is reached (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2010) argued that grounded theorist researchers are tasked with not looking for repeating patterns but instead "establishing abstract theoretical relationships" (p. 213). After careful review of the literature (Charmaz, 2014, 2017), the researcher is planning to interview between 15 to 30 participants. Although interviewing between 20 to 30 participants was suggested by Creswell (2016), the researcher felt approximately 15 participants could provide in-depth understanding of the emerging theory with a beginning stage of saturation beginning to take shape (Charmaz, 2014).

Miller (2003) suggested, "Criteria for membership in a sample will depend on the nature of the research question being posed (p. 278). Exploration of a phenomenon (Black womxn with national academic professional organizations leadership experience) should be explored with a group of individuals who had experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2016). Therefore, this study will include the following criteria, (a) participants who identify as womxn, (b) participants who identify as Black of any ethnicity, (c) participants with at least one full calendar year of leadership service within one of the identified national academic professional organizations, (d)

participants who currently hold doctoral degrees, and (e) be at least 18 years or older. Participants identifying as Black of any ethnicity allows for individuals who identify within the African diaspora as it relates to the United States of America (African American, Black American, Caribbean American, etc.). All participants must agree to one initial interview, one secondary interview (member check email), and agree to allowing their interview to be audio recorded for research purposes.

Sampling Procedures and Recruitment Strategies

In remaining congruent with constructivist grounded theory research, several different sampling procedures will be utilized for this study (Charmaz, 2010; Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Creswell, 2016; Tracy, 2010;). Snowball sampling (Berg, 1983; Creswell, 2016) coupled with listserv recruitment within the national academic professional organizations will be the initial sampling methods. Theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2010; Patton, 2002; 2014) will be used after the completion of the second phase of coding analysis is completed.

Initial Recruitment Strategies

Various methods of recruitment will be utilized for this study (Charmaz, 2010). An email recruitment (Appendix D) will be shared on several list serves within American Education Research Association (AERA), American Counseling Association (ACA), and American Psychology Association (APA). The following listservs were identified based on the access the researcher has given their current organization membership. Division E: Counseling & Human Development, Division G: Social Context of Education, and Division J: Postsecondary Education were identified as listservs within AERA. Association of Counseling and Development (AMCD) and Counselor Education and Supervision NETwork (CESNET) were identified as listservs for ACA. Division 45: Society for Psychological Study of Culture,

Ethnicity, and Race and Psychologists of Color were identified as listservs for APA. Moreover, the email recruitment will be shared directly with current and immediate past individuals in currently national leadership positions who are easily identified on the association's websites. Initial recruitment will begin shortly after IRB approval with a follow up email reminder of recruitment to listservs 20 days after the first email request was made. The email recruitment (Appendix D) will contain a link for the demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) for interested participants to begin filling out. Within the demographic questionnaire participants will find the consent form (Appendix A) at the beginning and will end the questionnaire by providing their chosen pseudonym and last five digits of their phone number to link the survey to their interviews. Once initial contact is established, interview appointments will be made with the participant via email. All interview appointments will be conducted uses a secure zoom account established by the researcher where the interviews will be audio recorded for research proposes only. In general, initial sampling in grounded theory creates the foundation of the study as where theoretical sampling creates a foundation of the emerging theory as co-constructed by the researcher and participants (Charmaz, 2010).

Snowball Sampling

First identified as a research sampling strategy by Berg (1983), snowball sampling is the process of which current research participants make referrals to potential participants who may have shared the same phenomenon. Often referred to as "chain sampling" this method allows the researcher increased access to "hidden" and "more marginal excluded groups" (Miller, 2003, p. 278). Although service and leadership positions can be identified as visible positions and the people who currently hold these positions might be identifiable, written historical record of positions held are not readily accessible outside of the national academic professional

organizations. Creswell (2016) and Miller (2003) suggested, there are two core reasons snowball sampling can be helpful in grounded theory research: (a) the ease of this informal method of recruitment can identify other Black womxn leaders and (b) because often used in qualitative interview processes this sampling method allows the researcher to enter a space not accessible by participants outside of the phenomenon. Although chosen by the researcher as the best way to recruit participants, Matthews and Cramer (2008) stated that regardless of a well-designed strategy "they may fail to produce a robust and diverse sample when attempting to conduct research with hidden populations" (p. 303). Therefore, the researcher is using a variety of methods to aid in the successful recruitment of participant.

Theoretical Sampling

In additionally to snowball sampling (Berg, 1983; Creswell, 2003), theoretical sampling will be utilized after the member checks with participants are conducted. Charmaz (2010) argued, "theoretical sampling relies on comparative methods for discovering gaps (in the research) and finding ways to fill them" (p. 206). Furthermore, Charmaz (2016) suggested theoretical sampling be used to (a) delineate properties within a category; (b) "verify hunches about categories"; (c) create saturation within categories; (d) "distinguish between categories"; (e) clarifying relationships between categories; and (f) using it to identify any variations in the process (p. 104). Tracy (2010) described the connection between rich rigor of the data collection process and the connection to high-quality qualitative research can be identified through the identification of themes creating credibility. Using a constant comparative method of data analysis was used throughout the interview and transcription review processes (Charmaz, 2010, 2020). Tyrrell et al. (2012) reported, data analysis will consist of going back and forth from data analysis to additional interviews, coding the interviews once and going back to analyze the

transcripts for a second and third time. The back-and-forth circular review between data and interviews assisted in the construction of the theory (Creswell, 2014). Theoretical sampling for this study focused on recruitment of missing areas of leadership experience or position.

Once interviews were completed, theoretical sampling was to be used to help contribute to the theory being developed and contribute to a better understanding of the initial process of coding. Theoretical sampling differs from purposive sampling in that theoretical sampling "is to obtain data to help you explicate your categories" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 198). To explore the specific categories that started to form in this study, participants that would "elaborate and refine" (p. 199) the data being analyzed were pursued. In a broader perspective, this sampling technique was used to aid in learning more about Black womxn identifying as leaders which were uncovered during the beginning process of coding. The reality was that there was a common want for Black womxn to serve in leadership roles. Black womxn reported feeling sought after and encouraged to run for leadership positions. Understanding the importance of how Black womxn were placed into these roles was the beginning. Learning about the supports they received after being elected gave context to how they reported their leadership experiences. Therefore, this study used theoretical sampling to highlight an important emerging theme.

Description of the Research Participants

Twenty-two participants were interviewed regarding their experiences as Black womxn within national academic professional leadership. All the participants selected they identified as Black womxn with no reports of non-binary or transgender womxn selected within the demographic survey. All participants reported holding leadership positions within one of the national organizations (American Counseling Association, American Psychology Association, or American Education Research Association). Participants were required to complete the

demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) before moving on to the semi-structured interview (Appendix C). There were 45% of participants reported their age as 36 years and younger while 54% were 37 and older. Approximately 54% of the participants reported being married or were in long-term committed relationships. Most participants (54%) reported participating in a leadership role between 1-5 years. Participants received their degrees in counseling education (50%), psychology (18%), education (9%), leadership (9%), and other 13%. Virtual interviews were conducted using Zoom giving greater access to participants while accommodating their schedules. While the Covid-19 pandemic continued to impact Black communities, participants were used to virtual formats after universities moved online allowing for comfortability when completing the interviews.

Table 1:
Demographics of Participants (N = 22)

Variables	Participants	#	Percent
Age	25 – 30 years	4	18%
	31 – 36 years	6	27%
	37 – 42 years	6	27%
	43 – 47 years	2	9%
	48 – 53 years	4	18%
Marital Status	Single, Never Married	10	45%
	Married, domestic partnership or long-term committed relationship	12	54%
Leadership Experience	Less than 1 years	3	13%
	1 – 5 years	13	59%
	6 – 11 years	4	18%
	12 – 17 years	2	9%
Discipline	Counselor Education	11	50%
	Psychology (clinical, counseling, community)	4	18%
	Education	2	9%
	Leadership (education or organizational)	2	9%
	Other	3	13%

Data Collection Procedures

As stated by Mills et al. (2006), constructivist grounded theory reshapes the relationship between researcher and participants throughout the research process and "in doing so bring the centrality of the researcher as author to the methodological forefront (p. 2).

Instruments

Informed Consent

To protect participants and assure that they are informed of the purpose of the study and its risks, obtaining informed consent is necessary (Patton, 2014). The goal of the informed consent is to provide sufficient information to a potential participant, in a language which is easily understood, so they can make the voluntary decision regarding "to" or "not to" participate in the research study (Nijhawan et. al., 2013). Participants will receive the demographic survey (Appendix B) link to participate in the study via email recruitment (Appendix E). The informed consent (Appendix A) will be the first page of the informed consent. Participants are required to agree to participate in the study before having access to the rest of the demographic questionnaire (Appendix B). On the day of the interview, the researcher will read the informed consent (Appendix A) over Zoom and will ask for a secondary verbal confirmation to the informed consent. Participants will be asked if they wish to receive a copy of the informed consent via email. Within the informed consent (Appendix A), participants will be notified that their participation in the study is voluntary, their personal information will be confidential, their names will not be required to protect their confidentiality, and any information that could help to identify them will be removed from the transcriptions. The use of pseudonyms will be used in the collection of all data and the last five digits of their phone number will be used to match their

demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) to their interview and member check. In addition, they will be informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time.

Demographic Questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire (Appendix B), developed by the primary researcher and based on a review of the literature, focused on Black womxn and was given to determine four key areas: informed consent, criteria to participate in this study, general demographics, and leadership experiences. The informed consent (Appendix A) and criteria to participate in the study are in line with the university requires. The general demographic section covers the following areas: (a) ethnicity, (b) age, (c) education level, (d) degree discipline, (e) level of education, (f) childhood neighborhood area if residence (i.e., urban, suburban, rural), (g) current socioeconomic status, (h) current income, (i) generation/nativity status, (j) employment status, and (k) relationship status. The leadership survey questions focus on (a) leadership positions held, (b) years of leadership experience, (c) pervious titles of leadership experiences, (d) and when the participate first identified as a leader. The demographic survey is hosted by the researchers' university's Microsoft ™ forms. The survey should take participants a total of 10 minutes to complete from beginning to end. Participants will receive the Calendly ™ link (Appendix F) at the end of the survey to schedule an interview. Participants are asked to leave a preferred email for additional follow up from the researcher. The participants completed the questionnaire independently at the beginning of the interview.

Semi Structured Interview Protocol

The semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C) was created using the emerging literature and the theoretical framework found in chapter 2. Using established literature and the theoretical framework, questions were carefully cultivated to inquiry about the lived experiences

of Black womxn in national academic professional organizations. Questions highlighting the intersectionality of race and gender (Collins, 2010) held by the participants as well as creating counternarratives (Haskins & Singh, 2015) were considered along with leadership principles (Komives et al., 2006, 2005). Only participants who agreed to the informed consent and complete the demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) received the Calendly ™ scheduling link (Appendix F) for their initial interview. The semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C) was be used because it provided a flexible technique allowing for more useful data collected for smaller research projects (Pathak & Intratat, 2012). During the interview process participants were invited to respond to questions from the semi-structure interview guide (Appendix C). The initial interviews approximately lasted between 60 to 120 minutes. Interviews ultimately became the "site for the construction" and the "researcher and informant produce this knowledge together" (Mills et al., 2006, p. 4). To gather thick and rich descriptions of participants' experiences, questions were focused on obtaining detailed narratives of their stories (Tracy, 2010).

Semi-structure Interview Guide and Revisions

Respondents were asked questions that would allow them to articulate their thoughts about leadership. When participants began to consistently answer the questions in similar ways, the interview guide was revised allowing for more saturation to take place. Developing categories through continual open coding that focused on the candidate's experiences within their leadership roles resulting from what they experienced rather than focusing on the type of leadership experiences themselves. Creswell (2007) stated that the constructivist perspective of grounded theory allowed for flexible guidelines. The adjustment of questions occurred after four, nine, twelve, and seventeen interviews. No additional adjustments were subsequently deemed

necessary. The remaining interviews followed a similar format to the questions used at the beginning of the study with some minor adjustments to gather additional data on the emerging theme. Although there was some redundancy of questions between the demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) and the semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C), the duplicated questions were not removed. The participants did not react negatively to this redundancy, and this approach prompted a deeper discussion and the extraction of additional details. The adjustment in the questions and processes reflected the flexible nature of the constructivist grounded theory approach. Charmaz et al. (2018) promoted the researcher's understanding and disclosing positions in the research process. This open coding process led to a discovery of categories and a return to the data and questions for further exploration of the main categories (Creswell, 2007). The flexibility allowed within grounded theory helped this study promote a better understanding of an emerging theory surrounding Black womxn in leadership.

Initial Interview

In constructing grounded theory, a "co-construction of meaning between the researcher and participant" is an implicit part of the interview process (Mills et al., 2006). Mills et al. (2006), argued that "interviews are not neutral" because they involve "active interactions" during data collection. It is important to remember that these interviews are retrospective narratives to open ended questions (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). According to Charmaz and Belgrave (2012), "grounded theory interview questions need to be sufficiently general to cover a wide range of experiences and narrow enough to elicit and explore the participant's specific experience" (p. 351). Moreover, interviews give participants opportunities to provide their counternarratives to the dominate cultural narrative (Haskins & Singh, 2015). This interview will last between 60 to

90 minutes long conducted via Zoom ™. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by a professional transcription service.

An interview log (Appendix G) will be utilized to keep track of whether the participant completed the informed consent, demographic questionnaire, initial interview, member check, the transcription process, and coding process. Once the initial interviews are conducted, snowball or chain sampling will be utilized (Miller, 2003). Snowball sampling helps identify potential participants who may provide rich information to the study (Creswell, 2014). Based on Creswell (2014) suggestions, the researcher will ask the participants to refer other individuals who may be interested in participating in this study and meet the inclusion criteria. This procedure will be utilized until a total of at least 15 in depth individual interviews are conducted or the saturation of data is reached (Charmaz, 2010; Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

Member checks

The member checking technique is considered by Lincoln and Guba (1999) to be "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Member checking is a verification process where the participants check the accuracy of the transcriptions and findings representing their narratives and interpretations of their lived experiences (Tracy, 2010). Member-checking often refers to taking ideas back to the participant for their confirmation and is also an opportunity to gather more materials to elaborate emerging themes (Charmaz, 2010). Moreover, conducting the member check within 7 business days will allow the participants enough time to reflect inbetween interviews while also allowing the initial interview to remain fresh for reflection. Participants will receive an email within 7 business days which will includes a copy of their transcription, their individual analysis, and a write up of common themes collected thus far (Candela, 2019). The email will request the participate to review the transcription themes,

provide any additional information they want to add, and return the email within 7 business days. The email will serve as the "respondent validation or participant vaildation" aspect of the study (Birt et. al., 2016, p. 1802). According to Birt et. al. (2016), providing the verbatin transcription and a symmary of the themes gathered can be a both affirming and cathartic experience. Some particpates will want to see their written words while others will dislike it however providng the symmary gives them options to review both (Birt et. al., 2016). When participants complete their member checks, the additional feedback provided by email will be saved as additional data and incorportated within the research process.

Field Notes and Memos

The use of memos (the researcher writing reflections throughout the research process) is intended to contribute to the development of theory (Creswell, 2016). Memo writing is a crucial step which connects coding to writing during the first draft of analysis (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). The use of memos will allow the researcher to record reflective and analytical notes during data collection and utilize those notes during the analysis of the data (Creswell, 2016). Reflexivity is often used in qualitative research to maintain ethical awareness of how the research affects their participants. Chiseri-Strater (1996) argued that the distinction between reflexivity and reflection is "to be reflective does not demand an 'other,' while to be reflexive demands both another and some self-conscious awareness of the process of self-scrutiny" (p.130). Charmaz and Belgrave (2012) suggested analyzing data and codes through memos early in the process helps the researcher avoid becoming overwhelmed by untouched data, remain involved throughout the research process, and assist with writing. Beyond collecting data driven by the participants, the researcher is expected to maintain some vigilance on how they understood and processed the data collected and analyzed. To that end, research memos will be

used during the study to document thoughts, hunches, assumptions, emptions, and subjectivities. Connecting these ideas to concepts addressed and documented within the literature review section. The memo process will also allow the researcher to expand the ways in which they conceptualized their understanding of the data and push them to challenge themselves to expand and interrogate their worldviews to see what else is going on within the data. With extensive memos, researchers can make connections between their memos and the literature review (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012).

Peer Debriefer

To help the challenging process while increasing credibility, the researcher needed the help of a peer debriefer who would be familiar with qualitative methods and the topic. Using a peer debriefer is required to produce high quality grounded theory research (Barber & Walczak, 2009; Spall, 1998). It is important to consider the peer debriefer's characteristics and qualifications as well as the relationship between the debriefer and primary researcher (Barber & Walczak, 2009, p.5). This peer debriefer will have access to the data collected, how data collection and analysis was organized, research memos, and the coding process. Furthermore, the peer debriefer must be comfortable critiquing the data, have a strong understanding of qualitative research methods and organizational leadership, and commit to the entirety of the research project (Barber & Walczak, 2009). With the help of the peer debriefer, the researcher will be able to identify any parts of the study that seemed incoherent, lacked logical flow, or demonstrated perspectives that needed further interrogation. The information gathered via memo writing and peer debriefing to also count as data sources. An important part of constructing grounded theory is the use of reflexivity which, "calls for researchers to be aware of their own thought process, epistemology, and subjectivities during the analytical process" (Barber &

Walczak, 2009, p.5). The researcher assuming a reflective stance can further be achieved by a peer challenging any incongruent reflections between the researcher and participants (Mills et al., 2006). The peer debriefer for this study identifies as an African American female who currently works as a professor in education leadership, she has approximately 20 years of experience at varying levels, as a faculty member, student success administrator as well as associate and dean experience. She has also worked with national organization to present, review, and evaluate research. Her research and teaching focused on persistence, development, and access of historically underrepresented groups in higher education to include students, faculty, and staff.

The use of Constructing Grounded Theory diagram (Figure 1)

The use of Constructing Grounded Theory diagram (Figure 1) is a guide for this research study. Using the figure, the researcher will be able to identify where each participant interview and the coding process is within the research process. In addition to the diagram, an audit trail (Appendix E) will be used to "record of the research process as well as the theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices made by the researcher" (Bowen, 2009, p. 307). The audit trail (Appendix E) primarily records the research process from the start of the project to the final analysis by making the process transparent and valid (Bowen, 2009). Although an external auditor was not used for this process, according to Bowen (2009) and Tracy (2010), audit trails confirm the research process is rigorous and the study could be reproduced by an auditor.

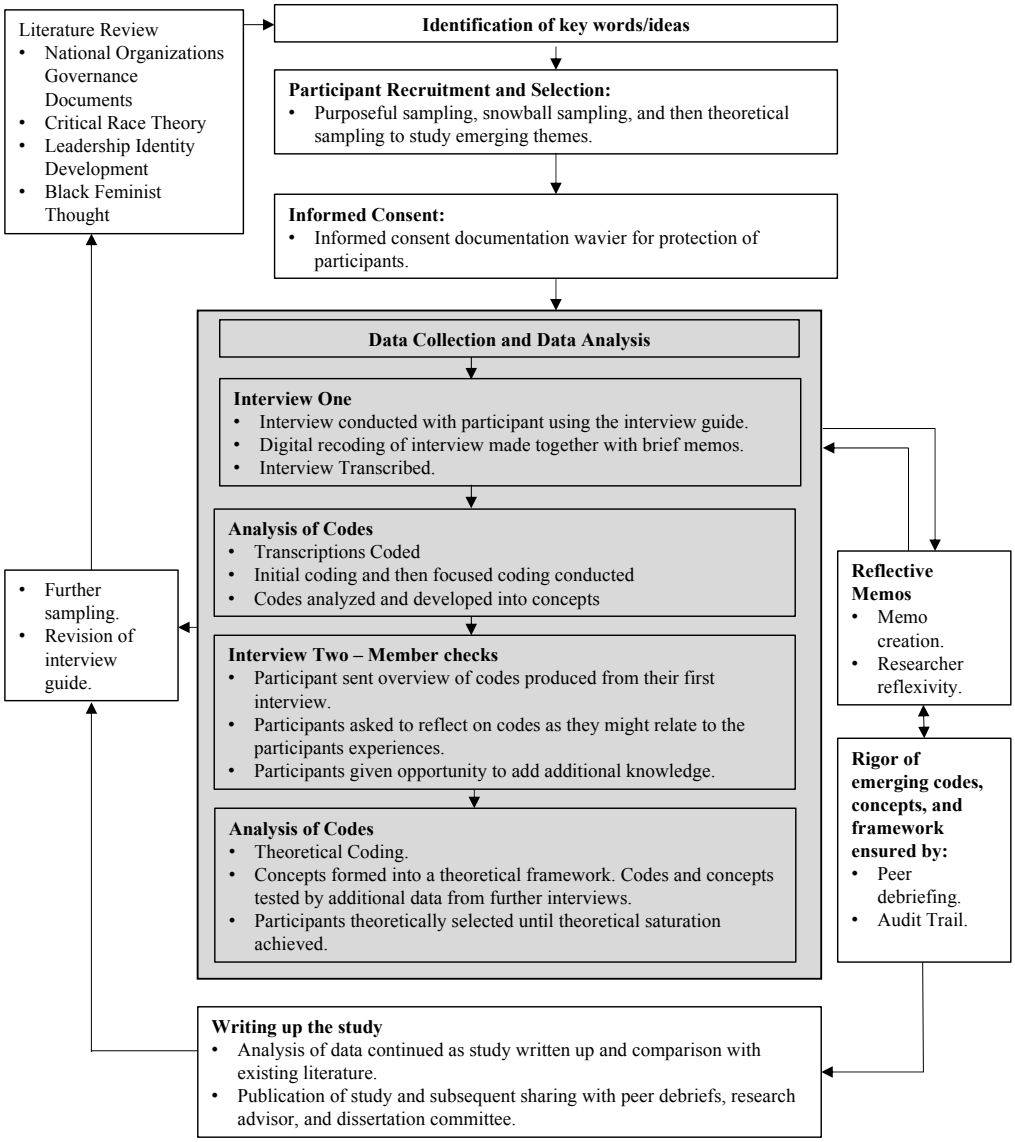

Figure 1: Summary of the Use of Constructivist Grounded Theory in this Study (Tyrrell et al., 2012; Carcary, 2009).

Data Analysis Plan

For constructivist grounded theory research, coding should include a close review of statements, actions, events, and documents (Charmaz, 2012). Using the *Summary of the Integration of the Theoretical Framework into Data Collection and Data Analysis Process* (figure 5), the researcher created a visual roadmap as a guide to understand the integration of the theoretical framework into the collection and analysis process. This integrative model shows a

stepwise process of coding using the theoretical framework created from Critical Race Theory (CRT), Black Feminist Thought (BFT), and Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM). Moreover, while existing literature created the theoretical framework overtime the participants and researcher will begin to co-create an emerging theory or a Black Womxn Leadership Theory. MAXQDA ™ (VERBI Software, 2019) computer software will be used for data analysis, coding process, and storage purposes. All interviews, field notes, and reflective memos will be transcribed and imported into MAXQDA™ (VERBI Software, 2019). The use of a professional transcription company will be utilized to assist with the audio transcription. Once the interviews are conducted the researcher will prepare and organize the gathered information, develop themes using a coding system, and create a diagram or provide a description that helps explain the findings and gives meaning to the data (Creswell, 2010). Constructivist grounded theory requires a data analysis process which includes initial coding, focused coding, theoretical coding all ending with member checking as the final stage (Charmaz, 2014). The following coding steps were suggested by Charmaz (2014), (a) initial coding, including line by line coding and in Vivo coding, (b) focused coding, and (c) theoretical coding. Following the constant comparative method approach, data analysis requires me to move back and forth from one participants' transcript to the other. Charmaz (2014) recommended that after coding a body of data, the researcher compares other participants' codes and data. Following constructivist grounded theory, the integration of memos, theoretical sorting, and diagramming will occur throughout the data analysis stage.

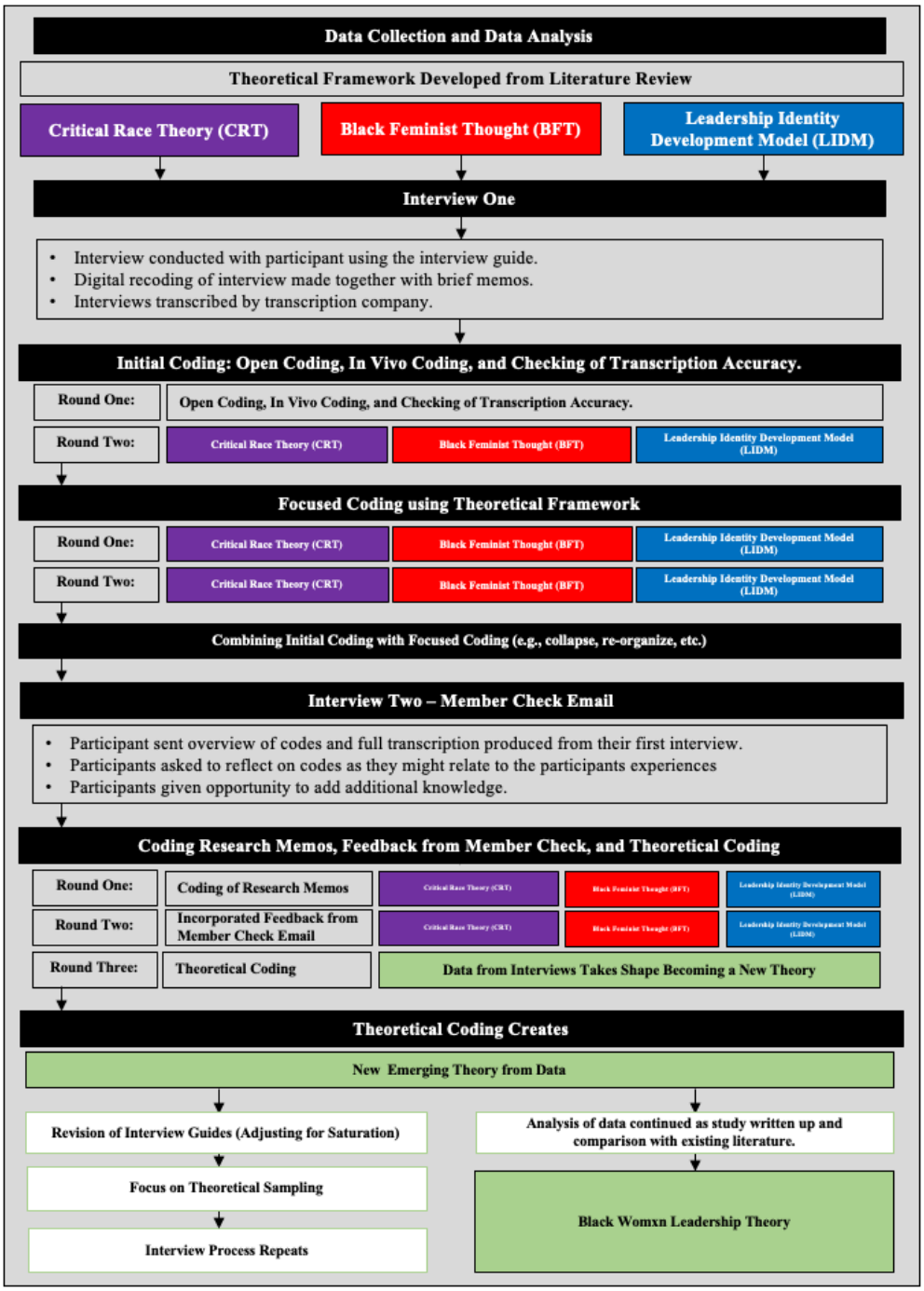

Figure 5: Summary of the Integration of the Theoretical Framework into Data Collection and Data Analysis Process.

Initial Coding

The initial coding process includes two rounds of coding. The first round paying attention to the accuracy of the transcription with open/in vivo coding and second round introducing the

theoretical framework. Once the transcription process was completed, the researcher started the initial coding process by reviewing the transcription by checking for accuracies of the transcription from the audio. According to Saldaña (2016), initial coding or referred to as open coding, is the first open-ended grounded theory approach to viewing the data. Charmaz (2014, 2020) suggests open-ended coding can include line by line coding and in vivo coding as the first coding strategy researchers can use. The coding process includes breaking the data into smaller more manageable parts and closely examining them while looking for differences or similarities (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). Coding from the data is an important tool for this research project as it will "uncover emerging grounded theory from the field of inquiry" (Mills et al., 2006, p. 29). Coding ultimately breaks the narratives up into properties that support the "processes, actions, and meanings" which define the connections between the data (Charmaz, 2012, p. 5). Initial coding is an important part of grounded theory as it searches for "processes in participant actions that have antecedents, causes, consequences, and a sense of temporality" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 118).

Round two of the initial coding process started to review the transcription from the theoretical framework. By identifying open and in vivo codes as they are loosely related to the theoretical framework creates understandings of how the participants conceptualize their own experiences. Although related to potential final themes of this project, initial coding may not be used in the focused or theoretical coding but will inform the study on how participants are conceptualizing their experiences (Saldaña, 2016). Moreover, including in vivo coding, "the terms used by the participants themselves", deepens understanding of the participant's culture and worldview (Saldaña, 2016, p. 105). Throughout this initial phase of coding, the researcher was mindful that codes are not "something to be discovered on the way to theory construction"

(Charmaz, 2012, p. 5) but should instead be reflective as the phenomena begins to emerge (Saldaña, 2016). The use of a peer debriefer and memos are particularly important during this phase to help with the reflective process (Mills et al., 2006; Charmaz, 2020). Charmaz (2012) argues for memo-writing beginning at the very start of the study as it can increase analytic momentum always making sure to compare the data to the memos collected.

Initial Coding Process During Interviews

The coding approach followed Charmaz (2014) guidelines of open and focused coding using MAXQDA™ (VERBI Software, 2019). Since open coding occurred in MAXQDA™ (VERBI Software, 2019), the process of organizing these codes based on emerging categories assisted in analyzing each interview and the data collected throughout the study. After every four to five interviews, the audio file was sent to GoTranscript™ for transcription. The transcription process took between twelve hours and five business days. After each transcription was received an authenticity check was performed to verify the accuracy of the transcription to the audio file. The interviews were then one at a time. This process forced the development of categories in MAXQDA™ (VERBI Software, 2019) as the study progressed. At the beginning of the interviews, there was a constant state of developing new codes.

After the first five interviews, codes were closely related to the literature review which informed the initial semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C). Some of the themes first identified were Black womxn, mentorship, identifying as a leader, shared responsibility, and community. The semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C) was revised for clarity and easier flow when asking questions during the interview. From there the next five interviews emerging themes were levels of Blackness, Black womxn, mentorship (giving to others, counterstorytelling), identifying as a leader (elementary school leadership, leader within the

family), and Black community (Black spaces). At the completion of ten interviews, current themes were re-explored and established. Once established themes were used to theoretically code past interviews expanding and collapsing categories that better fit the shared experiences of Black womxn.

After twelve interviews, no new codes were developed. The focus became on categorizing codes within the main themes. During the interviews, the researcher recognized a holistic view of influences in constructing meaning from the interviews including their relationships with the respondents. Charmaz (2014) stated that a constructivist approach includes attention to the researcher's relationship with respondents and how the researcher constructs meaning from the participant's stories. During the coding of the interviews, there was meaning beyond the words themselves and constructed an understanding that was likely influenced by previous conversations, an understanding of the meaning behind the statements, and the current geopolitical climate that exists for Black womxn worldwide. With this understanding, the theoretical framework (Black Feminist Thought, Leadership Identity Development Model, Critical Race Theory) began to shape the theory of Black womxn within leadership spaces.

Focused Coding

The second step in data analysis processes was focused coding which required the researcher to make decisions about what initial codes make the most sense for the study (Saldaña, 2016). This begins the integration process of the theoretical framework into the coding process. Using the framework (CRT, BFT, LIDM) as a lens the researcher begin to identify emerging codes as it related to the above theories. Charmaz (2014) suggested when using focused coding researchers can begin to move across interviews and can compare participants' experiences. To some extent this process will include axial coding by looking closely at initial

coding which helped determine what codes were dominate categories or subcategories while looking for how codes are closely related to each other (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). This process begins to reveal overarching themes found in the data (Creswell, 2014). The goal of focused axial coding was to start to achieve saturation where no new information emerged from the data (Creswell, 2016; Patton, 1999, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). Although axial coding can help produce between linkages between dominate categories and their subcategories, Charmaz (2014) reported axial coding could stifle the coding process towards theoretical coding if researchers are not careful. By using peer debriefers and reflexivity memos the researcher sought to move beyond what is happening and understand why participants reported their experiences and how national academic professional organizations influence those experiences (Charmaz, 2020). Integration of the theoretical framework allows further critical inquiry of the language used while asking how attentive the questions posed within the study are to social justice and cultural humility based on participants' responses (Charmaz, 2020; Hook et al., 2017; Ratts et al., 2015). Creating two rounds of focused coding allows the researcher to carefully attend to all parts of the theoretical framework while adjusting categories of themes identified (Saldaña, 2016). After the completion of initial coding and focused coding, the researcher provided participants with an overview of their themes for their member check email. After the participant completed the member check and provides feedback (Interview Two) the theoretical coding process began.

Theoretical Coding

Theoretical codes are "conceptual connectors" that develop relationships between categories and their properties (Mills et al., 2006, p. 29). In this section the researcher conducted three rounds of coding consisting of feedback from participants, research memos, and ending with theoretical coding. Charmaz (2012) suggested theoretical coding encourages the researcher

to ask increasingly more focused questions while seeking answers used in progressing through the study's inquiry. Theoretical codes act as umbrellas by covering and accounting for all the codes and categories formulated during the grounded theory analysis (Saldaña, 2016). This stage is where the data for this study began to take shape and ultimately be molded into a theory. The how and why of this study would need to be answered to further create a theory based off the experiences of Black womxn in national academic professional leadership (Saldaña, 2016). Tracey (2010) argues that research that builds theory can problematize current theoretical assumptions. There is often tension between emergence of codes and applications of codes (Charmaz, 2014). By using memos and a peer debriefer, this tension can often be managed at the same time producing precise clear theoretical codes that hone the work into a "sharp analytic edge" (Charmaz, 2014, p.171). Mills et al. (2006), advocate for keeping theoretical memos especially as the coding process becomes more complex and analytical to keep participant's voices and meaning in the theoretical outcome. Conducting researcher's memos during theoretical coding was intentional to allow for critical inquiry throughout the process while encouraging full engagement with personal reflexivity (Charmaz, 2020). While constructing grounded theory the study should not provide full individual accounts as evidence but instead theoretically analyzes participants' stories forward while remaining connected to the original data (Mills et al., 2006). Theoretical coding is the last step in the coding process, requiring the researcher to make decisions about the next step in the research process. From here the research will continue to refine the semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C) until reaching saturation for the study. Simultaneously the researcher will continue analysis of the data while writing and refining the results. To ensure consistency in the research process, an audit trail was used to provide a clear stepwise process of the study (Tracey, 2010).

Audit Trail

During the data analysis process the researcher will keep a research audit trail (Appendix E) and an interview log (Appendix G) to manage any additional threats to trustworthiness. Although flexibility can be an important part of qualitative work, research procedures are an important part of maintain the standard of research and the integrity of the study (Lietz et al., 2006). When constructing grounded theory, the audit trail used for this study will assist the researcher to follow their own research procedures consistently. Furthermore, when combined with the diagram (Appendix E) the researcher will use the stepwise processes to guide the data analysis which help maintain trustworthiness (Tracey, 2010).

The Study and the Researcher

The Study

Charmaz (2014) stated that "the dynamics of power and professional status, gender, race, and age can affect the direction and content of the interviews" (p. 74). Empowering the participants to share their experiences allowed for a better understanding of their experiences as leaders within their organizations. Participants were asked to reflect on their current leadership roles as well as pathways they might have taken to the positions they are in today. In the demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) and semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C), participants had multiple opportunities to reflect on how they became the leaders they are today. Having multiple questions that addressed leadership created connections within the current work the participants were doing and recall moments they might have forgotten about in the past. By the end of the interview a greater understanding of Black womxn in leadership formed. This process was completed for all the interviews. Saturation was determined when no new information was revealed, and no new categories were developed. At twelve interviews,

saturation was materializing. A totally of twenty-two interviews were completed to ensure that saturation was reached.

The Researcher

Charmaz (2017b) explained that researchers use the constructivist ground theory to capture life's social processes. Choosing this topic was not an easy process for me as I have had positive and negative experiences while holding leadership roles. Throughout my childhood, I have held some type of leadership role without understanding what that meant. Within my matriarch family, Black womxn are the leaders and decision-makers. I believe these leadership roles were passed down from Black womxn to Black womxn in my family. In most cases, the role would be placed on the oldest girl. My mother held this role and her mother before her. Although I come from a family full of strong Black womxn, when my mother passed it was assumed this role would be something I would take on. Often this meant keeping track of the family tree but what was most important was this person would serve as a peacekeeper and holder of the light. I often found myself frustrated that my mom would take these roles on while several of our family members would treat her badly. Over time, I became vocal in not wanting to become the keeper of our family. Although I managed not to become a leader within my family, I instead became a leader in other spaces often sacrificing my well-being for the greater good.

Recognizing and understanding bias in this research project was an important part of the process. Charmaz et al. (2018) indicated that the researcher's perspective influenced their interpretation of information received from respondents. I am a dues-paying member and have held leadership positions within the organizations used for recruitment. This made the study feel personal as I had insider knowledge of how organizational governance worked. I am an advocate

for governance, process, and policy. The understanding of organizational process makes it possible for Black womxn to enter these spaces while also impacting change. In hustle culture, playing the game can be seen as understanding the process and different political agendas. I was very good at becoming savvy and moving through spaces, but it did not fulfill me in the ways I had hoped. As I realized this, I moved out of leadership spaces and created firm boundaries which help me remain outside of leadership roles. It has been important to understand how my positive and negative experiences might impact my understanding of the experience of others. Having insider knowledge helped me better understand the nuances others might know. It also felt heavy as Black womxn shared their experiences with hazing, racism, and antiblackness.

Connecting with a peer debriefer to process my experiences created guidance in not allowing my own experiences to rewrite the experiences of others. Through journaling and personal reflexivity, I processed the hurt I experienced in the past and the hurt the participants are currently feeling. In the past, I would have written a long paragraph on how critical it is to bracket yourself outside of your study and data. Today, I realize this is an impossible task as the Black womxn community is hurting and I am not immune to the suffering our community is experiencing. The empathy I have for Black womxn everywhere is ingrained within my counseling identity. As I watch Black womxn leave leadership and chose themselves, I am saddened by all that might be lost. However, we cannot serve others if we cannot first serve ourselves.

Addressing Credibility, Transferability, and Dependability

In qualitative research, selecting a research methodology that is congruent with the researcher's orientation and the purpose of the study while infusing it throughout the qualitative study is the criterion for trustworthiness (Hays & Wood, 2011; Kline, 2008). Addressing

credibility in qualitative research was first addressed by Lincoln and Guda (1985) but overtime has been addressed throughout qualitative literature as an important part of any study conducted (Creswell, 2016; Hays & Singh, 2011; Hays & Wood, 2010; Patton, 1999, 2014; Shenton, 2004). According to Tracy (2010) the following eight criteria add depth, rigor, and trustworthiness to qualitative research: (a) worth topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethical, and (h) meaningful coherence (p. 840). In the following section literature on the importance of how using these eight tenants will help guide the credibility, transferability, and dependability of this study (Tracy, 2010) with specifics on time, duration, and details on participant guidelines are found in the *Sampling Procedures and Recruitment Strategies* section.

Credibility

Credibility starts with accurately recording the study under which the phenomena is occurring (Shenton, 2004; Tracy, 2010). Tracy (2010) argued that research credibility increases when the study is marked by "thick descriptions, concrete detail, explication of tacit (nontextual) knowledge, and showing rather than telling" (p. 840). Charmaz (2006) suggested a study can address credibility issues by accurately recording the behaviors, statements, actions, gestures, and expressions of the participants. Sufficient and suitable evidence collaborating the study's results enables the reader to form an independent assessment of the study's findings (Charmaz, 2006, 2014; Tracy, 2010). Shenton (2004) recommended incorporating debriefing sessions, researcher's reflexivity commentary, member checks, and triangulation were all ways to maintain credibility throughout the project.

This study's credibility will be increased by using the many recommendations referenced in the literature (Charmaz, 2006, 2014; Shenton, 2004; Tracy, 2010). Thick and rich descriptions

of participant' behaviors, actions, expressions, and statements (Shenton, 2004; Tracy, 2010) will be recorded. Additionally, visiting the participating organizations websites and reviewing their governance guidelines for leadership within the organizations will be reviewed. Researcher notes will be collected throughout reviewing the governance guidelines and will assist with any modifications to the semi-structured interview guide. The use of peer debriefers (Morrow & Smith, 2000; Seward, 2019; Shenton, 2004), will serve as a mirror to reflect the researcher's response to the research process, this also allow the researcher to process and gain insight on their own reactions to participants lived experiences. Reflective memos will be used throughout the interview, data analysis, and debriefing processes. Rennie (2004) defined reflexivity as "self-awareness and agency within that self-awareness" (p. 183). Memos will include the researchers' own experiences throughout the research process and any themes that might emerge from the data.

Member Checks

According to Tracey (2010) "member reflections" can include but are not limited to "member checks, member validation, and host verification" with an emphasis on "taking findings back to the field and determining whether the participants recognize them as true or accurate" (p. 844). For this study, member checks are important for providing a "deeper and richer analyses" while also allowing the participant to ensure whether the researcher "got it right" or not (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). The researcher must be prepared for any critiques the participants might have during the member checking process and knowledgeable that these critiques can further uncover new aspects of the study not yet identified (Shenton, 2004; Tracey, 2010). Morrow (2005) suggested, "that member or participant checking should not be treated as validation or verification; rather, it should be viewed as an elaboration on the emerging findings

and treated as additional data (p. 252). Member checks (secondary interview) will occur approximately 12 business days after the initial interview.

Transferability

Tracey (2010) argued that qualitative research should not be treated quantitatively with a goal of transferability or generalizability. Although generalizability and transferability of this study can be determined by the judgement of the reader (Patton, 1999), it is important to emphasize only the perceptions of the participant responses will be collected and it is unknown which findings from this study could be generalized to different populations, Black womxn in any leadership position, or university settings (Lawson, Hein, & Stuart, 2009). Generalizability is limited in qualitative research as the findings are descriptive and reflect the phenomenological experiences of participants (Spiegelhoff & Luke, 2015). "Transferability is achieved when readers feel as though the story of the research overlaps with their own situation and they intuitively transfer the research to their own action" (Tracey, 2010, p. 845). Overall, the researcher can provide testimonials, thick and rich descriptions, and understanding of the participant experiences but it is up to the reader to decide if the information is generalizable to them directly (Tracey, 2010, Creswell, 2014; Shenton, 2004, and Hannon et al., 2019).

Dependability

Overall, Tracey (2010) and Shenton (2004) argue that good qualitative research is dependable, and this can be achieved by providing detailed descriptions throughout the process of the study. However, critics of grounded theory have suggested that methods used can "gloss over meetings within respondents' stories" when researchers report selectively chosen evidence to "clean up subject" statements by adopting "value-laden metaphors and assuming

omniscience" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 269). Bowen (2009) argues for the use of an "audit trail" as one response these criticisms (p. 307).

Audit Trail

An audit trail is a technique used for increasing trustworthiness or to help assess the trustworthiness of a study (Bowen, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Bowen (2009), this technique involves "systemic recoding and presentation of information about the material gathered and processes involved" (p. 307) throughout the research study. Tracey (2010) argued for a formal audit trail that provided "clear documentation of all research decisions and activities" (p. 842). Shenton (2004) described the audit trail as a critical aspect of the research process because it "allows any observer to trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and procedures described (p. 72). An audit trail (Appendix E) was created for this study and will be used in addition to the Summary of the Use of Constructivist Grounded Theory (Figure 1). More information on how the audit trail was used during the coding process can be found in the *Data Analysis Plan*.

Summary

This chapter outlines how constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2017, 2020) will be used as the qualitative methodology for this study. The research questions that guided the study and theoretical framework supporting the semi-structured interview guide and theoretical framework were discussed. An overview of the data collection and analysis processes were covered with in depth review of the Summary Use of Constructive Grounded Theory (Figure 1) and Summary of the Integration of the Theoretical Framework (Figure 5). Specifics of participant requirement, strategies for trustworthiness, and theory formation was included. Furthermore, an overview of the Black Feminist Thought, Critical Race Theory, and Leadership

Identity Development as the theoretical framework was intergraded throughout the methodology section.

CHAPTER IV: PRESENATION OF DATA

The dissertation study used the constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006, 2014) approach to examine the experiences of Black womxn in national professional academic leadership. The purpose of investigating the participants' leadership experiences was to capture their lived experiences serving in leadership roles while balancing other personal and professional requirements. In Chapter III, a comprehensive guide was presented on the use of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006, 2014) including recruitment of participants, data collection, data analysis, and a summary of use (Figure 1). Additionally, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Black womxn experience leadership in their roles as board members within a national academic professional organization?
    d. What is the process of leadership development for Black womxn national academic professional organizations?
    e. How salient are mentorship experiences, academic requirements, or personal circumstances in the decisions to take on leadership roles?
    f. In what ways do national academic professional organizations impact Black Womxn in their academic roles?

Twenty-two respondents were interviewed between February to May 2022. These participants were chosen because they identified as Black womxn and served in a national academic leadership organization. Interviews were concluded once participants began providing redundant responses and saturation was realized. Participant responses were transcribed using GoTranscript™ following the interviews for coding and analysis. Once transcriptions were received from GoTranscript™, the audio files were carefully listened to while checking the corresponding transcription for accuracy. After verification and authentication of the transcript

were complete, interviews were entered into the qualitative research software MAXQDA™ (VERBI Software, 2019). Entering the transcripts and coding them to retain the initial thoughts and general context of the discussions was critical in the development of this study.

Presentation of Data and Results of the Analysis

Coding in constructivist grounded theory is vital because it allows for the constant stimulation of conceptual ideas. Initial coding allows the finding of repeating themes, while focused coding allows for filtering, classifying, arranging, and analyzing a large amount of data (Charmaz, 2014). According to the Charmaz, axial coding relates categories to subcategories by breaking down the data and reassembling it coherently. Theoretical coding is strategic, specific, and systematic and allows the researcher to refine emerging data categories (Charmaz, 2014). The following information provides a comprehensive overview of the emergent themes and subthemes from the interviews conducted with participants.

Emergent Themes and Subthemes

This dissertation study interviewed twenty-two participants totaling thirty-six hours of audio files transcribed and coded into 900 pages of quotes. Five major themes were discovered. The following sections are an overview of the major themes.

Black Womxn

This study sought to explore the lived experiences of Black womxn who served in national leadership positions within professional academic organizations. Black Feminist Thought (BFT; Collins, 2010) was a vital part of the theoretical framework in creating a foundation that allowed Black womxn voices to rise without the oppression of White dominant ideas. *Black womxn* as a theme were expected as this population was sought after throughout the formation of this study. This major theme covers the many different roles Black womxn serve while navigating how to maintain themselves and maintain others within their daily lives. Erika explained an event where one of her White womxn colleagues was embarrassed during a faculty

meeting when the White male dean commented that White womxn should only speak when spoken to. Erika spoke about her overall frustration and sadness for this White womxn, but also, Erika as a Black womxn, gave this White womxn advice, support, and overall feedback on how she could handle it differently next time, and how this White womxn could then advocate for herself in a way that she needed to advocate for herself in the future. Furthermore, Erika shared how in future meetings, her White womxn colleague learned to claim her voice and was able to speak up more often. Later the colleague shared with Erika that what she did helped her colleague come into herself and without Erika's coaching she would not have been able to stand up for herself. Coaching, supporting, and encouraging others has been ingrained within Black womxn for a very long time. "You create the space for everyone, and then you get people in it," said Erma Davis, "I don't care whether they have their Ph.D., don't have a PhD. If they have been in the field 50 years or two days. That's not what this [space] is for". Often Black womxn create spaces hoping that everyone will benefit, "I'm going to offer you my experience and my knowledge and assist you." (Erma Davis). Cecelia reported, "We effectively make change for everyone for the better". Ava shared that her focus, regardless of her role, is to make things better for people who came after her. When talking about her experiencing creating spaces, Zane shared why she felt committed to serving. "When I was coming up, there were not many people who looked like me and were studying race. Most people studying race were White. I wanted to change that" (Zane). Lucy, Cecelia, and Selma interviews reflected an awareness of missing Black and Brown faces while moving through their graduate programs into the profession as early career scholars. "I was the only Black student in my department at one point. It felt isolating and I did not want to feel isolated. That's when I started getting involved in leadership" (Lucy). Cecelia reflected getting involved much later, "There were very few people of color (in

school). I thought the profession was missing diversity until I attended a conference. That's when I started a student division at my school". Interviewees Anilec, Bella, Carolyn, and Zora attended school in the southeastern United States. Their interviews focused on the impact of seeing people who looked like them in their communities but not at their universities. "Academia was difficult because my classmates did not look like me, but my poor clients did. This was a driving factor in wanted to work as a school counselor" (Anilec).

This theme speaks to the different ways Black womxn show up, support others, and at times do this in determent to their well-being. Jasmine echoed this reporting,

> "I did all this work but still went through a national search when others didn't. I kept receiving messages that, "You have to conduct yourself differently. Other people want this position who are older than you, who are men, or who naturally should be the next person in line." I share this because the white mxn in my division has not had to go through a search. White womxn have not had to go through a search. I think that's a testament to Black women working extremely hard and doing more work for less pay. I'm the lowest-paid director in our division".

Like Jasmine, Phyllis shared the hardships of holding space as a Black womxn in academia and national positions. When asked about her experiences as a Black womxn she stated, "how much more shrinking do I have to do? Am I just going to have to disappear to make people feel more comfortable? Because I almost must disappear to make people feel more comfortable with their inadequacies, which I'm not pointing out in any way, shape, or form". Here Phyllis shared the frustrations of her presence being enough for others to feel uncomfortable or "insecure". She shared, "I'm not saying, "Oh, you're not qualified in this. You have no expertise in budgeting, so why are you even doing this?" I know that's not up to me to determine why you're in this job.

Yes, I keep having to shrink. When will we as Black womxn, whether inherent or acquire leadership positions to have to stop shrinking?". With these experiences often comes the questioning of their experiences as Black womxn. Wanting to serve their communities and within organizations comes a heaviness. For Leah serving in these leadership roles felt exciting while carrying heaviness when trying to navigate these spaces. She reports,

> "Leadership has impacted my relationships positively because I get to be in a space that's usually not occupied by people who identify as me, as a Black womxn. It creates opportunities for others who look like me, other womxn of color, and mxn of color. Any gender that is a minority that isn't found in these spaces doesn't see themselves and it gives them hope and it gives them a sense of pride. It also allows me to help, identify, and mentor those leaders that are of minority backgrounds to help get them in a space of leadership. In terms of negatively, I felt like in certain times that I was being questioned or doubted or challenged because I am a Black womxn and a successful one, at that. People would poke at it if you will, "Is she legit, does she know what she's doing? Let me see how she responds under pressure, does she fit into that category of an angry Black womxn that just got here by luck to fit a diversity quota, or does she belong in this space?"

Although Anilec knew she wanted to work as a school counselor, working within schools was not without its challenges. Anelic shared the heart ache of wanting to work within her community but being in a school that did not value her. Anelic seemed heartbroken while sharing her internship experience, "my supervisor was White. They would often say, "you shouldn't identify with your clients, it's unprofessional.". In these experiences Anelic shared the excitement of working with Black communities and frustrations when her supervisor

undervalued her connections to the clients. Phyllis disclosed feeling she was surviving her professional relationships as a Black womxn. “I've lived long enough in the professional environment that when I speak out, I am perceived to be aggressive, and it hurts me professionally. It becomes an internal battle, as to how you're going to take the comments. I have detached from being a Black womxn professionally because of those experiences that we deal with every single day” (Phyllis). Carolyn, Leah, and Raye all shared similar thoughts of worrying if others would perceive them as angry Black womxn when speaking up. Raye reflected she wanted to remain focused on her overall professional goals. “I feel I am more effective if I focus on being successful in my current roles. Then, I feel I can speak out more without others doubting my intentions” (Raye). As explained by Holly, she has been labeled as angry but felt that was not a true representation of how she was feeling during a faculty meeting,

> “I was so shocked. You know what it's like, I'm not even close to anger. I was just so shocked, "Angry?" Because I wasn't, but I was surprised, "I'm not angry." I did not effectively respond at that moment because I was shocked because A if you know me, it takes a lot to get me angry. You will know if I'm angry. You’re going to know that I'm hot. I was like, "Oh." It takes a lot for me to get angry. I'm a slow burner, so when I get there, you better head for the hills. I was just so far from angry. It was laughable, but I thought, "Oh, he stereotyped me because there's the angry Black womxn". After all, I probably said something that he didn't want to hear. His way of silencing me was to use a stereotype.”.

While the angry Black womxn stereotype is not new to these womxn, there is always a sense of questioning if they are legitime regardless of their temperate. “I think that the negative to leadership is realizing that so many people will assume because, I'm a younger Black womxn

and I'm quieter. That I'm weak, or that I don't know as much" (Erma Davis). Erma Davis spoke of the "whiplash" she experienced within circles she thought might support her. "As we talked about skin folk, I also think about the whiplash of feeling like, "Oh, I might be able to trust this person." Then realize, "Oh, I can't trust this person." Or feeling this energy, being excited about something to happen, and realizing that a person of color in the room is the one who's making it so difficult. That can be hard to set up opportunities for everyone to feel like they can be successful when you're hesitant to set up any opportunity at all because people have shown you, they're shady".

MG reported the same whiplash in not knowing if she was being stereotyped by her Blackness or gender. "Oh, there she goes, there's a Black woman, speaking up, speaking out," as opposed to, it's me as an individual speaking up, speaking out. I wonder sometimes if there's that label attached to what people hear or what people see. I'm always thinking about that, wondering about that" (MG). Nia, Carolyn, and Bella all spoke about feeling hesitancy when trusting new people. "In all honesty, I no longer need to add people to my inner circle" said Zane, "Not everyone you meet is trustworthy. Not everyone needs to know you personally". While Zora experienced similar thoughts, she works to combat those stereotypes. "There is also this notion of combating the stereotype by showing up in the spaces, and them seeing me as human if that makes sense. Humanizing me, I think is also a part of it so you don't look at me like other" (Zora). Regardless of what participants did, they felt they were often under a microscope and knew that they would be judged regardless. Using humor, Nia processed her experiences sharing, "Whew, I could go on and on it's only, we only 15 minutes in". Overall, regardless of where they were in their careers or experiences, they all felt a sense of using caution when interacting, "I just have to be very careful of how I say things and when I say things" (Malika).

These experiences occur throughout their day as Black womxn. Thinking about how they take up space or even who might see them. Hattie reported, “Our presence matters when we don't know that it matters. Just our physical being matters. Even though people didn't treat me bad, I still was very aware of my presence as a Black young person, a womxn in the midst of all these mxn”. There were few moments participants shared where they were not aware of their surroundings. Erika shared multiple experiences where she was identified at airports worldwide by people who knew from her organizational leadership, campus leadership, or her role as the associate dean of students. Erika shared the responsibility of “always being on” even at the grocery store. She reported, “you never know who might see you and if they will use that moment to judge you in other spaces”. Hattie also shared her experiences of running into former students at an airport in Germany. “I was in Germany, literally in an airport, and they said, "Hey, Miss Hattie." I thought, "Who knows me in Germany? What is this? Who are you and why are you calling my name?" I think all of that has to do with leadership in organizations”. While reflecting on her experienced arriving to a conference several days early, Zane shared, “I was at a museum, when someone asked me if I was Zane”. Zane seemed surprised by someone acknowledging who she was in a space where she thought she was protected from visibility. Lucy reported, “It’s funny because we talk about invisibility but do not talk about hypervisibility enough. There is something stressful about worrying who you might run into”. Malika processed the many comments she received on her professional attire,

> “I try to not wear attire that might emphasize certain things. I tend not to wear form-fitting things, or it doesn't accentuate any of my curves so people won't say, "Malika is dressing promiscuously”. Then I would say ghetto is a big one for me. It took me a while to get over. I'm not going to say get over it, but to just stand in my truth because I am

natural. A lot of the times people may look at my hair and say like, "You have a curly fro, your hair is unkempt, that's not professional." Over the years, for a long time, I would straighten my hair, I would perm my hair to make it acceptable, to fit in with society".

June who recently cut her hair reported feeling more nervous about how others might view her hairstyle. "What I do to my hair, what's considered professional or not for my role or the office, whereas no one else in the office has that to worry about". Most participants did not share where the pressure might have originated from when it came to their looks or professionalism. Cecelia reported her mother always arrived "put together". "We are Black" said Cecelia while laughing, "regardless of if it was church on Sunday morning or grocery story with no one around, you better be put together at all times". When asked how the influenced her, she seemed surprised. "I haven't actually thought about it" reported Cecelia, "I think it provided a false sense of who I am as a person, but I did tell my own kids this today".

This dissertation was to understand how Black womxn felt within their leadership positions. Hattie, however, shared how her everyday presence reminds her of her role as a leader.

> "In all honestly, my daily presence makes me think about how I'm perceived as a leader. When I walk out the door with my university jacket on, people look at me first because they're like, "Oh, if you have this jacket on, then you're part of the university. If you're part of the university, then you're a Black person as a part of that university. I'm talking about the noticeable stuff. It's not just like regular people just passing you by, but that happens a lot, and don't have somebody call you a doctor. "I'm Dr. Hattie." People's ears perk up because they're thinking, "It's a Black person here." There's an awareness. There's always a clear awareness. It's a black image, obviously, very Black and "I'm Dr. Hattie.".

With an awareness of how their presence impacts others comes a requirement to remain humble in their accomplishments. “Then you must remain humble in the fact that you don't need to even go there because we could go there, literally I can read you to filth and let you know how competent I am, how strong I am, and how educated I am” reported Arya, “I don't because I don't think that's beneficial to anybody, not even to myself because that takes away from the true essence of what my purpose and my goal.” Black womxn are forced to understand what their roles are, what the roles of others are, and most importantly what is not theirs to own. They navigate this while feeling required to “shrink” or “humble” themselves. “Early in my career” shared Selma, “I felt required to remain humble. To not talk about all my accomplishments. That talking about them made others uncomfortable”. When showing a softer side, Erma Davis shared another example of when her humility came into question, “Then there's also this dynamic of people expecting because I'm quieter, introverted. I would like to think of myself as humbler. For whatever reason, that upsets people, it feels like trying to poke at you to see you get upset and go off of them”. She shared how hard it is to find a balance between who she authentically is and who others expect her to be. In many cases, an expectation of an angry Erma Davis was disrupted by her softer warm leadership style causing frustration in a stereotype that never existed. “I'm a learner and I tend to be, humble. I don't put people down, I learn,” said Hattie. Bell and MG shared wanting to take on a humbler stance in their leadership roles. Raye sharing, “I guess you could say I feel required to be humble. To keep my voice steady, low, and express my needs without aggression”. However generational differences when taking on challenges were also present.

> “This is why I gravitate towards millennials like you because you help me hold on to some of those things that I need to be consciously aware of, because my generation, the

> Gen Xers, are the ones that take care of everything. We can do anything. We know how to navigate through things, but when it comes to racism and xenophobia, we're like, "What?" We're trying to find our footing, and so holding people accountable for the things that they say and how they make us feel is what we struggle with. We struggle with being uncomfortable correcting someone, which is strange, because we can correct our children, but we don't like to feel like we need to correct our superiors if that makes sense?" (Arya).

However, Cecelia created a counternarrative in how Gen Xers might struggle with conversations. "I am from generation X. I had to figure it out without help. Others can figure it out too. I do not have time to hold your hand through these experiences". Overall, the shared experiences of Black womxn position them to lead and move through the world in different ways.

The data that created the theme of *Black womxn* are real experiences and memories of what the participants experienced. From these counter-narratives, it was discovered that Black womxn are required to do mental gymnastics and their identities are mandated to become flexible depending on the context they find themselves in. Often participants shared how their identities were not enough or were too much for the people, places, or leadership they were engaged in. Current literature (Doharty, 2020; Kigore et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2021), highlights the challenging dynamics Black womxn face in work and academia when perceived as angry. Moreover, this study uncovers the emotional heaviness and fear of the impact of others' perceptions on participants but also other Black womxn. Black womxn are required to mold themselves and their leadership while fighting for others to recognize their humanity.

Understanding generational differences were not part of this dissertation's literature review or overall study. However, there was a sense that ageism and differences in time of

leadership experience influenced how participants spoke about their experiences. Younger participants shared that they felt humility was still required of them even though they were often unapologetic around their expertise and qualifications. Older participants often came from a positionality of wanting to learn new things with a connection to humility being a part of the learning process.

Earlier Erma Davis spoke about the whiplash she experienced in trying to understand who she could trust. Phyllis, Cecelia, and Zora expressed wanting to occupy spaces in the hope to make them more diverse over time. “Serving as vice-president of my organization is an honor” said Bella, “I serve an organization of color and seeing Black and Brown faces reminds me why we do this work”. Jasmine reported not wanting to occupy spaces that were not Black because of her identity.

> “I don't have many professional relationships outside of Black spaces because I'm cautious of White people in the academy. It's emotional labor. It's draining to provide the emotional labor or provide the mommy role. It's the mommy role that makes me not want to engage. It is the idea I'm supposed to be caring, nurturing, and a servant for you to work through your issues in these professional spaces. It is too much for me.” (Jasmine)

For Carolyn, having a Black space created comfort where she felt seen by Black faculty and Black students. “I know that you see what I see,” said Carolyn while sharing the feeling of not being the only one in the room. Moreover, Bella shared feeling “empowered” by the other three Black womxn faculty in her program. Ayra, Ava, and MG shared their experiences of being the only one and how isolating that often is. That when they have opportunities to be within Black spaces, they do not take that time for granted. “I'm excited to not be the only little chocolate face I see when I'm walking down the hall, what a thing to constantly be the only one and to have to

think about and to hope, that your colleagues can see the dynamic" (Denise). Wishing and hoping that their colleagues or others could "see the dynamic" was addressed by Zora. "Everybody saw it on Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson's face, those moments where you just want to say, "Are you serious? What are you talking about? Why are you even trying to come at me like this?". Most of the participants reported mental exhaustion from occupying White spaces. "I needed to preserve my mental health and just the sheer exhaustion of having to show up and play the game is too much. In these moments I wish there were more of us to carry this burden" (Zora). While Bella has several Black womxn within the same program, playing the game is still present. "Our faculty is diverse and powerful" said Bella, "however, there are still political dynamics that don't support our Black identities". Participants shared their challenges while highlighting the importance of creating Black space for others. "I feel we take up space and folks are envious of that" (Nia). "This is a space we share together and how we move through the world together" (Hattie). Throughout all the interviews, there was a foundational essence that Black womxn can be frustrated throughout the entire process but will always return to hopefulness. A hopefulness that change is coming because they are making that change happen. June and Cecelia shared their hopefulness. "I know my leadership is making a difference," said Cecelia. June reflecting, "This isn't easy work, but seeing change happen keeps me going".

Jasmine, Selma, and Lucy shared their experiences with Black mxn. Understanding how Black mxn fits into the study of Black womxn is a work in progress. For interviewees, mxn was not an abundant topic across all the interviews. However, the impact of Black mxn on Black womxn was impactful. "I experience that all the time where people will call a Black mxn to then call and check me. To make sure that I'm acting within whatever they deem as appropriate for me" (Jasmine). Lucy shared, "too often, I am expected to consult with Black mxn about my

leadership decisions". Jasmine and Lucy shared how Black mxn are often used as tools to guide their overall decisions. "Mediocre mxn exist everywhere" reported Selma, "but it is frustrating when Black mxn get by doing to bare minimum". Jasmine joking, "behind every Black mxn is a Black womxn who has told him what he should do next". "There is a false belief that we need Black mxn to assist us in our success. My partner and I decided we wouldn't attend work events together because people wanted to know how successful he was and how that related to my success," said Lucy. In the theme of Blackness, Black mxn represent pawns in a large chest game of policing Black womxn. An uneasy feeling that Black mxn must control Black womxn when others disagree with her decisions. Moreover, participants expressed feeling frustrated with interactions with Black mxn and how their colleagues interacted with their Black male partners. These quotes highlight how putting Black people against each other creates a withdrawal away from real issues to managing conflict within Black communities. For some like Lucy, creating a separation in her workplace by intentionally not bring her partner to events.

Black communities dealing with conflicts created by outsiders are best explained by the theoretical framework and use of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Whiteness as property and interest convergence creates discourse amongst Black communities by reinforcing policing of what is legitimate (Haskins & Singh, 2015). Whiteness as property is the right to decide who to associate yourself with even if it creates exclusion (Bondi, 2012). Black womxn are not immune from policing people who look like them. This often comes in the form of other Black womxn creating hardships or keeping others from opportunities under the idea that they too have suffered. "There is a sense of academic hazing when you reach out to other Black womxn and they never respond," said Erica. Later reporting, "I always wonder what had to happen to them for them to lose their connection to the community". Understanding Black identity, not all skin folx are kin

folx, and ideas of Black excellence speak to the power of community dynamics with reminders that diversity exists within Blackness. “In my department, for the first time, I'm not going to be the only Black womxn tenure track. I don't even know what to do with it because some people are different” shared Denise as she processed the excitement and hesitance of having more than one Black womxn in her department. These feelings stemmed from past experiences of feeling let down by other Black womxn,

> “Maybe I'm just feeling a way about it because it was that person whose reputation preceded them as someone who cared. She was known as someone not only who cared, but also who just would be this selfless giver. When I saw that wasn't quite the case, it was disheartening. The hope for one-on-one personal connection just was not there. To have that person speak about a community model and about bringing communities together and doing all this deep-rooted healing in communities, and then not offer that same healing and connection to people sitting across from you. It's like if we aren’t doing that healing, it starts to feel performative if you see someone talk about it so actively, but you haven't experienced it at all.” (Denise).

Erma Davis explained this as “double messaging”, “The strong Black woman schema is just very strong in there. You have to be selfless all the time. Everything is about everyone else. If you have any moment where you're like, "Hey, I need some rest," or, "Hey this is not healing or whatever to me." Then you end up getting backlash from all kinds of people, sometimes even other Black women”. Bella, Malika, and MG shared similar experiences of occupying Black spaces while feeling pressure from other Black womxn to perform a certain way. “When you are not following the majority” said Anilec, “you experience isolation from other Black womxn”. Anilec reporting, “I’ve experienced some harsh treatment and sideways comments from other

Black womxn in the profession. They make it clear I am not one of them". For others like Nia, there is a questioning of her loyalty and her intentions. "It was just the doubting of yourself like, "Are they going to listen? Are they going to judge? Are they not going to hear the words that are coming out of my mouth or are they just going to look at me?". Nia expressed frustrations of wanting to work within systems to change them but getting push back from the Black community. Not only does this create a doubting within us but questioning of who might support us. "I know there are a group of Black womxn who do not like me" said Anilec, "Sometimes I question, maybe I should try to connect more. However, I am starting to think regardless of what I do, they will never accept me". Often these experiences cause pain and hurt without understanding why others might treat us that way.

> "There was a Black woman in the office, and I knew her from campus. She had been on campus for years, just like I had been. When I moved offices, I was like, "Oh, this is so great. I have somebody there. They can show me the ropes." No, not at all. That was hurtful. My first time attending a dean's meeting, I was so excited. She went on without me. I got there a little early and the room was full, and people have food. I had to find a place to sit. I was like, "What is going on?" They told me when the meeting started, but nobody told me about the meeting before the meeting. I could have been there earlier even, but I was waiting because I thought we were going together. It had happened before to me in another job, but it should never happen. Then it happens again plus it's somebody who you know, plus it's a Black person. It shouldn't happen to anybody, nobody" (Hattie).

There will always be inside group dynamics. How the participants process if people who look like them are united often comes with trial and error.

The data shows Black womxn are not monolithic. How Black womxn identify, how they lead, and what is important to them varies. Moreover, those differences are often policed by other Black and White colleagues. However, Black womxn reported feeling conflicted. Participants wanted spaces where more than one Black womxn was present but were hesitant from past experiences of conflict. Interviewees reflected on the power of Black spaces and not being the only Black womxn in their departments. While expressing the frustration of double messaging or being unable to trust other Black womxn sometimes contributed to politics. Participants reported pressure to perform a certain way by other Black womxn. However, in most cases, Black womxn continue to try and build those relationships regardless of previous hurtful outcomes. A shared experience every participant has is navigating academia. Black womxn have not always been welcomed in academia but continue to rise through adversity to hold leadership positions and pursue tenure.

Academia

Throughout the participant interviews, there was a strong feeling of connection to academia even when they felt their presence was undervalued. Participants came to academia in a variety of ways. Some participants attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) while others attended Predominantly White Universities. While their disciplines varied (*Table 1*) they all found themselves working in academic settings today. Zora shares the importance of asking questions to move through her career, “You must ask, don't wait for somebody to ask you. I also know that many of us don't ask. We think if somebody sees something in me then they'll ask me to step up”. Zora shared how she sought out opportunities for movement in future positions by asking and applying rather than waiting for people to come to her. Phyllis shared her experiences moving from graduate school to an academic position because she wanted to give back to other students. “Empowered, invigorated, and exhausted.

[laughs] It's very empowering for me personally being in my career at this point, getting to this point," said June smiling on her pathway through academia. Anilec reflecting she never planned on ending up in academia but feeling grateful to be here now. Erika shared her positive experiences in academia leading her to want to hold more leadership positions. Wanting to make sure that she was engaging with the community, engaging with people around her, and engaging one-on-one with people at her university. Erika realized that through that engagement and through that process, wanting to increase that over time, and that engagement, led her to other leadership roles.

Holly sharing, "I am the only person in my family in academia. Most of them have no idea what I do but they love to tell people I work at the university". Hattie and Carolyn reflecting similar ideas. "Everyone in my family introduces me as Dr. Carolyn. Even when I tell them not to. "Hey, this is Dr. Carolyn" Carolyn laughed, "we were at a community BBQ. The cook did not care but said he thought it was cool anyway". Selma sharing, "as soon as my barber found out I graduated, she told every single person in the shop. "Hey, Selma's a Dr, you better act right". There is a shared sense of excitement and honor in Black communities when Black womxn accomplish milestones. However, Denise reminds us that university spaces are often difficult for Black womxn. "I feel comfortable more often than not, but when you get outside of that space and you're in these cross-college, cross-university spaces with members who are not as aware. Those spaces, you can sometimes leave so angry and depleted and because this business is usual for them" (Denise).

As Nia explained it, "We're the Wild West, academia." Often interviewees shared their amazement at the things that occurred in academic spaces. "During my graduate program, I did not feel welcomed. They made me feel my blackness was not welcomed" stated Malika while

reflecting on her graduate school experiences. “Often I thought, why did my advisor take me when they obviously hate everything about who I am and what I offer” said Anilec, “my family was great because they said my greatness made them feel inferior and that reflected them, not me”. When reflecting on her position as faculty, Carolyn recalled an interaction with a White student who suggests she worked for them.

> “I am the person who is teaching them, supporting them, mentoring them, helping them through this process. There is very little that a student, specifically a master's student can give me to move my career further. This is not a reciprocal relationship at all. It is truly, in most cases, very one way. I am giving in to you. As a professor of the class, I am the leader. I'm the captain of this ship. Then, to feel that my thoughts, opinions about the work that I am creating for you, is so little or so not needed, that you just skip over me to move to the next person who has nothing to do with this class.” (Carolyn)

As Carolyn reflects on her experience as faculty within her department, Selma shared, “Sometimes I question if my White colleagues are having similar experiences, but I know they are not”. Holly reported similar feelings, “I deal with students undermining me often. What frustrates me more is when my colleagues want me to look past student’s disrespect”. For Raye, these experiences happened often during their first years in teaching. Raye sharing, “students would point out to me, this other professor doesn’t do that, you are asking too much”. Overall participants seems to enjoy academia but felt frustrated by the lack of support.

Ayra, Phyllis, and Bella also shared interactions with students but instead focused on working with students of color. “I do think students of color may do that (seek her out). They often ask, “how are you navigating these systems”. I can't help to assume that it's because of my identity” (Bella). Denise shared her excitement about meeting with students like herself,

“especially for us because we're called to do so much all the time. I'm in a really cool position (faculty) that a lot of the students that I have these conversations with are kids of immigrants like me or they're immigrants themselves”. As with the other themes, Black womxn are tasked with doing multiple things to maintain themselves and others around them. Even when that work is exciting or meaningful, it still requires time and energy. Leah shared the challenges of this work,

> “That's a part of the challenge to students. We're supposed to push them past their comfort zone, not just as it relates to issues of diversity or inclusion, or multiculturalism, but just pushing them past their comfort zone to help them develop into the best counselor possible. If a part of that relates to culture, then so be it but again, that's my job.

Representation matters can only matter if it is the representation that inspires others. Within academia too often the Black and Brown faces are people who work within academia but are not considered academics. Hattie, however, highlights her experience of not seeing other Black people unless they are the cleaning staff, “There is another Black woman who's in another office down the hall. She came and said hi to me. We talked about the people around us because we're not in space. Academia is not populated unless you're cleaning the floors, making the meals, that kind of stuff, answering the phones. We're not populated with African Americans and certainly not Black womxn”. Selma and Zane shared similar experiences on campus. “On a Saturday I went to campus. I was wearing jeans and a t-shirt. I was stopped by university police and asked where I was going. If I feel uncomfortable on campus with police, how do Black students feel?” asked Selma. “I was wearing a baseball hat and leggings” said Zane, “I ran into the office quick. The faculty stopped me and asked if they could get another trash can. I said I was new faculty, so

I did not know". Having these experiences changed how participants viewed the campuses and the idea of inclusivity.

Phyllis expressed her frustration with her peers looking to her as a Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) expert. "I am one of three African American graduate faculty members at my institution. I feel like because I'm a Black woman, now I'm supposed to resolve any DEI issues. I felt like I walked into being appointed to this because I was looking at ways to serve the profession. However, I tell people I'm not a DEI expert.". Denise expressed feelings her university did not take DEI work seriously enough, "Sometimes I think about what knowledge bases people assume I have. I think one thing I'm very sensitive to, especially when it comes to, DEI work, is that not everyone takes it seriously as a science, as something that is studied and that is history and is systematic. There are so many approaches to understanding how to best serve our communities". For others like Erma Davis and Jasmine the very idea of diversity training is pointless, "I get so tired of everybody's answer, "Diversity Training." (Erma Davis). Nia laughing, "I'm over it. My university only requires one diversity training when you first get hired. People have been at the university thirty years and have one diversity training. Yet, I'm suppose to help lead a conversation? Get out of here". Anilec reported, "the people who say they are the most open minded, most inclusive, least racist, are the people who need antiblackness training the most". Several participants expressed their exhaustion with DEI work doing nothing. "When there are groups of people who say, or who present as if it's part of a checklist, like, "Okay, we got to make sure we're covering DEI. Here we are. Let's talk about diversity. Here's our monthly diversity talk, what do people have to say?" That just sucks" (MG). Again, there was an underlying call for Black womxn to participate and be at the table regardless of how these conversations might go. Moreover, often in these conversations Black womxn are harmed and

expected to brush it off. “It doesn't have to be perfect, but we need you to be there at the table because when it's just one of us or two of us it's exhausting. When we are not there, the issues around diversity, equity, and inclusion become surface level. We have to do the work” (Zora). There were no solutions on how to fix the performative DEI work that is occurring. However, these participants seemed tired of conversations that are going nowhere.

> “You're like, "You got me where in a ditch? What are you talking about?" It frustrates me because it just feels like people are willing to just trample all over you to raise themselves. Then turn around and be like, "I love diversity, equity, and inclusion. Yes, liberation." I'm like, "Liberation for who?" People talk about liberation, but, ultimately, so many people want to be the dominant group at the end of the day." I often think, why would I sign up for that in any aspect?”. Erma Davis

Holly reporting, “everyone wants Black womxn to participate but they don’t want our opinions”. “Sometimes it feels like a challenge to White folx” said Bella, “they want to be the most woke in the room but when you’re in the room and you do not agree with them, turmoil”. Jasmine suggested what the problem might be, “I don't think that our institution has quite yet understood or embraced intersectionality. How we could actually work together to solve some of these issues. Although, we have all these diversity committees”. The *Academia* theme showed a commitment to academia and working within academic spaces regardless of the negative experiences participants were having. Interviewees shared their experiences within graduate school and in their academic roles. Data showed participants often had to justify their presence within academia, especially to the White students taking their courses. Furthermore, participants reported not wanting to occupy Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) positions or committees because of their identities as Black womxn. Overall, they shared they felt DEI was not taken

seriously within academia, and serving in these roles did not help create tangible solutions for Black communities on campus. Regardless of this, Black womxn serve in leadership roles within their universities and their national organizations. *They Always Call Me Bossy* is the next theme as we understand how Black womxn serve and build community.

They Always Call Me Bossy

The main research question of this study was to explore Black womxn's experiences in their leadership positions. To better understand how leadership might impact Black womxn Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM; Komives et al., 2009) was employed. To allow participants to share their understanding of what leadership meant to them, questions addressed their earliest memories of themselves as leaders and their recent experiences. Surprisingly most participants were able to recall a moment when they were a leader but often spoke of not realizing what they were doing was leadership.

> "First one I remember overseeing an event at a school. I was in second grade. I just remember having a great experience being nervous, feeling like I didn't know what to do, but knowing that I had a lot of support, my aunt's support, and other adults' support. I found myself really enjoying it because I was able to have a lot of input as to what happened in the event" shared MG.

Nia shared she "felt like a leader early on in her life" but reflected on her experiences that occurred inside her home with her family. Hattie, Leah, and Zora all spoke of feeling empowered as leaders within their families as well. "I remember when I was 4 years old. "You're the leader, you're the one that should be setting an example," my mother said because I am the oldest of four" shared Zora. "My mother was a single mom. I had a lot of responsibility around the house. I had to take care of myself and get ready for school" said Anilec, "this set me up to be the leader I am today". "My mother passed, and I was the oldest of my sisters" said Zane, "I wanted to

make sure my sister had the support they needed". Hattie, number four of eight, sees herself as the middle child joking that her position in the family leads to her leadership role as a mediator. In elementary school, Malika was elected to a leadership position by her peers. "From that moment, I knew I was a leader and it followed me throughout being in high school when I was elected to be the captain of the volleyball team," said Malika. Holly reflected being a resident advisor for her college dorm when she was in undergraduate. Lucy and Cecelia both serving as soccer captains of their elementary teams and later in high school. For most reflecting on the past allowed them to identify themselves as leaders while others felt their leadership did not develop until later or still do not identify as leaders at all.

> In my own insecure ways, I'm still having a hard time recognizing that I'm a leader. One of the times when I realized that "Oh, shit, you are a leader," the president of the university pulled me in for guidance around a particularly challenging issue. It was the first time that I couldn't defer to somebody else's knowledge to try to figure out how best to solve it for the institution. (Jasmine)

Erma Davis expressed a similar moment of not seeing herself as a leader until graduate school but suggested, "I think that if I asked other people about it, they'd probably say, "Oh, you started things way earlier"." Denise connected her understanding of leadership to her background in education, "I think by virtue of being an educator in many ways, you develop leadership skills." Connecting those learned skills as a research lab manager in graduate school. June and Arya also shared identifying themselves as leaders in high school with Arya working for her dad. Carolyn shared she always considered leadership "this higher-level thing" reporting that she does not identify herself as a leader. She said, "there was a shift, especially after I finished my Ph.D.,

where I realized that maybe more of a mentor leader type, maybe aligning leadership with the title of mentor".

Ava suggested a hesitancy of leadership as well, "I'm probably unreluctantly leader because I don't want the spotlight". However, Ava went on to talk about how she wanted the power of leadership but wanted to remain behind the scenes. "Oh, shoot, there isn't anybody else", said Ava when sharing how she became chair of the program. How they arrived at their leadership positions came in many ways, but most found themselves reflecting on leadership early on in their lives. Best said by MG, "I've learned a lot about how people get into positions of power, which is interesting and not monolithic but still it has been really interesting to see from the inside out how things work and, historically, how some systems have operated".

"We effectively make change for everyone for the better. I hope we see more Black leadership in every domain. We just need White people to get out of the way. We got this, get out the way, we can do it. You all don't know what you're doing, we do", said Ava reflecting on the influx of Black mxn and Womxn into presidential roles within the organization. Zora reported she views the leadership as "pushing the profession forward" reflecting that "Black womxn have been the best, have more accolades, and the most experiences than anyone else but still have to show their worth". "I ran for a leadership position on a whim, I did not think I would get elected" said Holly, "then there I was, president! I was shocked but I was ready to go". Several participants used examples of Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, Oprah, Michelle Obama, or Venus and Serna Williams when reflecting on how Black womxn continue to lead yet are met with racist perceptions of what they "should" have done instead.

> That is the story of my life, as a Black womxn in leadership. Folks want you to step up and do, but they want to qualify that behavior, or they want to control how you step up

> and do. Instead of assigning positive qualifications, it's normally negative. They say, "you need to stop doing this, stop doing that, do more of this, or rather than a promotion of the things that you are doing well". The perception of what it means to get organized and get things done is just taken a different way. Then folks would judge you, "Oh, she's bossy." I would think, "I'm not bossy. I'm just trying to organize us." Even my teachers would call and say, "Well, Nia talks a lot or she can be bossy." Early on, I felt like I learned to check behaviors very early to try to make sure that I wasn't coming across too aggressive or too assertive or bossy. It's very weird how folks perceive you. I think that perception is huge when you talk about leadership. Whew, I could go on and on it's only, we only 15 minutes in. (Nia)

These feelings were shared across most of the interviews. MG reflected on her feelings about watching Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson,

> "It is interesting to watch but at the same time, brings up so much emotion. So much thought about how much we as Black women must endure doing what we are prepared and qualified to do. Always in a position, it seems to have to prove ourselves, to have to make a case for why we should be able to exist in certain spaces".

"There are times I am not sure I am Black enough for the Black folx" said Bella, "and I also am too Black for everyone else". Lucy reported, "there is no perfect way to lead. Everyone will have a problem with how your leadership moved forward". The double expectation of how Black womxn serve is a double-edged sword. Participants knew the stakes of serving in leadership roles, "Because we were Black, excellence is expected at all levels" Hattie said, ""You're supposed to be excellent and not only excellent, you're supposed to be excellent, excellent, excellent."

Cecelia reported, “others can show up messy, unprepared, and downright uninformed. Meanwhile, Black womxn better not. Better not what? It does not matter, you just better not”. “Being Black an excellent was talked about in my family” reported Raye, “and when I started to serve, that same language was used to define me in my career”. Malika shared what was at stake for her, “I understand that I don't have certain privileges being Black, being a womxn, and if I don't do something right. If I don't abide by the rules, then the consequences may be a lot more severe for me being a Black womxn”. High stakes of leadership came up often for June, who reported knowing her representation as a Black womxn was only one part of the work she was doing. “Being a Black woman sitting on the Board, sitting in a leadership role, using your voice, challenging the system, changing the system, it's something that's come to mind quite a bit” (June). An underlying fear of doing a good job because “leadership spills over into other areas of my professional life that I don't often anticipate” (Denise) and not being excellent can have lifelong implications. “It feels exhausting, but I think that Black womxn in leadership are needed, but at the same time it's tiring” (Carolyn). With all the exhaustion, hardships, and emotional labor participants came back to a unified decision that we need Black womxn in leadership. Ava while smiling said, “I think we're seeing in various domains in society Black leadership emerging, particularly Black female leadership. I just think that's a wonderful thing”.

For decades Black womxn are first identified as bossy when they are little girls. Research shows bossy is assigned to Black girls who show any kind of assertive or leadership nature (Tevis et al. 2020; Cox, 2020; Wooten, 2019). The data showed participants first identified themselves as leaders when they are girls as young as four years old. This is significate because LIDM research (Komives et al., 2006; Komives et al., 2009) has been focused on identifying leaders within college settings. Participant counternarratives suggest Black womxn identify as

leaders well before entering academia and may be well into their leadership identity by the time they enter college as freshmen. However, even with a well-developed leadership identity, Black womxn are still policed in how they lead. Often stereotypes such as bossy or aggressive are used when providing participants feedback. Moreover, Black womxn are elevated into leadership positions by their White colleagues but that elevation is held over their heads when they are viewed as unprofessional. Finally, the data shows Black womxn continue to diversify leadership spaces once they are in positions of power by appointing other marginalized scholars to serve on committees or run task forces. In the next theme, how Black womxn experience *Mentorship and Sponsorship* will be explored.

Mentorship and Sponsorship

Within the interview protocol (Appendix C) two questions were asked about the participant's experiences with mentorship and sponsorship. It was assumed that participants would talk about their experiences authentically. Exploring these questions directly gave participants opportunities to discuss the people who they felt influenced their careers or supported their journeys along the way. Sponsorship has emerged over time as an important factor in career growth for womxn of color (Means & Fields, 2022). The following definition was provided to participants:

> With sponsorship, a protégé is put forward by a sponsor for high-visibility, career-advancing opportunities. In academia, this may include being recommended for a leadership role, an award, or a high-profile speaking opportunity (Ayyala et. al., 2019).

Overall participants reported mixed results in recalling an experience of receiving sponsorship. Carolyn said, "This is fascinating to me because it's something that I've never come across or thought about. Now that I'm reading the definition, I see it. I don't see it for me". Carolyn's reflection was interested because of the idea that she sees sponsorship happening but has not

personally felt she experienced it herself. Zane, Lucy, Cecelia, and Selma also shared seeing sponsorship happen but not experiencing it themselves. “I have hope that I am doing enough for people to see it” said Selma, “but I am not going to get my hopes up they are”. Zane reflecting, “I’ve had to advocate for myself because other people are not advocating for me”. Cecelia reported, “I do the work to the best of my ability, which is a higher standard than others. I think that gets me more negativity then awards”. Ayra gave a different perspective, “For me, I don't participate in those things because I don't want to live my life like that. I don't want to live my life in the way of I'm doing all this for a reward”. While Ayra narrowed in on sponsorship as connected to rewards, Phyllis spoke of the fine line Black womxn walk in getting support but cautious of what she might have to give back for support. “I am cheering for everyone” said Holly, “I just not sure people are cheering for me”.

Nia reflected on the power of sponsorship, “This is more of a newer concept for me, but I believe in sponsorship. I do. I've seen it work. I've seen it work in places and spaces where you're not there. I've definitely been the byproduct”. Zora, June, Hattie, and MG all spoke of the power of experiencing sponsorship. “All the time and whenever I can,” said MG, “I do that for students. I do it for colleagues. I do it for friends. I do it in positions of leadership, such that when there's an opportunity to think about how we can help others. I usually am at the forefront of that conversation, if not the one who comes up with the idea”. In MG’s example, she has been the one advocating for and endorsing others. For Hattie, she explained how she felt when another person sponsored her,

> “I have. When that happens, it is a blessing because for sponsorship to happen, you're not in the room. Somebody's bringing up your name, somebody's referring you to somebody else talking about your accolades. You're not even present. You don't even know possibly

> who they are or what's going on, but somebody's advocating for you. Sometimes that comes with financial support and sometimes it comes with career support or communication capital or connections capital".

"I never thought people were sponsoring me or noticing my work" said Bella, "a friend told me she tells people about my work all of the time. It was a nice feeling to know there are people out there telling others how hard I work". Regardless of who is doing the sponsorship or receiving it, sponsorship has been a pathway to new opportunities and an endorsement of their skills. Not everyone could quickly speak to a sponsorship experience, but all the participants had shared experiences of both good and bad mentorship.

Ava spoke of the power of mentorship as an investment in the future of others and the profession, "I think it matters. I think we just must constantly remember what was done for us and do it for the generation coming after us because that's how we have changed. It matters that we are investing in those coming behind us". Reflecting on her experiences as a mentor, MG spoke of the importance of giving back as much as possible to make sure others are as successful as she has been. June however spoke often of titleless mentorship or informal mentorship she engaged in. "As I move through my career with people on my same level, I don't think I've always recognized that I'm a mentor. That I'm pulling people up as I move and make moves, but it's nice". Bella, Cecelia, Selma, and Holly all shared peer mentorship moments that made a difference for them. "In my master's program someone a year ahead of me was awesome" said Selma, "she made me feel like I could graduate and go on to bigger things". "In all of my leadership moments, good and bad" said Cecelia, "the relationships, the womxn serving with me, I will never forget what they did for me". Not all the participant's experiences with mentorship have been wonderful. Malika shared she had horrible mentorship experiences during her master's

program. “That was a big shock for me because I thought, when you're in grad school, you get to pick the people that you want to be in your lab, get to be in your program. "You purposely picked me, but you don't like me, and you don't intend on supporting me or making sure that I graduate." It was just a lot of cognitive dissonance there”. As Malika spoke confusion seemed to come up for her often. However, others felt that same confusion or frustration when people claimed to mentor them, but the participant did not feel supported.

"Do you need--" Not to say that I would necessarily ask but even the offer, never once did I get any nonprofessional advice or mentorship. Nothing. It was always, "Do this, do that, do this, do that, do this, do that," and that was it, reported Denise when talking about how mentorship does not always exist in leadership spaces. “She treated me like I worked for her” said Selma, “we were serving the organization together but I was tasked to be her assistant”. Furthermore, Erma Davis explained the downside to receiving “pretend” mentorship, “I feel like they have knowledge and experience to share that should be valued. I think that some people pretend, "I'm going to offer you my experience and my knowledge and assist you." It's a way to trap you in this weird relationship where they can say, "Oh, I did all that." Every time you're successful, "I did that, I helped with that." You're like, "Where were you? We had one conversation. What do you mean?". Leah sharing, “I did a lot of work putting together a book chapter and just like that I was replaced. I was told other people needed the experience more than I did”. “I am grateful nothing ties me to my advisor” said Zane, “we have no publications together, presentations, nothing. No one knows they were my advisor. I’m grateful they can’t profit off me”. Later Malika shared she moved programs during graduate school because of the mistreatment she was receiving. Jasmine shares what she’s learned about mentorship as she tries to discover her own mentorship identity. “My experiences receiving mentorship have taught me

that it is okay to take little parts of mentorship from different people and make my own" reported Jasmine, "that I need to be clear about if we're going to use the word mentor or call this a mentoring relationship. That there are some expectations, both ways about what that means and what I'm looking for and what I'm not looking for".

Mentorship and Sponsorship explored the informal and explicit ways Black womxn experienced professional and personal relationships. The data showed intentional sponsorship is slowly moving into academic spaces even though it has occupied executive business spaces for years (Hunter et al., 2020; McCrimmon, 2022; Ibarra, 2019). This meant not all the participants had experienced direct sponsorship, but most were committed to providing sponsorship once they understood the definition. All interviewees were able to directly speak to a mentorship opportunity while their experiences ranged from positive, negative, and informal. The Black womxn interviewed shared the power of mentorship in their lives. Their narratives explore how mentorship has changed for them over the years as participants moved through their careers. The data showed an overwhelming belief that mentorship was important to career development as well as the inclusion of Black womxn in leadership long term. Often mentorship between Black womxn feels like magic. The next theme brings together Black joy, Black womxn, and what happens when Black womxn lead together.

"It's Magic When We Get Together." #Mentorship

This section was formed from one of the participant's direct quotes. There is an emerging body of research focused on celebrating Black joy (Dunn & Love, 2020; Adams, 2022; Tichavakunda, 2021). Throughout the interviews, Black womxn expressed their excitement, gratitude, and overall joy in working with other Black womxn. While this theme contains remints of other themes, this section focuses solely on the emotions within the counternarratives shared during the interviews.

> Planning a conference is not easy, but I am enjoying it because her leadership has made it enjoyable. Working with my co-chair who's a womxn I have known. She's the first person I met in graduate school during my graduate school process. She's like a sister from another mister and still, we're working together, and we can do the thing. We're doing the work, but we're checking in with each other and we're supporting each other. That is leadership that makes it worth it to me. Any space that I can continue to work with Black womxn and other womxn of color, sign me up, sign me up because it's magic when we get together. That's the subtitle of your dissertation, "It's Magic When We Get Together". #mentorship. (Denise)

The excitement to occupy spaces with other Black womxn was shared within the first theme, however this theme focuses on spaces where Black womxn are the majority. In her leadership role, Zora's goal was to "seat as many women of color into some type of leadership position". Reported she was frustrated with the lack of diversity. Zora reporting, "that was really my goal, to position us in leadership, for those that want it. I wanted to open that door". The love and trust of fellow Black womxn seem to be the driving force that creates more for Black womxn but also everyone else. "Oh, I love Black womxn. Many Black womxn are responsible for me being here. I own that. I am grateful for them, and I try to give back to Black womxn coming behind me," said Ava when talking about her experiences with leadership and mentorship. "I have had the privilege of helping other Black womxn be successful" said Cecelia, when reflecting on mentoring others. Holly, Zane, and Selma shared experiences with writing or leadership retreats with only Black womxn present. "It felt freeing" said Selma, "I didn't have to be on. I didn't even have to wear my hair". Laughing Holly shared, "when you're with other Black womxn who know what it's like to be Black, you do not have to say anything, they just

know". June explained a feeling of vulnerability when working with Black womxn as a boss, "Especially with Black womxn to white womxn, I can talk to Black womxn about the things that bother me about you". Erma Davis appreciated the more personal relationships with Black womxn, "Once we have more personal conversations, realizing the impact that I have for them. For me, I was like, "Really, I didn't think I was doing that." I feel like that's very heartening to hear. Those things have been beautiful". Jasmine reported, "I've only known her a few years. However, she's made me feel like I can always be myself, I can always tell her everything, and she never judges me". Jasmine speaking of a colleague turned friend, "sometimes I think she might judge me but most times she's not even impressed". Laughing Jasmine reported, "she genuinely wants what is best for me and has my back". Hattie offers mentorship to younger Black girls, "Volunteering as a mentor for 15 years. I'm mentoring young Black girls through an education program. They talk, and they ask questions, and they say, "Have you done this? What about this?" They ask you because they know that you're open or they see you. They start to see who you are".

Ava shared how Black womxn have always looked out for her, "She's looked out for me since I was a graduate student. My thing is when you look out for people when they're not famous and they're nobodies, I rock with you. I was nobody and she's looking out for me. I know people did that for me". Hattie reflected on her mentoring relationship with a Black womxn who "is a Fulbright, published, humble as can be, and a supergiant. When we get together, we always are talking about what we're learning from one another". "I randomly reach out to her" laughed Cecelia, "and now I can't imagine my career or life without her around". "We met while serving at the same time" shared Selma, "today I view her as my sister, her husband as my brother, and I'm an aunt to their son". Creating a scholarship at her alma mater, MG, had a requirement that

the Black students meet with her once a month in addition to the financial support the scholarship provides. When asked why she would go “above and beyond”, MG said, “In thinking about who I am as a Black womxn, I feel like it's part of our responsibility because we know the challenges that we face in a lot of spaces. We know how difficult it can be for us”. For students finding Black faculty who are excited to mentor and support, you go a very long way. Malika reflected on her experience as an undergraduate, “I was able to find a great mentor, who was very pro-Black, and who really embraced all of the research that I wanted to do, which was focusing on Black populations”. Malika with a smile on her face when talking about how her mentor set her on the path to do the research and clinical work she does today. “This was the first time I believed I could be in academia because she believed in me, and she didn’t know me from Adam”, said Phyllis when meeting her new Dean for the first time. Phyllis described how this new Dean, a Black Womxn, invited her to collaborate on a research project. “Hey, you say you want to be involved in this?" she said, "you said you need to be involved in this. You know what? I'm going to support your efforts to be involved in this” (Phyllis).

The shared bond created by identifying as a Black womxn was present throughout the interviews. For the researcher, this was a reminder of why this dissertation is important. “The work you are doing is really important, we need more people to know about what Black womxn are going through”, said Arya, “we are suffering in silence”. Ava shared, “when I saw your call for participants, I knew I had to sign up. We need more Black womxn directing the conversation”. “I just finished my dissertation a few weeks ago” shared Nia, “I was honored to support you finishing your data collection. Where would Black womxn be without supporting each other”. “I don’t know if you remember me?” said Lucy, “but you’re the reason I’m involved in my division now. You encouraged me and put me on the path I am on now”. Carolyn sharing,

“I am committed to your success. We must make sure we stick together. Let me know what you need, and we will make sure you get it”. Several participants reflected how they had never shared these stories with anyone else.

> "I've been working with this organization for about 10 years. They were asking me to step down from my position within the organization. I thought, "Huh?" Now, I'm not going to lie. It hurt me to my core. I cried after this experience. I should say, my mom died in October 2019 unexpectedly and my sister died six weeks later in November 2019 unexpectedly. I was at a professional meeting when my mom died and a Black womxn comforted me. Because two White womxn had concerns about my professional demeanor, I was asked to step down from a volunteer position by another Black womxn who had just interacted with me intimately. When I look at the lens of leadership and my professional experiences as a Black womxn, it's disenchantment and detachment. I’ve never told anyone that before”. (Phyllis)

The shared understanding and knowing that these spaces are not often made for us opened the conversation past interviewee or participant. Sharing tears laughter, uncertainty, and hope for the future were created and shared throughout this study. “You really have to be doing it for the right reason if you're going to sustain,” said Jasmine, “but that there are these secret Black community spaces for Black womxn to tap into to re-energize”. While these interviews evoked many different emotions, a secret Black womxn community space was created by this study. Leah offered advice,

> “Find your village, find your people, your other Black female colleagues that have more experience that can help lift you up through some of these things. Even help you to avoid

some of the pitfalls or mistakes that they may have made and are willing to share with you".

Finally, ending with Denise, she sums this study up best. Black womxn are a work in progress but regardless of what is going on, they continue to work for everyone's benefit.

> "I don't know it all. What I try to do is just listen and affirm where it's appropriate and offer alternative perspectives where it is appropriate. That is paying it forward. More than even the leading organizations that are paying it forward because that kind of stuff can have an impact on the things that they do with their lives if those are the questions that we're having, the conversations that we're having. Yes, we're the blueprint you should make that the title of your dissertation, *Black Womxn are the Blueprint*. You're welcome" (Denise).

The theme *"It's Magic When We Get Together." #Mentorship*, identified by participant Denise, highlighted the power of Black womxn serving in leadership roles and working in the community with other Black womxn. Emerging research supported the data of Black womxn creating pathways and support for other Black womxn and womxn of color within this study (Fries-Britt & Kelly, 2022; Williams & Johnson, 2019). Interviewees shared how other Black womxn were responsible for their being where they are today. This finding is important because while the *Mentorship and Sponsorship* and *Blackness* themes showed conflict can occur between Black womxn data confirms these relationships are often complicated. Moreover, within this theme Black womxn expressed a long-term commitment to mentorship of other Black womxn. Spaces that contain mostly Black womxn were shown to energize, support, and encourage Black womxn in their current leadership roles and in future roles. *"It's Magic When We Get Together."*

#Mentorship theme gave space for participants to express their emotions. It unapologetically highlights Black joy, triumph, and success which is the most important counternarrative.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter the results of the coding process and themes that were discovered were shared. The emergent themes included Black Womxn, Academia, They Always Call Me Bossy, Mentorship and Sponsorship, and "It's Magic When We Get Together." #Mentorship. These themes were created using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2010) and participant lived experiences shared through direct quotes. Quotations from participant interviews illustrate the emerging model and corresponding categories and themes. This chapter set the foundation for Chapter V which will include the summary of findings, a working theory of Black womxn in leadership, discussion, implications for the counseling profession, suggestions for future research, and conclusion.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter, the findings from this constructivist grounded theory study which sought to explore the lived experiences of Black womxn in leadership positions were presented. Quotes from the participants interviews and the resulting emerging themes including subcategories were included which are the foundation for the emerging Black Womxn Leadership Model. In this chapter, a summary of the finds that were delineated in Chapter IV and a discussion and interpretation of the findings in relation to existing literature will be included. Following this interpretation of the findings, discussion of implications for the counseling profession. Lastly, there will be an examination of the strengths and limitations of the study and offer recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black womxn with academic positions who hold leadership positions within national academic professional organizations. Over several months, thirty-six hours of interview across twenty-two participants, a constructivist grounded theory model emerged with six categories and thirty-one supporting themes. The thick and rich quotes and descriptions (Creswell, 2009) in combination with the theoretical framework the Black Womxn Leadership theoretical model was constructed. This emerging model's six categories were: (a) Black womxn, (b) Academia, (c) They Always Call Me Bossy, (d) Mentorship & Sponsorship, and (e) "It's Magic When We Get Together." #Mentorship. Throughout the interviews, participants engaged in deep reflection, meaning making, counternarratives, and shared their knowledge. The theoretical model of the participants' experiences of Black womxn academic positions who hold leadership positions within national

academic professional organizations is illustrated in Figure 6, as presented in the following section, Black Womxn Leadership Theory Model.

Black Womxn Leadership Model

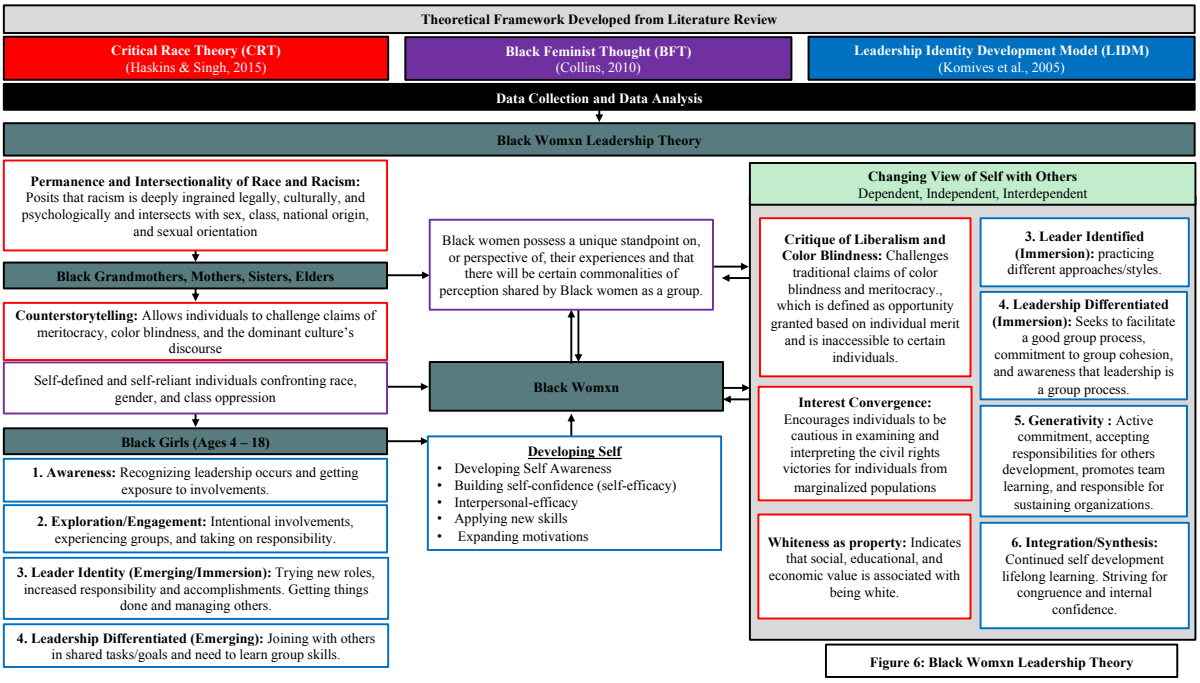

Figure 6: Black Womxn Leadership Theory

Using the theoretical framework from the literature review. Critical Race Theory (CRT; Haskins & Singh, 2015), Black Feminist Thought (BFT; Collins, 2000), and Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM; Komives et al., 2006; 2009) were used throughout this constructivist grounded theory dissertation in the creation of an emerging Black Womxn Leadership Model. From participants' shared experiences analysis of their interviews found how Black womxn come to see themselves within their leadership roles. Moreover, Black womxn identifying as leaders comes from knowledge passed down from earlier generations. Black womxn today learned of leadership, leadership skills, and understanding of overall leadership from their mothers, grandmothers, or other matriarchal elders (Waldron, 2019).

Black matriarchal elders shared their lived experiences with Black girls within and around their families by mechanisms of mentorship (Martinez-Cola, 2020), counterstorytelling (Haskins

& Singh, 2015), and family history. The passing on of leadership knowledge, skills, and understanding of how Black womxn lead came from the Black womxn who came before them. The passing of knowledge is ingrained within BFT (Collins, 2010) and CRT's tenant permanent and intersectionality of race and racism (Haskins & Singh, 2015). This tenant posits that "racism is deeply ingrained legally, culturally, and psychologically intersecting with sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation" (Haskins & Singh, 2015, pg. 289). Matriarchal elder's counternarratives allows individuals to challenge claims of mediocracy, colorblindness (Yi et al., 2022), and the dominant cultural discourse. This is closely connected to BFT's tenant of self-identified and self-reliant individuals confronting race, gender, and class oppression by occupying spaces not meant for them (Collins, 2000). These leadership ideas and skills come from the stories of Black matriarchs becoming the memories of the participants as young as four years old. In this area of child development, Black girls ages four to eighteen may already have some knowledge of their leadership identity development and how they hope or how they might lead in the future. For many participants, when asked to reflect their earliest leadership memories, this age range was when they first identified themselves as leaders.

These experiences were shared in the theme *Black Womxn* from interviewees Zane, Lucy, Cecelia, Selma, and others. Hattie and Zora sharing their experiences of being responsible for their siblings or Malika serving president of her elementary class. Being tasked to take care of herself early on, Anilec shared, "this set me up to be the leader I am today". For others a change in their family dynamics led to their leadership positionality within their family. "My mother passed, and I was the oldest of my sisters" said Zane, "I wanted to make sure my sister had the support they needed". The responsibility of family seemed to fall on the shoulders of the Black womxn within the family. That responsibility in many ways placed on Black girls by their

mothers or grandmothers, encouraging them to set good examples for the younger kids in their families. In the theme, *Mentorship and Sponsorship* and *Its Magic When We Get Together, #Mentorship* participants consistently shared how they were mentored and how they offer mentorship to others. “Many Black womxn are responsible for me being here. I own that,” said Ava while sharing her experiences receiving mentorship. Leah later offering advice to upcoming Black womxn in leadership, “your Black female colleagues that have more experience that can help lift you up through some of these things”. For Jasmine she identified the shared passing on of knowledge as, “these secret Black community spaces for Black womxn to tap into to re-energize”. Systems of permanence and the intersectionality of race and racism encouraged Black matriarchs to pass knowledge to those around them through counterstorytelling. For participants the awareness they were being raised to become leaders was not realized until later. Reflecting on their childhoods they can identify when they began their leadership identity (Komives et al., 2006; 2009).

The four LIDM (Komives et al., 2006; 2009) themes participants pinpointed when recalling their earliest leadership memories during the interviews were Awareness, Exploration/Engagement, Leadership Identity (Emerging/Immersion), and Leadership Differentiated (Emerging). In the Awareness stage, participants were recognizing leadership occurs and were getting exposure to leadership through involvements within their elementary schools, afterschool programs, or held leadership positions within their families. Exploration/Engagement is an intentional involvement, experiencing groups, and taking on responsibility. This leadership skill was shown through several participants being responsible for or showing their younger siblings how to conduct themselves by setting a good example. Interviewees Zora and Hattie shared how they still provide mentorship and give advice to their

younger sisters. Phyllis and Bella reporting they have become the matriarchs of their family. Leader Identity (Emerging/Immersion) is trying new roles, increasing responsibility and accomplishments, getting things done, and managing others. These skills were seen throughout the emerging themes highlighting how Black womxn not only fulfill leadership roles but can lead others in groups to finish tasks and complete responsibilities. Malika, Lucy, and Cecelia sharing their experiences as leaders in their elementary school then later becoming captains of their sports teams in high school. Finally, Leadership Differentiated (Emerging) is joining with others in shared tasks/goals and the need to learn group skills. The data showed that these four areas of leadership identity development end up merging across different lived experiences of the participants' lives in their earliest memories. While interviewees were participating in leadership roles and conducting leadership tasks, many did not realize they were leaders in their earlier lives until asked to recall their first leadership memories. Emra Davis and Carolyn sharing they do not identify with the official title of leadership but acknowledging they hold high level leadership roles. This section is especially significant because it expands current research on LIDM outside of college student leadership and suggests Black girls identify as leaders' years before attending university (Komives et al., 2006; 2009). Moreover, this could mean race and gender are factors within leadership identity which is an area understudied.

The major difference between Black girls ages 4 to 18 and Black womxn in the development of self or Developing Self. LIDM describes the developing self as developing self-awareness, building self-confidence (self-efficacy), interpersonal efficacy, applying new skills, and expanding motivations (Komives et al., 2006; 2009). The deployment of self and self-efficacy is connected to the movement out of childhood/adolescence into adulthood (Bandura, 1999; Chambers, 2016). Moreover, as participants grew in age an awareness of self and self-

determination is connected to the movement out of childhood development into adulthood (Wehmeyer & Shogren, 2017). Connecting to BFT, one aspect that is important in the cultivation of Black womxn leadership and understanding within the world is participant awareness of their gender and race (Moorosi et al., 2018). This awareness includes the knowledge of their gender and race as important to how people may treat or perceive them connecting BFT to CRT (Dixson, 2018; Collins, 2000; Haskins & Singh, 2015). Often participants reflected that their identity as Black womxn impacted their professional and personal relationships. Denise, Holly, MG, Nia, and others contributing identifying as Black womxn to how their professional and professional relationships develop. Hattie sharing, "I'm Dr. Hattie." People's ears perk up because they're thinking, "It's a Black person here." There's an awareness. There's always a clear awareness. It's a black image, obviously, very Black and "I'm Dr. Hattie.". A tenant of BFT suggests Black women possess a unique standpoint on, or perspective of, their experiences and that there will be certain commonalities of perception shared by Black womxn as a group (Collins, 2000). Nia reporting, she felt more vulnerability with a Black womxn as her boss because of shared understanding. Holly, Zane, and Selma describing Black womxn leadership and writing treats as "freeing". Erma Davis sharing the special bond created with Black womxn when conversations become more personal. These perspectives are shared through life experiences, stories, and family history from Black Matriarchal elders (Waldron, 2019). Over time, these family stories are shared from Black womxn to Black womxn during their shared experiences of leadership as advice, mentorship (Martinez-Cola, 2020), and fellowship. For this study the unique nature and importance of understanding Black womxn group dynamics do involve a different level of developmental understanding and growth (Waldron, 2019), therefore

while it is not impossible for Black girls to have these experiences it seems more likely in Black womxn with greater identity awareness.

When trying to understand how Black womxn lead from their developmental perspective there was an emergence of CRT within the creation of Black Womxn's leadership identity development (Amiot et al., 2018). In this section, there was a changing view of Self with Others which is influenced by dependent, independent, and interdependent experiences during the participant's professional and personal roles. Under the umbrella of Self with Others, CRT and LIDM from the theoretical framework influence the leadership of Black womxn. CRT includes Critique of Liberalism and Color Blindness, Interest Convergence, and Whiteness as Property (Haskins & Singh, 2015). LIDM includes Leader Identified (Immersion), Leadership Differentiated (Immersion), Generativity, and Integration/Synthesis (Komives et al., 2006; 2009). CRT is the understanding that race is included in everything we do, think, or believe (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1998, 2021). Therefore, as Black womxn move through the world, their experiences are directly impacted by their race and gender (Lewis et al., 2017) influencing how they lead.

Understanding the three tenants of CRT within Self with Others, directly influences how participants view themselves in context to their surroundings, peers, and how much they believe their leadership and identity might impact others. Critique of Liberalism and Color Blindness, CRT tenant, challenges traditional claims of color blindness and meritocracy, which is defined as an opportunity granted based on individual merit and is inaccessible to certain individuals (Haskins & Singh, 2015). Throughout the interviews, participants shared their experiences of being the only one as well as the significance of making sure they were not the only ones in the future. Lucy reporting, “I was the only Black student in my department at one point. It felt

isolating and I did not want to feel isolated". Interviewees shared their goals of including other Black womxn in leadership decisions and appointments to diversify their organizations. Zora, Ava, Anilec, and MG sharing how they were intentionally diversifying spaces within their organizations via appointments, tasks forces, or diversity scholarships. Furthermore, when participants made a goal to diversify their organizations, they appointed and mentored womxn of color as well. Highlighted throughout "*It's Magic When We Get Together." #Mentorship* the answered call for participants Lucy, Nia, Carolyn, Jasmine, and others who interviewed for this study because "We need more Black womxn directing the conversation". Interest Convergence encourages individuals to be cautious in examining and interpreting the civil rights victories for individuals from marginalized populations (Haskins & Singh, 2015).

Often participants reported the high bar of responsibility to do a good job in their leadership position as not to close doors for Black womxn who would come next. This responsibility seemed to create great stress in the participants. They worried about leaving a bad impression or hurting the chances of future Black womxn leaders. In the theme, *They Call Me Bossy,* Erma Davis and Malika sharing fears they had of not doing a good job. "Others can show up messy, unprepared, and downright uninformed" reporting Cecelia, "meanwhile, Black womxn better not. Better not what? It does not matter, you just better not". This responsibility led interviewees to appoint Black womxn to positions and mentor them to ensure their success. Finally, Whiteness as property indicates that social, educational, and economic value is associated with being White (Haskins & Singh, 2015). Black womxn continuously shared how White standards of leadership or professionalism were often used as measurements for their success. Interviewees reporting, "two White womxn had concerns about my professional demeanor" (Phyllis), "the White mxn in my division did not have to go through a formal job

search (Jasmine), or “my supervisor was white, they said identifying with my clients was unprofessional” (Anelic). Moreover, this was reinforced by White colleagues and students upholding stereotypes and colorblind ideology (Waldron, 2019; Yi et al., 2022). Zora sharing the mental exhaustion of “showing up and playing the game” when occupying White leadership spaces. The combination of these three CRT tenants greatly influences how Black womxn experience leadership within their organization and can unintentionally transform how Black womxn make personal and professional decisions.

The other influence within Self with Others is LIDM tenants Leader Identified (Immersion), Leadership Differentiated (Immersion), Generativity, and Integration/Synthesis (Komives et al., 2006; 2009). Leader Identified (Immersion) is practicing different approaches and styles. Interviewees shared their experiences of serving in different roles and working within different levels of leadership within their organizations. When reflecting on their leadership decisions, participants reported being flexible in their messaging and collaboration with others on the board or risk stereotypes being used against them. This was best displayed in themes *Black Womxn* and *Academia* when Leah and others shared the frustration of being labeled the angry Black womxn. “Let me see how she responds under pressure, does she fit into that category of an angry Black womxn that just got here by luck to fit a diversity quota, or does she belong in this space?” reported Leah. Raye, Holly, and Carolyn sharing concerns of how others might perceive them. “It's very weird how folks perceive you. I think that perception is huge when you talk about leadership” explained Nia. This led participants to realize that adapting their leadership to the situation in front of them allowed them to better accomplish their leadership goals. “I feel I am more effective if I focus on being successful in my current roles. Then, I feel I can speak out more without others doubting my intentions” said Raye. Leadership Differentiated

(Immersion) seeks to facilitate a good group process, commitment to group cohesion, and awareness that leadership is a group process. As shown in the last LIDM tenant, group cohesion and collaboration were important to the participants as they processed their experiences. There was an overwhelming sense that working as a group is what was best for the organization and the future of the profession. “I was looking for ways to serve the profession” reported Phyllis. Bella sharing, “I joined leadership in the hopes of furthering and supporting the profession”. Zora reflecting on “pushing the profession forward” when serving in leadership roles. When Black womxn spoke of conflict the stories ended with how they overcame a difficult situation to find a solution. Often these solutions included compromises but the overall purpose of completing the goal was accomplished.

Generativity is an active commitment, accepting responsibility for others' development, promoting team learning, and are responsible for sustaining organizations. Participants shared a commitment to the overall profession, wanting Black womxn in positions of power, and to serve in leadership roles. Themes *Mentorship and Sponsorship* and *"It's Magic When We Get Together." #Mentorship* reflected this the most. Black womxn serving in roles was important but also wanting to see them be successful in that servitude. Interviewees sharing the important of mentoring others, creating pathways for success, and supporting others with the success. “We effectively make change for everyone for the better. I hope we see more Black leadership in every domain” said Ava, “we just need White people to get out of the way”. As highlighted in the theme *Black Womxn,* Erika offering mentorship and coaching to a White womxn colleague who was having a hard time. “You create the space for everyone, and then you get people in it” reported Erma Davis. Moreover, interviewees shared the importance of mentorship and sponsorship of others while diversifying the future of leadership. Integration/Synthesis is

continued self-development, lifelong learning, and striving for congruence and internal confidence. Some participants were unapologetic and focused on how to get the job done regardless of who they interacted with during that process. Zora reporting, she felt her negative leadership experiences were due to racism within the organization. Phyllis, Malika, Cecelia, Jasmine, and Zane openly discussing how they experience racism every day due to their hair styles, professional attire, or how they lead. However, even in sharing bad experiences, participants shared how grateful they were. Denise, Erica, Selma reflecting the honor of being the top within the professions and holding top leadership roles within national organizations. There was a sense of confidence in the participants and belief in their skills to lead. Interviewees did not openly share their fears and insecurities around serving in leadership. Instead, when participants seemed unsure, they recalled their training, the group of other Black womxn around them, and a self-reminder that they would learn to do the best job possible.

Overall, the section on a changing view of Self with Others serves as the changing contextual part of the model. Black womxn's lives and experiences are intertwining, moving, and merging amongst each other. This requires Black womxn to navigate their organization and changes happening within the organization. How participants reacted to the world around them changed as their personal and professional circumstances changed. Depending on the dependent, independent, and interdependent factors of the organization (Komives et al., 2006; 2009), Black womxn strategically place or change goals. Furthermore, what might be occurring in their personal lives assisted Black womxn in making decisions to lean in or opt out (Eddy & Ward, 2015). This flexibility allows less marginalized identities to become successful within the organization as she elevates others into positions of power. As shown by BFT (Collins, 2000, 2005), the shared sense of responsibility and community for long-term growth and development

reemerges. Throughout generations, Black womxn have echoed “no one is free until we are all free” while working to make sure that happens.

The creation of the Black Womxn Leadership Model was constructed from Black womxn’s lived experiences in their academic roles and their service to national professional academic organizations using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Through participant interviews, it was discovered that Black womxn reflected their first leadership experiences as early as four years old. Realizing Black girls were engaging at the beginning of their LIDM very young restructured the use of the theoretical framework. While LIDM was an important part of understanding how Black womxn identify themselves as leaders, the model falls short. LIDM (Komives et al., 2006; 2009) focused on the lived experiences of undergraduate students at the beginning of their academic careers. A major critique of this approach is the assumption that students are not leaders until they are within academic spaces. The lack of cultural diversity in the participant recruitment and research findings leaves room for culture to impact how participants view leadership. Overall, the model's tenants fit with the lived experiences shared by Black womxn within this study. However, the participant's first leadership experiences occurred before arriving on a university campus. Therefore, Black girls are likely experiencing the first tenants of leadership identity several years before LIDM suggests. These finding challenges what is known about LIDM by inviting researchers to consider what leadership identity development looks like during childhood. The introduction of matriarchal counternarratives from Black mothers, grandmothers, and sisters as carriers of historical knowledge merged BFT and CRT to LIDM creating the Black Womxn Leadership Model. As Black womxn serve in their leadership roles and experience the world around them, outside influences, their gender, and their race impact their decisions. The intersection of their gender

and race creates environmental factors that require flexibility in their leadership decisions. Ultimately swaying their long-term feelings, beliefs, and dedication to how they decide to serve in the future. Finally, the passing on of knowledge from Black womxn to Black womxn creates dedication to Black relationships leading to mentorship, sponsorship, and commitment to giving back to the community.

Research Implications

Implications for the Counseling Profession

This constructivist grounded theory dissertation was the first to explore the leadership experiences of Black womxn within national professional academic organizations. Negative images of Black womxn such as welfare queens, baby mamas, and angry Black womxn, exist twice as much as positive imagery reducing Black womxn's humanity (Essence Magazine, 2013; Waldron, 2019). Nevertheless, Black womxn are the most educated in the United States earning 65.6% of the degrees obtained by marginalized populations (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010; Shavers & Moore, 2019). This dissertation seeks to disrupt the misconceptions that exist by lifting the voice of Black womxn. Additionally, this study is one of the first to examine the connection between Black Feminist Thought (BFT), Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM), and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Furthermore, the voices of participants update and expand current literature on BFT while challenging the development phase of LIDM. Therefore, the findings from this study have numerous important implications for theory, practice, and counselor education and supervision.

Implications for Counseling Theory and Practice

In 2015 the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough) ask counselors to “apply knowledge of

multicultural and social justice theories" (p. 8). MSJCC advocated for counselors to adopt critical consciousness when examining the counseling theories and treatments they were using in their clinical work. Counseling theories can be used in multiculturally competent ways, these theories are often focused on centering individuals when clients are experiencing systemic oppression and racism (Singh et al., 2020). This study provided a concrete understanding of how the tenants of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Feminist Thought (BFT) help create a foundational understanding of Black womxn (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; S. B. García & Guerra, 2004; Yosso, 2005). Challenging traditional counseling theories which fail to center clients and their cultural backgrounds to move towards incorporating theories with multicultural tenants ingrained (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014). Black womxn within this study experienced stereotypes, gendered and racial discrimination, and macroaggressions from their colleagues, students, and members within their organizations (Sue et al., 2019; Lewis et al., 2017). Research provides different mechanisms to address these aggressions (Sue et al., 2019) however counselors must adopt these practices within their work. Counselors' awareness of CRT and racial identity models (Black Identity (Cross, 2001), Asian American (Kim, 2001), White Identity (Helms, 1995), and Biracial Identity (Poston, 1990)) are well-positioned to offer culturally appropriate counseling. As a profession, counseling should incorporate cultural identity development and CRT throughout the ethical practices, cultural practices, and within the profession. Overall, without providing a foundational understanding of how cultural tenants can be intertwined with counseling theories the profession does a disservice to counselors and their clients.

During this study, Black womxn shared how they were working to diversify leadership spaces with other Black womxn and future leaders with marginalized identities. This work

cannot fall on the shoulders of Black womxn. National organizations must go further than diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) statements by creating policies that support, lift, and encourage Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) to hold leadership positions. It is not enough to appoint and elect BIPOC leaders there must be a conscious effort to decolonize the (Singh et al., 2020) organization. Moreover, current, and previous organizational leaders must create space for Black womxn to lead without pressure or advice that upholds whiteness as property (Haskins & Singh, 2015). Organizations can acknowledge their part in the racial silencing of Black Womxn and Black communities. When organizations intentionally lead in this way, those beliefs trickle down throughout the organizational leadership and the membership. To overcome systems of oppression and racism, this work first must start at the highest levels of leadership.

Implication for Counselor Education and Supervision (CES)

The theoretical framework for this study used Haskins and Singh's (2015) article, "*Critical race theory and counselor education pedagogy: Creating equitable training*". This influential article advocated for the CES profession and programs to implement CRT-informed pedagogical and curricular strategies. Programs should evaluate how Whiteness perpetuates colorblindness silencing students of color. "Evaluating the use and impact of pedagogical strategies is also a critical component of integrating CRT into the classroom and the faculty-student relationship" (Haskins & Singh, 2015, pg. 297). Black womxn have unique doctoral education experiences because of their experiences with racism and sexism (Shavers & Moore, 2019). Without strong community and relationships within CES programs Black womxn may feel isolated and lack a sense of belonging. When recruiting Black womxn into CES programs, considerations of how they will be supported, how programs can connect Black womxn to the

university community, and identifying mechanisms of mentorship (Martinez-Cola, 2020) aid in their long-term success. Black womxn may struggle to identify BIPOC role models and mentors to help them navigate their programs making it challenging to graduate (Shavers & Moore, 2019). Black womxn in this study shared strong leadership identities well before attending university. CES programs and faculty have opportunities to support Black womxn leadership development by understanding they come to programs with historical knowledge that led them to where they are today. According to Goodrich and Shin (2013), "counselor educators need to consider the degree to which cultural factors of a student from a culturally marginalized group affect the intervention process" (p. 43). Counselor educators should have a strong awareness of their own cultural identities and the implications of multicultural biases when working with Black womxn. Before labeling Black womxn with harmful stereotypes counselor educators should consider if "deficient behaviors that are being observed in a predominantly White dominant culture counseling program are actually reactions to an unwelcoming or hostile environment" (Goodrich & Shin, 2013, p. 45). Counselor Education and CES programs should first ask themselves if they are contributing to Black womxn's mental exhaustion by upholding a hostile or unsupportive environment? Incorporating multiculturally appropriate and tangible solutions that provide action that enables change.

> "Doctoral programs in counselor education address professional roles in five doctoral core areas: counseling, supervision, teaching, research and scholarship, and leadership and advocacy. These five doctoral core areas represent the foundational knowledge required of doctoral graduates in counselor education. Therefore, counselor education programs must document where each of the lettered standards listed below is covered in the curriculum". (Section 6: Counselor Education and Supervision, CACREP, 2016)

This dissertation sought to understand the experiences of Black womxn within leadership positions. A major finding included Black womxn identifying themselves as leaders as early as four years old. These results challenge CES to consider what previous leadership experiences students might have before enrolling. Based on this study's findings CES programs should explore if a student's prior leadership experiences brought them to the program. Rather than assuming students are blank slates that ultimately need leadership development. Moreover, the use of the Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM; Komives et al., 2006; 2009) provided opportunities to explore how leadership identity is impacted over time by Black womxn leadership experiences. Counseling research has lightly explored leadership identity (DeDiego et al., 2022, Gibson et al., 2018; Hays et al., 2021), however, these studies often leave out considerations for gender and race in the development of their research study and their findings. This study shows how leadership identity looks different for Black womxn further challenging CES to explore and implement a foundational leadership theory. This dissertation contributes to CES literature by exploring how LIDM might look within the profession. Currently, CES does not have a foundational leadership theory even though leadership is a counseling standard for accreditation. It is important to note that LIDM may not be a perfect fit for CES as it comes from student affairs and is focused on undergraduate students developing their leadership identities. For counseling students or CES programs, leadership identity may look differently for master's and doctoral level students. However, this study provides examples of how LIDM might look with participants with higher levels of academic education. Moreover, CES has a large gap in leadership research and research with Black womxn allowing this dissertation to fulfill those areas. Counselor education and supervision replies on counseling theories, supervision models, ethical codes, and multicultural social justice competencies yet is missing a leadership model

within its teaching, supervision, and counseling approaches. Moreover, CES must address its lack of culturally appropriate research approaches and frameworks. The use of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) has a permeant fixture in counselor education research (Clark et al., 2020; Hays & Wood, 2011; Hays et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2021). It is a misconception that using grounded theory in a research study uses a critical framework. The use of critical theoretical frameworks like constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006, 2014) would center multicultural understanding as the dominant narrative requiring counseling research to go further than listing lack of culture as a byline in the limitations section.

Limitations

Black womxn within this study share double marginalized identities intersecting with race and gender. However, Black womxn within this study all held doctoral degrees and positions within university settings. Their academic positions comprised academic deans, department heads, program directors, tenure track faculty, and provosts. The interviewees in this study shared their experiences of marginalization and discrimination within their academic and leadership settings. These harmful experiences are occurring in privileged spaces among the highest educated scholars in leadership. Participants within this study have access to spaces and leadership power not readily accessible by others without this status. While there was previous research used to create and implement the theoretical framework (CRT, BFT, LIDM) detailed in Chapter II, research on Black womxn in academic professional national organizations is missing. Moreover, no studies used the theoretical framework utilized by this study. Using a rigorous screening process indicated in Chapter III, efforts were made to recruit participants who possessed the requisite lived experiences to answer the research questions. This study was a qualitative constructivist grounded theory exploration of Black womxn leadership experiences

that centered on an interactive and collaborative data collection process. Participants were asked to complete interviews lasting 60 to 190 minutes ultimately providing extensive amounts of information. While member checking was offered to participants, not all interviewees responded to requests. Finally, it is important to note the model created by this study needs validation, but no measures exist. Future research can assist in replicating, extending, or challenging the findings from this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Foundational knowledge regarding Black Womxn experiences in leadership was provided throughout this study. The Black Womxn Leadership Model laid the grounded work for future research on leadership with Black womxn. This study is the first step toward exploring the dynamic factors and processes that impact Black womxn serving in leadership roles. More research is needed to create a mature model of Black womxn leadership. Research focused on Black womxn needs to expand and be explored. Updated examples of Black Feminist Thought (BFT) as it relates to generational differences could impact our understanding of Black womxn today. Going beyond Black womxn experiencing leadership, research can explore how organizations experience Black womxn as leaders within these organizations. Moreover, Leadership Identity Development Model research should investigate the potential implications of youth identifying as leaders much earlier than their college years. Research exists centering the tenants and advocating for the implementation of Critical Race Theory into counseling settings, training, and pedagogy (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014; Haskins & Singh, 2015; Singh et al., 2020). However, research is needed that explores CES programs that have implemented these tenants within the teaching practices. Furthermore, research exploring the use of CRT tenants within national academic professional organizations can inform the future of organizational policy and

practice. Future studies can replicate and extend the findings of this dissertation as this study's findings show the need for a deeper understanding of gender and race in leadership. Furthermore, exploration of other marginalized identities' experiences with leadership is needed. Additional research can focus on the implications of leadership theory and Black womxn informing counseling theory, supervision, counseling interventions, and training practices within counselor education. Future studies should sample a variety of cultural and other marginalized identities. Finally, more counseling research centering critical research methodology is needed. explore

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the summary of findings for this dissertation was explored. Black Womxn Leadership Model was discussed concerning the study's themes using participant quotes. This chapter then detailed the implications of this study for the counseling profession including recommendations for counseling practice, counselor education, training, and supervision. Lastly, this chapter suggested future research which could inform counseling research, leadership identity, and understanding of Black Womxn identity.

In conclusion, this constructivist grounded theory dissertation is a rigorous, in-depth examination of the lived experiences of Black womxn serving in leadership positions within national academic professional organizations. The study resulted in an emergent theory of Black Womxn Leadership depicted in five themes: (a) Black womxn, (b) Academia, (c) They Always Call Me Bossy, (d) Mentorship & Sponsorship, and (e) "It's Magic When We Get Together." Finally, this study has significant implications for the theory and practice of counselors, researchers, counselor educators, and national academic professional organizations.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A CONCENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

January 6th 2022

Dèsa Karye Daniel, M.A., Doctoral Student of the Department of Individual, Family, and Community Education at the University of New Mexico and Dr. Kristopher M. Goodrich, PhD, are the principal investigators of this research study whose focuses on your experiences with Black Womxn+ Leadership Experiences in Professional Organizations. The purpose of the research is to better understand the diverse experiences and perceptions of Black Womxn+ who have served in leadership positions within a national professional organization. You are being asked to participate in this study because you identify as Black of any ethnicity, identify as a womxn+, and are over 18 years of age.

This form will explain what to expect when joining the research, as well as the possible risks and benefits of participation. If you have any questions, please ask one of the study researchers.

What you will do in the study: We are interested in knowing about the diverse experiences and perceptions of Black Womxn+ Leadership Experiences in Professional Organizations. Should you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two separate in-depth interviews, which is the extent of your participation in this research study. The initial interview conducted will last 60-90 minutes. The interview will be geared toward exploring your experiences with leadership. With your permission, we will audio-record the interview. The interview audio-file will be destroyed immediately after the interview has been transcribed. All interview transcriptions will be de-identified, meaning that your name or identifying information will not appear anywhere on the document.

Risks: You have a right to be informed of all potential risks associated with your participation in this research. Psychological risks are likely to be small and unlikely to occur. These risks include memories or emotions that may be evoked when you answer interview questions related to sensitive topics or mental health concerns. You'll be sharing your personal experiences with the researchers through survey and interview data, you may experience some emotional distress, have questions or concerns, or feel uncomfortable. You might also have a concern about the breach of confidentiality given the sensitive nature of some interview questions. However, your responses to the questionnaires and interview questions will be completely confidential. All information you provide will be combined with the data from other respondents as grouped data. You will not be identified in any presentation or publication of this research. If you would like someone to talk about these experiences, the researchers will be able to help you connect with resources in your area. You may also utilize the National Board of Certified Counselors website at http://www.nbcc.org/Search/CounselorFind if you need assistance finding a counselor in your area.

Benefits: There is no direct benefit for participating in this research study.

Confidentiality of your information: All participant responses will be completely CONFIDENTIAL. You will not be identified in any presentation or publication of this research. All information you provide will be combined with the data from other respondents and reported as grouped data. The information you give us will not be shared with anyone outside of the listed principal investigators and the research team. You will not be asked for your name. We will protect your confidentiality by providing a pseudonym so no one can trace your answers to your name, limiting access to identifiable information, telling research staff the importance of confidentiality, and storing research records in locked cabinets that are accessible only by the listed principal investigators. If you would like to participate in this study (survey and interview) the last four digits of your phone will be used to group the data accurately, but you are not required to do so. We will take measures to protect the security of all your personal information, but we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of all study data. The University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board (IRB) that oversees human subject research may be permitted to access your records. Your name will not be used in any published reports about this study. You should understand that the researcher is not prevented from taking steps, including reporting to authorities, to prevent serious harm of yourself or others. Your information collected for this project will NOT be used or shared for future research, even if we remove the identified information like your name or date of birth.

Payment: Participants will have the option of adding their email addresses to the survey to be entered into a gift card drawing for a 1 in 10 chance of winning a $20.00 gift card. The drawing will take place at the University of New Mexico College of Education on January 31st, 2022 and winners will be notified via email within five business days.

Right to withdraw from the study: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose not to participate or to withdraw your participation via email at any point in this study without penalty. You may withdraw from the study at any time during the study or after the study is completed via email request to the investigator. If you withdraw from the study during and after the study, your data will be destroyed and not used in the final analysis or manuscript preparation phases. The researcher will respect the rights of participants to not participate in the study and to withdraw via email at any point in time and will honor their choice by not including them in the study data

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research study, please contact:

Kristopher M. Goodrich, PhD, LPCC, ACS
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If you would like to speak with someone other than the research team to obtain information or offer input or if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the IRB. The IRB is a group of people from UNM and the community who provide independent oversight of safety and ethical issues related to research involving people:

UNM Office of the IRB, (505) 277-2644, irbmaincampus@unm.edu. Website: http://irb.unm.edu/

CONSENT

You are making a decision on whether to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read this form (or the form was read to you) and that all questions have been answered to your satisfaction. By signing this consent form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights as a research participant. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

I agree to participate in this study.

_____ _____

Name of Adult Participant Signature of Adult Participant
Date

Researcher Signature (to be completed at time of informed consent)

I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to participate.

_____ _____

Name of Research Team Member Signature of Research Team MemberDate

APPENDIX B DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY QUESTIONS

FIRST PAGE

Dèsa Karye Daniel, M.A., Doctoral Student, from the Department of Individual, Family, and Community Education and Dr. Kristopher M. Goodrich, PhD at the University of New Mexico iOKs/are conducting a research project. The purpose of the research is to better understand the diverse experiences and perceptions of Black Womxn who have served in leadership positions within a national professional organization. You are being asked to participate because you identify as Black of any ethnicity, identify as a womxn, currently hold a doctoral degree, and are over 18 years of age.

Your participation will involve a demographic survey, an initial interview conducted via Zoom, and a member check interview. The demographic survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. The demographic survey includes questions such as professional status and leadership experience. The initial interview should take about 60-90 minutes to complete. The initial interview includes questions such as your leadership experienced as a Black womxn. The member check interview should take about 30 minutes to complete. The member check interview includes follow up questions such as themes and codes from your initial interview. Your involvement in the research is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time. You can refuse to answer any of the questions. There are no names or identifying information associated with your responses. There are no known risks in this research, but some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. Data will All identifiable information (e.g., your name, study ID) will be removed from the information collected in this project. After we remove all identifiers, the information may be used for future research or shared with other researchers without your additional informed consent.

The findings from this project will provide information on the experiences of Black womxn who have held leadership positions within a national professional organization. If published, results will be presented in summary form only.

You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer.

Section 1: Questions or Complaints Regarding Study

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please feel free to call Kristopher Goodrich at (505) 277-4535. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input, please contact the UNM Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (505) 277-2644 or irb.unm.edu.

1. You are making a decision on whether to participate in this study. Clicking "yes" below indicates that you have read this form and that all questions have been answered to your satisfaction. By clicking "yes" to this consent form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights as a research participant. You can request a copy of this consent form at any time.

Section 2: Inclusion Criteria

2. Do you self-identify as Black (of any ethnicity) Participant Number (Last five digits of your phone number)

3. Do you self-identify as womxn? (Womxn is an intersectional concept that seeks to include every personal identity of womxn+ regardless of sex assigned at birth or sexual preference (Kunz, 2019).

4. Are you 18 years or older?

Section 3: Demographic Survey Questions

5. Participant number (last five digits of your phone number)

6. What is your pseudonym?
   _____

7. What is your primary language?_____

8. What ethnicity, if any, do you associate with being?
   _____

9. What is your age? _____

10. What is your gender/ gender identity?
    (Please select from the choices below)
    a. Womxn
    b. Transgender
    c. Gender Fluid
    d. Other gender identity that is not listed: _____

11. What discipline did you receive your degree in?
    _____

12. What is your average annual household income?
    (Please select one of the choices below)
    a. $0-$24,999
    b. $25,000-$49,999
    c. $50,000-$74,999
    d. $75,000-$99,999
    e. $100,000-$124,999
    f. $125,000-$149,999
    g. $150,000-$174,999
    h. $175,000-$199,999

i. $200,000 or more

13. Please choose one of the following that best describes your socioeconomic status?
(Please select one of the choices below)

a. Lower
b. Working
c. Middle
d. Upper Middle
e. Upper

14. Where did you grow up?
(Please select one of the choices below)

a. New England (e.g. Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, etc.)
b. Northeast (e.g. New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Washington D.C. etc.)
c. South (e.g. Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, Virginia etc.)
d. Southwest (e.g. New Mexico, Texas, Arizona)
e. Midwest (e.g. Oklahoma, Kansas, Minnesota, etc.)
f. Far West (e.g. California, Oregon, Nevada, etc.)
g. Other (Please Specify):

_____

15. Where do you live now?
(Please select one of the choices below)

a. New England (e.g. Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, etc.)
b. Northeast (e.g. New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Washington D.C. etc.)
c. South (e.g. Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, Virginia etc.)
d. Southwest (e.g. New Mexico, Texas, Arizona)
e. Midwest (e.g. Oklahoma, Kansas, Minnesota, etc.)
f. Far West (e.g. California, Oregon, Nevada, etc.)

16. How long have you been living there? _____

17. What is your generation/nativity status?

a. First-Generation (You were born outside of the United States and immigrated to the United States)
b. Second-Generation (You were born in the United States, but at least one of your parents immigrated to the United States)
c. Third-Generation (You and both your parents were born in the United States, but at least one of your grandparents immigrated to the United States)
d. Fourth-Generation and above (You, your parents and your grandparents were born in the United States)

18. What best describes the area in which you live?
(Please select one of the choices below)

a. Urban
b. Suburban

c. Rural

19. What is your professional and employment status?
(Please select one of the choices below)
a. Employed for wages
b. Self-employed
c. Other (Please Specify):
_____

20. What is your relationship status?
(Please select one of the choices below)
a. Single, never married
b. Married, domestic partnership or long-term committed relationship
c. Widowed
d. Divorced
e. Separated

21. Is there any other information that you believe I should know to better understand your demographic background? Please type this information below:

Section 4: Leadership Survey Questions

22. What national organizations have you held leadership positions?

23. In total, how much leadership experience have you had at the national level?

24. What were the title of your last 3 national leadership positions?

25. Can you share a few words on when you first identified yourself as a leader?

26. Is there any other information that you believe I should know to better understand your leadership background? Please type this information below:

Section 6: Thank you for Completing the Survey

27. Please provide your preferred contact email address for the interview.

APPENDIX C SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Rapport Building

1. Tell me about a time, if at all, when you realized you were a leader?
2. Tell me about your first experiences in a leadership role?
3. What things come to mind when you think about national leadership?

Social Interactions

1. Tell me about a time, if at all, that you felt your identity as a Black womxn+ influenced your relationships?
2. What messages, if any, have you received about Black womxn+ in leadership positions?
3. Tell me about a time when you first realized your leadership position was not what you expected?
4. What messages, if any, have you received about your leadership?
5. Tell me about a time, if at all, you felt confused about whether your status as Black womxn+ dictated how you were treated in your leadership role?
6. Where and with whom do you feel most valued, respected and honored?

Cognitions/Thoughts

1. What types of situations, if at all, make you think about how you are being perceived as Black womxn+ leader?
2. What are some initial thoughts, if any, you might have had when you received information about your leadership?
3. What, if at all, thoughts or concerns do you have about engaging in conversations about racism and antiblackness within your organization?
4. How long, if at all, do thoughts or feelings about your leadership decisions occupy your mind?

Feelings/Emotions

1. How do you feel about being a Black womxn+ in leadership?
2. How would you describe your experiences receiving and providing mentorship to other Black womxn+?
    a. Sponsorship?
3. How, if at all, has your leadership roles impacted your life?

Behaviors/Actions

1. What adaptations, if any, have you made in your behavior to ensure that people will not stereotype or label you?
2. What behaviors, if at all, do you feel you have to engage in as a leader?
3. What behaviors, if at all, do you keep from engaging in as a leader?
4. When, if at all, have you experienced racism during your leadership?
    a. If yes, how have these experiences with racism, discrimination, or racial slights affected you personally? Professionally?

Closing Interaction

1. What other things, if at all, would you like to add on to your interview?

APPENDIX D EMAIL RECRUITMENT

Dear Participants,

I am conducting a research study about Black Womxn Leadership Experiences in Professional Organizations.
You are receiving this email because you identify as Black of any ethnicity, identify as a womxn, currently hold a doctoral degree, and are over 18 years of age).

The purpose of this research study is to better understand the diverse experiences and perceptions of Black Womxn who have served in leadership positions within a national professional organization.

If you agree to participate, this study will involve a demographic survey, an initial interview conducted via Zoom, and an optional member check interview. The demographic survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. The demographic survey includes questions such as professional status and leadership experience. The initial interview should take about 60-90 minutes to complete. The initial interview includes questions such as your leadership experienced as a Black womxn. The member check interview should take about 45 - 60 minutes to complete. The member check interview will include opportunities to review the transcription from the initial interview, review emerging themes from the interview, and the option to offer additional information or clarification on qualitative themes produced from your initial interview. Your involvement in the research is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time. You can refuse to answer any of the questions. There are no names or identifying information associated with your responses. There are no known risks in this research, but some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. All identifiable information (e.g., your name, email) will be removed from the information collected in this project. After we remove all identifiers, the information may be used for future research or shared with other researchers without your additional informed consent.

Risks: You have a right to be informed of all potential risks associated with your participation in this research. Psychological risks are likely to be small and unlikely to occur. These risks include memories or emotions that may be evoked when you answer interview questions related to sensitive topics or mental health concerns. You'll be sharing your personal experiences with the researchers through survey and interview data, you may experience some emotional distress, have questions or concerns, or feel uncomfortable. You might also have a concern about the breach of confidentiality given the sensitive nature of some interview questions. However, your responses to the questionnaires and interview questions will be completely confidential. All information you provide will be combined with the data from other respondents as grouped data. You will not be identified in any presentation or publication of this research. If you would like someone to talk about these experiences, the researchers will be able to help you connect with resources in your area. You may also utilize the National Board of Certified Counselors website at http://www.nbcc.org/Search/CounselorFind if you need assistance finding a counselor in your area.

Benefits: There is no direct benefit for participating in this research study.

Compensation: Participants will have the option of adding their email addresses to the survey to be entered into a gift card drawing for a 1 in 10 chance of winning a $20.00 gift card. The drawing will take place at the University of New Mexico College of Education on March 1st 2022 and winners will be notified via email within five business days.

You do not have to be in this study, your decision to be in any study is totally voluntary.
If you feel you understand the study and would like to participate, please click the following link to fill out the research survey: https://forms.office.com/r/tuXfGDCUYs.

If you have questions prior to participating, please contact:
Dèsa Karye Daniel
Dkdaniel@unm.edu

Thank you for your time,
Dèsa Karye Daniel

(Dèsa Karye Daniel)
(Doctoral Candidate at University of New Mexico)

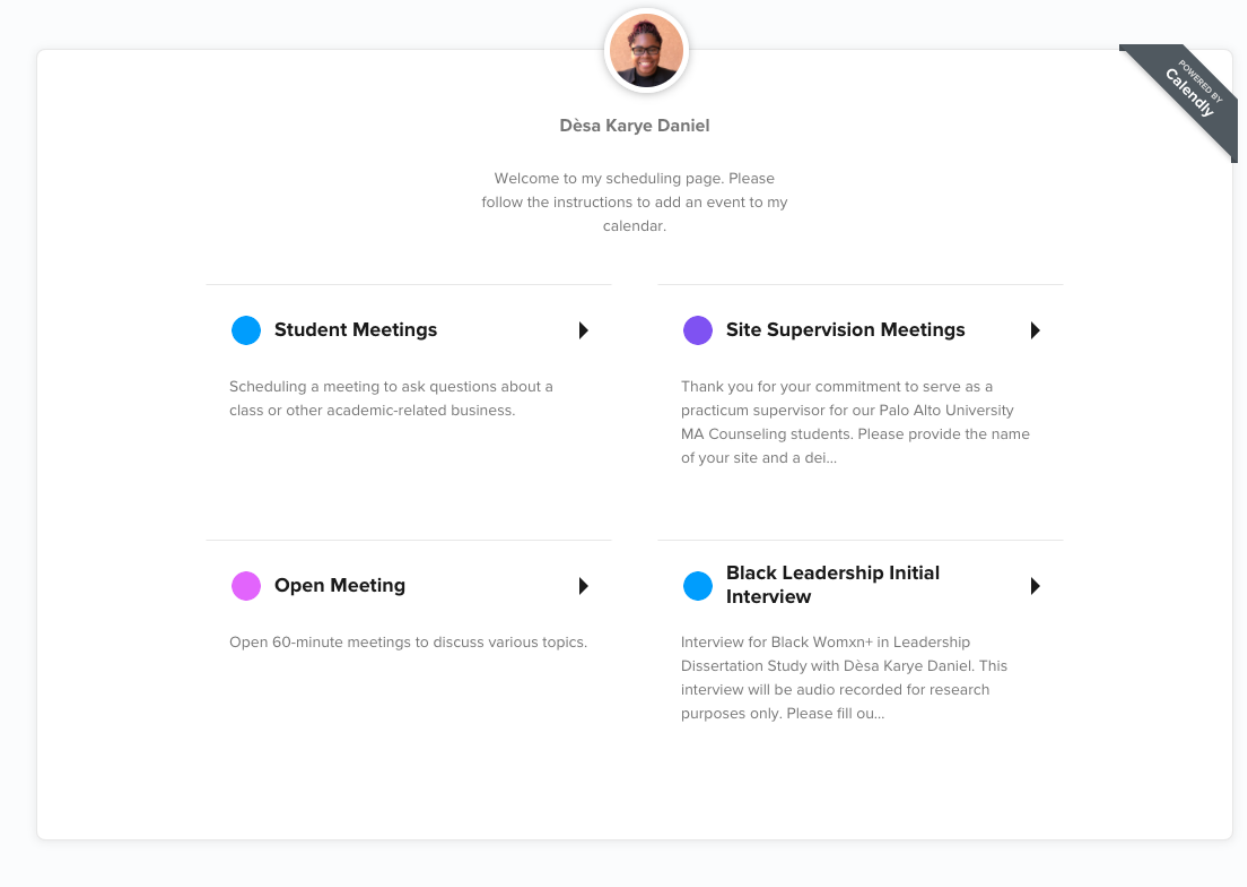
Principal Investigator: Kristopher M. Goodrich, PhD, LPCC, ACS
Study Title: Grounded Theory Black Womxn+ Leadership Experiences in Professional Organizations
Consent to Participate in Research
IRB # : 01622

APPENDIX E AUDIT TRAIL

Audit Trail for Grounded Theory of Women of color Leadership Experiences in Professional Organizations (Bowen, 2009; Tyrrell et al., 2012)	
Research Questions	Formation of research questions
Literature Review	A detailed literature review as part of research proposal and expanded on for the final research project, prior literature on higher education leadership development models, the lived experiences of women of color in academia, qualitative research methods and sampling procedures, Constructivist Grounded Theory, include other important literature as it relates to the study and final count of references used.
Conceptual/Theoretical Framework	Sensitizing concepts: Theoretical Lens: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM)
Interview protocol and instrument development	Information on protocol and interview guide.
Participant selection	List of participation criteria
Dissertation Proposal	3-chapter proposal for dissertation committee approval
Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and oversight	Computer-based human subjects research-training course for National Institutes of Health–Institutional Review Board members; IRB oversight for ethical purposes; IRB consent document will be included in research report as appendices.
Data collection and storage	Primarily and secondary in-depth, semi-structured, zoom interviews, and supplemental data from national organizations governance documents.
Raw Data	Audio transcriptions, researcher memos, and peer debriefs
Partially processed data	(Coded) interview transcripts and key informant responses; write-ups of observational comments and researcher's memos
Data Analysis Plan	Initial, focused, and theoretical coding leading to the formation of research codes and potential emerging theory.
Trustworthiness techniques	Triangulation of data collection (data sources and methods); member checking; negative case analysis; 'thick' descriptions of phenomena; diagrammatic illustration of theory generation (with codes/sub-themes and themes); auditing/peer review; feedback from research advisors.
Revision of Interview Guide	Analysis of data continued as the study is written up and compared to existing literature. New emerging themes will be used to identify missing gaps while forming new interview questions.
Repeat Data collection and analysis process.	Repeating the data collection and analysis plan until data saturation begins and theory starts to emerge.
Final Dissertation	

APPENDIX F CALENDLY SCHEDULING PLATFORM FOR INTERVIEWS

https://calendly.com/desakdaniel



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