

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE UNDERREPRESENTATION AND MINIMAL
ADVANCEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Sylvester Allen, Jr.

Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Liberty University, School of Business

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explored the underrepresentation and disproportionate advancement of African American leaders in higher education. The general problem addressed is the minimal advancement, and the disproportionate representation of African Americans compared to their White counterparts in leadership positions at higher education institutions, resulting in a lack of diversity among individuals in a leadership capacity. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to add to existing bodies of research that address the underrepresentation and low advancement of African Americans in leadership positions in higher education. The research questions explored why African Americans leaders are disproportionately represented in leadership positions at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) and outlined strategies to address the disproportionate representation of African American leaders at PWIs. Nineteen interviews were conducted using purposeful sampling allowing five superordinate themes to emerge from the data analysis. In culmination with the themes and the current academic literature, suggestions for advancement were developed to assure that higher education and other organizations alike understand the importance of African American leaders throughout the organization.

Key words: African Americans, leadership, mentor, barrier, advancement, mentor

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Asia. You have been my strength, light, and steadfast in your support as you saw me through this journey. Without you, I would not have met the finish line. I am eternally grateful to have you in my life and aim to be worthy of you every day. Your unwavering support and confidence in my ability is unmatched, and I continue to strive to be better because of you. Thank you for all the sacrifices you made throughout this process your compassion and conviction in my ability even when I did not believe in myself. You keep me grounded, you are my rock, and you are my companion. I choose you and love you always. You are my light, my love that which gives me strength. I am because of you.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Advancement and representation of African Americans in leadership positions at higher education institutions remain a concern, as there is a significant disparity among individuals who hold leadership positions. According to Wolfe and Dilworth (2015), African Americans make up 9.4% of all administrators in higher education. Throughout the last 30 years, higher education institutions have struggled to address inequities and improve recruitment and retention of diverse students and staff (Suarez et al., 2018). Racial equality concerning higher education leadership continues to be problematic, as the shortage of ethnic minority leaders is intensified by opportunities to access (Arday, 2018). The study was intended to understand why African Americans are underrepresented, and the strategies and barriers that impact advancement and representation.

Background of the Problem

Higher education is an essential component within society, as students aspire to achieve degrees from institutions across the globe. Those students should see diverse representation at the highest level (Russell et al., 2019). The research study centered around the underrepresentation, and disproportionate advancement of African American leaders at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) in Connecticut, resulting in the absence of racial diversity among these individuals in a leadership capacity. The study identified and explored strategies for advancement, such as the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (FGCC, 1995) and affirmative action, which some individuals believe to have corrected the problem (Wheeler & Smith, 2018).

Limited data exist regarding African American administrators and faculty working in higher education (Beverly, 2012). Furthermore, there is a lack of African American mentors in

higher education; thus, creating barriers in their advancement into leadership roles (Gamble & Turner, 2015). This disparity continues to be a problem among institutions, as Gamble and Turner (2015) explained that the foundation of an institution lies within the executive and leadership teams, for leaders are the foundation of an organization. Hence, students should see representation at various levels. Johnson et al. (2019) explained that institutions could support students from marginalized groups by ensuring their faculty, staff, administrators, and executives understand the students' perspectives and them as human beings.

Problem Statement

The general problem addressed is the minimal advancement and the disproportionate representation of African Americans compared to their White counterparts in leadership positions at higher education institutions, resulting in a lack of diversity among individuals in a leadership capacity. Institutions of higher education affirm that they value diversity and maintain the significance of recruiting and retaining faculty and staff that are diverse; however, in comparison to their white counterparts, recruitment remains low (Joslyn et al., 2018; Kelly et al., 2017). Russell et al. (2019) explained that professionals of color are frequently underrepresented in various executive, administrative, and leadership roles at degree-granting institutions. Furthermore, African Americans and other minorities are met with several challenges when trying to advance (Webster & Brown, 2019). The specific problem addressed is the underrepresentation, and the minimal representation and advancement of African American leaders at two predominantly white institutions of higher education within the state of Connecticut (CT), resulting in diminished productivity and innovation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to add to existing bodies of research that address the underrepresentation and low advancement of African Americans in leadership positions in higher education. The larger problem was explored through an exhaustive study of the disproportionate representation and a lack of diversity among African Americans in a leadership capacity at two PWIs within the state of CT in comparison to their White counterparts. The case study provided an analysis surrounding the importance of African American leaders and the minimal representation of minorities in senior leadership positions within higher education (Arday, 2018; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Additionally, African Americans have to traverse the challenges of securing leadership opportunities when trying to advance in higher education (Banks et al., 2018). The study sought to understand attitudes and perspectives regarding the under-representation and the minimal advancement of African Americans at these institutions. Furthermore, the research sought to identify any barriers that African Americans face ascending into leadership roles at these institutions and how it affects productivity and innovation.

Nature of the Study

Multiple research methods were considered for this research study, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, as each approach maintains its respective philosophy (Creswell, 2014). These philosophies determine which methodology among quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods will be best applied. Quantitative and qualitative research methods include the collection, analysis, interpretation, and documentation of the results of a study. Simultaneously, the mixed-methods approach involves a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data; each approach allows for a robust study (Creswell & Creswell,

2018). Qualitative research produces insights and a greater understanding of one's experiences (Denny & Weckesser, 2019). Mixed-methods research studies consist of qualitative and quantitative components of equal value and weight (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). A mixed-methods approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative data in a manner that is meaningful throughout the research process (Creamer, 2018). A mixed-method approach was not applied to this study because it relied solely on the perceptions and sensitivities of a small select group of participants at PWIs in Connecticut.

Quantitative research restricts itself to factors that can be quantified or measured and focus heavily on statistical significance (Astroth & Chung, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) posited that, in quantitative research studies, data is obtained with an instrument and analyzed using statistical procedures to test a hypothesis. Furthermore, this study did not collect quantitative data or perform statistical analysis to answer the research questions. Hence, this methodology did not allow for this study as individuals' perceptions, experience, or personal testimony cannot be tested.

Discussion of Method

Qualitative research investigates and understands a phenomenon through the meanings assigned to them by the individuals in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This qualitative research consists of a multi-site case study. The case study is acceptable, as it allows the researcher to garner data from leaders' perspectives and experiences within PWIs in CT. There are four main qualitative data collection types, including observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2018). Interviews for this study were useful as the study sought to surmise leaders' perceptions of the disproportionate representation of African leaders at

private institutions, and the barriers for advancement that African American leaders face at private institutions of higher education.

The interviewer pursued in-depth information on the topic. Interviews are often conducted in an informal, conversational manner; the in-depth interviews allowed the participants to freely express their individual story as it pertains to the phenomenon and provided rich data for the research (Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research attempts to understand the subjective and less quantifiable components that impact specific populations of people. Each design is different and maintains its advantages and challenges; however, in the purest sense, they all attempt to achieve a common goal.

Discussion of Design

There are five design approaches that one can take when conducting qualitative research. These five approaches include narrative research design, phenomenological research design, grounded theory research design, ethnography research design, or a case study(s) research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell (2014) asserted that a narrative research design is a design of inquiry that studies individuals' lives and requests that one or more individuals provide stories respective of their own lives. The data can then be analyzed thematically through various means such as structurally, the nature of storytelling, dialogic and performance, direction of the story, or through visual analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, one of the challenges facing this design is that, although individuals can present stories about their experiences, the narratives can be biased without an understanding of the participant as an individual. Hence, this design was not selected given the current study did not focus on understanding the participants as individuals but on their leadership experiences.

Ethnography is a qualitative research method that studies the shared patterns of behaviors, language, and actions of a cultural group. Ethnography examines the participants in a natural setting over an extended period (Creswell, 2014; Jones & Smith, 2017). Ethnography is a design of inquiry, where data collection frequently involves observation and interviews, which stems from anthropology and sociology, allowing the researcher to study shared patterns (Creswell, 2014). Ethnography entails comprehensive fieldwork and requires extensive direct and substantial contact with study participants within their natural settings to capture robust explanations (Burke & Patching, 2019). Critical components of ethnography include insights, detailed understanding, and culture where the researchers venture to learn about specific phenomena by inquiring about the experiences of those living with the phenomena (Burke & Patching). The ethnographic research design was not adopted for this study given it does not focus on the behaviors, language, and actions of a cultural group (Creswell, 2014).

Phenomenology is grounded in complex philosophical, human science and humanities traditions. It is best suited for situations where the researcher attempts to analyze and understand one's individual experience regarding a particular phenomenon (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Cypress, 2018). However, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), finding participants who have experienced the same phenomenon may be difficult since a phenomenological research design is concerned with the essence of the shared experience as it stems from the individual experiences of phenomena. The essence serves as a foundation to understand the human experience and provides greater insight into the subject. A phenomenological research design was not be adopted for the current study because participants in the study will not share the same perceptions and experiences surrounding advancement in higher education, which would mean

that the participants do not share the same phenomenon (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018). Hence, this design would not apply to the current study.

Grounded theory design is a form of qualitative research where the researcher moves past descriptions to generate or discover a theory (Boadu & Sorour, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, a grounded theory study intends to produce new theoretical frameworks to a process or topic with minimal knowledge (Chun et al., 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Grounded theory is best suited to employ when there is a lack of understanding of a social phenomenon that there is no theory, or the current theory is incomplete (Engward, 2013). Boadu and Sorour (2015) clarified that a grounded theory design supports researchers in creating new knowledge. A grounded theory research design was not selected for this study given its purpose was not to create a theory from the participants' interactions and processes.

A case study is a qualitative method. The researcher investigates a single case by collecting robust data through various sources over time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Multi-site case studies are becoming essential to enhancing the statistical vigor, improving generalizability, and pooling relevant subgroups together. These studies may be limited by the availability of participants at a single site (Bari et al., 2019). Case study research allows for the investigation and analysis of a group or individual case that intends to understand the object's complexity within the study (Hyett et al., 2014). Further, a case study design maintains a level of flexibility that is not easily allowed within other qualitative approaches. The essence of a case study is to attempt to bring light to a decision, or a set of decisions, and attempt to understand why and how it was implemented while ultimately trying to figure out the result (Yin, 2018).

Summary of the nature of the study.

Various research methods were considered for the study, which included quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods. However, a qualitative research method approach was ultimately selected as it investigates and understands a phenomenon through the meanings assigned to them by the individuals in the study. Qualitative research produces insights and a greater understanding of personal experiences. A multi-site case study design allows the researcher to investigate a single case by collecting robust data through various sources. As the case study design allows for greater flexibility, it is not easily allowed in other qualitative approaches.

Moreover, a multi-site case study enhances the statistical vigor, improves generalizability, and pools relevant subgroups together. These studies may be limited by the availability of participants at a single site. Hence, the detail and flexibility supported by the qualitative case study will produce the results that align with the goals of the research study.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided the study were composed to determine why African Americans leaders are disproportionately represented in leadership positions at PWIs in Connecticut. Furthermore, the research questions outlined the strategies employed to address the disproportionate representation of African American leaders at PWIs. These research questions allowed for an in-depth analysis of attitudes and perspectives and further investigated the barriers to advancement that African American leaders face at PWIs. The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

RQ1. Why are African American leaders disproportionately represented in leadership positions at predominantly white institutions in higher education in comparison to their White counterparts?

RQ2. What are the attitudes and perspectives of leaders regarding the underrepresentation and the minimal advancement of African Americans at predominantly white institutions?

RQ3. What strategies are being employed to address the disproportionate representation of African American leaders at institutions of higher education in Connecticut?

RQ4. What are the barriers to advancement that African American leaders face at predominantly white institutions of higher education?

RQ5. What effect does racial representation have on productivity and innovation?

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to add to existing bodies of research that address the underrepresentation and low advancement of African Americans in leadership positions in higher education. This resulted in numerous theories being examined in an attempt to answer the research questions for this study. The researcher's conceptual view encompasses the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy and Critical Race Theory. Both theories maintain a strong connection to each other and provide a lens to acknowledge underrepresentation in leadership and the importance of diversity within an organization.

Theory of Representative Bureaucracy.

The Theory of Representative Bureaucracy can be attributed to Donald Kingsley (1944) and has notable implications for investigations around social equity (Rabovsky & Lee, 2018). The theory offers an explanation for how individuals are best served by a workforce that reflects the demographic makeup of the constituent population (Vinopal, 2020). Having a workforce that

is reflective of the population is essential and Arday (2018) explained that although universities are recognized as places that embrace diversity and multiculturalism, there has been a legacy of racial inequality and significant under-representation of Black staff in senior leadership.

This theory is particularly significant to the study, as it explains the importance of having adequate diversity. Ensuring that the applicant pool is diverse is a step in the right direction and, although recruiting a diverse applicant pool is an excellent move in the right direction, more needs to be done (Wilson, 2018). The Theory of Representative Bureaucracy encompasses passive and active representations, where the thought process is that passive representation leads to active representation (Capers, 2018). Passive representation can be described as having a diverse workforce that is proportionate to the population an organization serves, while active representation is where a representative utilizes their position to advance the interests and motives of the people to which the individual is presumed to represent (Capers, 2018; Roch & Edwards, 2017).

The Theory of Representative Bureaucracy primarily concentrates on the public sector and the potential to improve racial, ethnic, and gender representation (Vinopal, 2020). However, this theory is highly applicable, as Hong (2016) explained that representative bureaucracy fosters diversification within the workforce and improves its integrity. Furthermore, ethnic diversity improves communication, equity, and ethical treatment of those individuals who are part of minority-group. University faculty and administrators need to expand efforts to eradicate practices and policies that disproportionately impact minorities (Martinez et al., 2017). Furthermore, opportunities for promotion should be inclusive and account for cultural assets. Hence, this theory is highly applicable to the study due to the importance of leadership staff representing the population they serve, the student population. However, critical race theory was

discussed, as it provided an additional lens that speaks to the disproportionate representation of African Americans in higher education.

Critical Race Theory.

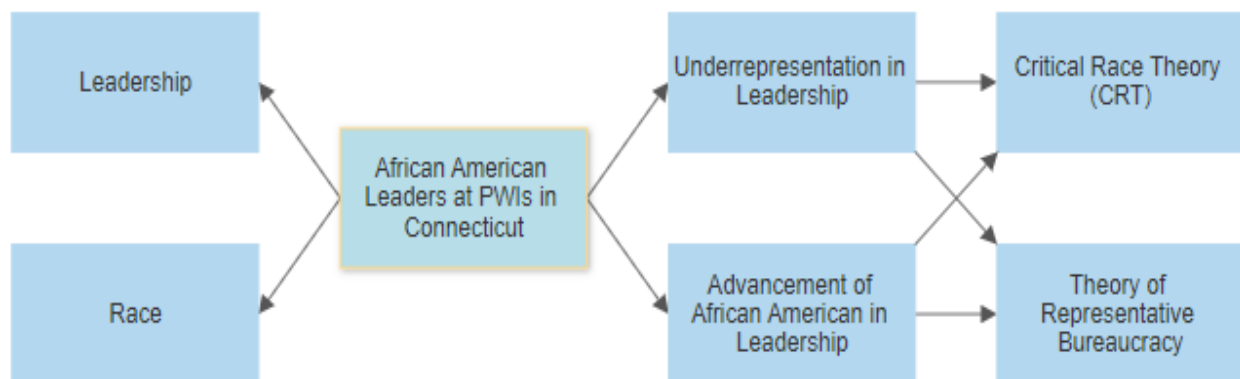
The second theory selected for the conceptual framework was Critical Race Theory (CRT). Legal scholars created CRT to uncover the hidden subtext of race and racism within the American legal system (Cabrera, 2018; Einbinder, 2020). The author explained the continuity of racism and argues that it is a permanent feature of society (Cabrera, 2018; Patton, 2016). When examining the minimal representation of African American leaders in higher education, race, and racism should be addressed. Through the lens of CRT, the study demonstrated the above factors that have led to the underrepresentation of African American leaders in higher education and the importance of diversity within leadership positions.

Understanding the concept of diversity is essential to understanding the benefits it provides. Gomez and Bernet (2019) explained that diversity enhances performance as it allows for a multitude of viewpoints and skillsets; additionally, it promotes robust discourse. Diversity management effectiveness can be exhibited in individuals' behaviors connected with the institution despite the extent that beliefs and values differ. Understanding various cultures is critical to dismantling stereotypes, reducing bias, and allows for greater cultural integration (Mampane, 2019). Through the lens of CRT, an understanding of inequality can be established and lead to a greater understanding of existing issues. A concerted effort involving the hiring and retention of administrators from diverse backgrounds should be as deliberate as the efforts employed to recruit and retain diverse students; however, minimal attention is given to administration (Arnett, 2015).

Fornili (2018) claims there are six tenants to CRT, the first being that racism is normal and part of everyday life. The second tenet is interest convergence, which explains that people of color will only be accomplished to the degree that they can also advance White interests. The third tenet is a social construction that contends that the notion of race is a social construct and should not be essentialized (i.e., that there are no inherent characteristics of any racial group). The fourth differential racialization explains racial marginalization across various racial groups. The fifth tenant is the intersectionality tenant related to the anti-essentialism of the third. The sixth tenet is unique voices of color, which argues that minorities have different perspectives based on their experiences with racism (Fornili, 2018). The incorporation of CRT has begun to become a common practice for academic scholars to unearth inequities that are both subtle and blatant (Sleeter, 2017). Hence, this theory was selected as it aligns with TRB and helps to strengthen the overall study.

Figure 1

Relationship Between Concepts



Note. Variables impacting African American Leaders at PWIs in Connecticut, which impacts representation in leadership and the advancement of African American leaders; thus, ultimately

analyzing advancement through the lens of critical race theory and the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy.

Summary of the conceptual framework.

The current study adopted two theories that encompass the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy and Critical Race Theory. Both theories affirmed the notion that there is underrepresentation in leadership and the importance of diversity for the organization's success. Representative bureaucracy promotes diversification within the workforce and improves the organization's integrity, while critical race theory aims to uncover the hidden subtext of race and racism within the organization. The application of both theories connected the study and provided a strong foundation; furthermore, this study's conceptual framework demonstrated that the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy and Critical Race Theory are highly applicable to addressing the research questions of this study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined to ensure an understanding of the intended use.

African American. African American or "black" are used synonymously to designate individuals that self-identify as such (Noonan et al., 2016).

Career advancement. Career advancement can be categorized into three components, which include career satisfaction, career strategies, and career barriers that provide the strategies that support the progress of upward mobility (Arokiasamy et al., 2017).

Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT is the study of relationships connecting race, racism, and power, providing a comprehensive framework that examines these components (Fornili, 2018).

Leadership Diversity. Leadership diversity is a complex notion built on the foundation that an adequately represented group enhances outcomes while providing the ability to engage others who would otherwise be out-of-reach for current leaders (Fredette & Sessler, 2019).

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Predominantly white can be described as more white students enrolled at the institution than students who identify as members of underrepresented racial groups (Bourke, 2016).

Racism. Racism can be defined as a view that racial difference provides an inherent advantage of a particular group (Noonan et al., 2016).

Theory of Represented Bureaucracy. Representative bureaucracy suggests that race and ethnicity are essential components for representation in the United States (Ricucci & Van Ryzin, 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are critical to enhancing the quality of a research study, as they provide a lens to the data presented. Furthermore, as the research study explained its limitations, delimitations, and assumptions, it may also be employed as a benchmark for future studies (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

Assumptions

Studies have demonstrated that assumptions are the previous knowledge that an individual has that combines theory and experience concerning concepts of a phenomenon (Stains et al., 2015). Based on the experiences with the phenomenon, Fjeld (2018) explained that various assumptions should prove to be correct. Assumptions for this qualitative case study included participants were honest and data were based on their own experiences within higher

education leadership. Hewitt (2016) explained that qualitative interviews allow the researcher to obtain access to participants' feelings, experiences, and social environments.

Another assumption of the study is that current institutional leadership recognized the importance and need for diversification among individuals within a leadership capacity as diversity and inclusion are commonly acknowledged as a necessity for optimizing organizational performance. Diversity and inclusion have demonstrated enhanced financial performance, a reflection of the marketplace, and increased innovation and group performance (Douglas et al., 2017).

Additionally, there is an assumption that the individuals selected to participate in the study understand the nature of the study. Furthermore, there is an assumption that no participant was forced or compelled to provide a specific response concerning the research study and provide honest, unbiased answers. Specific parameters were taken to ensure participants understood that participation was voluntary, as there was no coercion of participant involvement (Tarimo et al., 2019). The final assumption is that the study produced additional knowledge to the existing body of work that surrounds the underrepresentation and the minimal advancement of African American leaders at predominantly white institutions, as numerous universities are attempting to increase diversity of students, faculty and staff (Kezar, 2016).

Limitations

Understanding the limitations of a study exhibits rigor and identifies a distinct direction for future studies (Greener, 2018). The first limitation of this study included focusing solely on PWIs in Connecticut, as focuses on multiple states would provide a more comprehensive study. Though the study focused on the state of Connecticut, the research strived to understand the depth and complexity of a phenomenon (Reinecke et al., 2016). The next limitation addressed in

the study was the focus on African American leaders and not all persons of color (POC), which can encompass American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander (Gupta et al., 2016). However, though the study focused on African Americans any individual, regardless of race, who held an Assistant Director position or greater was interviewed.

Another limitation included the methodology. A qualitative approach was deemed ideal for this study; qualitative research attempts to understand the subjective; this, in turn, results in less quantifiable research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, triangulation was utilized to ensure there are multiple data collection sources for the researchers' study and to establish a sense of trustworthiness in the data collection process (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, researcher bias was a limitation for the study as the researcher was the principal means employed to gather and examine data (Wadams & Park, 2018). The researcher employed member checking to validate, check, or assess qualitative results' integrity (Brit, 2016). Moreover, as the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the world, higher education institutions had also been affected (Gurukkal, 2020). With institutions moving online, layoffs and furloughs reduced access to leaders; however, the researcher provided a video meeting option to ensure participant safety. These were simply some of the limitations recognized throughout the research study.

Delimitations

The delimitations of a study serve to narrow the research scope (Creswell, 2013). The first delineation of this study was that participants held an Assistant Director position or above and were currently working in higher education in the state of Connecticut. The next delimitation of this study was the choice of research method, as a case study methodology was chosen. This methodology was selected as a case study allowed for a qualitative research approach that required robust research of a specific problem instead of a method that required statistical

analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The final delimitation addressed the number of participants within the study as having a larger sample size might have provided greater accuracy; however, it would have been more time consuming and costly (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Significance of the Study

This qualitative case study's significance laid in the fact that it adds to existing research bodies that address the under-representation and low advancement of African American leaders in higher education leadership positions. The study provided critical data that acknowledged the importance of African Americans leaders in higher education (Henry, 2015; Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). The research demonstrated that there is a lack of African American leaders in administration in higher education. However, there is an increase in minority students attending universities. Institutions need to provide the same level of effort in recruiting African American leaders as they recruit students from diverse backgrounds. As the study sought to provide greater insight into African Americans in leadership, Boone and Makhani (2012) described that leadership is an attempt to influence individuals or groups toward collective tasks or to achieve organizational goals. Administrative leaders of minority groups are positioned to become role models for students and other employees of a similar minority group (Carter, 2019). Therefore, the study's significance was found in the underrepresentation and disproportionate advancement of African American leaders at institutions of higher education, while exemplifying to leaders in higher education that there is a disparity in representation. Furthermore, the study acts as a resource for institutions to understand the importance of representation and provide strategies to address the gap.

Reduction of Gaps

The literature currently available details that within higher education African Americans' representation is disproportionate to Whites (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Thus, research should be conducted surrounding leadership positions and the individuals who fill those positions. Diversity within leadership positions is a nonverbal expression that the track to leadership is attainable for all (Carter, 2019). This study provided greater insight into challenges encountered by African American leaders to advance and be better represented in higher education. Furthermore, the study exposed strategies that can be employed by the institution to address the disparity in leadership positions between African American leaders and their White counterparts. This study bridged the gap in the literature as it pertains to the disproportionate representation and minimal advancement of African American leaders in higher education.

Implications for Biblical Integration

The Bible provides a refreshing view as it relates to work in comparison to other religions. The Bible connects work to one's purpose (Keller, 2012). Furthermore, Keller (2012) explained that God is the creator of all life and provides one with their purpose. He also provides the skills to glorify Him and provide service to others. God's plan for us is to have meaningful work, and we must remain diligent about how we conduct it as well. This form of work is conducting a research study that will represent God and support others. God created us in His image, so we must work and research as a service because of our God and neighbor.

Through conducting business research, it is critical to note that the biblical worldview can and should be applied. As one begins to conduct research, the researcher should approach their study similarly to how they approach any other work. The Bible provides a robust explanation of the essence of work and how Christians should conduct themselves while doing work.

Colossians 3:23 (New International Version), stated, "Whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." According to Nelson et al. (2017), there is a strong correlation between religious belief and increased integrity. Hence, God has a significant role in how one conducts their research. Proverbs 16:3 (NIV), asserted, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans."

Work at times can be challenging; this also includes conducting research, as many may encounter difficulties. One should remember their faith during these times. Throughout the process of conducting one's research study, one must seek God's direction, as everything one does should be done in his image. 1 Corinthians 10:31(NIV) explained, so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for God's glory. Hence, God expects Christian researchers to execute their study according to His will. As one completes their study to God's will, they should be guided by the highest level of ethics, integrity, and honesty. God deserves to be honored in all that one does.

Colossians 3:23 (NIV) stated, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." Through God's word, this researcher established a strategic plan. Furthermore, this researcher conducted the study as God would, with ethics, integrity, and honesty. This researcher's goal was to support the growth and development of the organization, also, to support the mission of God, as it serves as an avenue to help others who may overlook it. This researcher believes that completing this study was also completing the work of God.

We are all the work of God, as stated in Ephesians 2:10 (NIV), which stated, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Through this message, the researcher understands that ones' work, specifically this

research study, will not be without issues. However, as one follows their design, it is essential to remember that there will be a resolution to them. As explained in Genesis 1:27, "So God created mankind in his image, in the image of God, he created them; male and female he created them." This study shed light on underrepresentation, low recruitment, and minimal advancement of African American leaders at institutions of higher education, ultimately resulting in a lack of diversity among these individuals in a leadership capacity. This study furthered God's message as found in Acts 10:34 (NIV) "Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism."

Relationship to Field of Study

Leadership is a critical component of organizational success, as the job of a leader is to inspire others to work toward a common goal (Belmore, 2019). In higher education, leadership plays a significant role in the institution's advancement and the students that attend the institution. Furthermore, efforts should be committed to understanding social systems that may lead to notably better policies, laws, and programs, which will increase the diversity amongst leadership staff (West et al., 2018). Hence leadership is a critical precursor to building cohesion and greater confidence throughout organizations (Loughead et al., 2016). This study could fill the gaps in the current research surrounding leadership; hence there is value in understanding why there is a minimal representation of African Americans in leadership positions within higher education.

Summary of the significance of the study.

The study provided critical data that acknowledge the importance of African Americans leaders in higher education. Through conducting business research, it is crucial to note that the biblical worldview can and should be applied. Furthermore, in executing their study to God's

will, individuals should be guided by the highest level of ethics, integrity, and honesty. In higher education, leadership plays a significant role in the institution's advancement, as diversity within leadership positions demonstrates that the path to leadership is attainable for all individuals.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The literature review supports the study as data are gathered on a specific subject; furthermore, the literature review provides an analysis of what is known regarding the topic and the unknown (Maggio et al., 2016). This literature review focused on African Americans' advancement and representation in leadership positions within higher education. Higher education plays a significant role in society for individuals who are attempting to obtain a degree. The data demonstrated that there is an excellent representation of minority students who attend institutions of higher education. However, there are still minimal efforts committed to addressing the advancement and underrepresentation of African Americans in leadership positions at institutions of higher education (Larry & Brown, 2019).

This section of the study provided a synthesis and overview of the current literature pertinent to this study. Specifically, research related to the current context of African Americans' advancement and existence in higher education with regard to race, racism, culture, diversity, inclusion, leadership, and African American leaders' experiences through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Theory of Representative Bureaucracy. Both CRT and the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy examine the disparity in leadership and, more importantly, the significance of leadership, specifically in higher education and its implications on various constituents.

Higher Education.

The first institution of higher education was founded in 1636 in Cambridge, Massachusetts (Fisher, 2020). Through its evolution, higher education has provided other benefits other than advanced education. There is a significant amount of data documenting the relationship between higher education degrees and earning potential. Further, these studies demonstrate that those who have enrolled in or have completed a higher education degree achieve a greater quality of life to include higher lifetime earnings (Shafiq et al., 2019). Higher education may provide those who attend a positive perception of work, a greater sense of confidence, ability to deal with adversity, ability to be a team player, and a better ability to communicate verbally and in writing (Gee et al., 2015).

Higher education is an environment where individuals can grow and flourish; however, it does not remain unimpacted by inequity and racial issues (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Though higher education remains a significant movement of social change, issues of equality remain challenging. It is imperative to examine the hurdles that impact African American leaders. Within higher education administration, diversity is vital to students' success as the influence of staff can be as profound as that of faculty. Inclusion and diversity at higher education institutions are perceived to be the future of ensuring that a multicultural workforce exists through the recruitment process (Mampane, 2019).

Institutions of higher education have made growth in creating opportunities and avenues; however, more needs to be done (Mampane, 2019). For example, predominantly white institutions (PWIs) frequently represent the broader American society. African Americans are met with their own set of challenges that can vary from racial microaggressions to more blatant

institutional racism (Sinanan, 2016). Thus, higher education is not immune to Black America's racial issues (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2015).

Higher education institutions remain essential in creating leaders of tomorrow. These entities hold a foundational role in shaping society (Breetzke & Hedding, 2018). Students on college campuses interact with university staff for various issues. As students arrive on campus, they are allowed to meet various leaders on campus; unfortunately, at some institutions, the diversity is minimal. Furthermore, in many instances, the initial contact that a student may have with the institution is with a staff member; these interactions may frequently occur before attending their first class (Luedke, 2017). Before attending their first class, students may meet with various leaders on their respective campuses from financial aid, admissions, student affairs, dining, or the university's facilities department. These individuals have the unique ability to provide insight into the institution's environment and culture, and the interaction may exemplify how diversity is perceived (Luedke, 2017). These interactions contribute significantly to a student's perception of the university at large, thus reinforcing the significance of a diverse faculty and staff.

Culture in Higher Education.

Culture indicates a value system and views that contribute to standards of predictable behaviors; moreover, it is perceived as a force that is mostly invisible and maintains a powerful impact on organizational outcomes (Craft, 2018). An organization with distinguishing culture has exceptional values, procedures, practices, and beliefs that support the organization's goals and mission; moreover, cultures principally reflect leadership's values and actions (O'Reilly et al., 2014).

According to Johnston (2017), culture is the impact of collective thoughts, perspectives, beliefs, and performance of individuals and teams and how they work. Furthermore, this process starts with leaders devising a cultural transformation through the development of values, procedures, and policies that support the organization's mission. Culture is complex, dynamic, and characterized by clear and shared values. Culture maintains four dimensions, including mission, consistency, involvement, and adaptability (Mathew, 2019). Daft (2016) explained that culture is a shared understanding of individuals within an organization. A shift in an institutional culture gives leaders a way to drive change and equality (Craft, 2018). Craft (2018) explained extraordinary culture leads to growth, creativity, and better communication throughout the organization. Assuring that an organization's culture is rooted in integrity and ethical behavior is critical; it must guarantee that senior leadership is leading the way and driving the message (Craft, 2018). Further, the organization should provide the necessary training ensuring that organizational standards of conduct are known, understood, and expectations are met.

Culture involves everyone within the organization, which means that leaders are tasked with designing, producing, and sustaining, an environment that allows employees to learn and grow. This developmental environment is the type of culture in which employees can develop and reach their full potential (Underhill et al., 2007). According to Hogan and Coote (2014), an institution's culture presents a series of assumptions that are designed or developed. These assumptions are then explained to others as the right way to perceive and believe in handling changes and difficulties within the organization. Furthermore, culture is a system of values that provides an understanding of the normal behavior of those who are part of the organization. Moreover, it is a force that cannot be seen; nevertheless, it is impactful and shapes outcomes (Hogan & Coote, 2014).

Leadership culture reinforces practices, beliefs, patterns, and behaviors that explain how an organization interacts, influences, and makes decisions within the respective organization (Auxier, 2015). Leaders' decisions and actions are driven by conscious and unconscious beliefs that guide leadership practices. In turn, leadership culture is a critical component in facilitating career advancement (Nanton, 2015). Leaders should reinforce beliefs, methods, and behaviors that are inclusive of all individuals as they are positioned to create and change leadership culture within their respective organizations. Furthermore, the change in leadership culture entails a strategic and collaborative approach that can potentially influence the culture of leadership for an organization; however, the foundational work has to be done first (Nanton, 2015).

Predominately White Institutions (PWIs).

A PWI can be defined as an institution of higher education, where 50% or more of the student population is of the White race (Chen & Hamilton, 2015). As higher education institutions seek to improve initiatives surrounding diversity, the data shows that little has been done beyond having conversations to reach significant levels of diversity (Zambrana et al., 2017). Enacted in 1964, the Civil Rights Act was an amendment to the constitution that declared that all minorities would have equal rights to those of their white male counterparts (Hersch & Shinall, 2015; Wilder, 2018). The act outlawed discrimination of individuals based on race, religion, gender, national origin, or color. However, African Americans have not received equal consideration for leadership positions at PWIs (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015).

Scholars suggest that the United States has a racialized system where one's race directs the nation's social, economic, political, and psychological mindset and behaviors (Turner & Grauerholz, 2017). Historically within higher education in America, minorities have encountered discriminatory practices. Race-based discrimination appears undeniable in higher education as

no major PWIs of higher education employs more than a token representation of African Americans (Larry & Brown, 2019). Addressing the disparity concerning representation at PWIs requires a greater understanding of history, race, and the organization's culture (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Understanding history, race, and the organization's culture can help mitigate a racialized system that provides various advantages to one race above another, systematically fostering and renewing a hierarchical relationship between races (Turner & Grauerholz, 2017).

At PWIs, there is abundant data stating that African American students experience isolation and alienation (Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2018). Furthermore, research suggests that Black or African American students at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have more favorable academic outcomes and greater satisfaction than their counterparts who attend PWIs (Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2018).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities can be defined as an institution of higher education in which 50% or more of the student population is black (Chen & Hamilton, 2015). Historically Black colleges and universities are institutions of higher education created to serve the African-American community primarily (Palmer et al., 2018). Data supports that Black or African American students at HBCUs have more promising academic outcomes and higher satisfaction than their counterparts who attend PWIs, as representation exists at every level of the institution (Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2018).

HBCUs are known for cultivating, encouraging, and supportive environments that foster African American student development (Palmer et al., 2018). The establishment of HBCUs played a significant role in providing opportunities for the edification of African Americans who previously were denied an opportunity to receive higher learning. Furthermore, the need for

HBCUs' emerged in direct response to a history of racism in the U.S. This racist history legitimized Black individuals' enslavement, made educating black individuals illegal, and then once educating Black individuals became legal resulted in the segregation of educational institutions (Williams et al., 2019). These institutions also offered the students an opportunity to collectively explore their culture and identities in a nurturing environment (Palmer et al., 2018). Historically, HBCUs have played a significant role in satisfying gaps in education within Black communities due to considerable barriers faced at PWIs (Williams et al., 2019).

Several studies have shown that HBCUs create educational experiences for African American students that are different from PWIs (Whaley & Whaley, 2017). African American students at HBCUs demonstrate an increased sense of satisfaction and engagement (Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2018). These institutions produce a strong sense of identity and commitment as these institutions promote diversity and exploration of culture. Furthermore, these institutions offer professional networking and mentorship opportunities, a significant component in higher education for students, faculty, and staff (Palmer et al., 2018). Representation matters, as it is evident that African American students are thriving at HBCUs. Furthermore, without senior leadership focusing on driving change as a top priority, campuses will continue to struggle in their diversity efforts to improve campus racial climates (Patton et al., 2019).

Importance of Leadership in Higher Education.

The skills gained while attaining a higher education degree can aid in an individual's professional success and valuable for leadership (Gee et al., 2015). Leadership can refer to the notion of overseeing activities, making selections on critical matters, and guiding others on what is anticipated of them (Makhani, 2012). Through effective leadership, one can create a vision for an organization's future direction (Oxtoby, 2018). Further, effective leadership may guide an

organization in obtaining its mission, goals, and objectives. However, the ascension to leadership roles for minorities is met by various challenges and barriers (Oxtoby, 2018).

Successful leaders motivate and inspire their subordinates to achieve more than expected while increasing their employees' confidence through their development. Leaders should have the capacity to look forward and prepare individuals and organizations for change (Aslam, 2018). Furthermore, a leader is positioned to articulate a new vision while dismantling old structures and processes. Ensuring that leaders understand the value of a diverse workforce is critical to the execution of these changes.

Administrative leaders who are part of minority groups are positioned to become role models for students and other employees of a similar minority group. The research demonstrates that there is a lack of African American leaders in administration at private institutions. Furthermore, PWIs fail to fulfill promises of ensuring diversity on campus and do not provide the necessary support to ensure greater success for students of color (Chen & Hamilton, 2015). However, there is an increase in minority students attending universities (Gasman et al., 2015). Institutions must commit to the same level of effort in recruiting African American students as is given to recruiting, hiring, and advancing African Americans in leadership (Larry & Brown, 2019).

According to Goldberg et al. (2019), as organizational leaders see and employ diversity programs, they should seek to create work environments where individuals feel appreciated, respected, recognized, and protected. Individuals should feel comfortable in the workplace and not repress parts of themselves. As diversity increases, organizations will begin to see larger applicant pools, greater retention, a broader customer base, innovative resolutions, enhanced productivity and performance, and greater competitiveness and profitability (Goldberg et al.,

2019). An organization's leadership should be crucial in developing, establishing, and influencing organizational culture as leaders are expected to lead by example (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). Recognition of the need for diversity in leadership in the education system provides an opportunity to address the inequity currently existing. Institutional leaders should understand the need for diversity and set the trend for what the institution can look like as it pertains to racial diversity.

Summary of Higher Education.

In summary, higher education is recognized and remains an important place for social change; issues of equality remain on college and university campuses. Systemic racism is deeply rooted within the university culture (Harry, 2015); and a shift in institution culture must occur to give way for leaders to drive change and equality (Craft, 2018). Diversity among faculty and staff contribute to students' success (Mampane, 2019). However, African Americans have not received equal consideration for leadership positions at PWIs (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). While HBCUs have played a significant role in satisfying gaps in education within Black communities, considerable work must be done at PWIs to satisfy similar gaps in education (Williams et al., 2019). The next section of this literature review explains the need for diverse leadership and its implication in higher education while examining it through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT offers a theoretical lens that can be utilized to identify and analyze how racial discourse and actions in American culture, specifically at higher education institutions, affect American culture at large (Gillborn et al., 2018).

Critical Race Theory.

Academic scholars have focused on using CRT to approach social justice issues and education (Gillborn et al., 2018). CRT contends that one primary perception is that racism is not

unusual but somewhat normal, and is familiar to those in the subculture (Cabrera, 2018). The theory centers on subtleties and covert systems that influence discrimination, regardless of the intent. CRT maintains that racism functions within normal activities, as many factors go unquestioned by practitioners and various policy creators. This notion is exemplified by the disproportionate access that Whites have to multiple resources compared to African Americans (Cabrera, 2018; Sleeter, 2017). While racism is widely accepted, some individuals will attest that racism does not exist or has dissipated over the years. Individuals who believe that racism is no longer prevalent typically do not recognize racial disparities; therefore, when imbalances are identified, the racial gap is attributed to factors other than racism (Cabrera, 2018).

Origins of Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Legal scholars created critical race theory in the 1970s to uncover the hidden subtext of race and racism within the American legal system (Cabrera, 2018). Further, CRT intended to dismiss the "color-blind" mentality that was prominent during the Civil Rights era. Though done with good intentions, this mentality did not address the root causes of systemic and institutional racism (Bissonnette, 2016).

CRT is a movement in which activists and scholars are intrigued by the relationships between race, racism, and power and how they transform and evolve (Cabrera, 2018). Though legal scholars established CRT as a method to explore race and racism in law, it has been adapted into the realm of education (Steele, 2018). CRT is one of the most critical global approaches for those who are researching racial inequity (Gillborn et al., 2018). Critical Race Theory offers a new paradigm on the reasons behind issues of race, social injustice, and racial disparities within society, resulting in the utilization of the theory in numerous studies and throughout different disciplines (Arai & Kivel, 2017).

In an attempt to directly address racism, CRT challenges the foundation of liberal order (Hall, 2018). CRT is extensive and robust, as it includes several overarching tenants. CRT is rooted in the following six common tenants:

1. Racism is typical in US society.
2. CRT expresses suspicion regarding claims of colorblindness, meritocracy, impartiality, and objectivity.
3. CRT questions the historical examination law. CRT assumes that racism has added to the present demonstrations of the advantages and disadvantages of groups.
4. CRT insists that experiential awareness of minorities be recognized.
5. CRT generates an understanding of themes and ideas that cut across disciplines.
6. CRT strives to eliminate racial oppression as a catalyst for stopping all forms of oppression (Hughes, 2020; Hughes et al., 2016).

CRT addresses the discursive construction of race that is entangled in education systems. CRT criticizes the deficit of discourse surrounding race, as it is both explicit and implicit in the realm of education (Mills & Unsworth, 2018). Furthermore, CRT in academia has explored racial inequality concerning African American identities; it has recorded a history of White supremacy in education.

CRT asserts that experiences of racism occurring at PWIs are not by chance; moreover, this notion is not new. These incidents do not survive on an individual level but result from a racist society (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). CRT is a vibrant and sound lens to analyze the data provided as this challenges the common beliefs of race and racism. CRT recognizes the complexities of race as being a social construct and deeply material (Brook et al., 2015). Drawing from CRT is imperative to understanding how these intersections influence experiences

in Higher Education. For this study's purposes, the proposed remediation of the lack of racial diversity within leadership at institutions of higher education was viewed through the lens of CRT.

Discrimination, Prejudice, Racism & Stereotyping.

Despite their distinctions, racism, prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination are used interchangeably within common conversations (Salter et al., 2018). Stereotyping makes general claims, particularly about social kinds, while lacking quantifiers and does not assert specific individual claims (Beeghly, 2020). Stereotypes may influence decision-making and employee appraisals, resulting in lower expectations and evaluations, limiting minority leader's reach to promotion opportunities and, ultimately, leadership positions (Anderson et al., 2019). Also, some racial minority groups, such as African Americans, are stereotyped as having lower competence and less ambition than their White counterparts, which has been extended to leadership positions. Stereotyping is significantly problematic as it categorizes and makes inferences that may be inaccurate; these preconceived notions can lead to prejudice and, subsequently, discrimination (Wagner et al., 2019). Moreover, stereotyping fails to treat people as individuals, which is morally wrong (Beeghly, 2020). Stereotypes concerning African Americans have historically been seen to negatively impact African Americans in leadership positions (Anderson et al., 2019).

Despite their distinctions, racism, prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination are used interchangeably within ordinary conversations (Salter et al., 2018). Most recently, prejudice can be described more expansively to include perceptions of the difference in the in-group and out-group values where individuals perceive that their one group maintains more exceptional desirable traits than the out-group based on inaccurate information and resistance to change

(Goldman, 2017). Some argue that prejudice is connected to the perception of differences in values between groups or cultures; further, leaders in education maintain a critical role in addressing and reducing prejudice within education systems (Lins et al., 2017).

Race-based discrimination led to a history of disadvantages for African Americans (Taylor et al., 2018). Discrimination based on race continues to be a problem as there is considerable evidence that hiring discrimination exists (Hora, 2020). Discrimination can be explained as consistent but subtle forms of intolerance and unfair treatment or less respectful treatment during social encounters, which is also strongly shaped by race (Taylor et al., 2018). Discrimination is a pervasive notion that is recurring and can be differentiated between two forms. Hard discrimination is blatant and driven by negative affect such as fear, anger, or hatred (Greenland et al., 2018). Conversely, soft discrimination can be described as being ignorant, lacking experience, or making a mistake. Discrimination and discriminatory practices still influence educational administration where there is a perception that to experience upward mobility, one must be White (Agosto & Roland, 2018).

Racism and race continue to be important topics of discussion and study in the U.S. and are increasingly becoming a foundational component to the educational curriculum (Demoigny & Botzakis, 2018). Race is a social construct in the interest of societal dominance and is not biologically constructed or genetically real. Furthermore, race is a general term to categorize signifying one's skin color, which then distinguishes rank and power (Feagin, 2017; Liu, 2018). The concept of race was developed between the 16th and 18th centuries during which time it became customary to utilize race to indicate social categories and to differentiate between inferior and superior human species (Demoigny & Botzakis, 2018). Further, this differentiation

began the classification of human beings based on physical characteristics, while also attributing intellect to race.

Racism is systemic and exists in the benefits and drawbacks designated in cultural artifacts, ideological discussion, and institutional entities that are combined with individual biases (Salter et al., 2018). Hence, racism equates to prejudice plus power. There are three critical insights regarding the psychology of racism, which include racist actions are embedded in the structure of daily life. Secondly, individuals inhabit cultural worlds that sustain or support the racialized processes of the world. Lastly, individuals frame, create, and maintain racialized environments through elected actions and practices.

Racism is the differential treatment of individuals based on their assigned or perceived racial category and the perceived superiority or inferiority of a specific group over another group (Noonan et al., 2016). Multiple forms of racism occur to include aversive racism, laissez-faire racism, and color-blind racism. Aversive racism implies that negative attitudes are exhibited in subtle, obscure, and reasoned ways (Minero & Espinoza, 2016). Additionally, subtle unpleasant interpersonal interactions and behaviors may transpire more frequently as it is not as visible, detectable, and in cases, unconscious, which can be perceived as cues of an unwelcoming environment (Anderson et al., 2019). Thus, aversive racism is subtle, obscure, and more challenging to identify. Hence, aversive racism proposes that individuals believe they have equal values; however, they feel uneasy while interacting with individuals from minority groups and attempt to avoid interracial interactions (Minero & Espinoza, 2016).

Laissez-faire racism represents an era in which historical values, meritocracy, and a competitive spirit in a free marketplace provided a rationalization for persistent racial inequality (Bobo, 2017). A principal component of laissez-faire racism is the stereotyping that continues to

persist in society resulting in negative belief systems attributed to minorities. Another critical component of laissez-faire racism is that victim blaming occurs, as the individual is considered responsible for their plight, and not an old system of racial discrimination (Denis, 2015).

Color-blind racism is based on the foundation that inequality does not exist, and if it does, it is not hugely significant (Brühwiler, 2019). Moreover, White college students and staff espouse higher levels of color-blind racial ideologies than individuals of color. They can be attributed to systemic race-based privileges that White individuals maintain in the United States (Keum et al., 2018). This form of racism further speaks to a more significant underlying issue. Color-blind racism is founded on the belief system that social changes instituted during the Civil Rights Movement served African Americans. Thus, the promise of equality has been achieved; however, color-blind racism only supports and maintains a society rooted in white privilege (Brühwiler, 2019).

"White privilege" refers to the array of privileges one gets from belonging to the white "racial" group (Feagin, 2017). According to Dudzinski (2018):

White privilege is unearned power conferred systematically. Whites are given the benefit of the doubt. Our motives or reasons for being somewhere do not bear undue scrutiny from strangers or law enforcement. Deference is paid to us & fewer obstacles arise in our efforts to exercise our rights, pursue our goals, and hold positions of authority. The privilege is marked by its invisibility to those who enjoy it and its conspicuousness to those who do not. Whites take our independence and freedom for granted because we have known no different. White privilege gives white people the option of playing it safe—of not speaking up or taking risks if we do not want to. Our colleagues, students, and neighbors of color do not have this option. (p. 4)

The inadequate treatment of African Americans remains an issue of grave concern within American culture and continues to be a pressing issue (Noonan et al., 2016; Sinanan, 2016; Wilder, 2018). Minorities who have demonstrated mastery of a skillset may be passed over for promotion opportunities. They may be expected to have more stringent competency standards (Khattab et al., 2020). Those individuals in the minority groups are frequently required to demonstrate more considerable work experience, more significant job-specific experience, and longer tenure before receiving consideration for promotion (Khattab et al., 2020). One may argue that this directly relates to the topic at hand; the underrepresentation of African Americans in leadership positions at higher education institutions.

Several landmark events can represent the origin of diversity initiatives in the U.S. These initiatives show potential and hope surrounding diversity in education. In *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the Supreme Court affirmed that state laws establishing separate schools for Black and White students to be unequal and unconstitutional (Liu, 2018). The Civil Rights Act (1964) enacted by congress is a federal law that protects against employment discrimination based on race, color, national origin, and other characteristics (Hanley, 2020). Both these government efforts were implemented to signify anti-discrimination and a path toward equality; still, inequality in the U.S. demands more than these legislative acts to abolish racism.

In a blatant, overt context, racism is easy to recognize; however, it is not as easy when covert and subtle. Covert racism under the lens of CRT can be explained as microaggressions. Microaggressions occur daily, in both social and educational settings, as subtle insults directed toward minorities and can be conscious or unconscious (Marom, 2019). Microaggression signifies an interaction between two or more people surrounding race, culture, or gender; this

intentional or unintentional unfriendly communication is a disrespectful put-down and implicit racial repulse (Orelus, 2018).

In various ways, Americans frame racial inequality to justify the unfair treatment of minority groups (Brühwiler, 2019). CRT explains that individuals experience racism at PWIs, and these occurrences are not random or abnormal, as it has been a perpetual issue. Additionally, these instances do not exist personally, but because of a racist (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). There is significant data that supports the assertion that racism is still prevalent in the United States; however, it manifests in a subtle manner strengthened and maintained through institutionalized and historical racism (Thurman et al., 2019).

Racism can be categorized; as a view that racial difference provides an inherent advantage of a particular group; or individual prejudice (Noonan et al., 2016; Salter et al., 2018). Racism is more pervasive than an individual holding a prejudice; it is complicated as it can be hostile, subtle, and unconscious (Salter et al., 2018). These forms of racism compounded lead to a significant problem of institutional and systemic racism. Racism functions on various levels, thus contributing to black Americans' social inequities. Institutionalized racism continues to impact black Americans' well-being in all aspects of society as such racial differences should be acknowledged (Thurman et al., 2019).

Racial biases continue to be a concern in the most progressive workplaces; moreover, there is growing data demonstrating that all aspects of employment are impacted by gender, cultural, or racial identity (Fan et al., 2019). The notion that one's racial identity impacts components of hiring and advancement are alarming. Bias in the performance evaluation process has been noted to be one reason why few minorities ascend to academia's upper echelons. Representation matters as institutions attempt to recruit and boost the number of

underrepresented individuals in leadership positions, decision-makers can no longer only hire individuals who look like them (Fan, 2019). This inability to recruit, retain, and advance minorities intentionally or unintentionally perpetuates aversive racism (Turner, & Grauerholz, 2017). Power and privilege are essential factors when examining race, racism, prejudice, stereotyping and ethnic discrimination; those who work at PWIs cannot evade the consequences of historical and modern racism and should attempt to create spaces for various communities to be represented and valued (Wallerstein & Duran, 2016).

Diversity in Higher Education.

Diversity in higher education can be explained as the inclusion of minorities and various marginalized groups. The representation concept is significant as it allows for a comprehensive view of data and perspective through exposure to different aspects. According to Roberts (2018), data reveal what exists while the lack of data describes very little. Russell et al. (2019) explained that if an institution is going to address diversity and inclusion issues, they must do the work. Institutions must look at the current population and see where there are deficiencies in equity. Examining the lack of diversity among leaders at higher education institutions is essential to understanding the need for greater diversity and more representation of minorities in leadership positions (Russell et al., 2019). To succeed, organizations should focus on increasing diversity. Millennials outnumber baby boomers and are notably more diverse (Goldberg et al., 2019). Additionally, despite increasingly diverse populations, minority workers are less likely than whites to be promoted to executive or senior management positions. For diversity to occur within leadership positions at predominately white institutions, minority experiences to include African Americans must be included. The inclusion of African Americans will help to better support the recruitment and assessment of minorities at PWIs within a leadership capacity (Wolfe &

Dilworth, 2015). Hence, the representation of groups that have been historically excluded is a fundamental issue.

The lack of diversity shown in education can be attributed to beliefs that fail to appreciate the input of minorities and other marginalized groups (Clarke & O' Donoghue, 2017). A critical component to cultivating diversity and inclusion entails creating an institutional baseline. This baseline allows the organization to identify gaps and, more specifically, targets for positive change (West et al., 2018). The development of diversity initiatives within higher education leadership has been slow in advancing African Americans' leadership roles into administrative roles. Maintaining diverse faculty and staff can have numerous positive impacts on college campuses, therefore, one would assert that institutions should place a more considerable effort on retaining them at PWIs (Steele, 2018). To improve diversity and inclusion, an organization must utilize current and accurate information that evaluates leadership, recognize problems in culture and various practices, seek input from stakeholders, and facilitate an environment for change (West et al., 2018). Once the change has been implemented, a continuous assessment must be performed to ensure that it maintains a diverse environment.

Diversity Management.

Diversity management promotes a changing demographic structure of the workforce, increasing social sensitivity to ethical concerns (Abidi et al., 2017). Diversity management entails employing best practices to support, foster, and create an inclusive and diverse workplace while gathering synergistic resources and driving optimum efficiency. These best practices benefit the organization as different perspectives allow for multiple opinions and views. Diversity management has increasingly been regarded as a critical element to an organization's strategic agenda (Theodorakopoulos & Budhwar, 2015). Some argue that diversity management

can be myopic and a threat to the greater community, social capital, and solidarity. This perspective is due to an inability to manage cultural diversity and a belief system that certain cultural groups will be incompatible (Howarth & Andreouli, 2016).

Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) explained that for diversity to occur within leadership at PWIs, the inclusion of minority experiences must also be a priority during the recruitment, retention, and assessment. Organizational planning is conventional in all industries to ensure a competitive environment is maintained. Planning can be described as a valid means for addressing issues that impact an organization (Elliott et al., 2019). A strategically aligned plan can ensure that the organization's members are working in a cohesive manner (Elliot et al., 2019). This need for planning is no different for issues of diversity, as an institution should make a concerted effort to have a racially diverse staff (Russell et al., 2019). Understanding that a problem exists, along with an effective plan, could combat current issues facing the institution.

During the strategic planning process, institutions can advocate for greater diversity and inclusion of faculty and staff while ensuring an increase in cultural competence to create a diverse pipeline of individuals (Coplan & Fleming, 2019). Proper planning can support leaders by improving their competitive intelligence, as competitive intelligence provides efficient ways to enhance results and productivity (Daft, 2016). The benefit of effective strategic planning can have numerous benefits to include elevating the culture of the institution, which supports inclusivity (Allaoui et al., 2019).

Ensuring that African Americans are advancing within an organization requires a successful leadership development approach that should be attained and developed through leadership skills, traits, and knowledge. Leaders with a different perspective are uniquely positioned to enhance the organization in many ways beyond production (Viitala et al., 2017). As

institutions take an active role in developing African American employees, it can be directly linked to innovation (Zhu et al., 2018). These individuals should be considered assets in which there should be a focus on investing and developing. Through the implementation of training and various advancement opportunities, these individuals will feel more empowered, which translates to better innovation opportunities. Racial diversity is a critical element of successful societies. Fostering racial diversity is not merely a moral issue but a practical one. Data demonstrates that racial diversity has numerous benefits, such as creating greater creativity, innovation, quality, and decision-making (Galinsky et al., 2015).

Criticisms to CRT.

While some responses to CRT are positive and constructive, CRT has remained subject to varying critiques. Individuals have attempted to reassert traditional opinions. Some general criticisms of CRT include that race is the only factor. However, this is not accurate, as CRT explains that acknowledging race and racism is essential to garnering a greater understanding of various social inequalities (Cabrera, 2018). Another critique of CRT is that the theory sees all whites as racist. This perspective is also incorrect, the theory does not assert that all white people are racist, nor does it declare that everyone who is white will benefit from white supremacy.

An additional critique of CRT is that it fosters a sense of hopelessness; this is also inaccurate as CRT contends that to triumph over racism will be challenging; however, there is a need to and a call to combat injustice (Cabrera, 2018). Lastly, CRT is criticized for its reliance on storytelling and narration, as some argue that CRT is built on fiction (Tran, 2019). However, scholars explain that storytelling is valuable as those individuals who belong to the dominant racial group, cannot easily understand what it means to be non-White (Grey & Williams-Farrier, 2017).

Summary of Critical Race Theory.

In summary, CRT is rooted in the legal field and is well-positioned to be utilized in education. CRT provides a crucial lens for surmising racial issues and the sustained marginalization of minorities in America. The theory maintains several primary tenets addressing race, racism, privileges afforded to White individuals (Gillborn et al., 2018). Multiple forms of racism are examined to include aversive racism, laissez-faire racism, & color-blind racism. Furthermore, the distinction between prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, and racism is also examined. Diversity within higher education is also discussed and analyzed, along with diversity management. The lack of diversity among leaders at higher education institutions and the benefits of greater diversity at PWIs in a leadership capacity is also explored (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). The next section of the literature review discussed the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy, which suggests that a demographically diverse workforce leads to policy outcomes that echo the interests of all groups represented (Cabrera, 2018).

Theory of Represented Bureaucracy.

Governments have promoted diversity within the public sector in line with the concept of representative bureaucracy, which encompasses the thought that public organizations should represent the population they serve, meaning that passive representation renders active representation (Cabrera, 2018). Passive representation is the extent a bureaucratic entity's employee diversity is proportionate to the population they serve. Active representation transpires when a bureaucrat utilizes their position to support the interests and aspirations of those they represent. Public organizations that are represented by their citizens consequently grew to become concepts particularly responsive to diverse interests instead of a structure that primarily encompasses individuals from the dominant social class. Empirical studies have established that

representation matters as services delivered by a representative workforce produced positive results (Lind, 2016). As the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy has evolved, it exemplifies more significant concerns about the function of organizations in sustaining diversity (Liang et al., 2020).

Origin of the Theory of Represented Bureaucracy.

Donald Kingsley first explained the notion of representative bureaucracy in 1944. However, to understand the origin and the need for representative bureaucracy, it is critical to review the concept of Max Weber's Theory of Traditional Bureaucracy and the various critiques. Weber claimed bureaucracy is a system that controls and monitors a country, entity, or organization (Jordan-Makely, 2019). Bureaucracy is frequently aligned with capitalism characterized by a hierarchy of office, explicit explanation of functions, recruitment, and promotion based on merit; Weber also believed that bureaucracy was a rational, efficient, ideal based on sound logic principles (Jordan-Makely, 2019). Conversely, though laws have been created to ensure equal treatment, bureaucrats have discriminated against minorities (Andersen & Guul, 2019). Furthermore, bureaucrats use various approaches to bend or break the rules, which allows them to discriminate against other groups.

A large body of research explains that the stereotyping of various groups may lead to discrimination (Andersen & Guul, 2019). Furthermore, the underrepresentation in leadership positions of minorities can partly be attributed to stereotyping and lower expectations of minorities. Stereotypes may impact decision making and employee performance appraisals, which can lower expectations and evaluations for minorities, ultimately limiting access to promotions and leadership positions (Anderson et al., 2019). Some stereotypes exist around White managers that express that they are more competent and ambitious and embody

characteristics of leaders, opposed to African Americans who are less qualified or skilled and have lower promotion potential. The discrimination that occurs within bureaucracies provides opportunities for other theories to evolve. The Theory of Representative Bureaucracy asserts that fair representation of citizens in government agencies will ensure that the public's interests are accounted for in decisions being made for the greater society (Shjarback et al., 2017).

The Theory of Representative Bureaucracy argues that individuals who share common backgrounds can lead to shared values and norms; thus, those working within the bureaucracy align with those existing within the bureaucracy (Ricucci & Van Ryzin, 2017). Representative bureaucracy explains that an organization's demographic makeup can impact how organizational policy and procedures are implemented and executed (Chand, 2020; Ricucci & Van Ryzin, 2017). Furthermore, the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy contends that when bureaucracy maintains a representative of the individuals it serves, it can enhance trust and foster the group (Ricucci & Van Ryzin 2017).

Diversifying the workforce is based on the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy, to which a racially diverse organization will better represent the population it serves (Hong, 2016). Furthermore, there is a perception that representative bureaucracy will improve the integrity and ethical treatment of minority groups. Efforts to improve diversity are critical for many reasons. Beyond the fundamental issues of social equity in promotion and hiring, diversified workforces can impact an institution's capacity to fulfill its mission by more effectively meeting the needs of the individual it supports (Ricucci, & Van Ryzin, 2017). As the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy affirms that the powers of bureaucracy can be more responsive to the public's interests if the staff of administrative agencies illustrates the demographic characteristics of the respective community (Rivera, 2016), some critics do not agree.

Figure 2.*Passive-Active Representation Model*

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<https://doi:10.1111/puar.12649>

Note. The implication of demographic characteristics compiled with distinct values and actions, resulting in better outcomes (Ricucci & Van Ryzin, 2017).

Criticisms of the Theory of Represented Bureaucracy.

Criticisms often associated with the theory representative bureaucracy include an emphasis on ethnic balancing instead of effective production. Striving for equal representation may lead to a reduction of quality and a more significant rift between races, as some may believe that the individual chosen is not the right fit (Idike et al., 2019). Some individuals believe that passive representation is adequate, while active representation is not needed on behalf of underrepresented and underserved populations (Lind, 2016). Another critique referenced regarding representative bureaucracy is the definition and understanding of representation as it may encompass socioeconomic status, race, religion, and the need to be represented in precise proportion to the population (Lind, 2016).

Barriers to advancement.

Institutions need to take the diversification of campuses seriously at all levels. Furthermore, this level of seriousness entails that institutions are intentional in those efforts of improving institutional diversity policies and initiatives. Moreover, these policies and initiatives cannot be created casually as this will only reinforce exclusion and inequality (Gasman et al., 2015). The glass ceiling exemplifies an invisible yet impenetrable barrier that prevents minorities from achieving the highest leadership levels within organizations (Gamble & Turner, 2015). A

Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (FGGC) study affirmed that minorities and women met considerable glass ceiling barriers in their careers (FGGC, 1995). The glass ceiling can affect diversity management in higher education resulting in minimal racial diversity and poor representation of minorities in leadership capacities (McIntosh et al., 2015). Bias, unconscious or conscious, impacts decisions based on personal experiences, stereotyping, and cultural context, which can negatively impact one's growth potential (Pardhan, 2018). The data suggest that academia is not a level playing field for all those who aspire to grow, and there is a significant need to remedy the imbalance (Pardhan, 2018). Furthermore, Fan et al. (2019) explained that there could be a decrease in biased incidents when there is better representation among the university workforce

Another factor that compounds upon the glass ceiling is the concrete ceiling. The concrete ceiling is a nuanced identifier that represents barriers that cannot be penetrated by minorities; the concrete ceiling is a career-limiting factor that affects the ability to ascend in addition to the ability to co-exist (Beckwith et al., 2016). The implication of these barriers continuously disregards minorities and other disadvantaged groups from being contenders for leadership positions.

It is important to note that mentoring programs exist within higher education institutions; however, there is a lack of African American mentors. The lack of available African American mentors creates a barrier that impacts African Americans' ascension into leadership positions (Gamble & Turner, 2015). Data have shown that African Americans have experienced challenges while gaining employment in academia in the United States. Furthermore, there are fewer opportunities for career growth and potential advancement than their white counterparts (Breetzke & Hedding, 2018). Mentors play a critical role in supporting career progression to

senior leadership positions. Data states that African Americans face barriers accessing effective mentor relationships (Jackson & Bouchard, 2019). The structure of an organization is one of the most challenging obstacles to address. Historically, higher education institutions are highly bureaucratic, making it challenging to enact change, specifically in leadership and management (Aarons et al., 2015; Jackson & Bouchard, 2019).

Strategies to advancement.

Efforts to better race relations and mitigate instances of discrimination have been undertaken as strategies for the advancement of minorities included implementing laws. Laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Affirmative Action, the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Act of 1972, and the FGCC were created to regulate diversity within organizations and mainly in leadership (Rush & Kellough, 2017). Approaches that promote diversity and equality in higher education included implementing strategies that support the inclusivity of minorities in leadership (Beer, 2015). Institutions should strive to ensure that the staff is reflective of the student demographic (Breetzke & Hedding, 2018). Understanding the challenges and barriers African Americans face while attempting to advance into higher education leadership is essential. Thus, finding appropriate mechanisms and various support systems to promote the advancement of African American leaders to navigate the recognized barriers. Ways in which these barriers can be managed is through mentorship, diversity management, and succession planning (Larry & Brown, 2019).

Ensuring that various recruiting efforts occur provides a pipeline that supports the building of diversity of all levels throughout the organization. If recruiters continue to do what has been historically done, they will continue to receive the same candidates that they always have. This awareness, in turn, shows that recruiters must change the methods that they are using.

Conducting training on various interview practices while utilizing previously established practices, institutions can better support diversity hiring. Also, understanding bias can provide shifts in prejudice and offer strategies and policies to address said biases (Yenet al., 2018).

The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (FGCC) was created to identify barriers associated with employment and leadership opportunities for minorities and women (Christie & Baghurst, 2017). The FGCC is a 21-member bipartisan team appointed by President Bush and Congressional leaders directed by the Secretary of Labor, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1991. The mandate was created to identify glass ceiling barriers that have prevented the advancement of minorities and women and the successful applications and policies that have commanded the advancement of minority men and women in leadership position positions in the private sector (FGCC, 1995). The Glass Ceiling Act (Section 204 of Public Law 102-166) mandates that the commission examine the preparedness for leadership positions and examine opportunities for advancement. Additionally, the commission investigates the practices and policies surrounding how decision positions are filled; review related industries in which minorities are not promoted, and compile and synthesize available research (FGCC, 1995).

The mandates from the FGCC sought to examine the issues and practices that limit the advancement of reducing unconscious and conscious biases that affect an institution's hiring and advancing practices (FGCC, 1995). Retention is another critical factor that should be acknowledged, as it is essential for growth. Retention can aid in an institution's success. High turnover rates of employees who do not feel valued can create an undesirable work environment for all involved (Swartout et al., 2015). Higher education has grappled with including and supporting students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented groups. Institutions have attempted to address these inequities by employing various strategies such as training, campus events,

audits, and surveys. One approach that has garnered much attention is the employment of campus diversity officers (Suarez et al., 2018). These efforts are ongoing as universities across the country begin to address the racial inequality on their campuses.

Coaching and Mentoring.

The underrepresentation of African Americans in leadership can be attributed to many factors. Some factors include the lack of informal networking opportunities with influential colleagues, the lack of prominent coaches or mentors, and the lack of organizational role models of the same ethnicity (Beckwith et al., 2016). Coaching can be described as a one-to-one learning and growth intervention process that employs reflective and goal-focused relationships between the coach and coachee to support organizational goals (Woods & Guillaume, 2016). Coaching in an organizational setting involves frequent interactions between the coach and the coachee geared towards the development of an individual (Hunt & Weinraub, 2017; Koroleva, 2016).

Coaching within an organization needs to be ongoing, collaborative, and goal-focused (Jones et al., 2016). Coaching, when effective, maintains that the coach will develop the coachee in a professional capacity that mutually benefits the coachee and their respective organization (Jones et al., 2016). Successful coaching relationships are built on trust, have a positive rapport, instill confidence within the coachee, and are rooted in the coachee's success (Chong & Gan, 2015). Coaching varies from other forms of organizational developmental relationships as it provides a unique approach to development; this approach includes providing honest and direct feedback to the individual being coached (Jones et al., 2016; Thomas & Thomas, 2015).

As the mentoring relationship evolves, particular competencies are being established, further mentoring nurtures a mentee's personal and professional development (Krishna et al., 2019). Mentoring is a tool that is used to develop the individual further while also supporting the

individual in setting goals. Also, mentoring attempts to present the individual being mentored with the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful at the organization. Mentoring is based on the mentor's experience and occurs between a senior experienced individual and a less experienced junior person (Bradford et al., 2017). Mentoring supports a significant and meaningful emotional element that is primarily ongoing between the mentor and the mentee.

Further, mentoring is a one-to-one interactive process of guided learning, as expressed by Hunt and Weintraub (2017). A mentor relationship is a long-term connection that is significantly comprehensive while looking at an individual and their overall career (Jones et al., 2016). Additionally, the mentor-mentee relationship includes a more profound emotional component that fosters development.

Mentoring and coaching share some similarities; however, mentoring and coaching are not the same (Gannon & Salter, 2015). Mentoring and coaching are both tools that can further develop the individual. One crucial distinction between the two concepts is that mentoring attempts to present the mentee with knowledge or skills based on the mentor's experience (Bradford et al., 2017). In contrast, the coach may not be someone familiar with the specificities of the job. Mentoring maintains a more significant emotional component that is typically ongoing between the mentor and the mentee, a one-to-one interactive process of guided learning (Hunt & Weintraub, 2017). Finding mentors and coaches may be difficult for African Americans and other minorities, as they may not have leaders who share similar experiences or feel comfortable working with them (Jackson & Bouchard, 2019).

Figure 3*Coaching versus Mentoring*

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Kumar, A. (2019). Empowering Managers Through Positive Political Skills mentorship.

<https://www.slideshare.net/AbhishekKumar604/empowering-managers-through-positive-political-skillsmentorshipintroduction-to-hr-analytics>

Note. The implication of coaching and mentoring and the benefits of both. Adapted from

“Empowering Managers Through Positive Political Skills mentorship,” by A. Kumar, 2019.

Summary of the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy.

In summary, the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy explains that representation is the extent a bureaucratic entity's employee diversity is proportionate to the population they serve (Cabrera, 2018). The Theory of Representative Bureaucracy argues that individuals who share common backgrounds can lead to shared values and norms thus those working within the bureaucracy should align with those within the bureaucracy (Ricucci & Van Ryzin, 2017). This section also addresses the barriers that affect African Americans, such as the glass ceiling, which represents an invisible yet impenetrable barrier that prevents minorities from achieving the highest leadership levels within organizations (Gamble & Turner, 2015). Further, the concrete ceiling is also explained and a nuanced identifier that represents barriers that cannot be penetrated by minorities, minimizing their ability to ascend in addition to the ability to co-exist (Beckwith et al., 2016). Other barriers, including a lack of mentors and coaches, are also addressed. The section moves forward by acknowledging previously established strategies implemented to address diversity and equality, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Affirmative Action, and the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Act of 1972 (Rush & Kellough, 2017). Further, outlining the importance of other strategies, such as coaching and mentoring (Hunt & Weintraub, 2017). The next component of this literature review addressed the potential themes and perceptions of the study.

Potential themes and perceptions.

Several notable themes and sub-themes were developed while gathering data for the literature review. The first theme that arose in the leadership and diversity literature is the call for greater representation in higher education leadership. It is evident that racism still exists; further, there is still racial discord. Race relations and diversity scholars concur that change is needed to

address the challenges that face higher education institutions as they relate to a disproportionate number of White individuals in a leadership capacity.

The next theme that arose is that race, racism, and racial equality are still heavily implicated, whether implicitly or explicitly, in higher education related to how African Americans are perceived. African Americans have to contend with the hurdles of prejudice, aversive racism, laissez-faire racism, and color-blind racism as they attempt to ascend. Subthemes that also emerged were stereotyping and micro-aggression toward African Americans and the existence of White privilege, which affords White individuals' societal benefits over non-white individuals who navigate the same financial, social, or political conditions.

The last theme includes the significance of African American role models in leadership positions to include mentors and coaches. There is a lack of African American administrators who can mentor and coach due to the limited number of African Americans within leadership positions at institutions of higher education. Having mentorship is crucial to the development and advancement of African Americans at PWIs. The literature and themes generated established the value of coaching and mentorship, the concern of race and racism, and the importance of leadership and diversity in supporting African Americans as they navigate their careers.

Summary of the literature review.

The data presented show that there is a lack of African Americans in leadership positions at PWIs. At the same time, there is an increase in minority students across colleges and universities in the United States. There is a need to echo the same commitment to African American leaders on college and university campuses. Though laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Affirmative Action, and the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Act of 1972 were created to regulate diversity within organizations, barriers remain. The obstacles that impact

African Americans advancing into leadership positions include the glass ceiling, the concrete ceiling, lack of mentors and coaches, among many other factors. Strategies suggested within this study helped to provide a foundation of equity and inclusion for African American leaders.

Moreover, additional research must be conducted about the lack of African American leaders in higher education institutions.

Transition and Summary of Section 1

Section one of this study provided an introduction to the research project, which began with the background of the problem of underrepresentation and disproportionate advancement of African American leaders at Predominately White Institutions. The problem statement explained the general and specific research problems and its importance to the study. The purpose statement section explained why exploring the research problem is critical in higher education. The nature of the study section described the selected research method and design and why it was chosen to examine the phenomena.

The research questions that guided this qualitative case study allowed for an in-depth analysis of attitudes and perspectives and further investigate the barriers to advancement that African American leaders face at PWIs. The conceptual framework further explained the central concepts of the study and related theories. The definition of terms section elaborated of all vital terms used throughout the study. The section on assumptions, limitations, and delimitations listed the study's various boundaries and implications to the results. The study section on significance described how the study would add to the existing body of knowledge, provided a Biblical integration foundation, and explained how the study relates to the researcher's field of study. The literature review supported the study; it analyzed the current data and further linked theories exhibited in the conceptual framework and provided additional context surrounding the

subject matter. Section two of this study provided an overview of the research project, the researcher's role, participants, the research method and design. This section also addresses population and sampling, data collection and analysis methods, and the approach's reliability and validity.

Section 2: The Project

This project examined the relationship between African Americans and various theories related to race and representation associated with leadership within higher education institutions. This section encompasses the purpose of the study and the researcher and participants' role, as the study seeks to explain the research intent. The study employed a qualitative case study methodology to understand the phenomenon further. The population and the rationale for the sampling method, as well as eligibility for the participants, were described. Next, the section addressed the data collection strategy and data analysis strategy. The final component of this section encompassed the study's reliability and validity techniques, in addition to a brief overview of the following section.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to add to existing bodies of research that address the underrepresentation and low advancement of African Americans in leadership positions in higher education. The larger problem was explored through an exhaustive study of the disproportionate representation and a lack of diversity among African Americans in a leadership capacity at two PWIs within the state of Connecticut (CT) in comparison to their White counterparts. The case study provided an analysis surrounding the importance of African Americans leaders and the minimal representation of minorities in senior leadership positions within higher education (Arday, 2018; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Additionally, African

Americans have to traverse the challenges of securing leadership opportunities when trying to advance in higher education (Banks et al., 2018). The study sought to understand attitudes and perspectives regarding the under-representation and the minimal advancement of African Americans at these institutions. Furthermore, the research sought to identify any barriers that African Americans face ascending into leadership roles at these institutions.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role in qualitative studies, specifically in this case study, was to be a human instrument through which the data is gathered, generating robust data to be analyzed (Moon, 2015). Though there is computerized software to aid in text analysis, qualitative data management remains systematic and rigorous (Renz et al., 2018). The researcher was responsible for locating participants for the study and asking those participants questions surrounding their experience with the phenomenon (Moon, 2015). Within qualitative research, the researcher collects data through various means to capture the researcher's observations of the phenomena (Renz et al., 2018).

Before gathering and analyzing data, this researcher identified gaps in academic and professional literature; further, the researcher identified research questions to investigate (Dresch et al., 2015). The researcher explained the research design and methods for conducting the study as these components tell what the researcher wants to do and how they will accomplish it (Moon, 2019). Also critical in qualitative research, the researcher should decide how data will be collected as there are four primary qualitative data collection types namely observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2018). Mainly for this study, semi-structured interviews were utilized to navigate the participants' experiences about the

phenomenon and provide rich data for this researcher. Further, qualitative researchers collect data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places being studied.

Once data have been collected, analysis began that is both inductive and deductive, which established patterns and themes providing further insight into the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher explained the participant's experience with the phenomenon in detail while transparently describing, interpreting, reporting, and presenting evidence to substantiate the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In essence, the researcher was a listener, interviewer, and finder of observations for those under study.

Participants

Participants for this study included 19 leaders who currently or previously worked at two PWIs in the state of Connecticut. Interviews were conducted with individuals who hold an Assistant Director position or greater. The rationale for selecting these participants was to glean further insight into their leadership understanding at their respective campuses. Specifically, the study sought to understand the factors that impact leadership, specifically African Americans, in leadership positions. Conversely, the study sought to understand the strategies employed to surmount challenges in attaining leadership positions. The study allowed the 19 participants to self-identify and share their individual experiences in higher education administration. Participants also shared their educational and career background, demonstrating their preparedness for leadership positions. Additionally, participants shared support systems available at their respective universities (mentors, coaches). Further, participants explained whether these factors have supported or limited their ability to ascend within higher education.

Research Method and Design

The selection of research methods and design may affect the study's findings, so ensuring that an appropriate method and design was chosen is a significant component when addressing the study's research questions. This qualitative study sought to examine and discuss the underrepresentation and low advancement of African American leaders in higher education leadership. This study was conducted with a case study design using a qualitative method. Qualitative research methods collect data from individual experiences in a natural setting and provide greater insight into the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This section of the methodology included greater detail around the method and design employed for this study.

Discussion of method.

There are three primary research methods to include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. All methods present a distinctive strategy in the manner that research is conducted. Qualitative and quantitative research represents a different way of performing a research study; while both qualitative and quantitative research aims to produce robust, valid, and reliable data (Davis et al., 2016). Quantitative studies deal primarily with numerical data whereas qualitative data handle non-numerical data. Further, mixed methods research integrates qualitative and quantitative elements (Davis et al., 2016). However, after careful consideration of the various approaches, a qualitative approach was chosen.

Qualitative research is experiential in the approach to inquiry; data collection occurs in a natural setting to those individuals under study; it reveals how things happen and how they work while seeking an array of interpretations and providing a greater understanding as themes and patterns are established (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research is fundamental in educational research as it enables a deeper understanding of experience and phenomena while

answering "why" and "how" research questions (Cleland, 2017). Qualitative research analysis strives to understand the depth and complexity of a phenomenon, furthermore, giving a voice to the individual under study (Reinecke et al., 2016). Qualitative methods enable those under study to share their perspectives and experiences in a manner that a quantitative method cannot measure or address (Ali et al., 2020).

Discussion of design.

Five designs are commonly considered in a qualitative study: ethnography, narrative research, grounded theory, phenomenology, and case studies (Ali et al., 2020; Davis et al., 2016). The case study design was selected, as it is a primary form of qualitative research. The case study is comparable to other research strategies and affords the researcher with a method of investigating an empirical topic through a series of pre-specified procedures (Creswell, 2014). The case study methodology should be utilized when the degree of focus is on a contemporary event instead of historical events. Primarily, this qualitative research method produced and developed an exhaustive analysis of a case (Creswell, 2014). Case studies facilitate detailed and descriptive understandings of a phenomenon (Ali et al., 2020). The case study design is utilized when a researcher examines contemporary events but cannot manipulate the relevant behaviors (Yin, 2018).

Case study research reliably examines real-life phenomena within the environmental setting with great depth (Ridder, 2017). Creswell and Poth (2018) described the case study approach deals with real-life investigations of situations to gather data and themes to explain certain phenomena. Multiple cases provide an identification of common patterns and characteristics, which is critical to understanding characteristics for analytical generalization (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017). Employing a multiple case study design allowed for a more

significant analysis of cases of diverse perspectives on the same phenomenon (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017). Multiple-case design is more robust than a single-case study. It allowed for comparing research results in multiple locations with various individuals and concluded with more in-depth information (Yin, 2018). Examining multiple cases enabled the study to uncover what changes need to occur to address the under-representation and minimal advancement of African Americans in Higher Education.

Summary of research method and design.

A qualitative research method with a multiple case study design was best suited for this study. It allowed research to be gathered and analyzed as it relates to African Americans in leadership. A qualitative approach to research provides a robust understanding of a situation or problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research method allowed a rapport to be established and further explores the relationship between the phenomenon and the individuals under study (Ridder, 2017). The case study design is well-suited when one deliberately wants to cover contextual conditions and the extent of control the researcher has over behavioral events (Yin, 2018). Case studies are a design of inquiry in which an in-depth analysis of a case, event, and process, bounded by time and activity of one or more individuals where information using various data collection procedures are sustained over some time (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2018). Given the above-outlined characteristics of a case study, this researcher asserted that the multiple case study design was the most appropriate to address the phenomenon under investigation.

Population and Sampling

This section discussed population and sampling while conducting academic research and the population and sampling methodology adopted for this study. This component included the basis for involving participants in the study, ensuring that each participant meets the study's

eligibility criteria, ensuring that participants are eligible to answer the study's research questions and have experience with the phenomenon.

Discussion of Population.

A research population consists of individuals with single or multiple characteristics of interest that a researcher examines to further academic knowledge and debate (Asiamah et al., 2017). The specification of the population is a necessity in qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative studies center on comparatively few participants who describe their experiences and knowledge concerning the phenomenon. Additionally, Rahi (2017) explained that the population relates to the individuals or items that one wants to understand further. The research population in the qualitative section consists of Assistant Directors and above at PWIs in Connecticut. Two PWIs within the state of Connecticut were incorporated into the population. Leaders, regardless of race, who have held leadership positions at these institutions, were invited to participate. The fundamental criterion for this study is that the participant currently maintains a leadership position.

Discussion of Sampling.

Utilizing a smaller population size allows for an inference to be made about a larger population; further maintaining a smaller group reduces the burden of work and cost associated with studying the entire target population (Rahi, 2017). Sampling necessitates choosing a segment of people to elicit information concerning individual attitudes and beliefs. There is no universal method that dictates data saturation; however, general guidelines explain that when little or no change will result from additional data collection and the study can be replicated, data saturation has been met (Fusch & Ness, 2015). According to Malterud et al. (2016), the sample should not be too small or too broad; thus, the best qualitative analysis occurs when robust data

and diverse accounts of the phenomenon exist. To achieve diverse accounts and new aspects of the phenomenon, a sample of six to 10 participants with diverse experiences might provide sufficient information (Malterud et al., 2016). Boddy (2016) explained that data saturation is apparent at 12 in-depth interviews. While, other researchers have expressed that data saturation occurs when participant responses can be anticipated as they have heard them repeatedly, and no new patterns or themes are emerging in the data (Roy et al., 2015).

Purposive sampling was used to identify the data to be collected by staff who are Assistant Directors or above. These participants were selected due to their respective positions on campus as they can provide insight into leadership and its relationship to the greater institution. According to Rahi (2017), judgment sampling, also known as purposive sampling, indicates that researchers use their judgment to select a group of individuals aware of the problem under study; this type of sampling allows for greater convenience is cost-effective. The use of purposive sampling in qualitative research provides a practical means to access information, expertise, and manage time constraints (Benoot et al., 2016). Purposive sampling was employed with the caveat that sampling is an emergent process that sought to select cases that relate to the conceptual framework, research questions, and provide rich data (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017).

Summary of population and sampling.

The specification of the population is a necessity in qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative studies consist of a group of individuals having single or multiple characteristics of interest to the researcher for further examination. Sampling is selecting a percentage of a particular population under study that provides a practical means to access information, expertise, and manage time constraints. Purposeful sampling was adopted to manage the study's

size and scope as it is best used in qualitative studies and focuses heavily on obtaining substantive data. Additionally, it included identifying and selecting individuals or groups that are particularly informed about or encountered the phenomenon being studied (Etikan et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). Creswell (2014) explained that saturation has been reached when there are no new information, patterns, or insights emerging. Participants for the study must hold an Assistant Director position or greater and worked or previously worked at one of the PWIs selected for the study.

Data Collection

Data collection should be concentrated on addressing the research questions to the point where further data collection will no longer unveil added findings, and additional data will no longer enhance the descriptions' richness (Twining et al., 2017). There are four primary qualitative data collection types: interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2018; Yin 2018). One-on-one interviews were the primary method utilized for collecting data for this study. As one-on-one interviews were selected for this study, the researcher collected a vast amount of data from the 19 participants. All interviews lasted from 30 minutes to one hour and were audio-recorded with participants' knowledge and consent. The interview guide is located in the Appendix section of the study. A comprehensive list of questions was developed and asked of all participants; however, the interviews maintained a semi-structured format which allows for flexibility and versatility (Kallio et al., 2016).

Gaikwad (2017) contended that the first component of data collection is reviewing the current literature, as the existing literature formulates the theoretical construct. Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) claimed interviews and observations are the most critical data collection tools for case study methodology, while Yin (2018) explained that the utilization of the various data

collection tools significantly increases the research study's quality. For this research study, the data collection process was executed to further understand African Americans' disproportionate advancement in leadership positions compared to their white counterparts in higher education.

Instruments.

Qualitative research requires the researcher to become an instrument for collecting data (Alam, 2020; Twining et al., 2017). Qualitative research design is commonly characterized as inductive and descriptive (Alam, 2020). As the researcher was the primary instrument by way of interviews and observation, interviews were recorded to allow the researcher to reference during the study's analysis phase for this study. Interviews were semi-structured allowing the researcher to ask follow-up questions to ensure data saturation is obtained. Creswell (2014) stated that qualitative researchers frequently use eight primary validation strategies. These validation strategies include prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, negative case analysis, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, clarifying, external audits, member checking, and rich, thick description.

Data collection techniques.

Compared to quantitative research, the tools to measure qualitative research's validity is more elaborate. When pursuing quantitative studies, validity relies heavily on ensuring that the math is accurate, so the researcher used testing and measurements to prove that the data obtained is correct and valid (Creswell, 2014). This study employed triangulation, member checking, rich and descriptive data, the identification of researcher bias, and the presentation of negative or disconfirming data to assure qualitative validity. Triangulation of multiple data sources helped achieve and establish a sense of trustworthiness in the collection and analysis process.

Triangulation.

Ensuring validity means that the researcher utilized triangulation. According to Creswell (2014), triangulation uses multiple data collection sources for the researchers' study.

Triangulation of multiple data sources helped to achieve and establish a sense of trustworthiness in the collection and analysis process. There are four triangulation standards: methodological, investigator, theory, and data triangulation (Noble & Heale, 2019). This study employed methodological and data triangulation as it supports the utilization of multiple data collection methods to include interviews and observations. This researcher understands that the means chosen to collect the data requires a significant amount of fieldwork; yet, it also has a considerable amount of communication with participants in the study, which gave the researcher greater context.

Researcher bias.

Bias in research is defined as combining numerous factors such as design, data, and analysis to produce findings that should not be produced. However, researcher bias may occur when researchers, knowingly or unknowingly, influence an empirical study's results based on their expectations (Romano, 2020). Pannucci (2010) espoused that bias can occur at any time during a study, including the planning, implementation, analysis, and publication phases. If a researcher's findings are valid, they are consistent and not biased by the researcher's preferences or personal viewpoints (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). To mitigate researcher bias, qualitative researchers should recognize their biases and actively attempt to prevent biases from shaping the researcher's judgment; further, the researcher must report them so others can determine whether biases affected the outcome or results (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This researcher self-reflected about personal biases, preferences, preconceptions, relationships with participants, and how they might have impacted the study.

Member checking.

According to Brit (2016), member checking is also known as participant validation and employed as a mechanism to enhance rigor in qualitative research. Further, member checking is utilized to validate, check, or assess the integrity of qualitative results. Member checking is often considered a sound validation technique based on the continuous, informal verification of information through solidifying answers of respondents to the investigator's reconstruction (Candela, 2019). Additionally, member checking allowed participants' own meanings and viewpoints to be expressed and not diminished by the researcher's knowledge, background, or agenda.

Negative or discrepant data.

There is often an unconscious tendency for researchers to notice instances that support their view and ignore those instances that do not fit their prior conclusions. According to Booth (2013), the researcher should identify negative or disconfirming data does not unanimously confirm the researcher's results. Another approach used to ensure validity and inform analysis is the negative case and discrepant data analysis. Negative cases describe where the outcome differs from the central body of collected data (Mikkelsen, 2017), while discrepant cases provide different viewpoints on a category or pattern. These approaches offer a counterbalance to a researcher's desire to hold on to their initial impressions.

Rich and descriptive data.

The study provided data with detail and depth as the reporting level will challenge validity. Qualitative research often involves rich data collection from various sources to understand further individual participants, including their opinions, perspectives, and attitudes (Nassaji, 2015). Direct quotations were utilized from participants to ensure that the researcher's

interpretation of the data directly connects to their words; it is crucial to note that pseudonyms were employed to protect participants' anonymity (Heath, 2018). Direct participant's quotations acquired from interviews preserve the original message and were edited for purposes of confidentiality.

Interviews are valuable and enabled this researcher to get the story behind a participant's experiences (Yin, 2018). Data for this study were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, documents, observations, and note taking. The insight obtained from the semi-structured in-depth interviews enabled participants to openly express personal stories as it concerns the phenomenon, also providing rich data. The semi-structured in-depth interviews aligned with the research questions that guide the study, ensuring that these questions are answered. Alam (2020) explained that the semi-structured interview is commonly employed and produces a greater understanding of social events; further, this method allowed participants to express their opinions through their experiences and knowledge. The researcher recorded the interviews to ensure accurate data collection.

Additionally, the researcher took notes during the interview and summarized observations once the interviews were concluded. To strengthen the study's validity, the researcher employed data triangulation among the various data sources that surround the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Conversations were recorded and later transcribed. Documents and archival records were essential in corroborating and strengthening data from other sources and providing specific details as part of the data collection process (Yin, 2018).

Data organization techniques.

Qualitative data have been described as abundant and sometimes overwhelming to the researcher (Rogers, 2018). Various strategies help researchers organize qualitative data; two of

those strategies are coding and theming (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Coding is a universal method of conducting qualitative research, which supports researchers, breaks down intricate pieces of data while delivering concise robust information (Dougherty, 2017). Moreover, coding refers to identifying issues, similarities and differences unveiled through participants' accounts and interpreted by the researcher (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Through the coding and recording process, the researcher can better organize and refine the data collected (Rogers, 2018). Theming refers to the collection of codes from singular or multiple transcripts to present the research findings in a logical and significant way (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Themes are generally longer than codes and encompass several codes within the theme (Rogers, 2018). Coding and theming were employed to allow for easy identification and organization of data and provided an understanding of whether additional data were necessary.

Further, this qualitative case study organized the collected data by utilizing a unique identifier while maintaining a separate file for each participant. Where applicable, audio recording and video recording will be kept on a password-protected computer in a secure locked location in the researcher's home office where only authorized persons will have access (Lin, 2009). In addition, notes, transcriptions, and other related records are being handled in the same manner, ensuring that the data is kept confidential. Data stored on the password-protected computer will be retained for three years; after that time, the researcher will delete all electronic records.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic impact.

Due to the global impact of COVID-19, the researcher was prepared to adjust if necessary, and modify the initial data collection plan of face-to-face interviews if required. Specifically, the researcher utilized Zoom, the video conferencing platform of choice during the

pandemic (Greenblatt, 2020). When conducting face-to-face interviews, the researcher was sure to adhere to federal, state, and university guidelines in response to COVID-19. When conducting Zoom interviews for the study's participants' safety and comfortability, the researcher recorded interviews with participant approval as Zoom is cost-effective, intuitive, and has excellent data management features and security options (Archibald, 2019).

Summary of data collection.

Ensuring that the data collected are valid, the researcher employed the following strategies: researcher bias, triangulation, member checking, and rich, thick description. Utilizing numerous data sources intensifies the case study; hence, data collection in a case study typically includes multiple sources, including interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts (Kruth, 2015; Tavener et al., 2016). Data collection was done using direct observations and focused on the leaders before the interview, during the interview, and after the interview process.

Documents and archival records were also reviewed to include the university's website, which provided insight into the university's history, documents such as CVs and resumes, which provided background on interview participants. Organization of the data occurred using various strategies, while participants' confidentiality was and will remain of the highest priority.

Data Analysis

The ability to analyze qualitative data expeditiously and with rigor is crucial for applied researchers whose intent is to reveal resolutions to social conditions and practical problems that directly impact the world (Watkins, 2017). Data analysis encompasses the examination, categorization, tabulation, and recombination of data to draw an empirically based conclusion; further, it is the process that allows the researcher to interpret and make an inference that may include the development of a model or theory (Twining et al., 2017).

Qualitative data analysis is commonly accomplished through a five-phase process that includes compiling, disassembling, reassembling, and arranging, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2016). Informal analysis typically begins during the initial stages of data collection, while the formal analysis begins by compiling and arranging field notes accumulated throughout fieldwork and other data collection initiatives (Yin, 2016). After the initial stage of compiling and organizing the data, the next phase requires the data to be separated. Disassembling the data suggests that the data are taken apart, and meaningful groups should be created, in essence, codes, resulting in the next phase of data analysis, reassembling, and arranging (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

Reassembling and arranging provides a real picture to the readers of the study (Hakim, 2018); further, this stage of the process may be accomplished by creating a list or other tabular forms (Yin, 2016). Interpreting qualitative data is less of systemic activity and is often seen as an art form (Caiata-Zufferey, 2018). The interpretation of the reassembled data should be fair and credible, resulting in other researchers arriving at the same interpretations if given the same data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Additionally, interpretations should also be an accurate representation of the raw data while adding value to the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study and utilizing the rearranged data to create a new narrative (Yin, 2016).

The last phase of the data analysis phase is concluding. Conclusions are an essential component of a study; the researcher should be confident that a reasonable conclusion has been met, which means that another researcher who is provided with the same information will arrive in a similar space of truth (Miles & Huberman, 2016). Yin (2016) explained that the concluding is connected to the interpretation phase, which relates it to all other data analysis phases.

Coding Process

As expressed in the second phase of the data analysis process, meaningful groups or codes were created. The study applied the grounded theory principles of open and axial coding, where themes and subthemes were generated (Pandit et al., 2018). Coding can be described as the process by which raw data are progressively transformed into useful data by identifying concepts, themes, or ideas that connect each other (Skjott & Korsgaard, 2019). Coding decreases substantial sums of empirical data and makes that data readily available for review and analysis; further coding increases the findings' quality (Skjott & Korsgaard, 2019). Coding unites the data collection component and data analysis component of a qualitative study (Rogers, 2018).

Open coding is the initial level of coding, allowing the researcher to discern the path to take one's research enabling the researcher to focus conceptually on a specific social problem (Glaser, 2016). Creswell (2018) expressed open coding attempts to convey data and information broadly. Additionally, open coding allows for the classification of essential words, or combinations of words, in the data, and then labeling them accordingly (Mohajan, 2018). Once completed, open coding should result in a list of characterizing codes and categories supported by code notes produced to explain codes' content (Williams & Moser, 2019).

Axial coding is the second phase of continuous comparative analysis while analyzing qualitative data inductively for theory development purposes (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). According to Kendall (2016), open coding splits the data into various categories; axial coding does the opposite and puts the data back together by allowing categories and subcategories to emerge. Further, axial coding results in a coding framework that allowed the researcher to synthesize and organize data in a more comprehensive and structured way (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). Axial coding provided a robust description of a concept and described the phenomenon

with deep understanding (Kendall, 2016). At this step, the researcher began to explain the phenomenon of the study (Mohajan, 2018).

Once the data are coded, the identification themes, patterns, and relationships among the dataset emerge (Yin, 2016). A critical component of the coding process is ensuring that coding procedures are transparent, meticulous, and consistently applied to conform to qualitative research's validity and reliability standards (Williams & Moser, 2019). Open and axial coding of accumulated data results in the conception of theory, leading the researcher to build deeper theoretical meaning. This coding method provides researchers with a nuanced way to examine participants' thoughts, perspectives, and reactions. Further, coding allows participant data to be gathered and analyzed related to how and why participants do what they do in a research setting. Open and axial coding allowed for the researcher to break down the data, conceptualize the data, and then put the data back together in a new way (Meeuwissen, 2019).

Summary of Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data represents the most critical and challenging component within the qualitative research process (Sechelski & Onwuegbuzie, 2019). Analyzing qualitative data quickly is critical to qualitative research. According to Bennett et al. (2019), coding is a critical process for analyzing qualitative data and is an essential piece of the researcher's study. Hence, this study employed open and axial coding. Themes and subthemes were generated in this study through the application of open and axial coding. Through this process, the researcher had a nuanced way to examine participants' thoughts, perspectives, and reactions and gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon and provide a robust explanation through the five themes discovered.

Reliability and Validity

Validity and reliability are two critical components when conducting a research study regardless of whether a quantitative or qualitative approach is employed. Quantitative research relies profoundly on numerical data to understand the phenomenon; hence quantitative research reliability and validity rely heavily on checking the math and the application of statistical methods to assure that the data collection process was performed correctly (Noble & Smith, 2015). However, qualitative methods require alternative approaches such as triangulation, reporting data with detail and depth, and member checking to ensure that the data are valid and reliable (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Reliability.

Reliability is a critical component when evaluating qualitative research. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), reliability is a meticulous process of identifying codes and themes and meticulously constructing and presenting the research data. Reliability refers to the actions taken to present accurate, trustworthy information free from the absence of the random error in research; this trust is accomplished by allowing for replication and transparency (Lock & Seele, 2018). To ensure reliability in qualitative research, the researcher should record interviews, verify they are of good quality, and transcribe them verbatim (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Heale and Twycross (2015) stated that it is highly unlikely to achieve a perfect calculation of reliability; however, results should have some level of consistency if the research is reliable. Reliability implies replicability; the more times a study can be replicated, the more stable or secure the phenomenon is thought to be (Cypress, 2017). In turn, the research should be conducted in a manner that allows others to repeat the process and receive similar results.

Moreover, the reliability of a study exists in its consistency and attention given to the application of research practices to include research methods, analysis, and results (Cypress, 2017). Reliability procedures that a researcher can employ include checking transcripts and crosschecking codes (Creswell, 2014). By thoroughly identifying codes, themes, and carefully organizing and presenting the research study data, it allowed the phenomenon to be further expanded and led to conclusions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Validity.

Validity is the precision with which a study's findings correctly present the data (Noble & Smith, 2015). Further, validation indicates the robustness of the research conducted in the field, thickness of descriptions, and closeness to participants that add value to the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As qualitative research has numerous approaches, one can incorporate various forms of validation into their qualitative study. Member-checking, triangulation, presentation of negative or discrepant data, and rich-thick descriptive data are various ways validity can be accomplished in a qualitative study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

These validation approaches directly connect to the "interpretive lens" used for validation, which include the researcher, participant, and reader, or reviewer lens (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher lens verifies evidence by triangulating multiple data sources, negative case analysis, and defining researcher bias. The participant lens encompasses member checking, which allows the researcher to verify what the participant said is what they meant to say to ensure participants' accuracy and persistent observation should occur (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lastly the reader or reviewer lens, which aids in the validation process, helps identify characteristics of research such as rich and thick descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, this also ensures that the readers develop a more profound understanding of the

cases, and themes presented in the qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that qualitative research validation is assessed through the findings' accuracy based upon the researcher and participants. Ample time in the field and detailed descriptions were critical to enhancing a study's validity.

Summary of reliability and validity.

Validity and reliability ensured that the results of research are credible to those reviewing that research. To ensure reliability, the qualitative researcher recorded all interviews; ensured that the recordings are of sound quality, checked transcripts, cross-checked code, in addition to providing verbatim transcriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While ensuring a study's validity one should utilize the "interpretive lens" which includes the researcher, participant, and reader or reviewer lens. These lenses encompass multiple unique approaches to validity, which is crucial to a researcher's study. Information presented in one's research study should be credible, trustworthy, and dependable. Hence, reliability and validity for any study is an essential component. In qualitative research, reliability lies in whether the results are stable and dependable and create a foundation for future research. In contrast, qualitative research validity is assessed through the findings' accuracy based on the participants and the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transition and Summary of Section 2

This qualitative case study addressed the underrepresentation and low advancement of African Americans in higher education leadership positions. The second section of this study further explained the researcher and participants' role, the research methodology and design, population, and sampling methods. Additionally, this section covered qualitative data collection, analysis, reliability, and validity and explained each component's importance in great detail. The

third section builds upon the first and second sections, as it encompassed the findings from the research conducted in the field.

The first section of this study provided a foundation for the research, and the second section addresses the project and how the researcher will execute the study. The third section presents the application to professional practice and implications for change. The final section provides an overview of the study, presentations of the findings, specifically, themes discovered, interpretation of the themes, representation and visualization of the data, and the relationship of the findings. This section continues on to address the application to professional practice, recommendations for further study's, reflections, and study's conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

This project examined the relationship between African Americans and various theories related to race and representation associated with leadership within higher education institutions and how it impacted productivity and innovation. This section includes the study themes discovered, the interpretation of those themes, a representation and visualization of the data. Additionally, it provides a detailed discussion that encompasses how the findings relate to the research proposal's key areas to include the research questions, the conceptual framework, anticipated themes, and the current literature. Further, this section of the study addresses the application to professional practice and how the study findings can improve general business practice and potential application strategies. This section of the study also covers personal and professional growth reflections, biblical perspective and conclusively summarizes the study.

Overview of the Study

The research study focuses on the underrepresentation, and disproportionate advancement of African American leaders at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) in Connecticut,

resulting in the absence of racial diversity among these individuals in a leadership capacity. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to add to existing bodies of research that address the underrepresentation and low advancement of African American leaders at institutions of higher education; resulting in a disproportionate representation of African Americans in comparison to their White counterparts and a lack of diversity among individuals in a leadership capacity in higher education within the state of Connecticut. The specific problem to be addressed is the underrepresentation, and the minimal representation and advancement of African American leaders at two predominantly white institutions of higher education within the state of Connecticut, resulting in diminished productivity and innovation.

Presentation of the Findings

The researcher conducted a multiple case study that examined the participants' leadership perspectives and professional experiences as it relates to the phenomenon under study. The study selected two PWIs in the state of Connecticut. There were five research questions that guided the study to determine why African Americans leaders are disproportionately represented in leadership positions at PWIs in Connecticut. Additionally, the research questions allowed for participants to identify barriers and provide strategies to address the disproportionate representation of African American leaders at PWIs.

The study addresses the assumptions, limitations, delimitations and the significance of the project. Further, the literature review is exhaustive and provides a robust foundation of the knowledge and data currently available related to the study. Participants for the study included leaders who worked or previously worked at two PWIs in the state of Connecticut. Interviews were conducted via Zoom with individuals who hold an Assistant Director position or greater. It is crucial to note that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the researcher's ability to conduct face-

to-face interviews. A qualitative research method with a multiple case study design was employed as it allowed the researcher to gather and analyze data as it relates to African Americans in leadership.

The researcher used various inquiry tools to answer the research questions and triangulate the study's findings. Further, the researcher analyzed participants' responses through the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy and Critical Race Theory, which provided a framework to support emergent themes. During the field study, the principal investigator invited 30 individuals at two PWI's to participate in the research study; some individuals declined to participate while others did not respond even after sending a follow-up request. Ultimately, 19 individuals agreed to participate in the study. This study employed triangulation, member checking, rich and descriptive data, and the identification of researcher bias to assure qualitative validity.

Open coding was utilized for the initial level of coding, allowing the researcher to choose the path to take to focus conceptually on a specific social problem (Glaser, 2016). Axial coding was then completed allowing for continuous comparative analysis while analyzing the data inductively for theory development purposes (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). Themes and subthemes were then generated allowing the phenomenon to be further expanded and lead to conclusions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure reliability, the researcher recorded all interviews; transcribed all interviews, checked transcripts, cross-checked code, in addition to providing verbatim transcriptions. Member checking, triangulation, presentation and rich-thick descriptive data are various ways that the researcher ensured the study's findings were valid (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Themes Discovered

Participants in the study responded to a series of semi-structured, open-ended questions about their lived experience as leaders at a PWI in the state of Connecticut. Subsequently, the data was analyzed utilizing open and axial coding, which produced five superordinate themes. The themes generated directly aligned with the research questions on the underrepresentation and minimal advancement of African American leaders in higher education. Bostrom et al. (2019) explained that examining data for themes is a fundamental component of numerous qualitative research methods of analysis and requires transforming coded raw data into a thematic structure. There were five (5) superordinate themes that emerged from the transcribed interviews to include the following:

Superordinate themes included:

- 1) Human Resources Involvement
- 2) Professional Development
- 3) Lack of Diversity in Higher Education
- 4) Macro and Microaggressions Within Higher Education Administration
- 5) Addressing Barriers

The five themes presented directly align with the research questions raised in the first section of the study.

Interpretation of the Themes

Following Creswell and Poth's (2018) recommendations, the researcher evaluated and categorized the data into themes allowing for reporting of the information revealed through the data collection process. Research considerations for this qualitative study included credibility, transferability, saturation, and reliability. Member checking was employed to provide the

researcher an avenue to ensure the participants had the opportunity to confirm and correct the interpretations and accuracy of the data adding to the study's credibility (Thomas, 2017).

Faulkner and Trotter (2017) explained that data saturation commonly refers to the point in fieldwork where the researcher is no longer gathering any new information and nearly finished with that component of the project. Saturation for this study was evident after conducting 12 interviews; however, the researcher conducted 19 interviews to ensure complete saturation.

Further, triangulation was also employed throughout the data collection process, as the researcher utilized multiple data points such as observation, extensive interviews, and document review to validate conclusions. Yin (2018) claims this is a key component to ensure validity and reliability. The following section provides a coherent and concise interpretation of the five themes discovered through the research, including human resources involvement, professional development, lack of diversity in higher education, macro and microaggressions within higher education administration, and addressing barriers to representation and advancement.

Theme 1: Human Resources Involvement

The first superordinate theme that evolved through the study's findings was Human Resources (HR) involvement. Mello (2019) explained that the HR function within organizations ensures that employees bring intellectual capital; this is an intangible asset that fosters organizational success through its people. These accomplishments, however, can only be accomplished through deliberate and intentional efforts. Arora (2016) espoused that HR can foster business strategy; this is accomplished by aligning HR interventions within the organizational strategy. Further, HR strategies and practices with the organization's vision and values allow HR to be at the forefront of interventions and implementation within the organization (Mello, 2019). Numerous participants referenced the importance of HRs role in

advancement, specifically around recruitment, retention, and training (P1, P4, P5, P14, P15, & P16).

Recruitment of Black/AA Candidates. As HRs role encompasses recruiting, developing, and retaining high-performing and diverse talent while fostering a safe and healthy environment for employees, there are multiple implications for HR leaders' role in the strategic advancement within any organization. One participant stated:

...We've been talking a lot about how we prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in our job description so that when people are interested in applying for positions at [UNIVERSITY REDACTED], they can see that we're prioritizing it as something that's important. We've talked about implementing diversity statements for all positions, all levels in our hiring process on the Student Affairs level. Again, this does not exist in the HR general levels." (Participant 19, personal communication, March 16, 2021).

Another participant expressed their concerns about the candidate pipeline and continues on to challenge the HR department and leaders about their recruiting practices.

I think that our department, our staff should represent our students and our community. And we should look and talk like the people that we represent. And when we don't see that quality in our candidate pool or hiring practices, the answer is we'll just hire the candidate that's there, instead of trying to go out and figure out how do we change our marketing or advertisement (Participant 8, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Lack of Black/African Americans Retention in Higher Education. Human Resources (HR) roles at institutions of Higher Education should actively work to support other departments of the institution through the retention of great people, a great culture, and a supportive and fair

people management process (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2017). However, this does not always seem to be the case as participant 8 explained, "...[T]here's not much support from the HR department in trying to find a diverse candidate pool" (personal communication, March 11, 2021). HRs role is to support areas of the institution through various areas to include hiring, training, and retention. Participant 12 stated "So there needs to be more training and staff dedicated to what that whole process looks like, and somebody maybe who has a specialization in DNI work that can be really intentional in the development of what a good hiring process will look like" (personal communication, March 13, 2021). Additionally, as participant 16 stated:

I think about my tenure here at [UNIVERSITY REDACTED] when I started, I remember going through our faculty orientation, and there was like a gang all of Black people there and we were all so excited. It was like the color purple moment we exchanged phone numbers. And then literally like, a year or two later, people started disappearing. And here we are almost five years later, and out of that cohort, there are two of us left, which is just mind boggling (personal communication, March 12, 2021).

Swartout et al. (2015) espoused that retention is another crucial determinant to an organization's success as organizations with higher turnover rates may see increased expenses and decreased employee morale in addition to an unfavorable working environment. Mello (2019) revealed that HR departments exist to ensure that recruitment, performance, and compensation systems are free of bias. As stated by participant 3: "I would say if we wanted to recruit and then retain more leaders who identify as Black or Indigenous or people of color, we need to first make the campus and the campus culture appealing." (personal communication, March 2, 2021). Another participant stated:

The idea that they are trying to have like committees be more involved with hiring, I think that does help. But then it always goes back to who you're putting on the committee, and how are you choosing to pick the people to go on the committee. And it really does come back to you know, you want a diverse group of people on the committee so that you have a diverse group of ideas and everything going into the interview process, if you have the same person on the committee 12 times, that's still just going to give the same opinion. So I think that they need to do a little bit better job of trying to be a little more diverse in the committee, makeup to make sure that that fosters through (Participant 4, personal communication, February 25, 2021).

The finding and the current literature explained how higher education institutions aspire to recruit and retain qualified, diverse individuals; however, this is not always a simple task. One participant stated, “HR is not intentional with their hiring practices” (Participant 17, personal communication, March 18, 2021). There should be a significant push to ensure that diversity and inclusion strategies occur to foster these goals. The HR function within any organization holds many roles and responsibilities and can help to support these goals (Iordache, 2015). There are numerous methods HR leaders can employ to recruit top diverse talent; however, just as important is that institutions do the work to recruit and retain qualified, diverse individuals. Investing in human capital is one way that institutions can show they are willing to support their employees further as it is essential to the success of the organization (Swartout et al., 2015).

Theme 2: Professional Development

The next theme that emerged was professional development (PD), which supports leaders and allows for the development and growth of various skills and abilities (Melcher et al., 2018). Study participants identified professional development, learning opportunities, training, and

continuing education as crucial components to their respective development (P4, P6, P7, P10, P12, P16). Participant 12 explicitly stated, “professional development and continuing education opportunities” are tools the university can provide to support the success of its employees (personal communication, March 13, 2021). PD allows leadership capabilities to be enhanced, while supporting current and future leaders' success. One participant stated:

[T]here's not necessarily always funding for professional development opportunities. Nor is there again, also always intention with creating those internally. So, I often see new professionals floundering trying to figure out funding them for themselves. And so, I think opportunities to provide that to the new professionals and I would even say mid-level professionals will help them create their path, but this is also an opportunity to create spaces for promotion, and opportunities for growth within the field and within the organization it exists in some spaces but not in others. (Participant 19, personal communication, March 16, 2021).

Further, PD remains an important concept when the intent is to recruit and retain talented, diverse candidates to which various participants reference its importance (P1, P3, P6, P7, P9). Sahu (2016) stated that it is challenging within Higher Education to provide various professional development activities to include workshops, seminars, and courses, as these activities require financial resources. However, mitigating this means that appropriate budgetary allocation must be implemented to ensure these activities can occur. Participant 17 explained, “My past supervisor that left in August, paid literally, out of her pocket for professional development, trainings, joining committees and whatnot” (Participant 17, personal communication, March 18, 2021).

Pak (2020) explained that PD is a crucial tool in the implementation of educational policies. Another participant stated:

Tools, the university provided consistent opportunities for professional development in a variety of ways, via conferences, lunch and learns on campus. And just different opportunities to connect with other people on campus and outside of the community. And I would say the community itself is a pretty tight knit one, and full of different resources that people can take advantage of, if they know where to look. Not that things are hidden too much. But sometimes it's just a matter of asking. And that opens up a whole realm of possibilities. (Participant 7, personal communication, March 2, 2021).

PD should be content-specific, collaborative, coherent, active, and sustained (Pak, 2020), however this seems to remain a challenge as one participant stated:

So I just feel like we have these conversations, and the intent is there. But I'm not really sure the follow through is there. Or the things are happening to make sure that we're actually developing these skills in a way that's beyond attending a conference. So I think conferences are great, right? Nothing against them. But I do think for certain things, you need a little bit more than just a weekend experience or a full day experience (Participant 13, personal communication, March 9, 2021).

For PD to be influential, it should be inclusive of others, rooted in evidence-based practices, and data-driven as expressed in the findings and current literature. Additionally, PD duration is also notable as one-off PD workshops are ineffective and insufficient on their own when not sustained. Professional development remains a complex process that is more involved than a single, isolated event; and should be seen as a process that continues to unfold throughout one's career (Iordache, 2015).

Provision of Trainings. Rowland et al. (2017) asserted that training has become of critical importance directly connected to HR strategy. Providing necessary training to the workforce has led to improved job performance and employee engagement and satisfaction. Additionally, training provides employees with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the institution's strategies and goals while meeting employees' developmental needs. Hence, additional forms of training can support other areas where there may be a deficit. Participant 1 stated, "Every year, there should be a couple of trainings surrounding diversity that everybody has to attend, like it's not optional, and to have those conversations and to facilitate like that dialogue" (personal communication, February 22, 2021).

Diversity Trainings. Diversity training remains a complex issue as one participant stated, "[W]e have to really break this cycle of one and done diversity trainings like oh, we went to a diversity program, we're done. I'm hashtag woke now, we need to break that cycle. It must be a constant continuous process" (Participant 2, personal communication, March 1, 2021). Hussain et al. (2020) explained that diversity training is a clear set of programs directed at promoting positive intergroup interactions, reducing discriminatory and prejudicial behavior while improving interaction when interacting with diverse individuals. Participant 1 speaks to the need for greater training specifically around diversity and bias. Participant 1 stated, "Every year, there should be a couple of trainings surrounding diversity that everybody has to attend, like it's not optional, and to have those conversations and to facilitate like that dialogue should happen" (personal communication, February 22, 2021). Creating diversity training is an essential measure for an organization to demonstrate inclusiveness. Moreover, greater diversity provides increased representation of underrepresented groups such as African Americans.

Participant 5 went on and expressed the need for training stating, "...[I]t's not enough to have optional workshops. I think that there's different types of trainings and resources that should be made available to supervisors in particular, if you're a supervisor, who supervises folks of color, in particular, Black folks..." (personal communication, March 12, 2021). Diversity enables individuals to see things from various perspectives. Further, it fosters an environment that helps eliminate stereotypes and inaccurate beliefs, while providing an opportunity to work with individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Diversity education is frequently identified as essential to the institution's growth as supported by the literature; however, institutions are still attempting to understand the best way to traverse issues and concerns of inclusion (Behm-Morawitz & Villamil, 2019).

Opportunities for Advancement. Grant (2019) espoused that it is challenging for African Americans and other minorities to advance in their careers as they are rarely considered for executive and leadership positions. Participant 5 stated: "But I can tell you, in my 14 years, I've only ever seen one person of color who was promoted and didn't have to apply for a job" (personal communication, March 12, 2021).

Randel et al. (2021) explained that African Americans' advancement remains a challenge as bias and discrimination continue to exist in organizations for African Americans. According to Reno (2020), systemic racism involves all of society, and eliminating these systems would require a revamp of all aspects of everyday life, which brought light to the 2020 riots. Participant 8 stated:

I have not really seen any forward movement of African American employees at the institution. Until this past summer, when the protests happened, and different things were happening around the country, and our president promoted someone into the Vice

President of Diversity and Inclusion, we hired a Dean of Students that is a person of color. And so, you started to see some of that, I do see it starting to change, because those people have been added into the mix. There's a voice at the table to represent that. But I still think there are struggles because even with those people at the table, you're still not seeing forward movement (personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Theme 3: Lack of Diversity in Higher Education

Diversity remains a considerable focus at higher education institutions and has grown to lay the foundation for many institutional initiatives and strategies (Brooks, 2020). As diversity remains a central focus of institutions it begins to negatively impact the institution as issues of tokenism, representation, mentorship and other factors begin to arise. Participant 9 stated, “We don't have an issue hiring people of color, and black folks. We have an issue retaining them” (personal communication, March 18, 2021). Additionally, study participants expressed concerns related to tokenism, the importance of representation, and mentorship (P2, P3, P5, P10, P17).

Tokenism (Only, the Voice of Race). Tokenism can be described as a situation where individuals from underrepresented groups such as African Americans exist in specific spaces to limit criticism and present the appearance that individuals, regardless of race and other aspects of their identity, are treated fairly (Brown, 2019). The tokenized experience can be challenging as the enhanced visibility and attention that these underrepresented individuals may feel can be overwhelming and challenging to manage. Tokenism, in general, is perceived to be negative; thus, for underrepresented people such as African Americans, it may create a sense of isolation and loneliness (Podoshen et al., 2021). “And certainly, people of color exist, but a lot of times they're doing the diversity, equity inclusion work, or they're doing the work that every university

has not prioritized and seen as important.” (Participant 19, personal communication, March 19, 2021). Participant 3 stated:

There's always a sense of this, you know, I'm tokenized, you know? Think about hiring committees; for example, they say, diversify your selection committee; if you are the only Black person in the department, you are then tagged and tapped for every single committee, task force, or selection process. And that is labor-intensive, and it is also just this consistent reminder of this, like, I'm the token in the department, which is emotionally and mentally very taxing. (personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Individuals who are tokenized may maintain a perception that institutional practices and policies are inequitable, as another participant stated:

You can always say you're going to more affirmatively recruit and hire faculty, staff and students. But once they're at the institution, do they feel supported? Do they have resources that can provide them guidance and mentorship? And if they don't, you know, all you've done is created a very difficult situation for that employee. Because you've now tokenized them into these roles and they become the token African American or token a person of color. In these high leadership positions it adds, I imagine a level of stress, frustration and weight. Particularly when those individuals are getting put on committees because they are the only one and we need "diverse staff" or "diverse employees" on this committee, we need a diverse mix of staff serving in this group and you know, you're the one African American Black person in your office gets put on all those committees.

(Participant 2, personal communication, February 25, 2021)

Representation Matters (Sense of Belonging). According to Walker (2020), equitable representation remains a challenge, and there is still significant work to be done

as representation matters to marginalized individuals such as African Americans. Further, a growing body of research expresses that African Americans and other minorities remain underrepresented in leadership positions (Elonga & Mboyo, 2019). This sentiment is also echoed by Participant 3 who stated, "The best leadership team would be a leadership team that just empowers lots of different voices from lots of different identities that are working together simultaneously to speculate, question, create, be innovative" (personal communication, March 2, 2021).

To ensure cultural diversity and a sense of belonging requires a dedicated and deliberate approach to meaningful inclusions of talented, diverse employees. One participant stated "It's about how we're making [UNIVERSITY REDACTED] a really awesome place to work, where we really feel like, diversity is valued authentically. And not just to inflate numbers and say that you are (Participant 5, personal communication, March 12, 2020). Diversity within hiring practices and efforts to increase diversity should be intentional. The data shows that understanding the workforce's social makeup and backgrounds can lead to better motivation throughout the organizations' workforce (Villegas et al., 2019). Participant 2 explained, "You need to have a seat at the table from day one; I think you need to see other folks that look like you in the room" (personal communication, March 1, 2020). Another participant stated:

So I think for me, because I am a Black woman, I think it's important for other Black women to see someone be successful. So I have tried to push myself to continue going in this field, because I think it's important for people coming up to have something I want, say aspire to, but to see someone who looks like them. I think representation is extremely important. There's not a lot of Black directors, there's not a lot of Black deans, or whatever. Also, I think that when you have someone who looks like you, you're able to

advocate for students who look like you. (Participant 1, personal communication, February 1, 2021)

Faculty/Staff Representing Student Populations. Per Elonga Mboyo (2019), the underrepresentation of Black and other minorities in leadership remains an issue though they are a growing demographic of ethnic minority students receiving education. As students are the primary customers at institutions of Higher Education, this can be problematic. As expressed by Participant 14:

I think it's important to represent our students and that if we were to say, okay, we're going to hire all white females that's not representative of our population. It's not serving our students of color. It's not serving our Middle Eastern students. Just hiring one specific type of person does a disservice to our institution and to our students. (personal communication, March 12, 2021)

Hubain (2016) explained that students are the primary customers at Higher Education institutions; however, they have raised diversity concerns such as feeling tokenized based on their race. Participant 16 stated, "If the campus climate is not conducive to having leaders of color, or supporting people of color in leadership roles, then you'll never be successful, no matter where you sit in the structure" (personal communication, March 12, 2021). Students must have a level of support and a safe place while on college campuses, one participant stated:

For our students of color, in particular, our Black students, there's not a single Black therapist. There's only one, maybe two, two therapists of color. But they're both Asian, and that has been a major topic of interest of our students, during the Black Lives Matter, they wrote this big, like manifesto of things that they really felt like the university was lacking. And they specifically pointed out, we need to have someone in counseling, you

need to have a counselor that identifies in this way, that really understands what it's like to be Black on a PWI. (Participant 5, personal communication, March 12, 2021)

Brooks (2020) explained that the faculty and staff at some educational institutions still do not reflect the institutions' student population. Participant 1 explained why this representation is needed stating, "I think that when you have someone who looks like you, you're able to advocate for students who look like you" (personal communication, February 22, 2021).

According to DeCuir-Gunby (2020), at higher education workplaces African Americans are at a heightened risk for encountering racial discrimination and racism, thus creating adverse experiences that affect their mental and physiological health, which requires coping strategies to ensure healthy functioning. One participant stated, "I think something that's important for me is, after you finally can recruit people of color, having the infrastructure in place to retain them and to support them" (Participant 19, personal communication, March 16, 2021).

Lack of Peer Mentorship. The capacity to formulate mentor-mentee relationships is critical for career advancements for African Americans. Participant 16 stated, "as a black practitioner it is harder to find those folks who understand what it means to be black and in this field" (personal communication, March 12, 2021). Mentorship supports and further develops African American professionals as they pursue various career objectives despite complex challenges and barriers that African Americans face at work. One participant stated:

I think that is one of the biggest barriers to advancement in education right now is, again, we'll continue to patch perpetuate the same types of individuals at higher level leadership positions, you need to bring in new folks who have different experiences, different backgrounds, racially, as well as other identities. (Participant 2, personal communication, March 1, 2021)

Additionally, same-race mentoring of African Americans can offer unparalleled and substantial psychosocial advantages; however, these benefits and advantages do not inevitably result in increased career outcomes (Randel et al., 2021). One participant stated, "I know that mentorship for me personally is crucial. Because it helps me realize that I can aspire to higher positions and helps provide me an avenue of advancement and motivation" (Participant 2 personal communication, March 1, 2020).

However, Bhopal (2020) explained that workplace changes have placed more significant pressure on employers to improve diversity. This pressure leads to formal mentoring programs, as mentoring has been identified as a successful practice concerning career advancement.

Participant 8 stated:

When you don't have African Americans in leadership positions or positions where they're able to coach and mentor, how do you pull the younger generation up and give them that experience in coaching and mentorship to grow and develop and achieve their goals? Because there's not those positions in the system and that it kind of falls short. So, I think it plays a very important role, but I don't think we do a very good job at it, or at least don't have a very good handle on how we can effectively do it. Especially at predominantly white institutions where we don't have a lot of options to reach into those coaches and mentors. (personal communication, March 11, 2021)

Theme 4: Macro and Microaggressions within Higher Education Administration

Another theme that arose was Macro and Microaggressions within Higher Education where multiple participants state that these experiences negatively impact their sense of belonging (P1, P13, P17, P18, P19). According to Compton-Lilly (2020), macro-aggression can be explained as overt hostility toward individuals who may have different identities, including

race, gender, and other areas of one's identity. As participant 1 stated, "...the narrative that the university says [about people of color leaving is] they've gone on to bigger and better, but the reality is that they left, because they've been experiencing microaggressions, macroaggressions, racism, discrimination, it's hard to advance..." (personal communication, February 22, 2021).

Another participant stated:

We are not really addressing root issues or root causes related to the cultural climate and promoting racial diversity. It's very superficial, very cosmetic. And I just think it's because individuals don't really understand how deep rooted racism is, and how sometimes people can be inherently racist and not even know it in ways that are outside of what's popular. (Participant 13, personal communication, March 9, 2021)

According to Corona and Block (2020), noticeable minorities commonly experience racial microaggressions. Participant 19 stated, "I also think that there's some level of macro and micro aggression there. There's some level of bias as to if this person fits into our executive team" (personal communication, March 16, 2021). Participants within the study reference experiencing micro-aggressive comments while at work. Payton et al. (2018) explained that understanding these experiences and supporting these employees will help build and cultivate a supportive institutional environment that fosters retention and career advancement. Participant 13 stated:

It's just a small micro aggressions of small actions, the small comments on that I don't think that people are aware of because again, we're dealing with the popular fluffy issues that are in the media and not really getting the opportunity to address how people are just inherently racist, or kind of carry these biases without knowing it. And again, we don't have this environment where we can really have these honest conversations without white

tears, or like people being fragile and feeling like you're trying to offend them. (personal communication, March 9, 2021)

Stereotypes. Armstrong et al. (2019), posits many African Americans experience racial discrimination daily, precisely 96%. Participant 1 stated:

The first thing people see when you walk in a room, they see you, they see a race and it's not something you can take off. I mean, the two things people look at are race and gender, right? You walk in the room, you're Black, and then you're a Black woman. You know, I've had people talk to me about my hair. I've had people talk to me about the way I dress like, and I'm just like, like, why?" (personal communication, February 22, 2021)

According to Corona and Block (2020), loaded verbal and other behaviors can appear harmless but are taken as offensive and insulting by the micro-aggressed individuals. To remediate this issue, inclusive language that directly impacts and influences how one feels can be employed as it positively affects the institution's environment and culture. Additionally thinking beyond the stereotypical lens and discussing how ethnic and racial stereotypes negatively impacts one's ability to advance. The racial stereotypes of diverse ethnicities such as African Americans, remains an issue and continues to persist as Participant 19 stated:

I haven't faced or identified much discrimination. In that regard. I think when it does appear, it's more of the microaggressions, it's more of the assumptions based off of the way I may look, present, dress, speak, or manage a situation. I think that's really when people may not see that as being professional, which I believe is rooted in whiteness. I think when I think about how that allows my peers to perceive me, I think a lot of people just may see me initially as abrasive. (personal communication, March 16, 2021)

Inability to Advance (looked Over for a Position). Many organizations and institutions attempt to express that minorities such as African Americans are not discriminated against for career opportunities. Furthermore, since the civil rights movement, there has been a push for equal opportunity programs and affirmative action to promote diversity in employment and leadership positions for underrepresented individuals; however, this remains a challenge (Corey et al., 2020). Participant 1 stated: "One of the [Black] women who left the university had been there for 22 years, and there was an opportunity for a promotion. And instead of promoting her, they promoted a white woman with less experience..." (personal communication, February 22, 2021). Some individuals argue that a minority can get a leadership position only when there is a need to raise workplace diversity. Participant 19 explained:

I think many of our promotions are, obviously internally, right, because they're coming in, the people who have been here for a long time, have the opportunity to advance. But if you look at our current demographic, it is very white, very male or woman dominated. And so those are the people being promoted, those people were advancing in the organization. (personal communication, March 16, 2021)

Bhopal (2020) explained that there have been meaningful advances in policy at higher education institutions focused on diversity, equity, and advancing underrepresented populations. However, there is still a lack of systems to support the advancement of underrepresented individuals, which is clearly expressed in the current literature. Additionally, participant 13 explained, "they're going to advance people that are in front of their faces. And it doesn't matter if they're qualified for the position or not, they're going to go with who they like. And that's just the reality of it" (personal communication, March 13, 2021).

Theme 5: Addressing Barriers

Armstrong et al. (2019) explained racial discrimination serves as a barrier that impedes African Americans' advancement. Additionally, African Americans confront various barriers during the pursuit of leadership positions in higher education. Participant 2 stated:

I think that is one of the biggest barriers to advancement in education right now is, again, we'll continue to patch perpetuate the same types of individuals at higher level leadership positions, you need to bring in new folks who have different experiences, different backgrounds, racially, as well as other identities. (personal communication, March 1, 2021)

According to Villegas et al. (2019), for an institution to achieve greater diversity takes work and requires overt and unconscious discrimination in hiring to be reduced and ultimately abolished, requiring training for leaders and other individuals who make hiring decisions. Numerous participants explained that barriers can be addressed through intentionality, trainings, PDs, better HR strategies (P3, P4, P16, P17, P19).

Intentionality. Podoshen et al. (2021) stated that it is critically necessary to have intentional transformative efforts that fully embrace removing the obstacles contributing to inequity. Participant 12 reiterated a similar message as they stated:

So, if they're going to give the hiring manager more autonomy over their search, there needs to be proper training. So there needs to be more staff dedicated to what that whole process looks like, and somebody maybe who has a specialization in DNI work that can be really intentional in the development of what a good hiring process will look like. (personal communication, March 13, 2021)

With intentionality in policies and procedures, institutions can build inclusive and equitable environments, which allows for everyone to have a transparent and equal opportunity

for career advancement (Newman et al., 2019). Participant 7 stated: "...[E]xplicitly in the past years, the university has made an explicit effort to make sure that they are exploring... They're more intentional, rather with their hiring practices, diversifying the tools that they use on the administrative end, to source out applicants" (personal communication, March 2, 2021). Another participant stated:

I think that internal assessment is something that really needs to happen. And, although everybody can speak to, like, I don't think anybody's gonna say that they don't want to be more diverse. I think like, you know, most of the time in higher education in general, people are like, yes, we want diversity. But then saying it is one thing, actually figuring out how to do it and how to implement it is a totally different thing. (Participant 4, personal communication, February 25, 2021)

Participant 12 stated, "I think mentorship would have been nice and or just a very intentional discussion, like when you start about what your career goals and/or opportunities are. You know, I don't think anyone after my interview ever asked me like, you know, what I want to be doing in five years" (Participant 12, personal communication, March 13, 2021).

Educational and Professional Development Resources. Professional development (PD) supports leaders and provides the development of skills to grow leadership capabilities that enhance their success as future leaders in their respective fields. PD is a critical concept when the goal is to recruit and retain talented, diverse candidates (Melcher et al., 2018). Participant 3 stated:

...[W]e need to do better and carve out more time for professional development...We need to constantly be checking ourselves and our own biases in creating connections and community amongst our division with our students with our faculty. So, through these

relationships, there's a certain level of trust where we can hold one another accountable, and check ourselves and check our own biases, whether implicit or not. Instead, I think we have a lot of fear and hesitancy to talk about, you know, how can we be an anti-racist? How can we introduce that into our work? (personal communication, March 2, 2021)

Reaching Out to Non-Status Quo Agencies. According to Leske and Pendleton (2020), if Higher Education institutions aspire to recruit diverse candidates and institutional leaders, current leaders must pay greater attention to establishing diverse search committees and rethinking how the institution operates. Participant 8 stated:

I think that our department, our staff should represent our students and our community. And we should look and talk like the people that we represent. And when we don't see that quality in our poll or hiring practices, the answer is we'll just hire the candidate that's there, instead of trying to go out and figure out how do we change our marketing or advertisement. (personal communication, March 11, 2021)

There still remains challenges when trying to advance, participant 13 stated “I think knowing how you can even advance is still unclear for me, I still don't know, I'm, I'm reaching for clues. Is it the evaluation? Is it the goals? Is it who I'm golfing with on the weekends? Is it, you know, the proximity that I have to you on a daily basis, there is no clear formula (personal communication, March 13, 2021)? To better serve individuals seeking advancement, organizations should provide an understanding of how one can reach the goals they aspire to reach. The literature supports the study's findings and the importance of greater representation of African American leaders within higher education and various strategies to address and ultimately improve the number of underrepresented individuals at PWIs.

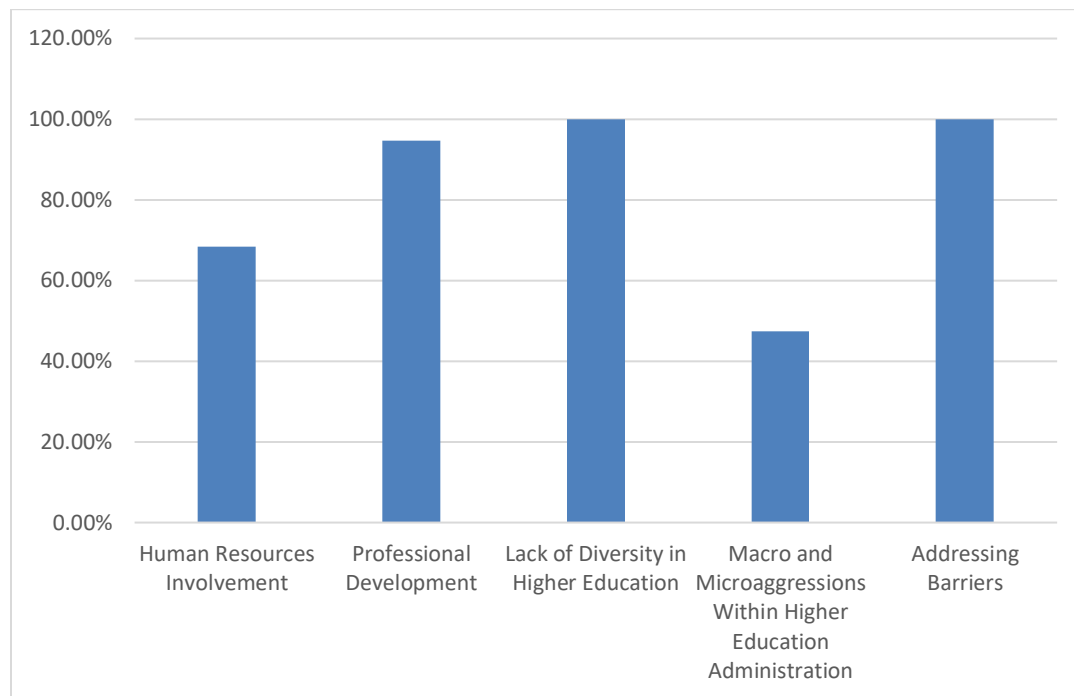
Representation and Visualization of the Data

Table 1

Participant Data

Participant Number	Years in the Field	Title	Racial Identification
Participant 1	10+ years	Associate Director	African American and Hispanic
Participant 2	10+ years	Associate Director	White
Participant 3	10+ years	Dean	White
Participant 4	10+ years	Senior Director	White
Participant 5	10+ years	Director	Filipino and White
Participant 6	10+ years	Assistant Director	White
Participant 7	10+ years	Assistant Director	African American
Participant 8	10+ years	Assistant Director	White
Participant 9	10+ years	Assistant Dean of Students	African American
Participant 10	10+ years	Associate Dean	Hispanic
Participant 11	5 years	Assistant Director	Hispanic
Participant 12	10+ years	Director	African American
Participant 13	10+ years	Director	African American
Participant 14	10+ years	Assistant Director	African American
Participant 15	10+ years	Associate Director	White
Participant 16	10+ years	Associate Director	African American
Participant 17	9 years	Assistant Director	African American
Participant 18	8 years	Assistant Director	African American
Participant 19	8 years	Assistant Director	African American

Note. Table 1 illustrates the number of participants in the study years of experience and how they racially identify.

Figure 4*Percentage of Respondents that Reference Identified Themes*

Note. Figure 4 illustrates the percentage of participants in the study who identified the various themes.

Relationship of the Findings

The themes discovered are related to each other as the participant interview responses overlapped significantly, establishing consistent similar concepts and notions. The interview questions were structured to assist in answering the five research questions. The five superordinate themes established related to a single research question or multiple research questions.

The Research Questions

The research questions were structured to understand the phenomenon of African Americans leaders disproportionately represented in leadership positions at predominantly white

institutions in higher education. The themes provide insight and answers into the five research questions that guided the study.

Research Question 1

The first research question was why are African Americans leaders disproportionately represented in leadership positions at predominantly white institutions in higher education in comparison to their White counterparts? Randel et al. (2021) explained that there is an established history of African Americans experiencing bias; however, this has not always been the same experience as their white counterparts. Participant 3 stated, "I think for me, you know, my whiteness has been a benefit, you know, higher education has always been something that is, was promoted, expected, there was no reason for me to not pursue that" (personal communication, March 2, 2021).

According to Leske and Pendleton (2020), institutions whose processes incorporate the spirit of diversity, express divergent views freely, understand and check for biases while designing a flexible interview process are better positioned to attract diverse candidates. Participant 12 stated, "Like I said, there was never a conversation about where this can, where this position can go or grow or transition to other opportunities or anything like that. Additionally, when you see other folks of color, and leadership positions, who want promotional opportunities, who are qualified, being overlooked for white people," (personal communication, March 13, 2021). Another participant expressed how representation is impacted by campus climate stating, "We have a really poor retention rate, with staff of color and so, you know, so there's something wrong with the climate" (Participant 15, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Research Question 2

The second research question asks, what are the attitudes and perspectives of leaders regarding the underrepresentation and the minimal advancement of African Americans at predominantly white institutions? One participant stated, "I think it's under-represented and it is doing a disservice. It's doing a disservice to all of our first gens that come in, our students of color that come in, our students that need to be able to relate to someone that looks like them" (Participant 14, personal communication, March 12, 2021). The literature also supports this response, as minorities have struggled with discrimination and underrepresentation at various institutions (Kuradusenge-McLeod, 2021). Participants interviewed also frequently made remarks about retention and advancement (P3, P4, P5, P9, P15, & P19). One participant stated:

I think one of the reasons we fail to retain people of color, specifically African Americans is because of, again, I think the visible diversity is there, but when you look at the staff is going to be may not feel supported or represented. (Participant 19, personal communication, March 16, 2021).

Participant 14 explained further their perception of higher education and some of the concerns that related to underrepresentation.

Higher Education in my mind is predominantly white women, and men who identify as homosexual. And there's not a lot of men of color, people of color, I'm starting to see that more now as times are changing. But if we had a bigger applicant pool, that we're not just always seeing the same type of person. And I feel like that seems super discriminatory on my part. But that's like, that's what's coming into the pool" (Participant 14, personal communication, March 12, 2021).

Research Question 3

The third research question asked, what strategies are being employed to address the disproportionate representation of African American leaders at institutions of higher education in Connecticut? Diversity continues to be a focus at higher education institutions, which has led to many institutional initiatives and strategies (Brooks, 2020; Walker, 2020). Participant 5 stated, "Like our equity inclusion department, they're doing things that an equity inclusion department does, right. So, they're doing like anti-racism workshops, but nothing is required" (personal communication, March 12, 2021). Another participant stated:

Because if they're ever going to be able to appropriately support African American, Black folks, folks of color, particularly, in advancement opportunities they need to understand, have a higher level of understanding, and a higher level of training to be able to support them appropriately. (Participant 2, personal communication, March 1, 2021).

As greater workforce diversity and representation has notable implications for the organizations, there is a push to address it. Participant 19 expressed, "we've been talking a lot about how we prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in our job description so that when people are interested in applying for positions at the institution, they can see that we're prioritizing it as something that's important" (personal communication, March 16, 2021).

Another participant expressed that "We've talked about implementing diversity statements for all positions, all levels in our hiring process" (Participant 19, personal communication, March 16, 2021).

Research Question 4

The fourth research question asked, what are the barriers to advancement that African American leaders face at predominantly white institutions of higher education? Randel et al. (2021) explained that a lack of access and availability to informal networks is critical to why

African Americans are underrepresented in leadership positions. Participant 4 stated, “I think that mentoring programs in general for trying to foster diversity and inclusion would be great. I think that the problem though, is if you want to have a mentoring program, that involves there being a mentor, that would be able to have a mentee. And if there's already a problem getting people to that level, then that doesn't help anything either” (personal communication, February 25, 2021).

The barriers to advancement that African American leaders face at predominantly white institutions of higher education include the lack of equitable representation, mentorship that is scarce or non-existent, and lastly, the effects of systemic racism. According to Kuradusenge-McLeod (2021), minorities have struggled with racism and other forms of discrimination resulting in limited professional opportunities. Participant 2 stated, when asked about barriers and the under representation and minimal advancement of African American leaders that predominantly white institutions, that it is “Systemic oppression, In a nutshell, I mean, higher education was founded by a bunch of white people, specifically white men, you know, to advance, a select elite population, into industry into higher businesses. And, you know, that culture, as much as we don't want to admit it, it is, permeated throughout all of higher education since its existence” (personal communication, March 1, 2021).

Research Question 5

The last research question asked what affect does racial representation have on productivity and innovation? Innovation and productivity remain critical to the overall growth of an organization. Barabino (2019) explained that innovation is driven by diversity, and Triguero-Sánchez (2018), stated greater diversity fosters innovation and creativity and better positions the organization to solve problems. When asked about the lack of diversity in leadership and its impact on productivity and innovation participant 3 stated:

Unless you are consciously stretching yourself, you are only looking at things from your limited lens. Diversity on staff creates such a rich and robust opportunity to communicate and think about things and in ways you never thought imaginable, because they aren't your lived experience. (personal communication, March 5, 2021).

Osman et al. (2016) examined the connection between employee performance and innovation, discovering that innovation is a powerful driver of organizational productivity. However, African American's within these environments do not feel as though they can innovate or be as productive as there are many other factors. One participant stated:

So a couple of things are coming to mind related to innovation wise, you know, you can only innovate if people have ideas. And if you don't have a diverse group of people thinking of ideas, then you're not going to have a diverse group of ideas. So the more diversity that you have, the more diverse ideas you would have, which would lead to more innovations that you could potentially explore. Productivity, so I think sort of along the same lines, you don't have as many avenues open for you to be able to be productive. But at the same time, I'm thinking along the lines of productivity of the individual. So if somebody is hired at the university, and they are feeling like workplace discrimination, or they are feeling that they're not being heard as much, or that they have to work harder in order to be heard that would reduce their individual productivity, because they're working so hard to swim upstream to get those ideas where they need to go. (Participant 4, personal communication, February 25, 2021).

Multiple participants expressed that the growth or demise of an organization is contingent on their ability to achieve new and innovative advantages over the competition (P3, P6, P10, P17, P19). The literature supports this notion as Hofstra (2020) explained the more significant

the representation of underrepresented individuals such as African Americans, the more likely there are to be innovative ideas. As such, an organization that facilitates innovation by engaging all employees from all backgrounds in the idea creation process is better positioned to enhance its performance. Participant 10 expressed:

But when you're trying to be innovative, if you don't have opinions from various members of a community, especially the community that we have, right? If we don't have all of the different populations represented, no matter what innovation we try to come up with, we're not going to be meeting the needs, which then impacts your productivity. Because sooner or later, you're going to go back to the drawing board. So, if you don't have those parties involved represented at the table, your productivity is going to be affected, because your innovation is not going to be as innovative as it needs to be." (personal communication, March 3, 2021).

The Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework of African Americans in higher education consists of various interrelated theories and concepts where each component has a specific function within the framework. The research framework attempted to understand the concepts associated with the research study to include underrepresentation in higher education leadership at PWIs, diversity improves results, and the recruitment and retention of African Americans, and the advancement of African Americans in leadership at PWIs.

The study adopted two theories to guide the study, encompassing the Theory of Representative Bureaucracy and Critical Race Theory. These theories provided a lens to understand further under-representation in leadership and the importance of diversity on the institutions' success. Utilizing CRT as one of the guiding frameworks provides an understanding

to uncover the hidden subtext of race and racism within the organization (Rankin-Wright et al., 2021). Participant 2 stated:

So I think education is a big piece. And we just have to break down these more traditional higher education ways of thinking and knowing behaviors and the notion of "professionalism," I think a lot of, cultural acceptance, everything from how people dress to hairstyles, which I understand permeates in every industry, but I think that it is problematic in Higher Education" (personal communication, March 1, 2021).

Another participant expressed how their race has played a role throughout their career stating:

I've been told things like that, like, you're so sassy, you're so loud, you're so animated, you talk with your hands like, and not only at [UNIVERSITY REDACTED], but like in other jobs I've had, I've been pulled in by people to talk about, like, things that are associated with my Blackness (Participant 1, personal communication, February 22, 2021).

Representative bureaucracy promotes diversification within the workforce and improves the organization's integrity by attempting to compensate for pre-existing inequities (Chanin & Rojo-Mendoza, 2020; Liang et al., 2020). Further, utilizing the theory of representative bureaucracy as an additional framework provides an understanding of why individuals from different backgrounds should be considered and why representation is necessary. Participant 4 stated:

If students are coming in, and they want to see people that look like them, because they're more comfortable talking about their specific situation, and they walk in and everybody

doesn't look like them, it can be harder for them to express what their situation is, (personal communication, February 25, 2021).

The application of both theories connects the study. It provides a solid foundation for understanding the phenomenon while the additional components of the conceptual were linked through the study findings and addressing this study's research questions. Specifically, the conceptual framework components maintained a solid connection to the themes established while providing a lens and guide to acknowledging underrepresentation in leadership and the importance of diversity within an organization. Participant 2 stated:

I think you need to see other folks that look like you in the room. I also think that cultural and bias training is not just a one and done workshop for higher level administrators, like okay, we did our diversity training, we can wipe our hands and walk away, we're good. We're now culturally competent. I think that's part of the problem (personal communication, March 1, 2021).

Anticipated Themes

A comprehensive review of academic literature revealed that numerous factors impact the underrepresentation and the minimal representation and advancement of African American leaders at PWIs. The researcher anticipated finding that limited representation and advancement were due to higher education culture, the importance of leadership, discrimination, prejudice, diversity, coaching, mentoring, training, racism, and stereotyping, which was also supported by the literature. Through participant interviews at two PWIs within the state of Connecticut, the researcher validated these anticipated themes. However, the interviews also shed light on additional themes, which were not anticipated to include macro and microaggressions within higher education administration and Human Resources Involvement. The unanticipated themes

provide a greater foundation for understanding the phenomenon. Further, the additional themes provided additional depth on why the underrepresentation and the minimal representation and advancement of African American leaders at PWIs are critical to institutional success.

The Literature

The literature review systematically explores and analyzes what is already known related to the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, the literature review provides context while providing a foundation and a clear account of present data and limitations concerning the data being studied (Maggio et al. 2016). The current literature affirms the themes established throughout the study. According to Randel (2021), there is a call to improve career advancement opportunities for African Americans and other individuals from underrepresented groups; however, they fail to provide these individuals with space where they feel valued and equal to their white counterparts. Participant 5 stated:

So, for example, there have been multiple people of color who've been told they can't apply internally for positions because they don't have a PhD, or they don't have the number of years of experience, yet white people have been promoted to positions without PhDs without numbers of years of experience. And those optics alone have kind of reinforced why people leave [UNIVERSITY REDACTED] (Participant 5, personal communication, March 12, 2021).

Another participant shared his lived experience as a white male in the same space as an African American counterpart and stated:

I sit in a place of privilege. I mean, I am a white male that comes from a predominantly upper-class family that has not experienced some of those [discriminatory] things in my life. And I think, being in the position, and because I am a white male, I don't really

experience some of those discriminations or feel like I can't do the work that I need to do or that I can't advance (Participant 8, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Townsend (2020) explained that there is minimal growth related to the African Americans who are ascending to leadership positions in higher education institutions, and the lack of institutional support is a significant contributing factor. One participant explained, "I don't think there is any intention to have a focus on advancing leadership amongst African Americans. And I don't think it really affects them, right? It's kind of like out of sight out of mind, when you speak loud enough, it'll matter" (Participant 13, personal communication, March 9, 2021).

Webster and Brown (2019) explained that within higher education in America minorities such as African American have encountered discriminatory practices. There needs to be a commitment by staff, students, and faculty to learn about racism, engage in brave and difficult conversations with their African American counterparts and call out bias discriminatory practices (Barber, 2020). When ask about diversity, participant 17 stated:

I would like for it to be intentional, to not just say, oh, we support diversity, inclusion, and belonging, but your entire department says otherwise, and then all your grad students that work there, say otherwise. And everybody that comes for services say otherwise. This is probably why other people are not comfortable coming to your department (personal communication, March 18, 2021).

When individuals are affected by discriminatory policies or practices, whether overt or covert, it affects their ability to perform effectively while at work. Robinson et al. (2020) argue that organizations should employ diversity training to improve attitudes and practices toward diversity to mitigate and eradicate discriminatory behaviors. Participant 18 explained:

I know that at one point, I sat on the diversity inclusion committee for our division and there were discussions about how can we implement diversity training and the role that race plays on campus. We want to incorporate that into our kind of onboarding process. But it never really came to fruition. (personal communication, March 16, 2021).

It is difficult for underrepresented individuals to attempt to advance in a profession dominated predominantly by white individuals. This remains a challenge, as most leaders are also white; breaking through the racial barriers can seem daunting (Iheduru-Anderson, 2020). Participant 1 explained, "I think that is hard for people of color, and specifically Black people to advance. I think that it's challenging for women to also advance. I just think that there's a lot of systems that prevent people from moving up (personal communication, February 22, 2021).

As one thinks about strategies for advancing African Americans, mentorship surely comes to mind. However, African Americans historically receive less mentoring than their white counterparts (Randel et al., 2021). Participant 17 stated, "I think that mentorship is huge. And I feel like people don't realize that our students need this as well as staff, and faculty" (personal communication, March 18, 2021). Skjecvik et al. (2020) explained that mentorship provides a guide to one's personal and professional development, which can be highly beneficial to individuals. Participant 10 explained, "I would like to see some sort of mentorship within our institution, some might say that's inbred, right. But as a recipient of that, you know, it's something that I think works and provides an opportunity before we lose people" (personal communication, March 3, 2021). This level of support can aid in the retention of employees while providing support systems among other benefits. One participant stated:

One thing in my institution that we do have is an identity group, for folks of color, so staff and faculty of color, and we would get together monthly. So that was, like, kind of

our own thing that we developed. But again, this wasn't something that the institution thought would be something. It's not ingrained into the institution that there are mentor types of relationships, this is something that our community, we wanted to have a space for us to freely talk about things at the university, our lives in general. And so, we created this group, and from that have come like a, you know, unofficial mentor type of relationships. But this is a community that was doing this to take care of itself, not with institutional support. Now, the institution does give the group some money. But again, that was something that we had to go advocate for and ask for. And that money really covers the cost of food for our meetings. It's not for us to have a speaker come in or go to a conference or like anything like that. So that is the extent of, if we want it, what we wanted we had to create for ourselves (Participant 12, personal communication, March 3, 2021).

Another avenue that can be used to advance African Americans is professional development. Saleem and Ashiq (2020) explained how professional development provides an opportunity to learn specific skills and subject matter in addition to revising current skills, and it remains a continuous and proactive learning process. Participant 6 explained:

[W]hen I think about tools, I think about training professional development. We have prior to COVID, we were given a lot of opportunity to seek professional development yearly conferences, both regionally. Every few years, we attend national conferences, and then every year, multiple times a year, local conferences or webinars. A lot within the university to being able to learn peer to peer, right, or office to office (personal communication, March 5, 2021).

It is evident that the study's findings accurately reflect the data presented in the current literature related to leadership and minorities in a leadership position at PWIs. The literature review for this study highlighted the theoretical concepts surrounding and that guided the research while supporting the researcher as data was gathered regarding the underrepresentation and minimal advancement of African Americans in Higher Education on a particular topic.

The Problem

Creswell explained that a problem can be described as the concern or issues in practice, literature, or theory that necessitates a study (2017). The general problem to be addressed is the minimal advancement, and the disproportionate representation of African Americans compared to their White counterparts in leadership positions at higher education institutions, resulting in a lack of diversity among individuals in a leadership capacity. The specific problem to be addressed is the underrepresentation, and the minimal representation and advancement of African American leaders at two predominantly white institutions of higher education within the state of Connecticut, resulting in diminished productivity and innovation.

The findings directly relate to problem being studied as participant 8 stated:

One of the things that I've noticed since I started here is that it was very white. When I started here, the administration is very white, and a president and leaders who doesn't necessarily talk appropriately sometimes, like they, you know, they make jokes, and I don't think they understand sometimes the impact that it has" (personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Institutions need to do more to address the minimal advancement, and the disproportionate representation of African Americans compared to their White counterparts in leadership positions at higher education institutions. Participant 16 stated, "Something especially

that I've learned as I've continued to move up the ranks is that positive mentorship is crucial (personal communication, March 12). Another participant stated, "You know, I just think, again, the more we can do to recruit people of all races, people who can challenge the status quo, is one of the biggest ways that we can address like disproportionate representation" (Participant 6, personal communication, March 5, 2021). Lastly, addressing the culture is critical to addressing the problem of the study participant 3 stated, "If folks aren't seeing that diversity, why would they want to come to that campus and feel somehow tokenized (personal communication, March 5, 2021).

Summary of the findings.

The purpose of this qualitative study sought to answer the five primary research questions to garner a greater understanding of the underrepresentation and the minimal representation and advancement of African American leaders resulting in diminished productivity and innovation. The researcher was able to accomplish this by conducting 19 interviews with Higher Education Leaders (Assistant Director or above). The interviews were semi-structured, allowing the researcher to have established a set of questions to be explored with all participants; however, the researcher could probe and ask additional questions if additional context was needed. Once completed, interviews were transcribed, and member checking occurred open and axial coding took place. The findings are supported through the academic literature and the numerous personal communications that took place. This section provided an examination of the most salient points in the study and established themes.

The five superordinate themes that evolved were HR involvement, professional development, lack of diversity, macro and microaggressions, and addressing barriers. Each theme was supported by direct quotes from participants within the study and answered the

research question. The study revealed the importance of greater HR involvement as there was a significant focus on recruiting and being intentional with recruiting strategies for various job boards and larger geographical areas. Lack of diversity was another theme that rang through as having a diverse workforce is composed of many different types of people beyond the norm. Professional development was another established theme as this comes in many forms of training and learning opportunities, such as the call for diversity training. Macroaggressions and microaggressions were other notable themes, as institutions should be aware of its culture and evaluate whether it promotes inclusiveness. Some attitudes and actions may make some individuals feel unwelcome. Lastly, addressing barriers such as fostering diversity at all levels, focusing on retention efforts, paying attention to the institution's culture, and being intentional in all work is completed. In essence, if individuals can bring their entire self to work and not focus on these factors, institutions will see retention of diversity individuals and greater productivity and innovation. The established themes were supported through numerous participants within the study and the existing academic literature.

Application to Professional Practice

The application to professional practice component explains how the study provided innovative contributions while adding to the current literature related to the phenomenon being studied. Further, it gives insight into improving general business practice while providing application strategies that organizations can reference and leverage for their growth and success.

Improving General Business Practice

This qualitative case study contributes to the professional practice of organizational leadership related to African American Leaders in higher education and the impact on productivity and innovation. Further, the study's results can improve general business practice in

numerous ways. The data gathered within the study demonstrates a lack of African American leaders at higher education institutions; however, the underrepresentation is not limited to this specific industry. According to Cole (2020), African American professionals in leadership still lag behind their white counterparts in corporate America; moreover, the addition of Black role models in senior leadership and on boards should improve the retention rate of Black professionals. This statement directly relates to the findings and significance of this study.

The study's significance is to add to the existing research that addresses the underrepresentation and low advancement of African American leaders in higher education leadership positions. Moreover, the study provides critical data that acknowledges the importance of African Americans leaders in higher education and the benefits as it relates to productivity and innovation. This study's results are relevant for various organizations and industries as diversity represents a meaningful part of the organization. The fieldwork demonstrated that having greater representation to include African Americans positively impacted the organizational performance, specifically surrounding innovation and productivity.

The study highlighted the strategies and barriers associated with representation and advancement at PWIs institutional level. However, the problem raised is not isolated to PWIs, as numerous individuals through various industries meet barriers while attempting to advance. This study improves general business practice as it provides additional data for an organizational leader to review. Further, the study provides actionable steps to improve the representation of African Americans within their respective organizations.

The study's results provide awareness that can significantly impact how one thinks about diversity, representation, and advancement within the workplace. These concepts are deeply rooted and should have a multi-layer approach that encompasses hiring processes, organizational

culture, community involvement, and outreach. Organizational leadership effectively manages their diversified population and acknowledges their various perspectives. The study provides the necessary data demonstrating the importance of an inclusive organization that fosters African Americans' growth and advancement into leadership positions. This study provides support-based initiatives providing greater engagement while producing enhanced business results resulting in greater performance, productivity, and innovation.

Potential Application Strategies

Institutions must have a significant commitment to supporting equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism in the workplace, specifically focusing on the underrepresentation and advancement of African Americans and other minorities in higher education. Institutional leaders and hiring managers must first look at the barriers that impact African American leaders from joining the institution and provide strategies to support their growth once they are there. Human Resources (HR) must look at the hiring practices that currently exist and challenge hiring managers surrounding their hiring practices and decisions. Further, HR must also be intentional and deliberate about posting jobs.

To ensure greater representation of African Americans at higher education institutions, it begins with hiring practices and philosophies. Institutions can take a more intentional look at recruiting diverse populations. These practices include leveraging inclusive job boards that extend beyond the larger platforms. Ensuring a diverse candidate pool may require a post on various job boards beyond what is currently being utilized such as “www.higheredjobs.com, www.linkedin.com, or www.indeed.com.” Some examples of job boards that have a diverse focus include “www.diversity.com, www.blackcareernetwork.com, www.blackjobs.com, and,

workplacediversity.com." These sites were intended to promote African American employment opportunities while also aiming to reduce the high unemployment rates in Black communities.

According to Stewart (2016), institutions need a pipeline of diverse and talented individuals who have the capacity to advance and fill leadership positions. An institution can offer targeted internships to their students and students who attend HBCUs among other colleges and institutions. Institutions can also ensure that black student union groups receive notification of current internships and newly created job postings at the institution. This communication fostered and supported a more extensive and diverse talent pool for current and future leadership positions.

Robust and intentional diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training to include unconscious bias training among other initiatives should be a requirement for hiring managers. Implicit or unconscious bias refers to the various attitudes, perspectives, or stereotypes that may affect one's actions or inactions, perceptions, and decisions unconsciously (Keita, 2020). Seeking to understand the existence of an issue brings awareness to the issue. Understanding personal unconscious bias allows for deeper investigations about biases. Continuous training is also critical for the normalization of the conversation. Recognition of unconscious bias requires that one does the work to enhance hiring practices in addition to advancement opportunities that exist within the institution.

The implementation of a mentorship and coaching program will add significant value to the institution. These concepts foster greater engagement, resulting in better organizational performance (Maseko et al., 2019). However, the concept of coaching may be complex, mentorship and coaching programs can help to support and enhance the potential and capacity of those who are part of the institution that may not feel like they belong, resulting in individuals

not staying with the institution. Further, mentorship and coaching programs are essential to individuals who may not see themselves represented in leadership roles at PWIs.

Employee resource groups (ERGs) create an inclusive environment that provides an open forum for employees who may have similar lived experiences and mutual interests to gather and support each other. Moreover, ERGs offer multiple benefits to the institution where they are established; they provide support to leadership teams related to diversity and institutional concerns and needs (Welbourne et al., 2017). Additionally, allowing a flexible work schedule allows for employees to work outside regular office hours. This type of work relationship provides individuals with the ability to work and grow more dynamically while adapting to workforce diversity. It allows the organization to hire and retain employees who may not live near the institution or same state while still providing diverse perspectives.

Summary of Application to Professional Practice

These recommendations provided to include greater HR involvement, posting at various job boards, robust internship programs, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) training, mentorship and coaching programs, flexible working hours, and employee resource groups support all employees. These programs and initiatives allow employees to bring their true and whole selves to work, fostering greater employee engagement, productivity, and innovation. Additionally, these programs and initiatives provide a level of accountability for institutional leaders and HR departments as they espouse greater diversity within their hiring and internal advancement practices.

Recommendations for Further Study

Future research may examine African American administrators' lived experiences at public or religious PWIs; as the purpose of this study was to explore the disproportionate

representation and a lack of diversity among African Americans in a leadership capacity at two PWIs within the state of Connecticut (CT) in comparison to their White counterparts. Future studies can focus on multiple states, not in the Northeast. Though the study found that African Americans are significantly underrepresented in leadership roles at PWIs, other underrepresented groups are also not advancing or being represented in leadership roles at these institutions. Participants within the study expressed concerns surrounding representation related to other aspects of their identity to include one's sexual orientation, gender, political views, and even religious affiliation. Through the interview process, participants raised concerns about their advancement and expressed that other factors may inhibit their ability to advance.

Reflections

This section of the study reflected on the researcher's experience personally and professionally while conducting this research study. The section continues to provide a biblical perspective while integrating business concepts into the Christian Worldview. Additionally, there were references to specific scriptures that provided greater insight into the relationship between business functions and the Christian worldview. Lastly, this reflection section concludes with a summary of the most salient points discussed through the study.

Personal & Professional Growth

Conducting this research has provided a wealth of knowledge both personally and professionally for this researcher. The personal growth that this researcher has experienced has been invaluable. As explained by Roch et al. (2018), representation matters, and the results of the study echoed this sentiment. Through this experience, this researcher has been able to meet numerous leaders with higher education while being able to become a better researcher. Creswell (2017) explains that qualitative research is experiential; it shows how things transpired and how

things operate while seeking a collection of interpretations and understanding of how things work while looking for the general and particular. Researchers act as listeners, interviewers, in addition to being finders of observations that others are making. Through this experience, the researcher has learned and reflected significantly, which has allowed the researcher to understand how his leadership can have significant influence.

The professional growth gained throughout this experience has also been instrumental as this researcher now has a greater understanding and appreciation for leadership. This experience has provided the opportunity and a lens to understand leaders' lived experiences and how they impact change throughout the organization, develop human capital, and how to be an agent of change. This experience has taught this researcher the importance of diligence and perseverance and how it correlates to the workforce. Further, the coursework and study has provided a stronger foundation that allows the researcher to perform better within daily job responsibilities and enable the researcher to feel better prepared for future roles with greater responsibility. As an adjunct professor, the researcher can also support students and provide a greater level of guidance that did not exist before beginning this experience.

Biblical Perspective

A worldview is the conceptual lens within which we see, experience, and understand the world and one's place within it. One's worldview provides perspective or belief systems that give meaning or understanding of research data (Penner, 2020). The biblical worldview is rooted in God's word, and He is the ultimate reality within the Christian worldview, the foundation upon which everything is constructed and understood. Romans 2:11 states, "For God does not show favoritism." This verse reminds everyone that God does not discriminate, and everyone is equal. This is a critical notion as one looks at the advancement and underrepresentation of minorities

such as African Americans. As Christians, we understand the importance of treating everyone equally with dignity and respect regardless of their race or background. As expressed by James 2: 8-9, "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers."

As Keller and Alsdorf (2016) suggested, the gospel helps one see everything in a new light; however, it takes time to understand and incorporate this information into how we live and pursue our vocations. Reflecting on the journey to complete the dissertation and the level of understanding and persistence required to conduct meaningful and accurate qualitative analysis effectively brings to light Ephesians 2:10 (NIV). This scripture explains that, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Christian worldview teaches that we are all called to complete the work God has intended for everyone. As GOD followers, we are made in his image and are required to be productive in all that we do. Moreover, it explains that we may become more energized and fulfilled by enhancing skill sets and enhancing the workforce. As a Christian, one must remember that God cares about each aspect of our lives, and as Christians, we are all led through the grace of God (Keller, 2012).

"Every Good Endeavor" by Keller and Alsdorf teaches God's plan for challenging work, difficulties one can face while at work, and more reliable ways to ensure that one is honoring God with the work that we do. Keller's teaching suggests that work is a form of service. Further, the Christian perspective explains that God created work for His people. Through that work, each individual has been assigned a specific purpose, and through work, one makes themselves valuable to others, as opposed to living a life for oneself. 1 Corinthians 15:58 states, "Therefore,

my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Zeglat and Janbeik (2019) explained that meaningful work plays an instrumental position in allowing an employee's potential to come to fruition and realize their purpose at work.

This study assuredly acted as a guide and provides a greater view of how and why representation is important and how to ensure it is achieved. By understanding that change is needed and implementing those changes, leaders are positioned to develop business strategies that facilitate the organization's mission and vision but are better aligned with God's plan for effective leadership and business here on earth. As Keller and Alsdorf (2016) suggested, organizations on earth should continue to create, just as God created the heavens and the earth. When organizations develop and maintain sound and effective business strategies that support others and are supported by a biblical worldview, it aligns with God's vision for work. Keller and Alsdorf (2016) affirm that God's plan uses the work that one does to improve His kingdom on earth. Organizations and leaders would benefit significantly if there were a greater focus on maintaining a Christian worldview and spreading the Gospel through vocation. As stated in Mathew 5:16, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (NIV).

Lastly, Philippians 4:6-7 teaches, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." This is an essential passage as the Lord created the world and followers of Christ to cultivate what the Lord created (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012). The researcher has been given the

resources necessary to establish a meaningful, robust, and accurate qualitative study that fosters others' growth.

Summary of Reflections

This section of the study reflected on the researcher's experience both personally and professionally, which provided a lens as the researcher's personal and professional growth compounded throughout the journey. This section also provided a biblical perspective specifically about the business function explored in the study and its integration and relation to the Christian Worldview. This section's biblical worldview component explained the importance of work from a biblical perspective and how work and research foster one's humanity, dignity, and the assurance of continuing God's creation through their efforts. The section also provided an opportunity to reflect on the work done and its benefit to others.

Summary of Section 3

This section identified the five superordinate themes discovered, the interpretation of those themes, a representation, and visualization of the data component. Further, this section provided a detailed discussion that addressed how the findings related to the research proposal's key areas to include the research questions, the conceptual framework, anticipated themes, and the current literature. Further, this section of the study addresses the application to professional practice, and how the study findings can improve general business practice and potential application strategies. This section of the study covered personal and professional growth reflections, and provided a robust biblical perspective. This section conclusively summarizes the research and provides a foundation for organizations beyond Higher Education to understand the importance and implications on productivity and innovation of having greater advancement, retention, and representation of underrepresented individuals such as African Americans.

Summary and Study Conclusions

This study examined the relationship between African Americans and various theories related to race and representation associated with leadership within higher education institutions and how it impacts productivity and innovation. The general problem addressed is the minimal advancement and the disproportionate representation of African Americans compared to their White counterparts in leadership positions at higher education institutions, resulting in a lack of diversity among individuals in a leadership capacity. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to add to existing bodies of research that address the underrepresentation and low advancement of African Americans in leadership positions in higher education. Five research questions guided the study, ultimately generating five superordinate themes through nineteen in-depth semi-structured interviews that provided a framework and interpretation of those themes. The research findings provided a basis to address the gaps in current academic and business literature related to underrepresentation and minimal advancement of African American leaders in Higher Education.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

Time and duration of the interview:

Date:

Institution:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Research questions:

RQ1. Why are African American leaders disproportionately represented in leadership positions at predominantly white institutions in higher education in comparison to their White counterparts?

RQ2. What are the attitudes and perspectives of leaders regarding the underrepresentation and the minimal advancement of African Americans at predominantly white institutions?

RQ3. What strategies are being employed to address the disproportionate representation of African American leaders at institutions of higher Education in Connecticut?

Q4. What are the barriers to advancement that African American leaders face at predominantly white institutions of higher education?

RQ5. RQ5. What affect does racial representation have on productivity and innovation?

Opening Statement:

First, I would like to thank you for participating in this study and allowing me to discuss leadership advancement at your current institution. Your thoughts and perspective regarding the phenomenon are critical to the study. The interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Additionally, member checking will occur where I will follow-up with you to review the transcript from our interview to confirm that data was recorded as you intended, this will take approximately 20 -30 minutes. I will record our conversation and transcribe verbatim for further data analysis. The researcher will not disclose any personal or organizational data in the published results of this project. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time for any reason without consequences or penalties.

1. How do you identify (Ethnic Background)?

African American (Black)

American Indian

Asian

Caucasian (White)

Hispanic

Other

2. Highest Degree Completed

Associate's Degree

Bachelor's Degree

Professional Degree (JD)

Master's Degree

Doctoral Degree

3. What was your given title when you began your career in Higher Education, and how long did you hold that title?

(i.e. Chief Officer, Vice-President, Associate Vice-President, Assistant Vice-President, Dean, Associate Dean, Assistant Dean, Executive Director, Director, Associate Director, Assistant Director)

4. What is your current title, and how long have you held that title?

(i.e. Chief Officer, Vice-President, Associate Vice-President, Assistant Vice-President, Dean, Associate Dean, Assistant Dean, Executive Director, Director, Associate Director, Assistant Director)

5. If the same leadership levels were identified for previous questions please explain:

(Possible Prompt) Have you gained any new leadership responsibilities?

(Possible Prompt) Have you applied for other opportunities?

6. What do you believe is the ratio at your university of African American to white leaders?
(Possible Prompt) Why do you believe that is the ratio?

7. What tools has your university provided you to enable you to be successful and thrive? (i.e., internal/external training opportunities, mentoring programs, or identity network groups?)

8. What additional tools do you believe would positively affect your career growth?

9. How does your institution's cultural climate promote racial diversity within its hiring practices?

10. How does your institution actively foster the advancement of African Americans into leadership positions?

11. What racial diversity hiring initiatives currently exist at your institution?

(Possible Prompt) What additional strategies would you like to see?

12. What is your perception of the underrepresentation and minimal advancement African Americans leaders at predominantly white institutions (PWI)?

13. How does coaching and mentoring influence African American leadership advancement at PWIs?

14. What factors affect African American leadership advancement at PWIs?
15. How has your race affected the way in which you experience workplace discrimination, your current leadership position, or how your colleagues view you?
16. How has racial identity influenced your career growth in higher education?
17. How does the lack of racial diversity within leadership roles affect productivity and innovation?
18. What strategies related to racial representation can be employed from a leadership perspective to positively influence productivity and innovation?
19. Do you have any additional questions, comments, or suggestions regarding perceived barriers and strategies for African Americans' advancement in Higher education?

Closing statement:

Thank you for your time and effort. Your insights have provided a better understanding of the phenomenon, and I am excited about my study's findings. Your skills and experience have added significant value. Do you have any additional ideas or concerns about this research?