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IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATES AT HBCUS: LEVERAGING THE
VOICES OF UNDERREPRESENTED, MINORITY WOMEN FACULTY AND
INSTRUCTORS

By
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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in
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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study explores lived experiences of underrepresented, minority (URM) women faculty and instructors at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), examining how they navigate and respond to the complexities of structural and systemic barriers in higher education. Drawing from the literature on systems of oppression, intersectionality, and organizational change, this dissertation investigates the ways in which HBCUs still perpetuate systems of oppression that affect URM women faculty and instructors. This research seeks to understand the impact of systemic inequalities on URM women faculty and instructors at HBCUs, and their respective institution's efforts toward institutional change. Their voices are leveraged for deeper and more pervasive transformation. Through semi-structured interviews, it illuminates how HBCUs balance their historical legacy of resistance with the pressures of modern demands for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Four major themes emerged from the data analysis: 1) Navigating Organizational Climates, 2) Structures of Violence, 3) Leadership and Climate Conditions, and 4) Levels of Systemic Institutional Change. Research implications are also shared. Ultimately, this work contributes to broader conversations on social justice and leadership in higher education, offering recommendations for transformative practices - both internal and external to HBCUs - that foster institutional change and nurture inclusive environments for marginalized communities.

Keywords: underrepresented minority, historically Black colleges and universities, intersectionality, systems of oppression, institutional change, institutional diversity, servant leadership, structures of violence, minority tax

Dedication

My father's a preacher, my mother's a teacher – thus, I rhyme.

~ Saul Williams

To the two most benevolent beings and fiercest allies I have ever known, Fletcher and Shirley Wideman. A preacher and a teacher with enough love and grit to conquer the world's injustices and countless suggestions of who I should be.

Thus, I live. Thus, I rhyme. Thus, I write.

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Special thanks to my friends and colleagues not only in Cohort 54, but also those outside of this collection of scholar-practitioners. You all have provided a supportive, collaborative, and challenging environment throughout my studies.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the completion of this dissertation.

This was no solo effort.

We did it!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation in practice probes into the complex world of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) by describing the lived experiences of underrepresented minority (URM), women faculty and instructors and considers the suggestions they have for institutional transformation. As the academy and workforce diversifies alongside the transforming global population, URM women faculty and instructors at HBCUs offer a more intersectional lens from which to attend to issues of DEI. Such a pluralistic and humanistic mindset allows leadership at higher education institutions to serve the diverse populations entering their spaces. Changes in legislation, such as the repealing of Affirmative Action, may lead to a deluge of applicants at HBCUs who have historically served marginalized populations. HBCUs are caught in a “double bind”, simultaneously defending their mission and evolving to serve a diverse population of students (Gasman et al., 2021). Faculty are also a part of this evolution (Gasman et al., 2021) as URM students are more likely to pursue academics and persist in the academy when they have mentors with similar lived experiences and intersectional identities (Masters-Waage et al., 2024). Empowering URM women faculty and instructors will help to uphold the pedagogical, psycho-social, cultural, economic, and political virtues of HBCUs (Lomotey & Covington, 2017).

Chapter 1 provides a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research question, and aim of the study. Also, included are definitions of relevant terms, a methodological overview, delimitations, limitations, and personal biases. A brief personal reflection as a scholar-practitioner closes out this chapter.

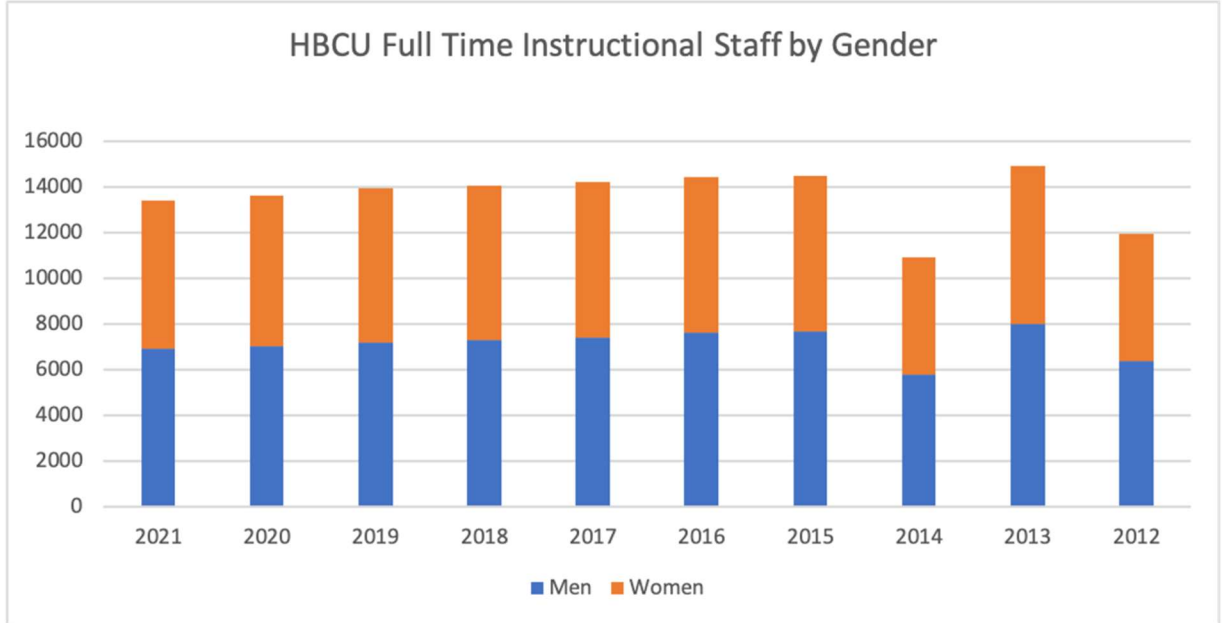
Statement of the Problem

A simple google search and scouring of academic journals yields a remarkably skewed reservoir of writing – there are more studies conducted about Black, women faculty at HBCUs (Lee et al, 2022; Lee et al., 2021) than women of other historically marginalized racial and ethnic identities. Since women face intersecting and compounding biases in the workplace (Thomas et al., 2021), this paucity of research presents a litany of consequences. Scholar-practitioners remain unaware of how organizational climates at HBCUs contribute to or reduce the barriers facing URM women faculty and instructors. Minimizing both the undisguised and clandestine barriers at these institutions is imperative (Lee et al., 2021)

The phenomena examined in this dissertation in practice is the lived experiences of URM women faculty and instructors at HBCUs with a deeper consideration of how the organizational climate at HBCUs either serves to institutionalize oppression through the exploitation and marginalization of URM women faculty and instructors or promotes their welfare and advancement. Thus, there is a particular focus on the nuances within organizational climates. The frameworks of intersectionality and systems of oppression are useful lenses from which to view failed or imperfect organizational climate at HBCUs. Because women account for roughly 50% of the entire faculty population at HBCUs (U.S Department of Education, NCES, IPEDS, 2021), it is imperative for scholar-practitioners to explore the experiences and roles of URM women faculty and instructors to see how they not only contribute to the overall longevity of HBCUs, but also to the development of institutional pedagogy and dismantling of oppressive structures. Figure 1 depicts the gender demographic of HBCU full time instructional

staff. 2012 and 2014 were not mandatory reporting years; schools could opt-in to submit their data.

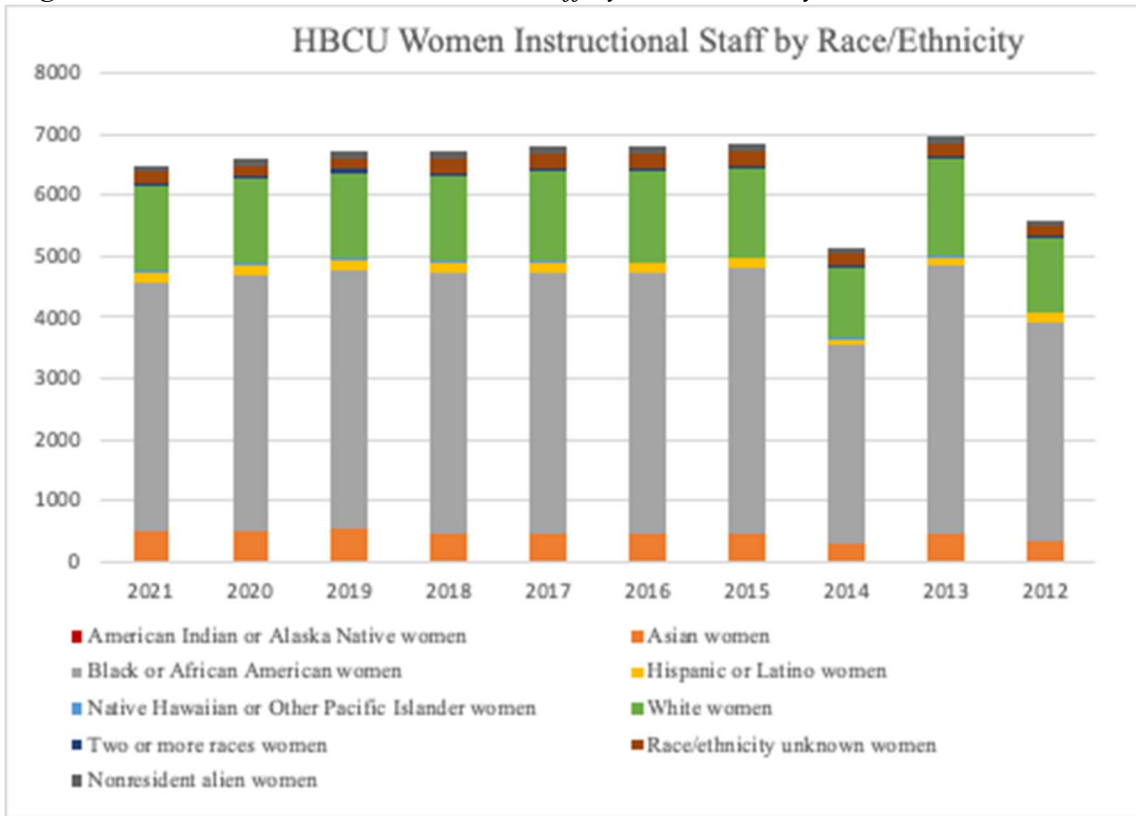
Figure 1 – HBCU Full Time Instructional Staff by Gender



U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. 2012-2021 (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Figure 1, however, only shows one piece of the puzzle. Figure 2 below presents a more detailed profile of URM women faculty and instructors at HBCUs.

Figure 2 – HBCU Women Instructional Staff by Race/Ethnicity



U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. 2020-2021 (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Finally, the servant leadership philosophy (Greenleaf, 1998) woven into institutional change models will guide potential solutions to the problems of imperfect organizational climates at HBCUs. Recommendations from a diverse pool of underrepresented minority women faculty at HBCUs can then be used to inform institutional DEI policy and procedures. A phenomenological approach can help address this gap in the literature.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study is to gain a better understanding of URM women faculty and instructors lived experiences with the current organizational climate at their respective HBCUS and their suggestions for institutional transformation. Many studies on HBCUs focus on Black, women in the STEM field (Lee et al., 2021), faculty perceptions of students in the STEM field (Brady et al., 2017; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2016), or URM faculty mentoring and teaching URM students (Ijoma et al., 2021). URM women faculty and instructors are all too often rendered voiceless despite wanting to contribute thoughtfully to institutional longevity, pedagogy, and DEI culture. Some argue the focus of HBCUs should be solely to support African American, descendants of slaves (DOS) (Davis et al., 2018). Yet, this is unfair to those community members navigating the HBCU landscape who do not identify as African American, DOS. There is still a need to explore the nuanced experiences of URM women faculty and instructors at a variety of HBCUs as the legitimacy and necessity of HBCUs is called into question. The voices of URM women faculty and instructors can provide a critical discourse designed to inform DEI policy, and practice.

A combined framework of intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change informs the research question and supports the inquiry, analysis, and interpretation of the lived experiences of URM women faculty and instructors at HBCUs. Therefore, a phenomenological approach is used to incorporate observations and data from semi-structured interviews with URM women faculty and instructors at HBCUs. Recommendations for institutional transformation are drawn from the findings and then categorized along an institutional change matrix provided by Eckel (2002) and further elucidated.

Research Question

The following research question guides this qualitative, phenomenological study: What are the lived experiences of underrepresented, minority women faculty and instructors at HBCUs and how can their voices inform institutional transformation?

Aim of the Study

The exigencies of the rapidly changing global landscape necessitate a revamped model of DEI leadership in higher education (Ahmadi Beni et al., 2024). The feminization of labor and mobility of women has changed the demographics of the workforce, and meeting the needs of a diversifying population demands an intersectional lens (Behera, 2023). By not only spotlighting the experiences of URM women faculty and instructors at HBCUs, but also countering the current assault on minority progress in academia, this study reimagines how the marginalized can regain agency and autonomy in spaces perpetuating systemic oppression.

The aim of this study is twofold; to promote the advancement of URM women faculty and instructors at HBCUs and to bolster the longevity of HBCUs as current

debates attempt to render the institutions obsolete. The tangible outcome of this dissertation in practice is to gauge the severity of failed or imperfect organizational climates at HBCUs through a DEI lens. Ultimately, the recommendations of URM women faculty and instructors selected for this study will be woven into a robust change model meant to revamp the current policies, practices, and procedures at HBCUs by leveraging URM women faculty and instructors' unique experiences.

The findings of this study will be of value to higher education literature as well as the expanding body of work investigating intersectionality, systems of oppression, and organizational change.

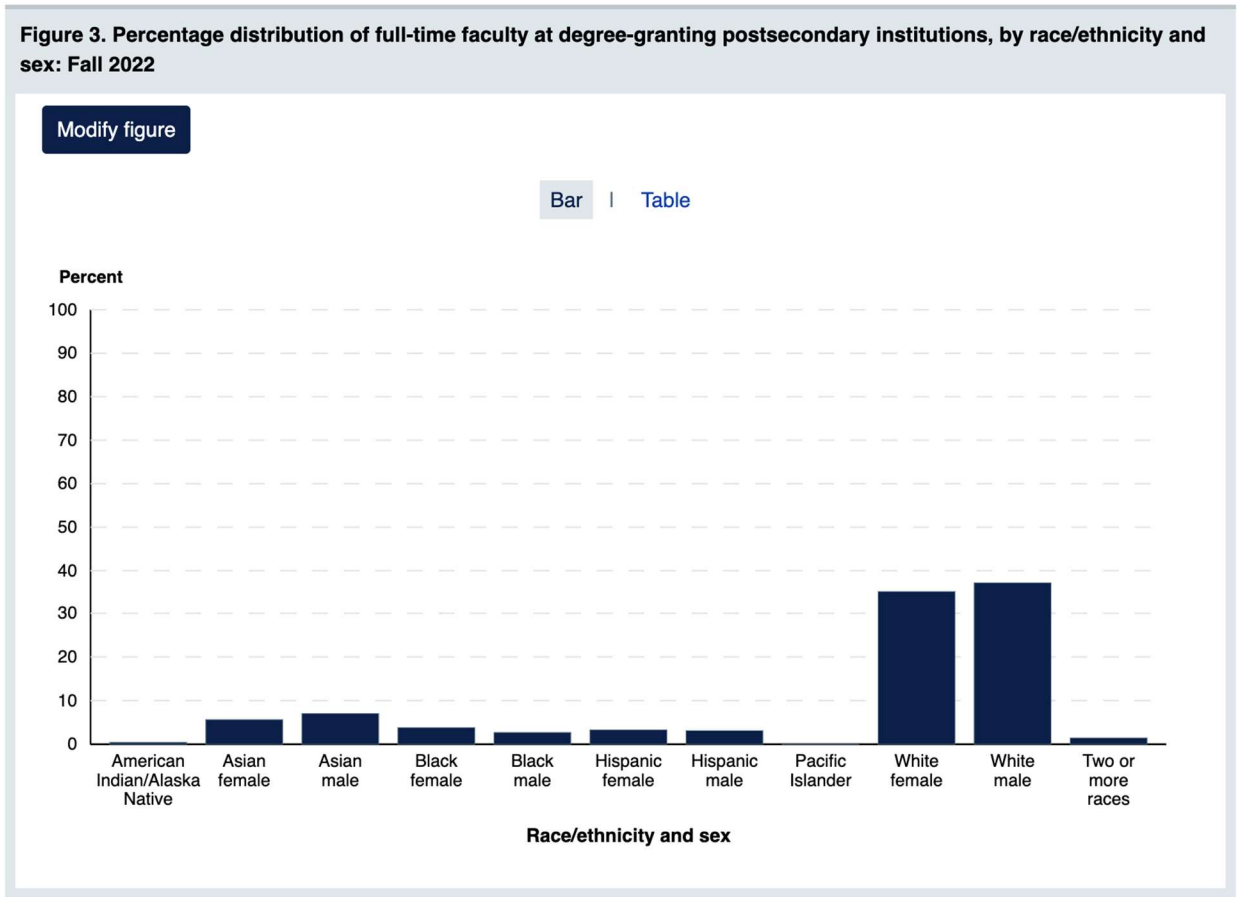
Definition of Relevant Terms

There are multiple terms used in this dissertation. Each requires operationalization. The following terms will be used throughout this study:

Underrepresented minority: An individual who self-identifies as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, Native American or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or those of two or more of the aforementioned races or ethnicities (The Pennsylvania State University, 2023; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). Additionally, Asian and Asian American is included in my broader usage of underrepresented minority. Typically, Asian faculty are not considered minorities in STEM fields, for example engineering (Main et al., 2023), but this conclusion cannot be assumed across HBCUs as each institution has a unique demographic context. The U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) 2022 report shows women who identify as African American/Black, Hispanic/Latina, Asian/Asian American, Native American, and multiracial tend to be vastly underrepresented among

full-time faculty at degree-granting institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). Figure 3 below summarizes the data in the NCES 2024 report.

Figure 3 - Distribution of Full-Time Faculty at Degree Granting Postsecondary Institutions by Race/Ethnicity and Sex



US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty, Fall 2022

Additionally, it is necessary to revisit Figure 2, which depicts the small percentage of Asian and Asian American women faculty at HBCUs. My use of underrepresented minority in this dissertation in practice will be limited to racial and ethnic identity.

Diversity: A spectrum, or range of individual and group differences including but not limited to race, ethnicity, age, religious beliefs, gender, and socioeconomic status (Lingras et al., 2021).

Equity: An approach intentionally providing community members access to the same opportunities (Lingras et al., 2021; Nivet et al., 2008).

Inclusion: A sense of belonging built on acceptance, affirmation, support, interconnectedness, participation, meaningful interaction, and value in a community or organization (Lingras et al., 2021; Tienda, 2013; Wright-Mair, 2020).

Microclimates: The “smaller, distinct spaces individuals operate within on college campuses” (Serrano, 2020, p. 2).

Organizational climate: Consists of the informal and formal policies, implementations, and procedures (Nabella et al., 2022) grounded in democratic principles of participation and justice (Nabella et al., 2022).

DEI climate: As a sub-climate of the organizational climate; the structures, behaviors, culture, and practices influencing the current state of DEI. Examples include organizational hierarchies, diversity or multicultural offices, departmental composition, wage disparities, teacher workloads, mentorship, and professional development opportunities.

Institutional transformation: Entails a deep, pervasive cultural change addressing 1) assumptions about behavior, action, and production, 2) the institution-wide collective, and 3) the alteration of beliefs, values, norms, structures, processes, and policies (Eckel, 2002). This type of change is not actuated by fixing discrete problems or refining current activities (Eckel, 2002); it is ongoing.

Structures of violence: how a social structure or institution systematically blocks one from accessing or acquiring basic needs, it can be concrete or abstract (Galtung, 1969; Wager et al., 2022), a reflection of systemic inequality

Minority tax: Burden of extra responsibility, often with little to no compensation.

Methodology Overview

The frameworks of intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change were combined into a qualitative phenomenological approach. Creswell and Poth (2018) state phenomenology seeks to find the essence of a phenomenon through finding commonalities in individual experiences, feelings, and perceptions (Babbie, 2017; Igwe & Odii, 2020). However, it is also crucial to account for potential counternarratives as the lived experiences of URM women faculty and instructors may differ based on their respective combination of identities (Creswell & Poth, 2018) in other words their intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). Accordingly, a phenomenological approach was appropriate for the research purpose, research question and aim.

For this dissertation in practice, there were two populations of interest: URM women faculty and instructors at HBCUs and URM women faculty and instructors at PWIs. From this population, a sample of 10 URM women faculty and instructors were chosen. To be a part of the sample, faculty members: 1) identified as female, 2) had a

faculty rank of assistant, associate, or full professor, 3) self-identified as an underrepresented ethnic or racial minority, and 4) taught at an HBCU for at least one year. Sample recruitment was achieved through purposive and snowball techniques and the use of an eligibility questionnaire.

As noted above, 10 URM faculty and instructors from HBCUs were selected for one-on-one interviews. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent preceded each interview. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and securely stored in the cloud on my personal computer. Additionally, notes on non-verbal communication were taken to illuminate attitudes and feelings of URM faculty and instructors. Interview data was triangulated alongside a simultaneous dive into departments websites.

A well-structured interview protocol bolsters the reliability and validity in phenomenological studies and guides the researcher throughout the data collection process (Platt & Skowron, 2013; Yeong et al., 2018). Examples from the 12-question interview protocol, placed in Appendix A, included: 1) Can you reflect on when you have felt excluded, unwelcome, or uncomfortable at (institution name) because of your racial or ethnic background? Your gender?, and 2) What do you think are the barriers to increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion? How can these barriers be overcome? Observation checklists and notes are included in Appendix B.

A thematic analysis with deductive coding fit the aim of this phenomenological study. Moustakas' (1994) modified Van Kaam approach is ideal for conducting a thematic analysis. The Dedoose qualitative analysis software program was used to organize and analyze the interview data. Codes were developed using intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change frameworks. If new codes were

interpreted from the analysis they were added and applied where necessary (Lee et al., 2021).

Delimitations, Limitations, and Personal Biases

Delimitations are the conscious limitations placed on the theoretical perspective, objectives, research questions, variables, and sample techniques (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). Put otherwise, delimitations are the boundaries or scope of the study (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019) like the time, location, and sample size. The time of the study was constrained to the Spring of 2024 to Spring of 2025. The sample of the study looked at URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs around the USA. It was not a study on all URM faculty in academia; that is, it did not include URM, men faculty at HBCUs, nor did it include the URM student experience. These two demographics were mentioned in conversations, but they were not included in the population or sample set. I limited the study location to HBCUs, choosing to remove the experiences of URM faculty and instructors at PWIs. Additionally, the majority of data collected came from semi-structured virtual interviews.

Limitations are potential weaknesses outside of the scholar-practitioners control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). By choosing a phenomenological analysis, I already introduced a certain degree of design bias. One of this methodology's weaknesses is the inability to make claims about a larger population as this research is typically conducted with a small group of people. On a basic level, time and resource constraints limited travel to HBCU campuses as well as face-to-face interactions. Another limitation arose from the scholar-practitioner's inability to know if a participant would be able to answer each interview question honestly, completely, and accurately (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). I

diligently reviewed the data I collected from interviews, observations, and institutional artifacts like websites, and mission and vision statements. By checking for congruence across data I supported my findings and strengthened weak data points.

As with any study, personal biases are present in this dissertation in practice. Personal bias skews the research process toward specific and often limited outcomes. To increase validity, I bracketed the meanings and interpretations (Hycner, 1985) stemming from my beliefs and assumptions as a URM, woman staff member of biracial identity working at a small liberal arts college. I have preconceived notions about the DEI space in higher education, but these may not be congruent with every URM, woman faculty member I interview. As such, I needed to remain cognizant of the type of language I used when communicating, asking questions during the semi-structured interviews, and reviewing the data. Ultimately, I had participants check my interpretation of their responses and provide feedback throughout the data collection and data analysis process. I also had DEI experts in higher education identify gaps in my argument and whether I have made sound conclusions. I kept questions open-ended, asked probing questions when necessary, and allowed the conversation to flow from the respondents' own words.

I also took steps to limit respondent bias. There is a risk of participants answering questions with acquiescence or uniform, repetitive responses. To mitigate respondent bias, I kept the interviews conversational, ensured a safe space for confidentiality, and emphasized the importance of sharing one's authentic experience. Overall, I remained aware and flexible during the research process.

Reflections of the Scholar-Practitioner

Dickel (2017) offers a detailed commentary on the types of reflection all scholar-practitioners should practice. I utilized spontaneous and systematic anticipatory reflection by walking myself through each step of the DIP process (Dickel, 2017) Additionally, I engaged in technical reflection when I made corrections to the study design. Reflection was an ongoing activity.

As an URM, woman working in higher education, I have a vested interest and connection to organizational climates and the connection to DEI. My lived experiences mirror many scholars' sentiments captured in their research on systemic barriers faced by those of intersectional and marginalized identities. My voice is one of many and I must practice personalistic and deliberate reflection (Dickel, 2017). Although I am not a professor, my career finds me at the intersection of data, people, and servant leadership. My hope is to learn more about my own personal and professional journey in higher education while contributing to the betterment of the URM faculty and instructors experience. I am fueled by an innate connection with transformational, authentic, and servant leadership. Guided by an ethic of care, earnest curiosity, and creativity in both my personal and professional life, I strive to eliminate parochialisms, empower those around me through safe, open, and constructive dialogue, and engage in potential and possibility building. I strive to be a person of influence "[who] engages with others and creates a connection, building trust, that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2022, p. 342). My intention is to raise the level of justice and fairness as well as increase self-efficacy, positive affect, discernment of multiple perspectives (Northouse, 2022) while I produce a narrative about the essence of

URM faculty and instructors' experiences at HBCUs. This narrative is deeply embedded in the process of critical reflection (Dickel, 2017). Undoubtedly, this dissertation journey was a cathartic moment, a reaffirmation of my personal leadership philosophy and related mission statement, and another milestone of lifelong learning.

In writing this dissertation, I had the opportunity to not only listen to the voices of URM faculty and instructors, but also provide a critical discourse for future DEI policy and procedures at HBCUs. These schools should remain as bastions of diversity, affirmation, and liberation for those of marginalized identities.

Summary

HBCUs cannot be abandoned in today's socially, culturally, and politically charged world. Though not perfect, these institutions continue to be hallmarks of academic rigor, leadership, and the development of social change agents (Franklin et al., 2023; Johnson, 2018). Chapter 1 addressed how a phenomenological approach can be applied to a study on the lived experiences of URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs and their respective recommendations for institutional transformation. By diving into the marrow of URM faculty and instructor experiences, it is possible to advance an innovative institutional change model to aid HBCUs in creating well-informed DEI policy and procedures.

In future chapters, the servant leadership philosophy is woven into the discourse surrounding institutional change models and how this leadership style can impact policy, practice, and procedures. This revamped model can then promote the longevity of these historic institutions. Chapter 2 of this dissertation includes a literature review concerning topics of intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional transformation in

higher education with a particular emphasis on the state of organizational climate and its effect on DEI at HBCUs. Servant leadership is introduced as both a philosophy and practice to further the revamping of HBCU organizational climates.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter I featured the foundational elements of the proposed dissertation in practice – a problem statement, purpose statement, research question, and aim. It also addressed the methodological approach and subsequent delimitations, limitations, and biases. As stated in Chapter I, examined in this dissertation in practice is how the organizational climate of HBCUs serves to institutionalize oppression through the exploitation and marginalization of URM faculty and instructors. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of URM faculty and instructors' lived experiences in the current organizational climate at their respective HBCUS and their suggestions for institutional transformation pertaining to DEI efforts. Women's stories are often counternarratives to the dominant, patriarchal frame (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2000). The sharing of testimonies engenders more empathy toward the oppression women faculty face (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2000). This act moves beyond simple population measures of diversity. My research question is - what are the lived experiences of underrepresented, minority women faculty and instructors at HBCUs and how can the voices of these professors inform institutional transformation? The aim of this dissertation in practice is to promote the advancement of URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs and to bolster the longevity of HBCUs as current debates attempt to render the institutions obsolete.

Taking the foundational elements in Chapter I, Chapter II presents a comprehensive review of the literature on the frameworks of intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change. Alongside these theoretical underpinnings, I review reports on women in the workplace. *The Current State for Women in the Workplace*

section includes McKinsey and Company's probing of 4 common misconceptions about women in the workplace. Additionally, snapshots of underrepresented minority women are provided. In the Microclimates and Organizational Climates segment, conceptualizations of microclimates, organizational climates, and DEI climates are held in conversation. Following the Microclimates and Organizational Climates section, I look at the literature on intersectionality with an added focus on its existence in higher education and HBCUs as a specific institutional category. Much like the Intersectionality review, I then look at definitions of systems of oppression, their manifestation in higher education and the impact they have at HBCUs. Institutional change models are then discussed with a particular eye toward key facilitators of change. The literature suggests a need for initiatives to address institutional transformation from a cultural and structural vantage point. Finally, servant leadership will be defined and contextualized as an already established philosophy at HBCUs. However, it needs to be more adequately applied toward valuing the lived experiences of all URM faculty and instructors.

Current State for Women in the Workplace

In specific industries, women tend to be an "only" in the workplace – or one of very few (Sneader & Yee, 2019). These industries include construction, manufacturing, transportation and communication (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2024), as well as technology and engineering sectors (Sneader & Yee, 2019). In a study of 64,000 employees, 45% of women of color in technology and engineering highlighted being an "only" in their workplace. Conversely, men, in the same industries, reported significantly less on this measure at approximately seven percent (Sneader & Yee, 2019). Overall, of the 64,000 employees, 20% of women expressed the same endemic "only-ness" in their

work settings (Sneader & Yee, 2019). Women who are often alone in their workplace still find ways to succeed but they face higher odds of discrimination and attrition as the single representative of their gender (Sneader & Yee, 2019).

The Four Myths

In the 2023 McKinsey & Company Women in the Workplace report, four longstanding myths were debunked. The first myth questions the notion whether women are becoming less ambitious. Findings from the report reveal 80% of women overall seek promotion, and women of color tend to be more ambitious than White women where 88% of women of color want to be promoted (Field et al., 2023). The second myth debunked by McKinsey & Company shows the broken rung is a more pervasive force than the glass ceiling in preventing women from advancing in their careers. In all cases men are more likely to be promoted than women. More striking is the effect the broken rung has on women of color compared to white women. Black and Latina women find their advancement most obstructed (Field et al., 2023). Field et al. (2023) also dispel the myth of microaggressions having a ‘micro’ impact on women. Traditionally marginalized women experience demeaning remarks and slights to their character or emotional state at higher rates (Field et al., 2023). The last confuted myth focuses on how women and men benefit from flexible work – not just women. Still, women tend to face fewer microaggressions and report higher levels of psychological safety when working remotely (Field et al., 2023).

Underrepresented Minority Women in the Workplace

A more nuanced portrait of URM minority women in the workplace is necessary. Each group experiences barriers in their career, however, context matters. Since this study

will look at URM women, including a snapshot of their experiences in the workplace is imperative. Glass ceilings (Field et al., 2023, Gee & Peck, 2018, Xiao et al., 2023), broken rungs, and tight ropes (Williams et al., 2022) are all pervasive structural barriers for women in the workplace. Krivkovich et al. (2024) does note there is optimism for minority women – they have, overall experienced significant gains on the corporate pipeline.

Black and African-American Women

Thomas et al. (2021) assert “black women fac[e] disproportionately high barriers in the workplace” (p. 30). They navigate bias in hiring and promotions, encounter more microaggressions than other groups of women, and endure a lack of managerial support and care (Thomas et al., 2021). Strikingly, Black and African American women are roughly “four times as likely as white women to be subjected to demeaning comments and behavior” (Thomas et al., 2021, p. 30). Moreover, they must find more ways to cope with racism and discrimination which leads to a lack of trust in their company’s dedication a healthy DEI culture. (Thomas et al., 2021)

Despite these shortcomings, there is hope. In the same 2021 study, Thomas et al. (2021) reveal Black women are now taking more initiative, pushing their companies to do better, and holding their companies accountable for DEI shortcomings even though there is a greater possibility of retaliation. Black women are more likely to pay a minority tax, dedicating substantial time to extracurricular DEI activities, like mentorship and sponsorship (Thomas et al., 2021). Black women, feel obligated to spend their time and resources filling their organization’s allyship void because it would not get done otherwise (Thomas et al., 2021).

Asian and Southeast Asian Women

Asian women are subjected to the model minority myth and what is coined as the bamboo ceiling (Yu, 2020). The model minority myth states Asians as a whole are “too successful to be considered a disadvantaged minority” (Cheng, 1997, p. 277). Statistics debunk this myth as Asian women account for approximately 2% of women in the C-suite (Thomas et al., 2021). Additionally, women lose pace with men on the corporate pipeline; Asian women, however, tend to fair slightly better than Latina women and Black women. The virtue that Asian women are too successful and escape many of the barriers plaguing minorities (Lim et al., 2023) undermines the nuanced experiences of double “only-ness”, microaggressions, subjective evaluation (Thomas et al., 2021), micro assaults, backhanded compliments (Wu et al., 2023), and workplace negotiations (Alt et al., 2024). Repetition of these experiences has a negative influence on Asian women’s work, well-being, interpersonal relationships, and their coping mechanisms (Wu et al., 2023).

The bamboo ceiling, much like the metaphor of the glass ceiling pertaining to the experience of women as a whole, is the invisible barrier Asian women face while seeking out similar leadership levels as men. For Tran (2023) these two ceilings combine to make the “glass bamboo ceiling,” a double jeopardy. This double jeopardy does not uniformly present itself – East and Southeast Asian women, for instance, experience discrimination, microaggressions, and hiring bias in various ways and frequencies (Tran, 2023). For instance, in complementary method study on East Asian and Southeast Asian leadership attainment in S&P 500 and large US companies Lu et al. (2020) found East Asians did not attain leadership positions at the same rate as South Asians and Whites. Additionally, South Asians also outperformed Whites at these major enterprises (Lu et al., 2020). Lu et

al. (2020) claim differences in cultural assertiveness was the mediating factor rather than leadership motivation.

Also, crucial to note is the Anti-Asian discourse that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic (Jun & Wu, 2021). Alongside the model minority myth and the glass bamboo ceiling, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated Anti-Asian racism and violence (Lim et al., 2023). Thomas et al. (2021) find 1 in 4 Asian women has been personally impacted by anti-Asian stigma during the COVID-19 pandemic (p. 11). For Lee et al. (2023) the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified racially discriminatory comments in the workplace and Asian women are showing lower work engagement as a result. In light of the glass bamboo ceiling and the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian women are making strides. While Black and African American women are holding their companies accountable, Asian women are more “likely to ask for promotions” and endeavor to be top purpose-driven executives (Thomas et al., 2021, p. 11).

Hispanic and Latina Women

In the 2024 Women in the Workplace report Krivkovich et al., (2024) find Hispanic and Latina women are the most underrepresented group in early career positions. In the same sphere as the glass and bamboo ceilings, broken rungs are also present. The broken rung is a compounding of systemic barriers causing women to fall behind early in their careers. They lose any advantage and experience capital which sets them on the path to promotion (Ellingrud et al., 2025). Hispanic and Latina women have faced the worst broken rung out of all groups combined for both men and women (Krivkovich et al., 2024). Across all industries, Hispanic and Latina women have the lowest promotion rates to VP positions (Krivkovich et al., 2024). This has adverse effects

for sense of belonging as Hispanic and Latina women do not see themselves in senior leadership positions. Alongside their Black and African American and Asian peers, there has been an increase in Hispanic and Latina women expressing that race plays a major role in whether they receive a promotion, raise, or help to move up another ladder rung (Krivkovich et al., 2024). Support from senior leadership has declined and they receive less guidance on how to navigate organizational climates and politics (Krivkovich et al., 2024).

Microclimates and Organizational Climates

Before diving into a discussion on relevant frameworks, a reminder of the definitions of microclimates, organizational climates, and DEI climate is necessary. These three, though similar, are not synonymous but rather interrelated. As noted before, microclimates are ‘the smaller distinct spaces individuals operate within on college campuses’ like programs, departments, organizations, and affinity groups (Serrano, 2020, p. 2). Serrano (2020) argues an individual’s perception of the microclimates in which they operate influences their perception of the overall campus racial climate.

Ackelsberg et al. (2009) further contend microclimates tend to circumscribe faculty members, affecting their willingness and ability to thrive at their respective institutions. Luckily this implies the existence of a microclimate spectrum – negative, neutral, and positive environments (Ackelsberg et al., 2009). Individuals may differ from their microclimate norm along vectors of difference – gender, race, ethnicity and/or sexuality (Ackelsberg et al., 2009). Additionally, minority or members in a microclimate may bring alternative methods and perspectives rendering their presence as ideologically or politically charged (Ackelsberg et al., 2009). Bullying is a frequent practice in toxic

microclimates; it discourages individuals from engagement with their peers and ultimately institutions as a whole (Ackelsberg et al., 2009). In more neutral microclimates, where factions are more or less no existent, the absence of shared goals can create tension, disconnection, and a lack of accountability (Ackelsberg et al., 2009). In contrast to negative and neutral microclimates, positive microclimates show support to one's life outside of the workplace. For Mack et al. (2010), empowerment becomes the stimulus for shifting negative climates to positive climates whereby a process exists to identify what is causing powerlessness as well as the removal of the conditions of powerlessness through organizational practices and the providing of efficacy information. In short, personal agency and self-efficacy are nurtured rather than neglected (Mack et al., 2010). For example, when colleagues gather outside of formal departmental structures they are creating alternative microclimates. Often these meetings include "college committee service, engagement with interdisciplinary programs, and membership in informal social/collegial networks" (Ackelsberg et al., 2009, p. 93). These alternative atmospheres should be complementary rather than opposing to the default microclimate to which one belongs (Ackelsberg et al., 2009).

Solely looking at microclimates is insufficient. In general, informal and formal policies, implementations, and procedures are considered a part of an organizational climate (Nabella et al., 2022). In all organizational climates there are "dimensions of individualism, collectivism, masculinity and power distance" (Manning, 2020, p. 5). For Manning (2020) the norms, structures, and values of toxic organizational climates enable rule breaking, deviancy, and wrongdoing. Healthy, open organizational climates are grounded in the democratic principles of participation, communication, and justice

(Bolding & Van Patten, 1982; Nabella et al., 2022). Unhealthy, or suboptimal organizational climates put organizations at risk of falling victim to future challenges like demographic and enrollment shifts, technology advancement, and financial burdens.

DEI climate refers to how certain aspects of the organizational climate affect diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts; namely - role modeling, wage disparities, mission statements and goals, the prioritization of on-campus and off-campus issues, formal and informal rules and policies, and biases and beliefs (Enders, et al., 2021). Gender, age, rank, and race power differentials influence bias (Enders et al., 2021). For Morgan-Daniel et al. (2022) and Enders et al. (2021), the abovementioned aspects contribute to an individual's sense of belonging, value, emotional and physical safety and how committed their organization is to DEI. DEI climate also includes how people encounter inequity, bias, and harassment (Portuallo et al., 2023). The DEI climate is a sub-climate of the organizational climate.

Individual, group, and institutional actions are needed to improve organizational climates at higher education institutions (Enders et al., 2021). Unfortunately, not all decisions are beneficial for the diverse populations at colleges and universities. Cheeks and Yancey (2022) found diversity climates are strongly related to “job satisfaction, perceptions of coworkers, affective organizational commitment, and perceived organizational support” (p. 12). Strikingly, ratings of an organization's DEI climate differed based on race, sexual orientation, and age, moreover these ratings were lower when individuals had multiple intersectional (or target group) identities (Cheeks & Yancey, 2022). Serrano (2020) urges scholar-practitioners to create homeplaces and counter-spaces which nurture a community of resistance, love, affirmation, healing, and

recovery. There is a need to turn negative microclimates into academic homeplaces (Serrano, 2020) which will positively affect the organizational climate. This type of growth in higher education requires a sounder conceptualization of DEI from the lenses of intersectionality and systems of oppression theory.

Intersectionality

Crenshaw (1989) introduces the term intersectionality, defining it as the dynamic marginalization of Black, women and the urgency of looking at their experiences from a perspective incorporating law, feminism, and antiracism. This marginalization rests at the convergence of power relations (Cho et al., 2013), capitalism (Bohrer, 2018), and resistance. Traditionally, intersectionality has been used to mobilize women of color (Roth, 2021) as part of exposing the marginalization and oppressions they face. It allows for radical coalition building and political change from the expression and acknowledgment of commonality and solidarity (Roberts and Jesudason, 2013). Corneille et al. (2019) asserts the intersectionality framework is ideal for promoting equity; moreover, the empowerment and advancement of historically marginalized faculty.

Opposition of intersectionality stems from a variety of perspectives. Intersectionality generates theoretical, pedagogical, political, and experiential unease (Nash, 2017). From one vantage point, it centers Black women as the exemplar, monolithic intersectional subject (Nash, 2008; Zack, 2005). Zack (2005) extends all women are inherently intersectional subjects – their position of disadvantage intersects with other social axes. Others argue intersectionality's elasticity deflects attention away from the very essence of its initial agenda to confront assumptions and unpack analyses from people's lived experiences (Salem, 2018). Still, there is a camp of scholars who

contend intersectionality unintentionally reproduces claims to know and represent the other (Salem, 2013).

Overall, intersectionality is not exhausted by prior iterations or discourse. It is not fixed; rather it seeks to recover marginalized voices and experiences (Carbado et al., 2013; Cho, 2013; Nash, 2008). Furthermore, it has matured from its infancy where race and gender merely provide a jumping off point (Cho, 2013). The advantages of using such an expansive lens include its ability to move beyond national boundaries as well as within and across disciplines (Carbado et al., 2013). It also engages black women, black men, and at its heart is a social movement (Carbado et al., 2013). Any plan of action hopeful “to build a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive space” requires a critical lens willing to see identities as intertwined rather than compartmentalized (Ramos & Brassel, 2020).

Intersectionality and Higher Education

The applicability of intersectionality is vast. It has promising implications for the field of higher education (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Museus and Griffin (2011) contend an intersectional perspective more accurately reflects the state of DEI in higher education, because it is problematic for higher education leaders to categorize and analyze faculty, staff, and students along singular dimensions of identity. By operating in non-intersectional dimensions, leadership runs the risk of condensing the impartiality of questions through their reliance on socially and commonly constructed concepts of race and gender (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Conversely, Nichols & Stahl (2019) find intersectionality research in higher education may show partiality toward gender identity when combined with other intersectional positions or social categories. This leaning may

limit intersectionality's scope in an academic context. For tenure-tracked professors, like Richards (2019), gendered racism is an everyday adversity for many Black, women professors; especially at predominantly white institutions (PWI). Ultimately, intersectionality allows for a broader understanding of power-laden university environments (Byrd et al., 2019).

Intersectionality at HBCUs

By allowing intersectionality to be a fluid framework, scholar-practitioners can explore the complex “gender and racial dynamics at HBCUs” (Del Priore, 2022). With a particular focus on Black Women faculty at HBCUS, Blackshear & Hollis (2021) note intersectionality affects this population despite their accolades, academic milestones, or locale. Important to note, however, is depending on an individual woman faculty member's department, these numbers do not represent the most accurate depiction of diversity, equity, and inclusion. For instance, in STEM departments, women are frequently still the minority (Hendrickson & Haynes, 2019; Lee et al., 2021). For Hollis (2024) minority faculty with intersectional identities feel minimally valued or not valued alongside feelings of mistrust in their institution. Literature on the intersectionality of other minority groups at HBCUs is seemingly absent, but scholars have started to investigate Asian, women faculty intersectionality and their lived experiences of oppression (Prater et al., 2011). This area needs further exploration.

Systems of Oppression

One cannot remove intersectionality from systems of oppression – it has become a prevailing vantage point from which to conceptualize the relationships between sexism, racism, ageism, classism, privilege, and other forms of discrimination (Carastathis, 2014;

Moradi, 2017). These systems stem from the interweaving of power, privilege, domination, stratification, structural inequality, and discrimination (Robbins, 2011). Feagin (2013) argues social groups, networks, and institutions sustain systems of oppression, especially racial hierarchies. Scholars have looked at the five faces of oppression – exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence - often from a feminist and justice-oriented lens (Young 1990). Exploitation occurs when the systematic and unreciprocated transfer of power and results moves from one social group and benefits another (Young, 1990). For Young (1990), marginalization is the “most dangerous form of oppression” – a group of people are barred from social life and in turn deprived of necessary resources. Powerlessness is ultimately a state of stagnancy – one takes orders, and has limited chances to develop or act (Young, 1990). Cultural imperialism sees a dominant group universalize its culture, norms, values, beliefs, and behaviors (Young, 1990). Finally, violence is not only a form of oppression where people fear attacks on their person or property, but also the very nature of the social context making it systematically acceptable (Young, 1990).

None of these facets can be corralled or reduced, nor does every human being have the agency and autonomy to change moral standards and terms (Walker, 2007a; Young 1990). In contrast, Zutlevics (2002) asserts there is a universal definition of oppression where to be oppressed means one lacks resilient autonomy; everyday existence is rendered more difficult (Zutlevics, 2002). There is agreement on refusing to quantify which oppressions or marginalization are greater than another – there is no single combination of identities with the title of “most oppressed” (Byrd et al., 2019).

Oppressive systems impact marginalized groups in varying capacities depending on the sociopolitical systems, context, and environment (Bowleg, 2012; Moradi, 2017). Put more succinctly, barriers exist across multiple industries. In construction, URM women speak of the difficulty they experience in “balancing work and family, and the lack of professionalism in human resource management” ((Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). Murray (2015) looks at the barriers and challenges to advancement in senior executive service (SES) leadership positions at federal government agency. They find differences in men and women’s perceptions of institutional and personal advancement barriers and challenges (Murray, 2015). In addition, Murray (2015) explores the perceived influence of support received from agency leaders.

Systems of Oppression in Higher Education

The seemingly infinite boundary of intersectionality and systems of oppression necessitates further exploration. As mentioned in Chapter I, scholar practitioners cannot ignore the frequency at which higher education institutions grapple with eliminating sexism, racism, ageism, and classism (LeSavoy, 2010; Lincoln & Stanley, 2021; Lynch & O’riordan, 1998; Wheaton & Kezar, 2021). Colleges and universities are not solely responsible for this impasse as State and federal legislation plays a role in institutional decision-making and the navigation of these structures and systems (Bracey, 2017; Gasman & Hilton, 2012; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002; Richardson & Harris, 2004).

Organizational climates at higher education institutions are often undermined by inconsistent leadership and a lack experience of exclusion by those traditionally in power; namely those who identify as White, male, heterosexual, and without disabilities (Chantarat et al., 2023). The consequences of neglecting to invest in the management of

the complex and adaptable ecosystem of oppression (Esparza et al., 2022) are numerous; URM faculty experience: gate-blocking (Amaechi et al., 2021), microaggressions (Kelly et al., 2017), wage disparities (Follins et al., 2015), difficulties in obtaining tenure (Corneille et al., 2019; Kelly et al., 2017; Reddick et al., 2021; Zambrana et al., 2015), additional role demands and service loads (Corneille et al., 2019; Follins et al., 2015; Trejo, 2020), ambiguous standards (Corneille et al., 2019; Reddick et al., 2021), isolation (Follins et al., 2015; Iheduru-Anderson, 2020; Kolade, 2016; Patton & Catching, 2009), powerlessness (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Young, 1990), questions of one's legitimacy as a professor (Kelly et al., 2017), and lack of supportive social networks (Casad et al., 2020). The literature on URM faculty in higher education undoubtedly reveals themes of exclusion, hopeful institutional rhetoric, and marginality (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). More research needs to be conducted to further describe the distinct struggles of URM who identify as having multiple marginalized identities (Armstrong & Jovanovic, 2015).

Systems of Oppression at HBCUs

HBCUs rest at the junction of the “American Dream” and the “American Nightmare” (Allen et al., 2007). The legacy of these institutions persists as a foil to racial oppression. Despite surviving in a quagmire of systemic oppression, leadership at HBCUs is responsible for nurturing and educating its community members to combat larger inequities in society. Black or African American bachelor's degree graduates at HBCUs account for between 20% to 50% percent of all Black or African Americans who go on doctoral degrees depending on the field; these include the agricultural sciences; earth, atmospheric, and ocean sciences; mathematics; biological sciences; and physical sciences (National Science Foundation, 2017).

Students, however, are not the only community members traversing the HBCU landscape. Faculty, especially those of traditionally marginalized identities, achieve success and face systemic oppression at these institutions (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021; Lee et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2022). At HBCUs, URM women continue to document their isolating experiences of individualism, class-based elitism, colorism, sexism, and paternalism (Files-Thompson & Byrd, 2020; Hollis, 2024) where their institutions may be both a refuge from racism and a trench of sexist ideology (Elliott et al., 2018). Moreover, there is a spectrum of perception surrounding the value and effectiveness of shared governance at HBCUs ; the environments are not harmonious and are incredibly complex (Guy-Sheftall, 2006).

One glaring example of systemic oppression at HBCUs is the disparity in ranking and position of professors by gender (Del Priore, 2022). Men and women are almost evenly split in the overall faculty population at HBCUs. The noticeable differences occur when demographics are disaggregated by tenure or non-tenure designations. 60% of male faculty are tenured at HBCUs compared to 40% of female faculty. Women faculty, except for those on a nontenured-indefinite contracts, have greater numbers in non-tenured positions even though they have slightly higher numbers on a tenure track. Grouping women as one cohort is not representative of all the realities of those who identify as part of this target group. The factors governing rank, tenure, pay, and promotion decisions for women faculty need further exploration (Bonner, 2001; Hollis, 2024).

It is critical to note, the majority of studies on underrepresented minorities (URM) at these colleges and universities tend to focus on demographic groups like Black, women

faculty in STEM (Lee et al., 2021) or senior administrators like Black Presidents (McGee et al., 2021b). These studies and the suggestions from faculty and Presidents, can help inform the way leaders eliminate systemic oppression at their institutions. Bonner (2001) and Renzulli et al. (2006) find URM faculty and instructors have significant and frequent experiences with discrimination and gender inequity. Despite inequities like the ranking gap, URM faculty and instructors have shared self-defined testimonies of success at HBCUs (Sulé, 2009). Success for Black, women faculty often arises from taking the initiative to work with external colleagues, support through social networks and professional associations, familiarization with both written and unwritten rules (Del Priore, 2022).

Campbell and Tumin (2020) describe the experience of a URM, woman faculty member with a visiting professorship in medicine at an HBCU. They underscore the need for faculty development models to emphasize cross-institutional mentorship when single institution structures are inadequate. Some URM faculty and instructors cope with failed infrastructure by exploiting multifocal lenses, reconfiguring identities, engaging tempered radicalism, and pooling resources with each other (Hernandez et al., 2015). Couple this lack of knowledge with the need for these institutions to establish Diversity and Inclusion Offices, Chief Diversity positions (Hiatt et al., 2019) or at the very least formal DEI policies (Yenor, 2023) and the reality that HBCUs are not reaching their full multicultural potential becomes even more apparent (Nahal et al., 2015). The need remains for HBCU leadership to raise institutional awareness of the many diverse populations on their campuses (Nahal et al., 2015).

In testimonial article, one URM professor describes her journey of pyrrhic persistence at a large STEM-oriented HBCU. Her unit, notorious for systemic and structural barriers to tenure for women, has only managed to hire a handful of black women to tenure track positions (Owens, 2024). Record imperfections, calendar year timing, deficit minded advising, and isolation were among the most highlight roadblocks (Owens, 2024). Ultimately, Owens (2024) describes pyrrhic persistence as a cost-benefit analysis – the high and often unappreciated costs of oppression. The experience of Owens (2024) shows an almost endless current of tiredness, hurting, and institutional betrayal. What’s more, enduring these costs lasts long after one leaves the institution (Owens, 2024). It only becomes a victory only because the oppression black women faculty face results in a reduction of collective cost (Owens, 2024).

Institutional Change and Higher Education

Intersectionality and systems of oppression frameworks highlight the challenges undermining successful organizational climates at higher education institutions. It is vital to view these two perspectives alongside notions of institutional change and whether higher education institutions have possible paths out of the quagmire of failed DEI (Armstrong & Jovanovic, 2015; Armstrong & Jovanovic, 2017; Morimoto, 2022). Eckel (2002) determined faculty developers and campus leaders should operate along a matrix of change moving along axes of pervasiveness and depth. Institutional change is either an adjustment, an isolated change, far-reaching, or transformational. After 6-years of observations on 24 diverse institutions Eckel (2002) found transformational change at higher education institutions requires three cardinal tasks – creating institution-wide momentum, 2) removing barriers to change, and 3) helping people think outside the box

and learn to embrace new mental frameworks. In addition, administrative support, collaboration, flexible vision, and visible action are essential for transformational change (Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

Bilimoria et al. (2008) expand upon Eckel's (2002) initial institutional change typology through an in-depth study of 19 institutions funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) ADVANCE Institutional Transformation program. Bilimoria et al. (2008) include a discussion on internal and external factors needed for transformation as well as both pipeline and climate initiatives undertaken to enhance women's representation and inclusion in science and engineering (Bilimoria et al., 2008). Roughly a decade later, the ADVANCE model still holds weight in the scholarship on institutional change. Armstrong and Jovanovic (2017) use Bilimoria et al.'s (2008) pipeline and climate initiatives framework to uncover whether institutional diversity initiatives meant to support URM were intersectional in nature. Their study on 18 universities receiving an NSF ADVANCE Institutional Transformation grant illuminated 5 intersectional facilitators required to enable synergistic change for URM women (Armstrong & Jovanovic, 2017). The 5 intersectional facilitators are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 - Key Intersectional Facilitators of Change

Facilitator	Definition	Example
Creating Accountable Leadership	Leaders who support URM women and share responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Senior level administrators who understand significance of issues and proactively create consequences for actors who do (not) attend to those issues” (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 223) • Leader “who presses initiatives forward by connecting the administration to the URM-focused efforts on the ground” (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224). • Department chairs that demonstrate who voice planned actions at departmental and institutional levels (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224).
Identifying Climate Zones	Awareness of multiple climates and strategies for interventions and change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Programming that reflects an understanding that faculty work within multiple structural climates” (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224) • “Programming that addresses the various microclimates that emerge due to variations in forms of bias” (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224) • “Institution taking local, geographical, or political climates into consideration in its decision-making when strategizing about ways to address issues for URM women” (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224).
Understanding the (N)umbers game	Diversity is not simply a numbers game; it is much more challenging and nuanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Majority faculty consistently listen to URM women’s voices, become responsive, and actively take on the work of

learning to be effective allies” (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224).

- “Institutions proactively voice their awareness of phenomena such as the “minority tax” and “representational tokenism...” (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224)
- “Institutional conversations centered around “underrepresentation” are broadly defined, avoiding a ranking of URM groups” (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224)

Overcoming Epistemological Hurdles Closing the knowledge gaps

- “Leaders and change agents invest in self-education” (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224)
- Cross-institutional teams developing an interdisciplinary knowledge set grounded in research on different underrepresented groups and structural, institutional solutions (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017)

Promoting Community Structures Investment, empowerment, and autonomous space

- Institution empowers URM women “to connect and build community via consortia, coalitions, and conferences” (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224)
- “URM women are enabled as *primary* actors, not data points or recipients of help” (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224)
- “URM women are afforded literal, conceptual, and discursive space to define their needs, set priorities, and autonomously create community” (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224)

The key take-away from the Armstrong and Jovanovic (2017) study is the increasing necessity to avoid additive approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The facilitators are meant to be complementary and contextually applied. URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs, encounter numerous adversities which should compel HBCU leadership to strive for the deep and pervasive change Eckel (2002), Bilimoria et al. (2008), and Armstrong and Jovanovic (2017) champion. Deep, pervasive organizational change is turbulent – obstacles and opposition are inevitable. For women and minorities, it may be amorphous and contested (Bilimoria et al., 2008). Luckily, recent literature on institutional change at HBCUs reimagines how individuals, departments, and senior leadership can engender cultural and structural transformation (Bilimoria et al., 2008).

Institutional Change at HBCUs: Promoting DEI

Lee et al. (2021) offers a preliminary study on recommendations for institutional change from Black women STEM faculty at HBCUs. Their analysis revealed 6 core suggestions – increasing institutional accountability and oversight, increasing the diversity and rank of Black women in faculty and administration, improving and expanding leadership training and opportunities, increasing support for research, enhancing mentorship, and upgrading student support services (Lee et al., 2021). These 6 core suggestions can help HBCUs “reposition themselves for the future” (Lee & Keys, 2013, p. 3).

Lee et al. (2021) found Black women faculty fall victim to a set of invisible rules favoring their male counterparts. This dynamic is also highlighted by Del Priore (2022) who reiterates the gender disparities in faculty rank and tenure. Making these rules visible, transparent, and inclusive (Lee et al., 2021) will help to reduce the

marginalization of URM faculty and instructors. Additionally, there is little recourse for Black, women faculty at HBCUs to report concerns related to unfair and inequitable policies and procedures; especially related to hiring, tenure, and promotion (Lee et al., 2021). Suggestions for increasing accountability and oversight include training senior faculty and administrators to be aware of their own implicit bias and how it impacts institutional decision-making (Lee et al., 2022).

As Lee et al. (2021) note, it is paramount to find ways to increase the representation and rank of women in faculty and administration at HBCUs. Representation needs to be both structural and symbolic and not simply remedial. Hendrickson and Haynes (2019) would argue this task can be accomplished through revamped faculty hiring initiatives. Cluster hirings are one example of an initiative where individuals are attracted, selected, and hired based on a common theme or shared research interest (Muñoz et al., 2017; Munyon et al., 2011). Curran et al. (2020) suggest cluster hirings may increase research output and research impact. Additionally, cluster hirings have been found to improve retention, enhance socialization, and reduce feelings of isolation for faculty of color (Sgoutas-Emch et al., 2016). Unfortunately, cluster hirings tend to influence specific faculty demographics, particularly men, White, and Asian professors (Curran et al., 2020). It remains to be seen if cluster hirings would have a positive impact on URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs. Without the proper supports cluster hirings may fail.

Hiatt et al. (2019) stress only a handful of HBCUs have formal diversity offices, so there is also a need to hire staff that specialize in DEI practices and procedures. It is important to note, Bradley et al. (2022) find evidence to counter the hiring of Chief

Diversity officers (CDO) after examining whether employing an executive level CDO led to more diverse faculty hirings over a 4-year period. Diversity hirings are complex and often inadequate if they only focus on structural change while neglecting relationships and group norms; they are but one piece of the institutional change puzzle constructed to improve organizational climates (Kossek et al., 2003). Leadership at HBCUs must focus on attracting, hiring, and retaining minoritized groups (Griffin, 2020). This hiring process requires race-conscious ethical leadership and a commitment from the top levels of the organization (Fujimoto, 2012; McGee et al., 2021a).

Doll and Thomas (2020) stress the need for institutions to provide training for leaders on how to onboard and advocate for URM, faculty. Failure to do so can lead to disbelief, minimization, and isolation (Doll & Thomas, 2020; Lee et al. (2021). The literature on diversity trainings has promising implications – faculty, staff, and students benefit from the infusion of multicultural education (Campbell-Whatley et al., 2016). Oftentimes an improved pedagogy leads to more avenues for collaboration. In regard to research scholarship, many underrepresented minorities have benefited from greater access to research, resources and professional development opportunities (Hendrickson & Haynes, 2019). A commitment to research culture correlates with the development of URM faculty – they are more likely to go on to assume major leadership positions, chair departments, serve as principal investigators, and direct administrative departments (Hendrickson & Haynes, 2019). For McGee et al. (2021b), HBCUs Black Presidents and senior administrators need to better employ race-consciousness to prioritize hiring black faculty, be attentive to the black student experience, provide faculty resources for STEM success, and design/create culturally affirming programming. This is, however, a siloed

approach. Multiple strategies are needed to measure and improve organizational climates at HBCUs so leaders can create diverse, equitable, and inclusive campuses (Guillermo-Wann & Johnston-Guerrero, 2021).

Another area where scholars have found positive outcomes related to institutional change is through the act of mentorship (Beech et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Ransdell et al., 2021). Lee et al. (2021) maintain mentorship should be both internal and external and concentrate on the scholarship and tenure capacities of underrepresented minorities. Many URM faculty and instructors describe how they lack a mentor of their same race (Lee et al., 2021). Additionally, junior faculty desire a senior faculty member to walk them through the unwritten rules and tenure process (Lee et al., 2021). Again, Campbell and Tumin (2020) advocate for cross-institutional mentorship as home departments are often spaces of patriarchal dominance (Kennedy, 2012). This push toward bolstering interpersonal relationships is part of a larger movement to understand and improve the symbolic and representational impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion (McGee et al., 2021a).

Servant Leadership

All organizational change requires leadership. In order to enact the changes highlighted by faculty and administrators in aforementioned studies, there needs to be an understanding of which leadership model provides the most robust framework to tackle individual, group, and organizational structures and behavior. Tanno and Banner (2018) assert servant leaders are the ideal individuals to take organizations through change. This framework will help leadership strategically create policies and procedures meant to improve the sup-optimal organizational climates at HBCUs, moreover to create the

necessary academic homeplaces highlighted by Serrano (2020). Presence is not the only indicator of DEI, exploring the how and what of servanthood is equally as crucial (Serrano, 2020).

Servant leadership is both a theory and philosophy; Prosser (2010) would argue it leans toward the latter. Greenleaf (1970) proposed servant leadership as an alternative model to traditional views of leadership like contingency theories, behavioral approaches, and great man theories. At its core, servant leadership compels individuals to put others first and encourage the development of servant leadership in their followers (Baldomir & Hood, 2016). It is a paradigm in stark opposition to authority and self-interest (Greenleaf, 1977). The key components of servant leadership have evolved since Greenleaf's (1970) original musings. Spears (1995; 1998; 2010) offers a set of 10 characteristics exhibited by servant leaders: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Similarly, Sipe and Frick (2015) discuss seven pillars of servant leadership: being a person of character, putting people first, being a skilled communicator, engaging in compassionate collaboration, practicing foresight, utilizing systems thinking, and leading with moral authority.

Servant leadership is not always the preferred lens from which to enact organizational change. Lowder (2009) presents servant leadership as the ideal approach for a spiritually, generative culture while transformational leadership pushes for an empowered, dynamic culture. More specifically, servant leadership succeeds in static environments while transformational leadership flourishes in dynamic environments (Smith et al., 2004). Graham (1991) calls attention to the difference between

transformational leadership and servant leadership. They contend servant leaders are more likely than transformational leaders to put followers first, then the organization, and finally themselves compared to transformational leaders' calculated focus on the organization. In short, servant leaders are not motivated by pride or absolute power but rather humility, integrity, and the development of followers (Wong & Davey, 2007).

Table 2 presents key characteristics of servant leadership. It is an adapted and updated summary of the list compiled by Mathis-Lawson (2017). Vital to note is the uniformity and expansion in the servant leadership literature.

Table 2 - Summary of Key Characteristics of Servant Leadership

Characteristics	Authors
Foresight and Preoccupation with the Future	Barbuto and Wheeler (2002; 2006), Buchen (1998), Greenleaf (1970), Spears (1995, 1998, 2010), Sipe and Frick (2015), Von Behren (2022)
Awareness	Barbuto and Wheeler (2002), Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Greenleaf (1970), Keith (2008), Sendjaya et al. (2008), Song (2019), Spears (1995, 1998, 2010)
Listening	Batten (1998), Barbuto and Wheeler (2002), Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Greenleaf (1970), Spears (1995, 1998, 2010), Tanno and Banner (2018)
Acceptance	Gotsis and Grimani (2016), Greenleaf (1970), Song (2019), Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011)
Empathy	Barbuto and Wheeler (2002), Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Greenleaf (1970), Song (2019), Spears (1995, 1998, 2010), Von Behren (2022)
Inspirational/Inspiring	Graham (1991), Hunter et al. (2013), Lemoine et al. (2019), Wong and Davey (2007)
Moral Authority	Graham (1991), Sendjaya et al. (2008), Sipe and Frick (2015)
Healing	Baldomir and Hood (2016), Barbuto and Wheeler (2002; 2006), Song (2019), Spears (1995, 1998, 2010)
Persuasion	Barbuto and Wheeler (2002; 2006), Russell and Stone (2002), Spears (1995, 1998, 2010), Tanno and Banner (2018)
Conceptualization	Barbuto and Wheeler (2002; 2006), Spears (1995, 1998, 2010), Von Behren (2022)
Stewardship and service	Baldomir and Hood (2016), Barbuto and Wheeler (2002; 2006), Farling et al. (1999), Russell and Stone (2002), Spears (1995, 1998, 2010), Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011)

Commitment	Brewer (2010), Spears (1995, 1998, 2010)
Community Building and Community Value	Barbuto and Wheeler (2002; 2006), Laub (1999), Liden et al. (2008), Spears (1995, 1998, 2010), Von Behren (2022)
Empowerment and Development of People	Batten (1998), Buchen (1998), Dennis and Bocarnea (2005), Liden et al. (2008), Page and Wong (2000), Parolini (2004), Russell and Stone (2002), Sendjaya et al. (2008), Setyaningrum et al. (2020), Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011), Wong and Page (2003)
Relationship/Covenant Builders	Bragger et al. (2020), Buchen (1998), Ehrhart (2004), Sendjaya et al. (2008), Wong and Davey (2007)
Caring	Greenleaf (1977), Batten (1998), Bragger et al. (2020), Brewer (2010), Page and Wong (2000), Wong and Page (2003)
Authenticity	Laub (1999), Page and Wong (2000), Sendjaya et al. (2008), Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011), Wong and Page (2003), Wong and Davey (2007)
Trust	Dennis and Bocarnea (2005), Farling et al. (1999), Greenleaf (1977), Russell and Stone (2002), Sendjaya et al. (2008), Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010)
Vision	Chui et al., (2024), Dennis and Bocarnea (2005), Farling et al. (1999), Greenleaf (1977), Page and Wong (2000), Parolini (2004), Sendjaya et al. (2008), Wong and Page (2003)
Humility	Chui et al., (2024), Dennis and Bocarnea (2005), Page and Wong (2000), Parolini (2004), Wong and Page (2003), Wong and Davey (2007), Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011)
Shared decision-making	Chui et al., (2024), Page and Wong (2000), Parolini (2004), Wong and Page (2003)
Character and Integrity	Greenleaf (1977), Sipe and Frick (2015)
Altruism/Putting Others First	Patterson (2003), Sipe and Frick (2015), Turner (2022)

Compassionate love and compassionate collaboration	Laub (1999), Sipe and Frick (2015), Tanno and Banner (2018)
Systems Thinking	Horsman (2018), Sipe and Frick (2015)

Servant Leadership and Institutional Change

Along with defining the key aspects of servant leadership, scholars have looked at the various outcomes this leadership style can have on the individual, group, and organization. These include, but are not limited to perceived leader effectiveness (Flynn et al., 2016), justice, (Walumba et al., 2010), job satisfaction (Neubert et al., 2016), work engagement (Ling et al., 2016), organizational commitment (Irfan & Rjoub, 2021; Setyaningrum et al., 2020; Zhou & Miao, 2014), intention to turnover (Hunter et al., 2013), well-being and stress (Tang et al., 2016), individual performance (Saleem et al., 2020; Setyaningrum et al. 2020), team performance (Song et al., 2015; Tanno & Banner, 2018), organization performance (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Tanno & Banner, 2018), leader/follower trust (Baldomir & Hood, 2016), organizational citizenship behavior (Malingumu et al., 2016; Walumbwa et al. 2010), and creativity and innovation (Yang et al., 2017). These outcomes show direct and indirect effects (Lemoine et al., 2019) and may contribute to deep, pervasive organizational change (Eckel, 2002).

Servant Leadership at HBCUs

HBCUs have served marginalized populations for nearly two centuries. As demographics shift and the legacy of systemic oppression is challenged the urgency for well-informed and strategic leadership is heightened. Servant leadership has roots at HBCUs. In fact, Gasman et al. (2023) found in their study on 26 aspiring Black leaders that these individuals chose to lead at HBCUs due to factors such as being an HBCU graduate, the overall HBCU experience, wanting to pay the HBCU experience forward, and believing in the HBCU mission and vision (Gasman et al., 2023). The concepts of

paying it forward and belief in the HBCU mission reflect a servant leadership philosophy amongst HBCU leadership.

Conversely, Zomerfeld (2020) looks at the lived experiences of HBCU President and Chancellor servant leaders. They identify 5 themes from thick descriptions of executive leaders - misrepresentation, excessive scrutiny, overcoming, misconceptions, building a culture, and dealing with those who challenge servant leadership (Zomerfeld, 2020). Zomerfeld (2020) reiterates even though servant leadership has a place in higher education and is nestled within the mission and vision of HBCUs as institutions, servant leaders still face a variety of challenges. In light of these barriers, servant leadership is a pathway to social justice and can help address organizational inequities (Zomerfeld, 2020). Servant leadership's role in building positive microclimates on college campuses is grossly under researched. It has the potential to help inform organizational initiatives and interventions aiming to support URM faculty and instructors.

Summary

Debates over the validity and scope of intersectionality continue to unfold. The proliferation of systems of oppression permeates higher education and subsequently HBCUs. The criticisms of HBCUs are justified; yet these schools are essential to the liberation, safety, and advancement of underrepresented minority faculty, staff, and students. Their mission and virtues remain paramount. In sum, Chapter II of this dissertation in practice extends the conversation on intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change. No one framework can capture the nuances of the underrepresented minority faculty experience at HBCUs. To do so requires a thorough probing into the lives and experiences of the marginalized and the recommendations they

have for sound institutional transformation. Servant leadership can then be woven into a robust institutional change model to preserve HBCUs.

Chapter III outlines the phenomenological methodological approach for this dissertation in practice. It includes a description of the sampling techniques, data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. Concluding chapters will incorporate a more contemporary blueprint for deeper systemic transformation at HBCUs.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Chapter I presented the foundational elements of this dissertation in practice; a problem statement, purpose statement, research question, aim, definition of relevant terms, and a methodological overview. A section on project delimitations, limitations, and personal biases was also included. Rounding out Chapter I was a brief reflection on my journey as a scholar-practitioner. Chapter II provided a comprehensive literature reviewing exploring the discourse surrounding intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change frameworks and the connection each has to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This chapter details the methodology for a qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study on URM faculty and instructors lived experiences and their recommendations for institutional change at HBCUs as well as URM faculty and instructors at PWIs. Participant and sampling techniques, data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical considerations are covered in this chapter.

Research Question

The following research question guided this qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study: What are the lived experiences of underrepresented, minority women faculty and instructors at HBCUs and PWIs and how can the voices of these professors inform institutional transformation?

Method

Research Design Overview

In order to answer the above research question, I situated URM faculty and instructors' experiences within the frameworks of intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change. This multi-tiered perspective allowed for a broader contextualization of the multiple systems of oppression and intersectionalities of the

URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs (Lee et al., 2021). Creswell and Poth (2018) state phenomenology seeks to reveal the essence of a phenomenon through finding commonalities in individual experiences, feelings, and perceptions (Babbie, 2017; Igwe & Odi, 2020). More specifically, this investigation was descriptive in nature since the interviews answered the what and how of the phenomena to be studied (Shorey & Ng, 2022). However, it was also crucial to account for counternarratives as the lived experiences of URM faculty and instructors differed based on their respective combination of identities (Creswell & Poth, 2018) in other words their intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). Selecting this methodology required eliminating other qualitative and quantitative approaches incongruent with the study's purpose, problem statement, research question, and aim.

Key concepts in this study were underrepresented minority (URM), diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change. Constructs to be measured relating to the URM faculty and instructors experience are: self-esteem, sense of belonging, job satisfaction and morale, motivation, self-efficacy, success, and social support. The phenomena examined was how intersectionality, and systems of oppression intermingle within current organizational climates at HBCUs to create the lived experiences of URM faculty and instructors. Ultimately, this interconnection impacts the lived experiences of URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs. There is a centering on DEI climates as an interwoven component of organizational climate. This positioned DEI policy, practice, and procedures as fundamental for institutional transformation.

Participants

For this dissertation in practice, the population of interest was URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs. This produced a heterogeneous group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Inclusion criteria were faculty members identifying as female with the rank of assistant, associate, or adjunct, professor, or instructors who self-identified as an underrepresented ethnic or racial minority and who have taught at an HBCU for at least one year. For the purpose of this study the U.S Department of Health and Human Services definition of underrepresented meant someone who self-identifies as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, Native American or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or those of two or more of the aforementioned races or ethnicities (2021). Sample recruitment was achieved through purposive and snowball techniques and an eligibility questionnaire. Shorey and Ng (2022) stress purposive sampling aligns with the aim of descriptive phenomenological studies since it selects participants for their cognitive capacity, ability to self-reflect, and ability to share their lived experiences. Purposive sampling is a sound technique to use when seeking to investigate, discover, and understand a complex phenomenon (Khan, 2014) such as URM faculty and instructors' nuanced experiences of organizational climates at HBCUs.

To create a women faculty email database, HBCU websites were scanned. This aided in assembling a larger population of potential faculty (N=147) who identified with a variety of demographics - race, ethnicity, academic discipline, age, and professorship. Once this database was created, recruitment flyers were sent via email and follow up emails when necessary. An eligibility questionnaire sent to the email database helped in finding approximately 10 URM faculty and instructors. This questionnaire is included in

Appendix A. Participants were removed if missing or incomplete data was provided on the questionnaire. Replacement participants were pulled from the generated faculty email database. Malterud et al. (2016) stress shifting attention away from the number of participants to the information power from data analysis. This sample size (n=10) had enough specificity for participants to belong to the URM faculty and instructors target group while exhibiting some variation with the experience of intersectionality and oppressive systems at HBCUs (Malterud et al., 2016). Quality of dialogue was also imperative - a larger sample size would constrain my ability to conduct dynamic interviews. The 10 URM faculty and instructors were contacted to determine a time and date for semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Additionally, the recruitment flyer was sent to a handful of non-profit, affinity groups, and higher education organizations. These included the HBCU Alumni Network, the Society of Women Engineers, the minority caucuses of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, and EdFarm.

Data Collection

Data Collection Procedures

As noted above, 10 URM faculty and instructors from HBCUs were selected for interviews. Unfortunately, none of the accredited HBCUs are in close proximity (within 200 miles) to the researcher so virtual one-on-one interviews were selected as a data collection procedure. One-on-one virtual interviews offered a space for participants to share their lived experiences, interpretations of events, and suggestions in a confidential environment (Mahoney et al., 2008). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent preceded each interview. A copy of the informed consent letter can be found in Appendix

C. Interviews were conducted via Zoom from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025. These semi-structured interviews lasted 45 minutes to an hour. A grand tour question, one meant to have the participant vividly reconstruct their story (Roberts, 2020) opened the interviews, “What has been your experience as faculty member at (institution name)?” Subsequent open-ended questions followed and probing questions were asked when necessary. The interview protocol, adapted from Mahoney et al.’s (2008) study of minority faculty voices in academic medicine at the University of California - San Francisco, is included in Appendix D. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and securely stored in the cloud on my personal computer. Transcriptions were redacted for personal identifying information and anonymized by giving faculty members and departments pseudonyms (Saunders et al., 2015). During these interviews, notes on non-verbal communication were taken. These observations are a necessary component of a phenomenological analysis as researchers “yield thicker descriptions and interpretations” (Denham & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). In short, non-verbal communication complements data gleaned from images, documents, and conversations (Denham & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

The quality and trustworthiness of a study is adversely affected by weak data collection procedures. The triangulation of data is critical. Follow up conversations with participants included an opportunity to check the transcripts of their own interviews to ensure resonance and an accurate account of their stories (Birt et al., 2016) as well as to mitigate my own biases. To establish trustworthiness, triangulation was achieved by drawing upon, comparing, and incorporating data from the audio recordings, interview transcripts, field notes, and analytical memos in my reflection journal.

Data Collection Tools

Research quality can be enhanced by a well-structured interview protocol which bolsters the reliability and validity in phenomenological studies and guides the researcher throughout the data collection process (Yeong et al., 2018). The questions must align with the real-world problem being studied, the purpose statement, the research question, and the overall aim of the investigation. Examples from the 12-question interview protocol placed in Appendix D included 1) Can you reflect on when you have felt excluded, unwelcome, uncomfortable, or undervalued at (institution name) If you have not, can you reflect upon a time when you have felt included, welcomed, comfortable, and valued?, 2) How would you describe your institution's DEI philosophy?, and 3) What do you think are the barriers to increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion? How can these barriers be overcome?. Observation checklists and notes from the content analysis of institutional websites are included in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis with deductive coding fit the aim of this phenomenological study. Many of the themes in the literature on the marginalization of URM faculty were relevant to this investigation. Moustakas (1994) offers a modified Van Kaam approach to phenomenological analysis. The 7-steps to the modified Van Kaam approach are horizontalization, reduction and elimination, thematizing the invariant constituents, checking the themes against the data, creating individual textual descriptions, creating individual structural descriptions, and creating composite textual descriptions (Moustakas, 1994)

The first step is horizontalization whereby I reviewed the interviews and gave each statement equal value (Becho Sullivan & Bhattacharya, 2017). Through highlighting the pieces of information relevant to the experience I then created a master list of horizontalization (Becho Sullivan & Bhattacharya, 2017). After horizontalization I reduced and eliminated expressions against two criteria - is this selection a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding the phenomena and can it be abstracted and labeled (Becho Sullivan & Bhattacharya, 2017). I eliminated vague, overlapping, or repetitive expressions (Moustakas, 1994), by doing so I was able to then form themes from the categories that arose. As I read through the transcripts, I combined the similar categories into clusters (Becho Sullivan & Bhattacharya, 2017). To validate the categories and themes against the original research, I checked for explicit communication of relevant expressions and compatibility. If categories and themes did not map, they were removed. For each interview, I built vivid and accurate individual textual descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). From these textual descriptions, I constructed individual structural descriptions with some imaginative variation all the while maintaining the integrity of the essence in each individual's experience (Moustakas, 1994). From the individual textual descriptions and individual structural descriptions, textual-structural descriptions were assembled through the incorporation of my chosen categories and themes (Becho Sullivan & Bhattacharya, 2017). Finally, through composite description, I developed a representative narrative of the URM faculty and instructors' experiences as a whole.

The Dedoose qualitative analysis software program was used to organize and analyze the interview data. I carefully scrutinized the units of meaning in the interview

transcripts (Kolade, 2016), these include words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Codes were developed using intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change frameworks. New codes interpreted from the analysis were added and applied where necessary (Lee et al., 2021), since coding is not a precise science and is interpretive (Saldaña, 2009). I then engaged in reflective journaling with analytical memos and incorporate their feedback (Saldaña, 2009). Reflective journaling and influx coding will continue until thematic saturation is reached.

Methodological Integrity

To ensure methodological integrity, findings must be contextualized before reporting. An overview of the setting, participants, grounding frameworks, and interview questions made the findings easier to comprehend (American Psychological Association, 2020). Next, to ensure findings were grounded in the evidence, direct quotes from URM faculty and instructors and excerpts from institutional documents and websites (American Psychological Association, 2020) were logged. Findings are presented in a coherent manner including contradictions and counterevidence (American Psychological Association, 2020) - in this case counternarratives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations of this study included obtaining informed consent, minimizing the risk of harm to participants, and accounting for bias. Phenomenological research often includes topics classified as sensitive areas of inquiry as it allows the scholar entrance into the participants' worlds (Walker, 2007b). Since sensitive topics are prevalent, I had the potential to arouse strong emotional responses, so I let potential participants know in an informed consent letter they could forego participation if they felt

distressed at any time and for any reason (Walker, 2007b). Participant welfare took priority over my research (Walker, 2007b). As alluded to in the data collection and procedures section, transcriptions were redacted for personal identifying information and anonymized in the findings section to protect organizations and individual anonymity.

Complete anonymity is impossible even when interviews are conducted virtually, therefore confidentiality was upheld (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Participants were reminded of their own responsibility to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of peers and colleagues when sharing their experiences (Walker, 2007b) I shared results with participants and those involved in the review of my research. In the case of needing to share the data or results of this study in future publications I redacted personal identifying information of participants. Raw data was stored in password locked files in Dedoose – only accessible to me. All recordings were destroyed after the completion of the study. To decrease bias, I needed to avoid deception and increase validity of my findings. To do this, I was transparent and asked for clarification if communication was unclear. Similarly, if participants needed more explanation, they were welcome to ask question and voice concerns. All observations and notes were be recorded in Appendix B, allowing me to keep an audit trail ensuring the trustworthiness of my findings.

I also engaged in bracketing throughout the entire research process. This practice included mental preparation, and determining how to remove my partialities from the data collection and analysis (Chan et al., 2013). Ultimately, I maintained curiosity about the lived experiences of URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs and offered a safe space for faculty to express themselves (Chan et al., 2013). This gave participants the opportunity to introduce ideas I had not previously considered (Chan et al., 2013).

Previous literature guided my study, but my predispositions were suspended (Chan et al., 2013).

Summary

This chapter contains a comprehensive outline of how I used a descriptive phenomenological methodology to explore the lived experiences of URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs and their recommendations for institutional change. Ethical considerations have also been elucidated. The insight gained from this study expands the literature on intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change within minority serving institutions; more specifically HBCUs. Chapter IV presents the results and findings that answer the research question: What are the lived experiences of underrepresented, minority women faculty and instructors at HBCUs and how can the voices of these professors inform institutional transformation? Finally, in Chapter V, I put forth an evidence-based solution to the real-world problem of suboptimal organizational climates at HBCUs and how the voices of marginalized faculty can help reimagine DEI efforts at these institutions.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Chapter IV restates the purpose statement and research question. Additionally, it summarizes the study's methodology, data collection procedures, research population, and participant sample. URM women faculty and instructor demographic data is also provided. In this chapter, findings are discussed in relation to the study's research question. After thoroughly analyzing the data, I found 4 major themes related to organizational climates, systems of oppression, and institutional change. These were 1) Navigating Organizational Climates, 2) Structures of Violence, 3) Leadership and Climate Conditions, and 4) Levels of Systemic Institutional Change.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to gain a better understanding of URM faculty and instructors lived experiences with the current organizational climate at their respective HBCUS and their suggestions for institutional transformation.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study was: What are the lived experiences of underrepresented, minority women faculty and instructors at HBCUs and how can their voices inform institutional transformation?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This phenomenological study used qualitative research methods. Much of the literature in higher education centering on URM women faculty and instructors is grounded in the frameworks of intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change. These are employed to ensure the scholar-practitioner understands URM women

faculty and instructors as individuals with agency, history, knowledge (Rogers et al., 2022). However, URM women faculty and instructor experiences are not limited to these lenses. Larger more nuanced descriptions were needed.

Data was derived from initial responses to my recruitment letter and eligibility questionnaire. In addition, I also collected data from transcriptions and field notes of recorded interviews following a 12-question interview protocol. The semi-structured interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour. There were contextualizing questions enabling the URM women faculty and instructors to reconstruct their experience in narrative form (Bevan, 2014). Following contextualization, interviewees were asked more descriptive questions with the intention of delving into how participants interpret their experience (Bevan, 2014). To gain more clarification of the phenomena, I had to be both reflective and an active listener. Various questions were asked to bring imaginative experience into the conversation. For example, a question was asked “What suggestions do you have for institutional transformation?” often leading to an organic follow up depending on what structures or people may have been left out of the interviewee’s initial narrative. For each interview, I listened to the recording alongside the corresponding transcript. Transcripts were also sent to participants for validation and authenticity. Subthemes were deductions amassed into 4 themes.

Population

The population for this study was the underrepresented minority women faculty body at HBCUs. Recall from Chapter IV, underrepresented minority refers to individuals who identify as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, Native American or

Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or those of two or more of the aforementioned races or ethnicities.

Sample

Purposive and snowball sampling was used to select individual URM women faculty members and instructors (n=10) from a variety of HBCUs. Table 3 provides a demographic overview of the study sample. All data has been redacted of personal identifying information, this includes careful attention to removing names from both the faculty member or instructor as well as their respective institution. To obtain this sample, an initial search of HBCU department websites was conducted and a repository of URM women faculty and instructor contacts was generated. The research information sheet and study flyer were sent to 147 URM women faculty and instructors. Initially, responses were limited and the purposive sampling turned to snowball sampling by asking interviewees whom they might suggest to interview. The research flyer was also sent to a variety of higher education associations and consortiums like the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Academic Officers (AACRAO), the HBCU National Center, the National HBCU Alumni Alliance, and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education. Table 4 shows background information for sample participants.

Results

Out of the 10 people interviewed, 6 were Black/African American, 3 were Hispanic, and 1 was of Asian descent. In terms of professorship level 1 is tenured, 4 are on tenure track, and 4 were not on a tenure track but had a definite or indefinite contract, and 1 was an adjunct professor with an annual contract. All age groups were represented

in the sample. Many came from diverse departments but certain races and ethnicities were more represented than others, more specifically departments often had very few or no Hispanic Latino/a professors or instructors. Table 3 shows the participant demographic profile.

Table 3 - HBCU URM Faculty and Instructors Demographic Profile

Name	Department	Race and Ethnicity	Age	Education	Rank	Professorship	Time at current institution	Demographic composition of your department
Professor A	Chemistry and Physics	Hispanic or Latino/a	36-45	Doctorate Degree	Assistant Professor	On tenure track	1-5 years	Mixed gender, male, female, other. Ethnicities: Black, White, Hispanic
Professor B	English and Foreign Languages	Black or African American	46-55	Doctorate Degree	Assistant Professor	Nontenured, annual contract	5-10 years	about 35% white; about 49% black; about 1 % Asian; about 1% Latino/a; about 43 % woman
Professor C	Biology	Black or African American	25-35	Doctorate Degree	Assistant Professor	On tenure track	1-5 years	More than half of professors are White American/European, with the rest being Black American or Biracial Black-identifying. The current department chair is White European, and the incoming department chair will be White American.
Professor D	Civil Engineering	Asian and/or Pacific Islander	25-35	Doctorate Degree	Assistant Professor	Nontenured, indefinite contract	1-5 years	Male and Female, Blacks and Asians

Name	Department	Race and Ethnicity	Age	Education	Rank	Professorship	Time at current institution	Demographic composition of your department
Professor E	English and Foreign Languages	Hispanic or Latino/a	25-35	Other, please specify	Instructor	Nontenured, annual contract	1-5 years	Out of the 24 of us, 13 are African-American or from other minorities, 11 of us are women
Professor F	Sociology and Criminal Justice	Hispanic or Latino/a	46-55	Doctorate Degree	Other, please specify	Nontenured, indefinite contract	5-10 years	Mostly black and female.
Professor G	College of Business	Black or African American	46-55	Doctorate Degree	Professor	Tenured	10 years or more	A blend of Caucasians, African Americans and Asians
Professor H	Economics, Finance and Accounting	Black or African American	56-65	Doctorate Degree	Associate Professor	On tenure track	5-10 years	Mixed ethnicities - African, Korean, Egyptian, Caucasian, African-American
Professor I	Community and Family Medicine	Black or African American	36-45	Doctorate Degree	Assistant Professor	On tenure track	10 years or more	70% female/30% male; 90% Black/African American; 10% Asian
Professor J	Business	Black or African	46-55	Master's Degree	Adjunct	Nontenured, annual contract	5-10 years	Mixture

Name	Department	Race and Ethnicity	Age	Education	Rank	Professorship	Time at current institution	Demographic composition of your department
		American			Professor			

Major Themes

The major themes are summarized below in Table 5. Each theme has subsequent sub-themes, an explanation, and an example excerpt from the participants' interview transcripts.

Table 4 - Major Themes and Sub – Themes

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Explanation	Evidence
<p>Navigating Organizational Climates</p>	<p>Thriving Surviving and Persisting Reconciling</p>	<p>Thriving refers to positively developing and excelling in an organizational context beyond mere survival.</p> <p>Surviving or persisting is the act of continuing in light of adversities such as discrimination, structural barriers, and other setbacks.</p> <p>Reconciling involves vulnerability, accepting differences, perspectives, and change, and a willingness to</p>	<p>Thriving - “Yeah, I feel very included in the faculty meetings. I think they go very well, and I feel very included when I encourage my students to go to events and I show up at the event”</p> <p>Surviving/Persisting – “I sort of learned that in order to like keep my job like I have to sort of like go with the flow...if I'm gonna have to deal with institutional BS, or whatever, I'd rather deal with it with black people”</p> <p>Reconciling - “You know I could go somewhere else; I’ve been thinking about it. But you know there is a level of comfort here too...”</p>

		<p>work with the current state of an organizational setting</p>	
<p>Structures of Violence</p>	<p>Workload and Wages Minority Tax Promotion and Tenure Resource Allocation</p>	<p>Workload - Expected tasks, responsibilities, and duties</p> <p>Wages - Compensation one receives</p> <p>Minority Tax - Burden of extra responsibility on URM faculty and instructors</p> <p>Promotion and Tenure - Moving up the career pipeline within an organizational context, tenure being a sought-after permanent professorship status in the academy</p>	<p>Workload and Wages - “If you’re asking if I’m getting rewarded by work-life balance, not necessarily. I don’t have the work-life balance that I wish I had by getting rewarded by time off, because in the time that I do have off, I squeeze in my research, my papers, my grant writing and all of that. The salary could be more competitive outside of academia or even if I change universities”</p> <p>Promotion and Tenure - “If [redacted] wants to be that research institution, [redacted] also needs to change its tenure. It is virtually impossible to get tenure at [redacted]. Especially in the humanities. And so, I wouldn’t put myself on the tenure track because it’s just too hard to get tenure and you won’t be able to get tenure in the amount of time that you need.”</p> <p>Resource Allocation - “But for a lot of it, I do rely on external collaborators for the satisfaction. For instance, I don’t have an X-ray machine, so I have to go</p>

		<p>Resource Allocation</p> <p>Assigning of people, funding, time, support, and equipment to ensure organizational success</p>	<p>to the [redacted] to get part of my research done”</p>
<p>Leadership and Climate Conditions</p>	<p>Support</p> <p>Lack of Trust and Transparency</p> <p>Following Tradition</p> <p>Breaking from Tradition</p>	<p>Support – Tasks, services, and people that assist URM, faculty and instructors and the larger community</p> <p>Lack of Trust and Transparency - breakdown of confidence with the institution, a relationship, or a process</p>	<p>Support - “Unless and until you are in a superior administrator role, you don't have the power or support to change things, and I have seen administrators relentlessly trying to change some systems, and they pathetically fail”</p> <p>Support - “We don't have that as regularly at my small HBCU. This may be because we're time limited, so our meetings tend to run maybe once a month and they're full business. There's no room for other things - asking questions or getting a little bit more guidance. So, at my HBCU we don't have that level of infrastructure”</p> <p>Lack of Trust and Transparency – “...my chair called me and he left this nasty message about how I should be fundraising for new computers and all of that, and how we should be getting</p>

		<p>Following Tradition – adherence to the status quo including traditions, practices, norms, and beliefs</p> <p>Breaking from Tradition – challenging or changing historical practices, norms, and beliefs</p>	<p>the money out of Title III to do that. And even though I had explained to him we can't do that because we were not given permission to buy computers with Title II money, I had to get the Title II coordinator to basically email him...Only after this interaction did my chair back off.”</p> <p>Following Tradition – “You're met with a little bit of resistance and attitude from older faculty. The type of discourse that I hear a lot is like, oh, I've done that before, and they shut it down. And that's not going to work.”</p> <p>Breaking from Tradition – “Things weren't going so well for us in the past, you know, with the past Presidency, and also to an extent, and I'm not afraid to say this here the provost that just retired was somebody whose governance was kind of difficult. The President had all these ideas. Faculty wanted change. The President wanted change, but we were always met in the middle by the provost with “Yeah, we've done that before. Yeah, we'll look into something like that” So now we have a new Provost which I am excited about.”</p>
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<p>Levels of Systemic Institutional Change</p>	<p>Relational and Transformational Structural</p>	<p>Relational and Transformational – Adapting how the institution engages with its historically marginalized populations; can include raising awareness, expanding cultural knowledge, learning new skills, and behavioral adaptation</p> <p>Structural – Recommended changes to policy, practice, programs, and procedures</p>	<p>Relational and Transformational – “Stop treating your faculty like children. Stop the supervision... if you change your attitude towards faculty in general, you’ll understand that we are all there for the same goal which is to see students thrive...I would like to see this more transparent attitude between administration and faculty, not as a parent child...”</p> <p>Structural – “ how are we going to get R1 designation when we don't have time to fundraise? Or how are we going to get R one designation when we're teaching four classes? How can we write books and articles and have a library that needs improvement? They need to order or add to their databases. So, it's kind of like you're going to have to put the money in...”</p>
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Theme I – Navigating Organizational Climates

Freeman et al. (2004) assert values are a cornerstone of any organization. The stakeholders in organizations find themselves along a spectrum of agreement or opposition when it comes to how the organization articulates and practices the ideals it professes. HBCUs are a complex space for examining placement in organizational climates where URM faculty and instructors find themselves thriving, persisting, and reconciling in various capacities. Thriving is a measure of “meaningful engagement, institutional alignment, student impact, affirmed value, and relational support” (Martinez, 2022, p. 8). Surviving, moreover persisting is “a fluid, emerging quality that develops as the role changes, in the midst of positive and negative experiences and perhaps because of them” (Greer, 2017, p. 33). When faculty have more positive relationships and interactions their persistence increases (Metz, 2004). Conversely, when these relationships and interactions are harmful - that is unwelcoming, unsupportive, and exclusionary - persistence is negatively impacted (McGee et al., 2021a). Reconciliation stems from an acceptance of the complex interactions, outcomes, and challenges in an organizational context (Styres, 2020).

Thriving

Professor A highlighted her ability to thrive at her current institution after leaving a climate of power imbalance:

At my past institution I was referenced to as a slave, verbatim, this is not me exaggerating, not putting my own twist into this. The person referred to themselves as my master indicating that I was just a slave. So here I don't see that. If I have questions, I have a good community, not just in my own department but in other STEM areas that if I have questions, I know who I can go to. I know that they are willing to listen and give guidance.

For Professor A, there is institutional recognition of her “working within multiple structural climates” (Armstrong & Jovanovic, 2017, p. 224). This recognition is more than mere acknowledgement. Professor A mentions having a good community and a space for inquiry which shows climate congruence – there are deeper structures at play contributing to this sense of belonging.

Similarly, Professor B touches upon thriving in an inclusive environment with sufficient recognition from colleagues and peers:

Yeah, I feel very included in the faculty meetings. I think they go very well, and I feel very included when I encourage my students to go to events and I show up at the event, and sometimes people will say, oh, there's [redacted], and let's see what else. I feel really included when I'm able to offer services from the writing center to the university campus. So sometimes I've gone to do workshops on plagiarism or something like that, so I feel really included. Then I feel like they recognize me.

These feelings of inclusion stem from community structures allowing Professor B to “define her own needs and be a primary actor (Armstrong & Jovanovic, 2017). She does not view these structures as help, but rather space for creating (Armstrong & Jovanovic, 2017) and thriving within an academic community. This creative space contributes to her job satisfaction.

Professor B, does however, mention interdepartmental and intradepartmental relationships are generally respectful, but these associations do not come without some dissention or disagreement:

I think the relationship among the colleagues in the English department and foreign language department is really good. We all talk to each other. We all ask for syllabi or we ask questions. How did you do this? How did do that? The only tension that I really notice is maybe a little personality tension.

Professor B acknowledged this incongruence and individual attempt by male professors to take control, but she ultimately welcomed the fresh perspective brought by the new professor when further questioned.

Professor E acknowledges her HBCU provides ample research opportunities for early career faculty in STEM which aligns with her goals and status in the professorship. Her thriving was apparent, but not necessarily indicative of the reality many Asian faculty have in STEM - rather they continue to be overrepresented in the field and viewed as model minorities (Liu et al., 2019). She summed up her intersectional experience:

It's the 5th year for me now. It has been very nice for me, very lovely, with a lot of opportunities presented to me, and I really think it's because I am an early career faculty. Also, I'm a woman. I work in a minority school. I'm an Asian and my field is very demanding.

Multiple professors chimed in about students being at the crux of their professorship journey. Professor E reflected:

You get motivated because you see that people are just really involved with their jobs. And they love students. And I love students. And we love the climate and everything. And we see all this potential for the university to, you know, be everything that it has the capacity to be.

The student academic journey is not always smooth, but the organic interactions that emerge contribute to URM faculty and instructors thriving at their HBCUs.

This is evidence Professor F's recollection. She stated students contribute to her sense of belonging at her respective institution despite some of their struggles and hardships. She articulated:

I love my students, and I feel connected with them, you know even those who don't do the work. I just get with them to help. It's an art, navigating, because of their excuses for not doing stuff. There are some issues beyond what the students go through. Some students are lazy; they don't want to do the work; they don't pay attention. But when students say,

especially in anthropology, that you learn things that you never thought about, it's rewarding! That's why I do it honestly, and I feel now attached.

Professor H also expressed immense pride in her connection with her students.

She recalled:

I saw a couple of my students, you know, on campus, and I spoke. and it was just that they were like. Oh, you know that's Tony, that's my professor right there. And so they were, you know, especially one of them was really surprised because I called them by name. I'm like I see you all the time. I know your name, but just so proud to say, oh, that's my Econ professor. First of all, I'm the only black female here, you know. So, it was just kind of a proud moment for the student and a strong connection for me where I'm like, this is where I need to be making a difference.

These interactions have become a measure of success and affirmation. It is evident

developing relationships is critical to the development of URM faculty and instructors' sense of belonging (Moore & Smith 2024).

Surviving and Persisting

Not all experiences are seen through a thriving lens. In fact, many study participants rehashed intense feelings of survival in suboptimal organizational climates. Moreover, they voiced feelings of pyrrhic persistence (Owens, 2024). For Professor C, it was a matter of tolerating institutional drawbacks. She stated:

I sort of learned that in order to like keep my job like I have to sort of like go with the flow. And I was hoping that that's not how it was going to be here. But that's just how it is everywhere. So, I feel the way that I've leveraged that with myself is by remembering that if I'm gonna have to deal with institutional BS, or whatever, I'd rather deal with it with black people. You know, with people that I feel I can have some type of cultural impact on.

Put differently, Professor C can endure the imperfections and limitations because she is in a familiar culture of racial identity and effervescence. This, however, is not an ideal condition.

Professor D described the transactional nature of her institution:

I don't have any authority, and I'm very sad and disappointed to see that, you know, even though the course loads are higher. But it's not just the course load matter. There are so many things that happen around the campus with which I don't agree, and I have tried several times to rectify that in whatever scenarios I can within my capacities. Not even one of them was rectified. That takes a huge toll on me. So, being faculty, you work for the university, you get paid on time, you get your accolades; if you can perform well, that's it.

Professor G reflected on her relationship with the broader university community and her motivation to serve:

Oh, initially I was all Gung ho! I supported people, you know, whatever they had going on, I'd give a suggestion. I'd give an idea. But when I see them starting to do things and treat me unfair, I was like regardless I am there for my students, for sure.

The pyrrhic persistence emerges for Professor G through a symbiotic relationship with students that juxtaposes her struggles with the institution. She states, “they were like my best recommenders when I was going up for tenure and promotions.” Building reciprocal relationships with students became a necessary coping mechanism – a space within the negative microclimates of her HBCU.

Professor J continues to meet structural and relational adversities. Her persistence is rooted in her sense of belonging and how students reciprocate a sense of trust and care. She related:

I stay there because of the students. That's the only reason why I'm still there now because of the students...that's the only reason...if I was offered a position at [HBCU-redacted] or [HBCU-redacted, [HBCU-redacted]] I would go, but I will still be here part time because of the students.

Her survival, her persistence intertwined with her servanthood and need to sustain quality symbiotic relationships. She does not want to sacrifice or lose those connections as it contributes to her sense of belonging and purpose.

Reconciling

Even though Professor (G) found a way to survive for over a decade at her current institution she was at the brink of leaving at the time of her interview. The dedication was simply not worth the overall cost to her well-being, family life, and professional development. She stated:

Yeah, I started to feel detached, you know, I no longer want to be a part of this or that. So. Yeah, I think the chapter has been closed. Had it not been for the students you know, or finding what I'm looking for then I'd be already out.

Recalling the notion of an academic homeplace – a counter-spaces which nurture a community of resistance, love, affirmation, healing, and recovery (Serrano, 2020) – it comes as no surprise to see some URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs like Professor G leave the institution for other professional and personal pursuits. Professor I offered a counternarrative and has come to accept her status at her current institution and the efforts it has made to improve its organizational structure. She reminisced:

When you work in research administration you kind of find your counterparts within your institution. You kind of learn how to navigate the research system if you will. By the time I became a faculty and I was able to apply for grants, our university was well positioned with a lot of internal funding mechanisms to support pilot studies and pilot work. Don't get me wrong. [redacted] has increased in terms of the rigor of the work that we do. And we're being recognized more and more as a HBCU. We still have our limitations.

Though not perfect, Professor I's institution has made enough of an effort to retain her as a faculty member and scholar.

In contrast to Professor G, Professor H remains at her HBCU. She also described a pyrrhic experience, though less extreme than Professor G:

Am I in the airport and I have students that have graduated that will come over thank me and share what they're doing now, and ask how things are going? Who will reach out to me and say, do you need me to come back, and, you know, talk to a class. Do any recruiting? So, it's things like that where you know, you made a difference. It doesn't

have to be a monetary value. Sure, it would have been nice but you know, if it was based on that, then, you know, people wouldn't be here. So, there's something about the experience outside of monetary compensation that keeps people here.

This portrayal does not seem to be so much about surviving a high cost of oppression as it is about still feeling a sense of belonging and connectedness to the students Professor H serves and the transformative power she possesses. It is the moments of shared identity helping her persist over time (Garrett et al., 2023).

Professor H also mentioned even among URM faculty and instructors there are some incongruities. She reflected:

What we see is a lot of African professors, too. So, when you're, you know, looking and doing your research, you might see people that appear black, but they're actually, you know from the Continent. So that's the other thing. So, it's not that I didn't have black faculty. It's that they were not American blacks.

For Professor H this is not a barrier to success but rather an opportunity to develop better relationships and cultural competence.

Professor (F) has considered leaving the HBCU world, but still feels at home at her university; She stated:

You know I could go somewhere else; I've been thinking about it. But you know there is a level of comfort here too. I know the university. It's kind of close to my house and all that. But honestly, I just feel that I'm doing research with some of my students and so definitely, I just feel connected to them. I really like and enjoy what I'm doing.

The fact remains, compensation and recognition remain an issue for many URM faculty and instructors. Yet, the service they perform for students and the institution tends to resonate more than the wages they receive. To cope, they adjust their mindsets and reflect on the lives they are changing, making the honest toil worthwhile.

Professor C spoke about her positive experience teaching at an HBCU while also recognizing some weakness in mission alignment between the professoriate and the

institution. Her testimony is one of neutral reconciliation, as she spoke of engaging in a constructive culture of blackness at the institution as a whole versus her observations of her department. She stated:

I was really looking forward to working at an HBCU in order to sort of immerse myself deeper in a constructive culture of blackness. Around the institution I find that at predominantly white institutions, blackness is like an afterthought. You know, cultural identity is an afterthought, you know what I mean. So, I was really interested in like centering that experience instead of like thinking about it after the fact.

Professor C then goes on to remark on the nuance within her department, and why a large population of white faculty settled at the institution. This in Professor C's opinion has created a suboptimal climate, one where URM faculty and instructors' belongingness is undermined. She expressed:

The department that I work in is over 50% non-people of color, and most people in the department are white, and I was kind of shocked, because I just figured that at HBCUs people who held positions of power are at least of color. The department chair is white. A lot of the faculty in the department are white, not just white, but like Republican, and right leaning with their thoughts and stuff. So, I'm kind of wondering how they gravitated to this environment. I just think it's because there's like a lack of infrastructure, a lack of employees, and a lack of faculty in general. So, it's not like there's always people who dreamt of working at HBCUs their whole life. It's like people who found a job. You know what I mean. They found a job because they needed a job and they stuck there. It doesn't seem that everyone's mission is necessarily aligned with the HBCU.

This presents an interesting dilemma for the population of URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs who are in environments where they are not only the minority along gender lines but also racial and ethnic status. For Professor C the power dynamic is not surmountable, but it is uncomfortable. That is, she acknowledged her leftist leaning both socially and politically and often finds this at odds with the majority of the institution learning "it's like, a balancing act between, like having cultural relevance and having you know,

purpose and then dealing with bureaucratic nonsense and holding your tongue until you get into positions where you're actually able to make changes.” This dynamic marginalization shows even at HBCUs, URM women faculty and instructors are still removed from fairly accessing positions of power and influence, especially when their values do not align with institutional norms.

Professor I offered an intriguing commentary on her department and working within the College of Medicine as well – URM faculty and instructors have found a way to cope within a male dominated environment. She voiced:

I can say I have found almost a network, a sisterhood of other women, and we support each other. It consists of some of my professors, my colleagues, my peers and counterparts. I think we have worked together to try to navigate this system, and it's more like I want you to learn from my mistakes, or, you know, to learn from the path that I've taken. Let me see how I can best advise you. I also feel like, even within that circle there are times that I feel like I have also been competing with the same women. You're working together, you're on the same trajectory, you're in the same fields, you're in the same spaces - but at some point we were competing and I think that has been a little challenging for me to deal, those nuances when they present themselves. But I just take it as this is the space we're in. We're in Academia, and it's important to develop your niche in your space. And that's pretty much the space that I've operated in – I just continued to press and advocated for myself.

Ultimately, her academic and professional journey as a URM professor is one of hills and valleys. For Professor I, staying in this competitive yet welcoming environment has “provided a level of comfort and stability.”

Professor (D) reflected on her overall experience at [redacted]:

I think it's more of a positive outcome, even though I have certain negative points to pick. So, the positive things are that [the administration] is very supportive. They want to boost us, when I say us, at least they wanted to boost me, and I did not have a problem with any woman or guy faculty anywhere. I never felt discriminated against.

This reconciliation was almost unexpected as most interviewed spoke to microaggressions and blatant discrimination. She also mentioned her success in tandem with the mundane bureaucratic processes she overcomes on a day-to-day basis:

So, I think that I have been very blessed and happy that I have been pulled into these kinds of opportunities. But then, I also have trouble with my immigration and visa issues at the school, because the school works according to their protocols. They take more time to do all the documentation, which basically prevents us from easily going back and forth and it's very painful. You have to get a lot of paperwork done. You have to go by the timeline. So that part is kind of heavy on me. So even though I'm very educated, I'm qualified enough for this job. I have been doing immensely well, based on teaching service and research.

Overall, Professor D is able to accept some of structural barriers because the people make her experience positive and valuable.

Professor (E) offered yet another standpoint, speaking to the larger legacy of HBCUs, the need to prevent their obsolescence, and the urgency in protecting the institutions as safe spaces for the African American community. In an almost exasperated tone, she attested:

It seems like the African American community is just a little bit of "oh, it's always been like this", you know. And in my point of view, these students, because I worked at a university that was very, very much white before. These students are brilliant. They're constantly trying to prove themselves better than white students. And I'm gonna put it in those terms because it is the way I see it. They're constantly trying to prove themselves. They're constantly like they are amazing. They do not deserve the bare minimum or below the bare minimum, and neither does faculty. We do not deserve the bare minimum. We deserve everything they deserve everything they deserve. So much injustice and systematic oppression has occurred over so many centuries. You cannot have that.

The longevity of these institutions' rests on each HBCUs' ability to see themselves as continued agents of social change, and holding all stakeholders in conversation. There is an implied reconciliation in Professor E's statement knowing HBCUs offer safe spaces for URM populations, more so in her eyes than PWIs.

As such, Professor (E) discerned it is not just a societal roadblock, but an institutional decision to meet the urgency of the current educational landscape.

When are we going to get tired of being shut down, of being, of trying to do things, of being overwhelmed, of being? You know it's a context that requires a lot of patience and faith in [redacted]. Specifically, because again, you get out of meetings with the provost, you get out of those meetings with the President, and you really are inspired right? Like you really are. You get out of the classroom, and you're like, wow! I love this right. But then backstage, the reality is, you find all these roadblocks both logistically and in terms of people just not wanting to assist you, because it's not there.

For Professor E, the aforementioned tension is an unwelcome reconciliation. The atmosphere of transformational leadership undermines the structural and intrapersonal roadblocks many URM faculty and instructors continue to face.

Two professors really underscored how they have to reconcile with their identities as foils to the institutional norm. Professor B divulged:

The administration is very, I would say the administration is conservative. I identify as African American or black. I identify as a woman, female. I identify as middle aged. I see myself as middle class, but not very middle class in terms of politics. I see myself as being more liberal. I think the students are more liberal than the institution is, which can sometimes make students very unhappy, if you will. So that's pretty much how I see myself. I also see myself as a feminist, womanist.

This response was incredibly animated and ultimately revealed how HBCUs still hold onto longstanding patriarchal values. She was not afraid to state her activism and support for various social causes on and off campus stems from a feminist and womanist paradigm. This for her, will always put her at odds with the administration if they choose to remain apathetic or uncompromising. Professor B possessed an emboldened counternarrative (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2000).

Much like Professor B, for Professor C there was a similar reconciliation of having to simply exist in a state of resistance at her HBCU. She proudly stated:

First, I identify as a as a black cis woman, and I, am very left. I'm a Communist. I'm pro Palestine. I'm antiwar. I'm anti-gun, pro sex work, pro you know, like very left. And I learned quickly that it's not the place to talk about politics for me. They can talk about politics because their politics are centrist. But I learned that I made everyone uncomfortable by talking about politics.

This shows, the very cultural, social, and political fabric of their institution misaligns with their personal journey which in turn can further exacerbate the systems of oppression they may face.

Theme II – Structures of Violence

Structural violence in organizations happens as a result of social structures and conditions harming individuals and denying them of their basic needs (Turvey et al., 2023). Structures of violence are deeply embedded in the economic and political framework of an organization and they supersede individual will or agency (Hamer & Lang, 2015). Structural violence within higher education may include unfair workloads and wages, inequitable tenure and promotion models, failed support systems indirectly causing indirect burdens like a minority tax, and uneven resource allocation. These structures frequently marginalize and exploit (Young, 1990) URM faculty and instructors. Violence occurs in meetings, evaluations, hiring, promotion, and advancement (Sinclair-Chapman, 2019). For the 10 individuals interviewed, the most common structures of violence were workload and wages, and tenure and promotion. A minority tax was often implied in the discussions, but only one professor dove into its impact on her HBCU experience. Resource allocation was also mentioned in a handful of interviews.

Workload and Wages

Professor (E) spoke about workload and wages at her HBCU:

You know, I am proud to say that [redacted] is really good about charging a fair price for tuition and, paying us well, now, the workload is a different thing. And then there's the short funding, kind of speaks to us, wearing many hats, which is an expression I hear a lot right? So, like normally in another university, perhaps 4 languages would be its separate thing. We would have somebody that does just the courses, and then somebody that does the minor right? But because we don't have that, it's kind of like we're constantly juggling. And then with a teaching load that is just abnormal, in comparison to other universities.

The burden is placed on URM faculty and instructors – many early in their career.

Workload and wages continue to be an attack on their person (Young, 1990).

Professor A dove into a discussion about work-life balance, competitive pay, and job stability. She revealed:

So, if you're asking if I'm getting rewarded by work-life balance, not necessarily. I don't have the work-life balance that I wish I had by getting rewarded by time off, because in the time that I do have off, I squeeze in my research, my papers, my grant writing and all of that. The salary could be more competitive outside of academia or even if I change universities. So, while where I am is a competitive pay for the region, that is not necessarily true for the degree that I have nor in comparison to what the government or industry would pay. If I were to compare my credentials, my experience in what I'm currently getting paid at an HBCU to if I were to go to 30 minutes away to Delaware, go to the state school, it's probably like a 30 K difference, minimum. The same credentials, same everything. Now, if I were to leave academia all around, then I'm looking at maybe getting closer to 50 K more if I go to government or industry. But the difference here is that you don't have job stability.

Job stability becomes a mechanism of exploitation and powerlessness (Young, 1990).

Many URM faculty and instructors trade working in other settings to serve and persist amongst peers.

For Professor B pay negotiation was out of the question. They defeatedly mentioned: When I came, [redacted] would not allow us to negotiate for our pay. So, they were like, you either take it or leave it, we'll get somebody else. The barrier to success was already evident from the beginning interactions with the administration. Wages become a way to devalue and demoralize URM faculty and instructors.

Professor H highlighted barriers to success are often conflated. One unchallenged expectation is to secure funding to the institution while meeting workload expectations.

She acquiesced:

I manage a pretty large corporate donation where it requires a lot of student engagement and faculty engagement. The company wants to come and interact with students to recruit and fast-track them out of the university. Its aim is to get the qualified students. We do on site visits and case competitions. We're doing all that, and in addition I am managing a department, I am teaching 2 courses, only because I'm endowed, otherwise I would have been teaching 3 courses, and my faculty teach 4, and some people teach 5. So, it's a heavy teaching load. On top of that, securing grant funding is a requirement for tenure and promotion.

This shows Professor H's institution prioritizes its longevity over the well-being and development of its URM professoriate. It comes as no surprise to see the toll traumatic tenure track experiences (Garrett et al., 2023) take on URM faculty and instructors. The failure to support URM faculty and instructors during such a pivotal stage causes long term consequences and precludes them from being optimal change agents, role models, and mentors (Garrett et al., 2023).

Minority Tax as Structural Violence

Professor A also indicated blatant minority taxing – the burden of extra responsibility on minorities to simultaneously serve and advise minority students while teaching and conducting research (Armstrong & Jovanovic, 2016). The tax goes beyond one's job description. She declared:

The university is trying to find ways to attract and help the migrant (especially Hispanic) population. And so, it tapped me on the shoulder. It's very clear minority taxing because they only went after people who looked like me to do the work. So, I do instances where I know it's clear. And my actions depend on the situation. If the issue is something that I'm passionate about, I might just go ahead and do it, even though I know it is extra work for no pay. But other instances where I do not see a benefit to the community, the institution, or myself - I simply walk away. But in walking away, I feel as if saying no is a slap in their face even though some things do not come with extra compensation.

She concluded her remarks bluntly “I’m also not a charity.” For Armstrong and Jovanovic (2016) the impetus is on the institution to proactively voice their awareness of cultural taxation. Professor A would argue extra steps need to be taken by the institution to help mitigate the burden on URM faculty and instructors. Advising, mentoring, and basic representation go beyond simple academic support (Sulé, 2014; Sulé, 2009) – it often leads to overcommitment and heightened service expectations and is not reflected valuation of the tenure and promotion process for URM faculty and instructors (Garrett et al., 2023). An organizational climate which exploits its URM professoriate cannot expect to thrive in the long run. To view one’s work as part of a larger ethos of care and service while the larger institution feigns ignorance or deflects the responsibility adds not only to the struggles of URM faculty and instructors but speaks to the suboptimal organization climates at HBCUs.

Promotion and Tenure as Structural Violence

For URM faculty and instructors, the path to promotion and tenure is all but easy. In fact, it becomes for many HBCU, women faculty and instructors, a “Walmarting of academic labor” (Hamer & Lang, 2015). Tenure in its simplest definition is, “an earned guarantee of continued employment” (University of California – Merced, 2024). The tenure path poses an exacerbated problem alongside issues of workload and wages. It is both a systemic and structural obstacle (Owens, 2024). For Lee and Leonard (2001), the tenure review process (review, denial, or obtainment) is laden with politics, power, and oppression. Masters-Waage et al. (2024) found in a study on 5 US-based PWIs, URM faculty received a higher percentage of negative votes and reviews from promotion and tenure committees - this problem was exacerbated for URM faculty and instructors as

they are often double-taxed because of their intersectional identities. Productivity is often weighted more heavily and in turn unfairly (Master-Waage et al., 2024). Not surprisingly, tenure decisions affect URM faculty retention, attrition, and decisions about switching career paths (Master-Waage, et al., 2024). The promotion and tenure problem also plagues URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs.

Professor A drove this point home in light of her tenure obtainment and the determination it took to reach her current professorship:

Then again, tenure can only go so much, right? Job stability, tenure is only as stable as the institution and it's only as stable as well, everything else. Getting tenure for me doesn't necessarily mean much in terms of compensation because I always embrace change, at least in this state in my life. But yes, we're severely underpaid.

Tenure is a structure of violence for many URM faculty and instructors. It is virtually unfeasible in certain disciplines for this population to obtain tenure. Even if they do obtain tenure the process for such an achievement is wrought with difficulty. Professor B chimed in:

If [redacted] wants to be that research institution, [redacted] also needs to change its tenure. It is virtually impossible to get tenure at [redacted]. Especially in the humanities. And so, I wouldn't put myself on the tenure track because it's just too hard to get tenure and you won't be able to get tenure in the amount of time that you need.

Tenure brings job security, higher salaries, pedagogical freedom, broader networking opportunities, and a variety of other benefits. Professor I, who has transitioned from being a student to a tenure track assistant professor tenure was a structurally violent phenomenon. She has had to advocate for herself through an incredibly tedious process of performance and portfolio reviews with little guidance or objective review. After just under 3 decades of loyalty to [redacted], Professor I was retroactively given tuition remission for her graduate education. She described this expedition:

Early on I was exposed to giving lectures but then I advocated for the title of instructor. I was dedicated to talking and lecturing to the students about health literacy at the time. That was kind of my intro lecture - health literacy and the importance of it - and so I advocated for an instructor position, but it was without compensation. So, I was primarily staff for a long time - even after my doctorate. I was still operating more as a staff scientist, if you will. I still have no tenure appointment, but I am still teaching at this point. I have been writing grants. So, I've been at [redacted] for a long time.

Barring URM faculty and instructors from tenure is not advantageous to the professoriate (Masters-Waage et al., 2024) or HBCUs as organizations. For Professor I the glass ceiling still looms as she continues to face bias in the evaluation process (Masters-Waage et al., 2024). She reflected:

I honestly have been in a place where I've had the autonomy and freedom to present ideas, and they haven't fallen on deaf ears. I think this came as a result of my reputation and work ethic, but for me the microaggression that I felt was hitting that glass ceiling, and realizing that as much as I may be respected and valued for my skill sets of grant writing this, that, and the other - without the education I could only go so far. It was just like I'm doing the work, but there are still gaps in compensation.

Here is yet another example of an HBCU neglecting to use a meritocratic system (Masters-Waage et al., 2024) all but ignoring Professor I's path as a scholar-practitioner.

In regard to their performance assessment which determines tenure, Professor E mentioned a required faculty performance contract at her institution. This document holds the most weight for tenure and advancement. She noted how it feels deeply transactional and almost futile to try to show extra initiative when submitting:

It has categories, 3 categories, teaching, research, scholarly activity, professional and community service. And then each category you have to describe your goals, objectives, your plan of action to achieve the goals and it has the criteria for assessment which is something that And I think this is incredible, because I understand the value of it. This is just an example, right? Because every semester there's something like this that I didn't experience at some other university. It's really good in a sense that you can see that they care, and what they're trying to do. But, on the other hand, it feels like faculty are being treated like children. We're the students a little bit, you know. And then, at the same time, it's just like, it feels just like a bureaucracy where nothing is acted upon like, it's more for me. I was like, oh, I have all these plans and stuff, but I know if I'm being honest, that if

they don't come to fruition it's probably not because of me.

Professor E's university wants their faculty to meet a performance standard, but the process and outcome of the assessment is not equitable for URM faculty and instructors, and instructors. Tenure and performance assessments are a form of micro assault (Wu et al., 2023) and subjective evaluation (Thomas et al., 2021). Moreover, tenure becomes a structure rewarding conformity to institutional expectations and norms (Hamer & Lang, 2015).

Resource Allocation

Another common narrative was the mentioning of resources. There were a variety of narratives highlighting the need for people, services, time, equipment, and other forms of capital. Withholding resources can cause unnecessary harm. Professor A stated:

One of the issues that I have with the institution as a whole is once people get tenured, they become less involved in research. And I like to learn, I like to continue to develop myself. And if I get to a stagnant position, I am probably going to contemplate other alternatives at this point, since I'm still learning a lot and I'm still have the freedom to carry on the research and work that I want to, it's beneficial to me. But for a lot of it, I do rely on external collaborators for the satisfaction. For instance, I don't have an X-ray machine, so I have to go to the [redacted] to get part of my research done. So, with the low pay and the lack of research support, that doesn't allow me to see myself 15 years from the line.

Having to seek support outside of the institution is yet another hurdle URM faculty and instructors face (Lee et al., 2021).

Funding allocation for research and teaching also bars URM faculty and instructors from their professional potential in the academy whether it is something they are expected to secure themselves or it is not apportioned equitably. Professor H added:

Having additional funding can help us do more with serving the students. But should that be the role of faculty, you know that's the thing that I'm just not believing. When you're looking at other schools, other, even other HBCUs that are highly ranked, faculty are not

regularly tasked with bringing money into the school...We could use an economist. We know we have money.

A subject matter expert - like a financial consultant - or as Professor H mentioned, an economist could bring much needed insight to her HBCU and help with distrustful vital resources.

Professor C mentioned a combination of supports she wished were improved.

Namely:

On terms of research support like in terms of wet lab research, like molecular biology research, my PhD is in molecular cell biology and genetics. I would prefer to do wet lab research, but I just don't think there's enough resources for that, and I don't have enough hours in the day for training because I teach a lot. And in fact, I think I've been overloaded the entire time. I've been teaching there the last 3 years and I've been overloaded every semester. I like teaching, though. I don't consider it like a punishment. That's the primary thing that I'm here for. If I were to have some other roles, I would be relieved from some of the teaching.

This demonstrated a support system needs to be holistic and tailored to the unique needs of URM faculty and instructors.

Theme III – Leadership and Climate Conditions

The anatomy of an HBCUs leadership conditions affects its organizational climate. Even though transformational and servant leaders exist at HBCUs and PWIs, toxic leadership still persists. Servant leadership as Toxic leadership is a pattern of behavior that intimidates, demeans, marginalizes, and polarizes followers and in an institutional setting it jeopardizes organizational success (Hitchcock, 2015). It can involve characteristics such as bullying, closemindedness, and an unwillingness to change (Gunasekara et al., 2022). This study revealed how administrative support, trust and transparency, tradition beliefs and practice, and seniority all interweave to either hinder or empower URM faculty and instructors.

Support

Professor C spoke to issues of administrative buy-in and seeking outside support or suggestions to improve departmental faults. Ultimately, the leadership within the institution bars departments from sound pedagogy and practicing servant leadership. Professor C divulged her institution has a proclivity for defending and safeguarding their established professors. She remarked:

If you have tenure, you really are protected. So, it's not like they can just go and remove a professor even if they got a thousand bad reviews, even if students said that the professor was violent and this and that they're not doing much to alleviate that. But what the administration did was they had an external evaluation of the department to have a third party offer some suggestions, but then a department can pretty much choose whether or not they'll implement the suggestions. So, the issue is - if we address any issue that we have at the whole institution, and there is an external source offering solutions modeled after many scenarios that says, "hey, 50 institutions are doing this. Maybe you should do this." We then choose not to consider their suggestions and the evaluation is a waste. I think we definitely do need to incorporate more modeling and maybe we should be a part of some type of consortium so that we can share ideas. But I just don't think that anyone higher up is really listening.

The aspiration for decision-making models and space for productive discourse is limited by toxic leaders. Professor C's testimony showed leadership neglects the best interests of all its institutional stakeholders when operating with a predetermined and convenience driven agenda. Her attempts to share concerns about tenure protection for professors who contribute negatively to an organizational climate are a reminder of how leadership may have formalized assessments for faculty but not always act in accordance with the results and suggestions of its URM faculty and instructor population.

Professor A shared her two different experiences being a faculty member at both an HBCU and PWI. The support system is starkly different at the HBCU. She divulged:

I'm also faculty at a different institution where we have regular meetings every single Monday. And those meetings are 15 minutes of business, followed by 30 minutes of

research update in whichever person's lab that is. We don't have that as regularly at my small HBCU. This may be because we're time limited, so our meetings tend to run maybe once a month and they're full business. There's no room for other things - asking questions or getting a little bit more guidance. So, at my HBCU we don't have that level of infrastructure, but I wish we had, especially for up-and-coming junior faculty. However, any person I've approached with questions or requesting guidance on how to succeed as a junior faculty and move towards tenure, I've been able to receive that unofficially from my peers.

With this suboptimal support system in place, Professor A has managed to find another coping mechanism for obtaining the mentorship she needs.

Professor D noted there is little to no space for diffusing an innovation when one is not positioned higher on the faculty and administration hierarchy. She revealed:

Unless and until you are in a superior administrator role, you don't have the power or support to change things, and I have seen administrators relentlessly trying to change some systems, and they pathetically fail.

This is an example of a lack of support for some of the tenets of Servant Leadership, specifically engaging in compassionate collaboration, practicing foresight, and utilizing systems thinking (Sipe & Frick, 2015).

URM faculty and instructors like Professor J also notice how leadership may not support all community members especially those from non-traditional backgrounds. For example, she expressed:

I can say that some of the administration discriminate against older students. They only want to deal with 18 to 24 year-olds, and that's not good. But it's a control thing, so it's something within themselves. They try to leave older students out, even if they are just like 29 or 30 years old. They can't control or manipulate them.

This power dynamic has a detrimental effect on both the students and the URM faculty and instructors. Professor J also noted despite having cordial relationships with many faculty and staff members, she does not feel like she has a community of mentors or

confidants. She has “good relationship with her chair” but was quick to say support from senior leadership is almost non-existent or one-sided. She stated:

You have the senior administration with the President, Provost, VP, Student affairs, the office of student services. They have their own personal agenda, and they try to weave all these other individuals into it. But then you have a high turnover of faculty and staff. For me, it's not because of the pay, I was doing it for free. But it's the administration that drives everybody else away.

When leadership does not support its URM faculty and instructor population, they are inclined to leave the academy and seek most positive work environments.

Lack of Trust and Transparency

Professor B recalled a particularly puzzling experience regarding trust and transparency. She noted the lack of respect:

I remember not this past academic but the academic year of 22-23, my chair called me and he left this nasty message about how I should be fundraising for new computers and all of that, and how we should be getting the money out of Title III to do that. And even though I had explained to him we can't do that because we were not given permission to buy computers with the Title III money. I had to get the Title III coordinator to basically email me and him and say, look, I'm willing to hold a Zoom meeting with you all and talk to you all about what you can and cannot do with Title III. Only after this interaction did my chair back off.

This type of microaggression is a reality for many URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs. Professor B added:

The majority of deans are female. I would say one thing is the lack of transparency about positions. So, for example, when the assistant provost resigned, it was already announced who had a position, and it was kind of like, well, when did you put out the call? The faculty have no say, we don't get to meet them. Same thing with the new provost.

A lack of stakeholder buy-in and collaboration erodes any foundation of trust. URM faculty and instructors continue to navigate hidden rules and processes. The intentional

siloeing of the professoriate from senior leadership is yet another microaggression barring URM faculty and instructors from empowering organizational climates.

Professor B also conveyed uneven power dynamics between professors and senior leaders often lead to misunderstandings and unhealthy relationships. The noted her Dean's lack of servant leadership:

The first semester I was there, [redacted] wanted me to put on a read-in, and I told her that I didn't feel comfortable doing that because it was my first year. I wanted to get used to everything. And she basically said to me, you don't tell the dean no.

This narrative revealed senior leadership may not always have the best interests of their URM faculty and instructors at heart. Additionally, there are consequences for opposing senior leadership.

Professor B offered another scenario highlighting communication breakdowns:

I remember getting in trouble one time. They didn't get my contract. I had signed it, mailed it back to them, and it just happened to be that what I mailed that day never went to the people that were supposed to get it. So, I had mailed a bill, I had mailed my contract. They just never got it. So, I told the representative in the provost office that I had made a photocopy and here it is. And I sent it to her, the dean and the chair. I had assumed that the dean and chair knew how much I made, and she chewed me out. I mean, not in a really nasty way, but she said, just a reminder, no one's supposed to see how much money you make, and next time, do not send to your chair. Do not send to your dean. And I had assumed it was okay because the chair and the dean and the provost office had been on one big email back and forth.

Professor (E) was a bit more fatalistic about her institutions ability to retain its professoriate, specifically in relation to URM faculty and instructors: She revealed:

[Redacted] has an issue that a lot of people leave. They do not stay long because of everything. I'll give you another example. We are on annual contracts which is ridiculous, like I have some certainty that my contract will be renewed. But say the Pandemic happens again. They could just terminate it right? And that's even for us assistant professors, even for higher levels as well.

Professor D offered an intriguing counter narrative and acknowledged her experience as an anomaly to many of her URM faculty and instructor colleagues. She revealed:

I have experienced very supportive and very soft treatments from women, and I have also experienced very harsh treatments from women who are not even way up. My experience could be totally contradicting many others, you know. But higher up in the administration people are nicer. Lower, they tend to be harder. I don't know if there is a power problem here, but you know, some of the staff, some of the offices, some of the faculty, especially women - they have a very hard tone. I don't know if it's the way they speak, but you know, higher up I haven't seen this as much. For example, we have a very superior person who works in human resources, and we have a comparatively junior staff secretary who works for that department. I have had a very hard time working with the Secretary while I have had a very good relationship with the senior HR Personnel. When I say this to my colleagues or my friend colleagues, they are astonished. They have the opposite experience, but I don't.

In short, Professor D's reflection demonstrates senior leadership at HBCUs is not the only group of stakeholders who may benefit from team and soft skills trainings.

Lack of trust and accountability affects all community members. URM faculty and instructors like Professor J observe this dynamic between the senior administration and the remaining community stakeholders. When asked about who has agency or stakeholder input, Professor J revealed:

Neither the students nor the faculty do. And it's like, if you listen to them, it's like they come with their own ideas. Yeah, they don't ask the students like, what degree? What do you want to do afterwards? What do you want to do get a bachelor's degree? And they call themselves okay because they affordable. But they're not getting input from the students. They're not getting input from the faculty.

This lack of compassionate collaboration makes the community unwelcoming and difficulty to navigate.

Following Tradition and Seniority

Even though Professor E describes a relatively positive experience at her HBCU she voiced concerns about older faculty stating:

People are just really involved with their jobs. And they love students. And I love students. And we love the climate and everything. And we see all this potential for the university to, you know, be everything that it has the capacity to be. You're met with a little bit of resistance and attitude from older faculty. The type of discourse that I hear a lot is like, oh, I've done that before, and they shut it down. And that's not going to work.

Professor B also characterized the Dean as being resistant to change. She described one specific conflict laden with toxic leadership. The first chronicled Professor B's hope to provide a more equitable and inclusive pedagogical structure. She reflected:

The writing center needs to be updated. Part of the issue is that the Dean also controls the writing center. When we came back from Covid, I wanted to do a hybrid kind of writing center where students had the choice of being able to use Collaborative Ultra. That was our zoom, if you will. So, the students could be tutored through that and they would have the choice of coming to the center, but that did not go over well and the Dean said, no, we are back in session. We want everybody in person, we want it the way it's always been done.

Following old practices and traditions can be harmful and restrictive; especially as the professoriate and student body at HBCUs has demographic shifts or unprecedented circumstances like a pandemic alter everyday routine. This is an example of how URM faculty and instructors have suggestions to not only improve the learning development of their students, but also the institution as a whole. In a similar vein, Professor G spoke about how leadership tends to hire those who will offer little resistance:

Anybody who gets these positions they're yes-men and yes-women. They're gonna say yes even if they believe otherwise. There's nobody who's countering anything that they're saying. And that's a problem. The minute you start to counter anything then you end up on the chopping block. Nobody is coming in with an attempt to disrupt.

Again, an organizational climate cannot shift, epistemological hurdles cannot be overcome, and accountable leadership declines (Armstrong & Jovanovich, 2017) when resistance to new perspectives and identities is present.

Professor F also mulled over the issue of seniority and tradition. In her home department she has attempted to voice her desire to advance professionally.

So, I've made it known to the Dean that I would like to stay and that I can teach other courses. But they have told me that the other professor that has a tenure in anthropology has to kind of make this happen, well it's not completely her responsibility, but perhaps she needs to show an interest in new courses. She has to say that she can teach those courses because she's the one that is a tenured. So, I'm very trapped.

This predicament does not allow for a diffusion of innovation, nor is it conducive to building an inclusive community (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017).

Breaking from Tradition

Luckily, many HBCUs are adjusting to the crossroads in higher education.

Professor (E) also expressed tension with traditional leadership. Nevertheless, she also was delighted to see a new leadership culture emerging at her institution. Optimistically she stated:

We have a new president. Things weren't going so well for us in the past, you know, with the past Presidency. The provost that just retired was somebody whose governance was kind of difficult. The President had all these ideas. Faculty wanted change. The President wanted change, but we were always met in the middle by the provost with "Yeah, we've done that before. Yeah, we'll look into something like that" So now we have a new Provost which I am excited about and so yeah, so it's a unique place to work at in the sense that I don't know how it is in other HBCUs, because it's the 1st HBUC that I've worked at.

This shift in leadership may prove to be a vital part of improving organizational climates at HBCUs – particularly if the individuals entering these institutions offer fresh perspective and a willingness to make deep pervasive change (Eckel, 2002).

Professor I mentioned her HBCU recently hired its first female dean to the College of Medicine. She described this shift as empowering and refreshing to see the institution live out its purpose:

[That's] a very strong statement to have a female dean for the College of Medicine. We have welcomed that. There are more women in these positions of leadership across the campus...The shift speaks to the institution and its mission.

This type of revamping means the organizational culture will start to move away from traditional patriarchal leadership. She also announced [redacted] had made significant efforts to change the dominant discourse and decision-making in order to remain competitive and influential. The changing demographics of higher education have compelled Professor I's institution to embrace diversity and address disparities and inequities with an "increased sensitivity and empathy."

Theme IV – Levels of Institutional Change

Themes I, II, and III laid the groundwork for how one might understand Theme IV - Levels of Institutional Change. Two subthemes emerged – relational and transformation, and structural recommendations. Questions surrounding but not limited to cultural competency, bias, programming, practices, and procedures, and policy materialized in the testimonies of the URM faculty and instructors interviewed in this study.

Relational and Transformational

For Professor A, some older faculty at HBCUs tend to be resistant to changing their critical pedagogies and beliefs. They adhere to the status quo. Because of this frequent occurrence, she states:

I'd also like to see some DEI training across the board, especially for some of the older faculty that are not necessarily too keen on accepting students for who they are, but constantly lecturing about who they are and that they should just follow this cookie cutter path? But in reality, it doesn't work that way. I would like to see more development workshops across the board that are geared to all faculty so that we can also provide more support to the students and be a better resource and not just have to navigate things blindly as well.

This recommendation is aimed at faculty, but has a student-focused outcome, which allows for multiple stakeholders to be positively affected. It also points to a problem with cultural competency. There is an inherent lack of self-awareness and self-reflection leading to bias, lack of knowledge of others' experiences, and deficient cross-cultural communication (Koonce et al., 2024). Though Professor A is indirectly affected by the decisions and attitudes of older faculty. Therefore, cultural competence is a vital tool for adapting and improving the organizational climate at HBCUs for not only students but also URM women faculty and instructors. It can, and should be practiced individually but is also “incumbent on the institution” (Koonce et al., 2024). Removing cultural incompetence and bias is a transformational change, both deep and pervasive (Eckel, 2002).

Professor (E) faces similar conditions illuminating the attitudes of older faculty sticking to tradition who “are never gonna change” as well as Professor C who stresses this on a more macro level:

Educational systems are very archaic and dated, and traditional people don't really change anything. They sort of just do the same thing for decades on and they expect different results. I'm not quite sure why, but you know, if we want different results, we gotta change stuff.

There is a dire need to help traditional faculty become more receptive to change - especially suggestions from younger professors and URM faculty and instructors.

HBCUs are at a crossroads – younger URM faculty and instructors are entering the workforce with fresh and fervently DEI forward perspectives and these institutions must find ways to break from decades of routine and inflexible vision (Eckel & Kezar, 2003, Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

There are some interpersonal level problems HBCUs must address. For Professor A the problem was with the relationships between stakeholders and the communication mechanisms. She stated:

I don't think that it is systematic within the organization. Like I said before, they do a very good job of being supportive and inclusive to both the students, the faculty and the staff. I have seen instances recently where there's been tensions between the students and some staff members, especially with the Palestinian Israeli conflict. And so, for example, some murals were destroyed. This happened to be by staff members who miscommunicated president, stepped in, listened to the students, listened to the faculty. That person apologized for their mistaken oversight and overreacting. And I think they were handled well, not necessarily micromanaged, not necessarily that the administration took one side or the other, but explained the fact that the institution serves as a ground for discussion. And so, if you don't necessarily share that same view, if you just can have your own murals, you can have your own protest and you can have your own, but it's not going to be taking one side.

Professor E also emphasized the importance of building stronger trust-based connections. Currently her institution is riddled with imbalanced dyadic power dynamics between faculty and the senior administration. She stressed:

Stop treating your faculty like children. Stop the supervision... if you change your attitude towards faculty in general, you'll understand that we are all there for the same goal which is to see students thrive...I would like to see this more transparent attitude between administration and faculty, not as a parent child, but more like, you guys are doing the work you're there with students. You're there, you know, seeing the issues every day, and we are here to support you. What do we need to support you? And that's not in money or anything like that. But the simplest things like sometimes answering an email. If you start to create an environment like that, then well, faculty are going to be more satisfied.

Excessive supervision between the senior administration and its URM women faculty and instructor population can lead to lower morale, less productivity, and disengagement.

Embedded in Professor E's petition is the need for the administration to practice more reflection in hopes of discerning URM women faculty and instructor concerns, offering space for their autonomous growth, and supporting their basic needs as educators and mentors.

As aforementioned Professor B was quick to note within her own microclimate of the English department there are gendered relationship dynamics which could be addressed to improve her teaching and service experience.

We have one professor who talks a lot, so you got to stop him or he will dominate the meeting. We have another professor who, he just kind of came out of school and he's been at those universities that have faculty unions, and he's like, we need a faculty union, or we need to talk about what our salaries are. And it's kind of like, that's not how it goes at [redacted]. You don't want to get fired.

Overall, individual cultural competency and bias trainings may prove to be beneficial for such a situation.

Structural

Structural barriers continue to hinder the development of URM women faculty and instructors at HBCUs.

Professor A stated, "overall, it's been positive. However, there have been instances where additional support is needed to push forth the visions of the institution."

Further diving into this need for support Professor A posited:

Let's say that we wanted to have a centralized person who hears all of your concerns or can help you navigate certain issues or that you can go to and talk. This is going to fall on the shoulders of faculty randomly, right? But if let's say we were to turn this into a position that counts towards our service time, then students wouldn't have to knock on different doors to try to figure out who to talk to because it would be right there. It's a

resource, but no one's going to be willing to become that resource if it's just going to be extra work and if it's not going to count towards your service or towards your teaching or towards any of your funding.

This proposition is compelling. On the one hand having a kind of life skills coach would formalize a mentorship process. On the other hand, this formalization will cost the university money and involve a shift in thinking about workload balance and service. A mentorship program for URM women faculty and instructors could greatly benefit the professoriate at Professor A's institution so it is not the sole responsibility of one person.

In response to the new dean at her institution, Professor B stated:

His goal is for us to get R1 designation, and it's kind of like how are we going to get R1 designation when we don't have time to fundraise? Or how are we going to get R one designation when we're teaching four classes? How can we write books and articles and have a library that needs improvement? They need to order or add to their databases. So, it's kind of like you're going to have to put the money in, or you're going to have to say, here are the structural changes that are going to be made.

This presents an interesting dilemma directly impacting the organizational climate of Professor B's HBCU and her success. Similarly, Professor J wanted to see changes in her department's pedagogy – specifically within the curriculum and degrees offered.

Professor J reported:

We offer certificates and that's fine. But the administration is more focused on just those certificates. Now they're being told by the board and alumni (since they're accredited) to focus on offering more degrees instead of certificates. You have those in the administration, and even some of the chairs who don't want to switch how the pedagogy is structured. It's a deeper problem - maybe its laziness, maybe it's about the money. The students are not going to be able to use the certificates to get a job, they need the degrees.

Here is another example where a URM faculty member is actively advocating for the student body, but the structural support is not sound and there are ramifications for this suboptimal microclimate. It will also help to keep the institution competitive in the HBCU sphere.

Professor F offers commentary on what happens when a department lacks funding and subsequently falls into a cycle of inflexibility as Anthropology is only offered as a minor at her respective HBCU which prevents certain resources from coming in and subsequently any buy-in for promoting community structures. She spoke about her futile attempt at pursuing a study abroad program in Puerto Rico that would improve cultural diversity at her HBCU especially for Afro-Puerto Ricans:

They say that they couldn't allow me to go with students because of the accreditation of the class. And I'm not going to convince students to go if the class is not gonna count for credit, so I don't know why. You know it's too much, or whatever. I always think about possibilities and pushing, but sometimes you don't have the time to do all that. Perhaps I can push more, people want me to do that.

Essentially, Professor F was suggesting her institution learn to empower URM faculty and instructors to autonomously build community in their own literal, conceptual, and discursive space (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2017). Professor H chimed in:

You know, when it comes to rewards, promotions, tenure - if you're at a teaching institution and we're expected to have teaching excellence and all of that, then the ways that we're measured when it comes to tenure and promotion should reflect more of that. And I really think the pressure to bring money into the school kind of takes away from your ability to do what you can in the classroom, even when you think about the mission of the school. Is there mission alignment, no I don't think so exactly. Yes, having additional funding can help us do more with serving the students. But should that be the role of faculty? You know that's the thing that I'm just not believing. Especially when you're looking at other schools, even other HBCUs that are highly ranked, and their faculty are not tasked with bringing money into the school, right? That's something that I hear often when I do a lot of presentations and attend different conferences. I, personally, don't know of a colleague at any other school where grants are required for their tenure and promotion.

Even for Professor H, the expectation to bring in money to the institution is drastically unfair. She contended this type of pursuit makes logical sense for STEM fields but not the business school at her HBCU. Professor H's suggestion was ultimately for her

institution to continue looking at ways to make expectations of grant funding fairer and more equitable across the different disciplines.

Systemic change requires an understanding of how an alteration or overhaul of one process in a system may (and more often than not) require a fundamental change in other parts of a system. Professor D spotlighted this deeper phenomenon at her university:

I'd say, it's not a micro level problem. It's all over. There are a lot of layers associated. I would say the administration or the superiors - in every respect. They work for the welfare of the University as a whole, or achieving those milestones like they want to have a great sports team. They want to have a great band team, or they want to have those timely outcomes that they that will list the University as doing something out of the box, or something really evolving. But then while they do that, they choose to, or unknowingly, they ignore so many other minor problems or minor uncertainties which 1st need to be rectified.

For systemic change to occur in higher education, institutions must be willing to strategically implement new policies, programs, curriculum, mission and values when the status quo preserves a sup-optimal organizational climate. Systemic change moves at a glacial pace. Professor D also reveals some of the factors involved in blocking systemic change at her HBCU – attitude and awareness. Cost and legislation are also important variables.

Professor G spoke about a practice that reinforces a suboptimal organizational climate at her HBCU. She mentioned senior leadership hiring practices citing how the institution selected its current President and past Presidents. Armstrong and Jovanovic (2017) stress the importance of senior leadership “[voicing] planned actions at departmental and institutional levels” (p. 224). Her description revealed her frustrations with a systemic process:

So, what would I like to see done? I actually had suggested to them at some kind of leadership gathering. I don't know what they were doing, by the way, so I told the incompetent leadership what I find is that through the years we [URM women faculty and instructors] never really choose our president. I'm thinking, okay, they do a national search right? But it should be a true national search, where the university system of Georgia does not have somebody in place already to assume the position when one person leaves it. So, they do these national searches, or they call them national searches, and then they come back very deceptive and say, oh, whoever is in the system, they somehow always end up being the President. So, they send these people as if, oh, it's a kind of cronyism.

Cronyism is detrimental to positive and effective organizational climates. It disregards qualifications and merit, and relies on personal relationships and connections when placing people in positions of power. Frequently, the consequence is weakened accountability and corruption. Furthermore, personal loyalty is often favored over what is best for the organization. The hiring practices at Professor G's HBCU have led to onboarding senior leaders who may not be a best fit for the institution. Professor J also described how cronyism impacts the organizational climate at her HBCU. She quickly suggested what is needed "I think it's a values shift." This deep pervasive change is necessary to mitigate toxic leadership and to catalyze structural changes to hiring practices and decision-making processes.

Professor G also mentioned the need for formalized DEI positions and groups, specifically in the form of affinity groups. She disclosed:

I don't remember when, but they had somebody now in the position to hear any grievances, and somebody from maybe the legal area to hear the big grievances. So the door is now open for that. And the affinity groups at [redacted], they are informal. There's a group called the [redacted] at the university. But we hardly have formal affinity groups at the university and maybe if it were like a PWI it would work. We have a lot of African Americans trying to find connections and people of their own race etc, or those who have experienced the same discrimination and issues. But yes, they are informal affinity groups.

There has been a shift at her institution though it has been far from optimal.

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study is to gain a better understanding of URM faculty and instructors lived experiences with the current organizational climate at their respective HBCUS and their suggestions for institutional transformation. To date, the literature on URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs has chronicled the lives mostly African American identifying individuals. This study sought to incorporate the lived experiences of not only this particular demographic of faculty and instructors at HBCUs, but also the neglected narratives of other groups, namely Asian and/or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latina, Native American and American Indian, and those of two or more of the aforementioned races or ethnicities. Although the participants are not representative of all URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs, the findings present valuable insights. There are similarities and differences in the lived experiences of URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs. In all instances, the emotional weight of the narratives was apparent, whether faculty and instructors expressed immense pride in their organization and its stakeholders or agitation toward their current organizational climate. The majority of the URM faculty and instructors expressed gratitude for their positive experiences while simultaneously showing disdain and dissatisfaction for the imperfections in the organizational climate at their HBCUs.

Students matter to the success of many URM faculty and instructors. This is not a new phenomenon in higher education – students provide feedback, contribute to their sense of belonging, and are a source of motivation (Rusticus et al., 2022) Almost every participant spoke about their students being a powerful driving force behind their desire to serve, mentor, and teach. Their sense of purpose is deeply rooted in enriching the lives

of those who enter their classroom or learning environments. This cohesion has helped to increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Wilson et al., 2025).

Almost all of the URM faculty and instructors who were interviewed mentioned mentoring or relationships in some capacity. Some spoke to the strong connections they have made at their respective campuses while others expressed the need for faculty and administration connections to be more symbiotic rather than transactional. Leadership conditions at HBCUs vary – there are quality relationships, but there are also suboptimal departmental dynamics. Connections contribute to feelings of acceptance and organizational trust (Wilson et al., 2025). When these connections move beyond simple affiliation, URM women faculty and instructors are able to be more creative and to see their well-being and mental health improve when structural and systemic barriers hinder their progress.

URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs continue to persevere despite the tiredness, hurting, and institutional betrayal (Owens, 2024): Professor D, for instance, even with all of her accolades and success, has had an extremely difficult time navigating and advocating in a flawed system adverse to change. This shows how negative organizational climates at HBCUs may directly neglect to nurture the personal agency and self-efficacy (Mack et al., 2010) of URM faculty and instructors. Her suggestions for institutional transformation are often thwarted. Sadly, if she meets or exceeds the University's expectations, she'll be paid and recognized, but her feelings of inclusivity and connectedness (Wilson et al., 2025) to her HBCU are negatively impacted. Many URM, faculty and instructors, like Professor D, are forced to find other coping mechanisms as they navigate the various microclimates of the academy. In short, HBCUs

are not always fostering a sense of belonging at the departmental or broader institutional level whether it be through social supports, valuing of difference, and perceptions of identity and legitimacy (Wilson et al., 2025). In other cases, URM women faculty and instructors are given more autonomy and decision-making capabilities (Wilson et al., 2025), as evidenced by Professor B.

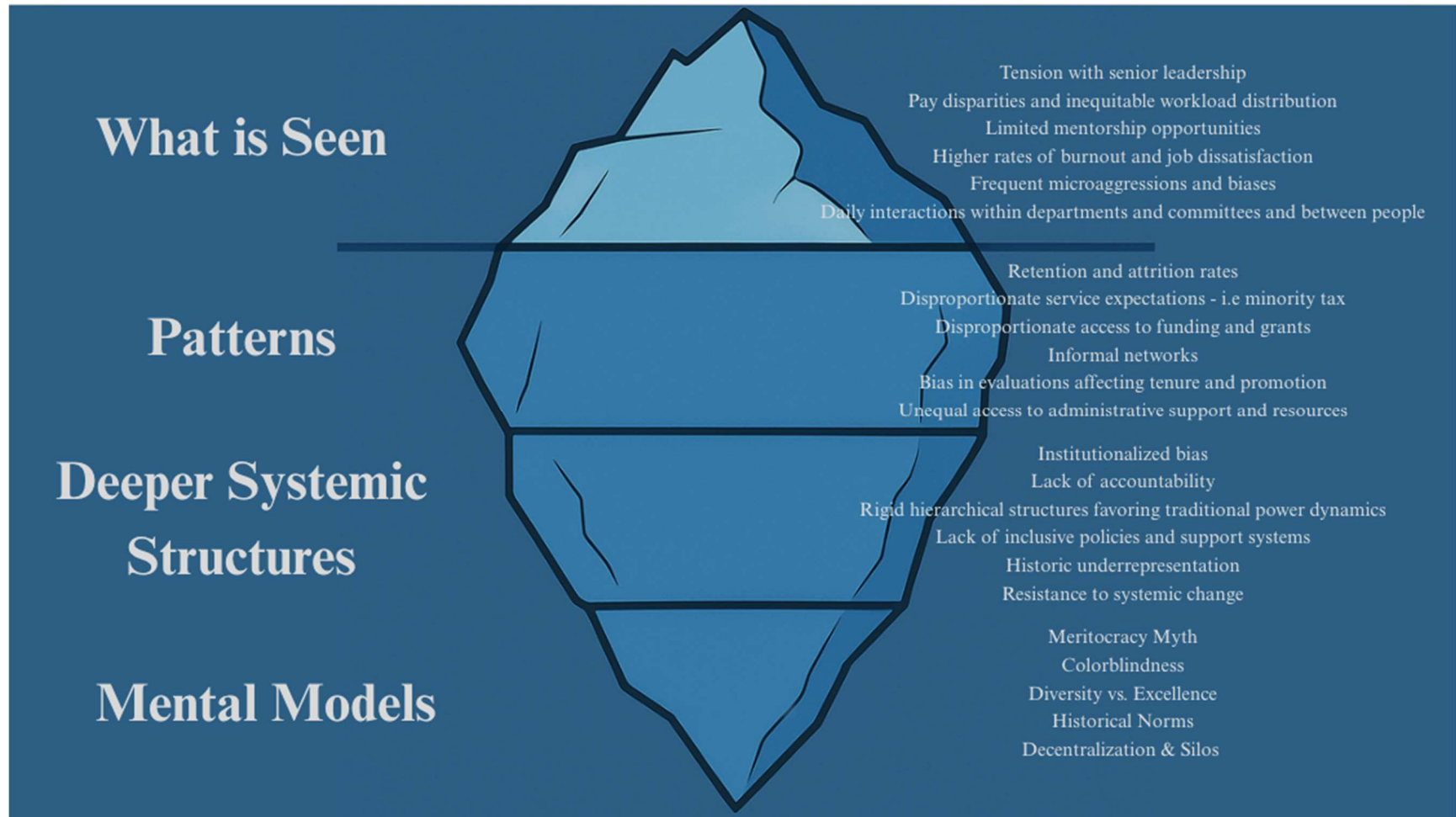
A repeated effort to break through the glass ceiling demonstrates URM women faculty and instructors continue to face structure violence. For Professor I there are other demographic factors affecting her outcome such as the unfair weight given to research activity versus teaching and service in the application process, and gendered dynamics (Masters-Waage et al., 2024) within her field.

Finally, out of all the professors interviewed for this analysis, Professor E seemed to “fair slightly better” than her Latina and Black peers as her experience in organizational climates was not suggestive of marginalization and invisibleness (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Moreover, it comes as little surprise Professor E remains highly motivated, a finding substantiated by Thomas et al. (2021) in the 2021 Women in the Workplace report.

Iceberg Model

I developed an iceberg model (see Figure 4), to visually represent the layers of systemic issues within HBCUs, from surface-level symptoms to deeply embedded structures and beliefs

Figure 4 – Iceberg Model



The "What is Seen" layer reflects visible tensions, microaggressions, disparities, and daily interactions. URM women faculty and instructors navigate unfair workloads, pay gaps, limited mentorship opportunities, and interpersonal relationships making it essential for organizations to foster inclusive and supportive climates. Informal sisterhood networks are frequently created in the absence of more formalized mentorship and coaching. Disproportionate service expectations and funding access are all too common patterns; so too are questions about URM women faculty and instructor retention and attrition. The "Deeper Systemic Structures" layer highlights how institutionalized bias, rigid hierarchies, power dynamics, lack of necessary support, lack of accountability, and change resistance sustain inequities. Structural violence is evident in disparities in access to resources, promotion bias, and the "minority tax". These inequities reinforce harm, trauma, betrayal, and exclusion. Leadership plays a crucial role in either maintaining the status quo or dismantling the structural inequities. Finally, though not explicitly stated, in the one-on-one interviews, there is the layer that often goes unnoticed or neglected - the addressing of mental models. Here HBCUs, can challenge meritocracy myths, color blindness, cronyism, nepotism, outdated norms, power dynamics and notions that excellence is compromised when DEI is the focus. Change at HBCUs cannot be superficial or performative, it needs to be substantive.

Delimitations and Limitations

The time of the study was constrained to the Spring of 2024 to Spring of 2025. The sample of the study looked at URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs around the USA. It was not a study on all URM faculty in academia; that is, it did not include URM, men faculty at HBCUs, nor did it include the URM student experience. These two

demographics were mentioned in conversations, but they were not included in the population or sample set. I limited the study location to HBCUs, choosing to remove the experiences of URM faculty and instructors at PWIs. Additionally, the majority of data collected came from semi-structured virtual interviews. Even though I utilized both purposive and snowball sampling to garner a larger population of 147 potential participants, only 10 URM faculty and instructors responded to my recruitment letter and google form with a subsequent interview.

By choosing a phenomenological analysis, I already introduced a certain degree of design bias. I recognize I am unable to make claims about the broader URM faculty and instructor population as my sample size of 10 is insufficient for such conclusions. On a basic level, time and resource constraints limited my travel to HBCU campuses as well as face-to-face interactions as I am headquartered on the West Coast. Another limitation arose from my inability to know if a participant would be able to answer each interview question honestly, completely, and accurately (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). With that being said, triangulation with other data sources was essential. I diligently reviewed the data I collected from interviews, observations, and institutional artifacts like websites, mission and vision statements and strategic plans. By checking for congruence across data I supported my findings and strengthened weak data points.

As with any study, personal biases are present in this dissertation in practice. Personal bias skews the research process toward specific and often limited outcomes. To increase validity, I bracketed the meanings and interpretations (Hycner, 1985) stemming from my beliefs and assumptions as a URM, woman staff member of biracial identity working at a small liberal arts college. I have preconceived notions about the DEI space

in higher education, but these may not be congruent with every URM, woman faculty member I interview. As such, I needed to remain cognizant of the type of language I used when communicating, asking questions during the semi-structured interviews, and reviewing the data. Ultimately, I had participants check my interpretation of their responses and provide feedback throughout the data collection and data analysis process. I also had DEI experts in higher education identify gaps in my argument and whether I have made sound conclusions. I kept questions open-ended, asked probing questions when necessary, and allowed the conversation to flow from the respondents' own words.

I also took steps to limit respondent bias. There is a risk of participants answering questions with acquiescence or uniform, repetitive responses. To mitigate respondent bias, I kept the interviews conversational, ensured a safe space for confidentiality, and emphasized the importance of sharing one's authentic experience. Overall, I remained aware and flexible during the research process.

Summary

The strengths of this study are evidenced in its validity, transferability, reliability, credibility, and confirmability. Chapter IV included vignettes of the study participants and how their lived experiences at HBCU show striking similarities and differences. Four Major Themes emerged - 1) Navigating Organizational Climates, 2) Structures of Violence, 3) Leadership and Climate Conditions, and 4) Levels of Systemic Institutional Change. Chapter V will take the results and findings of Chapter IV and suggest solutions for the problems highlighted in the unique narratives of the URM women faculty and instructors. Research implications will also be shared.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking the findings revealed in Chapter IV and the Iceberg Model, Chapter V presents conclusions, implications for action, and my recommendations for future research. These implications for action can offer additional vantage points from which to determine news solution for helping HBCUs better serve their URM faculty and instructor populations. In this chapter I highlight 4 topics I find both salient and tertiary addressed in the interviews from my study. Nonetheless these recommendations offer space for extending the conversation and ultimately the scholarly literature.

Aim Statement

The exigencies of the rapidly changing global landscape necessitate a revamped model of DEI leadership in higher education (Ahmadi Beni et al., 2024). The feminization of labor and mobility of women has changed the demographics of the workforce and meeting the needs of a diversifying population, demands an intersectional lens (Behera, 2023). By not only spotlighting the experiences of URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs, but also countering the current assault on minority progress in academia, this study reimagines how the marginalized can regain agency and autonomy in spaces perpetuating systemic oppression.

The aim of this study is twofold; to promote the advancement of URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs and to bolster the longevity of HBCUs as current debates attempt to render the institutions obsolete. The tangible outcome of this dissertation in practice is to gauge the severity of failed or imperfect organizational climates at HBCUs through a DEI lens. Ultimately, the recommendations of URM faculty and instructors selected for this study are held in conversation and have informed how I would devise a robust leadership

model meant to revamp the current policies, practices, and procedures at HBCUs. This is all contingent on leveraging the URM faculty and instructors' unique experiences.

Proposed Solution(s)

Recall from Chapter II, Armstrong and Jovanovic's (2017) 5 intersectional facilitators - creating accountable leadership, identifying climate zones, understanding the (N)umbers game, overcoming epistemological hurdles, and promoting community structures. The narratives of the 10 participants show at their core, HBCUs need both internal modification and external assistance (Dawkins et al., 2006) if they are to improve the quality of their organizational climate with a particularly focus on DEI. The proposed solution integrates the 5-part typology of Armstrong and Jovanovic (2017) with the participant determined dialogue. Since the URM women faculty and instructor experience has created a more expansive "knowledge domain" (Lee et al., 2021), there is a space for supporting change at these pivotal institutions. The participants in this study suggested or alluded to wanting more support, more commensurate pay and promotion, more accountability and trust, and more culturally competent leadership.

Internal Solution – Office for Institutional Diversity at HBCUs

The internal solution, I propose involves a revamping of HBCU organizational structure to create Offices for Institutional Diversity (OID). OIDs could help with strengthening a servant leadership ethos. An OID office can become an authoritative body within the institution tasked with assessing the DEI climates, evaluating the processes, decisions, and relationships enabling systems of oppression, and enacting policies pivotal for institutional change. Staff roles for the OID office would include a Dean, Education Developer, Recruitment Specialist, Data and Systems Analyst, Project

Manager, and a Communications Specialist. Additionally, two student representatives would meet with OID office biweekly. Each of these roles has their own unique responsibilities and will contribute to decision-making and engagement with the broader campus communities. The Dean would report to senior leadership at each HBCU and serve on a larger institutional diversity committee. The burden on URM faculty and instructors to pay a minority tax and navigate multiple intersectional jeopardies can be alleviated with this robust structural support.

The evidence against organizations forming diversity offices and the initiatives that follow, suggests concerns about the limited or harmful impact on DEI (Esparza et al., 2022), accountability and metrics (Fahl et al., 2023), financial needs (Insight Staff, 2019), bureaucratic impediments (Bailey, 2020), reverse discrimination (Newkirk, 2019), alienation and isolation (Smith, 2024; Ward-Bartlett et al., 2023), tokenism (Smith 2024), and ideological bias (Hellerstedt et al., 2024) or ideological tension (Greenfield, 2015). A sound strategic plan can mitigate these structural and relational concerns but not necessarily eradicate them.

External Solution – A Consortium Grounded Institutional Diversity Committee (IDC)

Not only am I proposing an initiative that would help erect OID offices on HBCU campuses, but I also hope to connect HBCUs externally through the HBCU Faculty Development Network which also lacks a formalized DEI consortium or Institutional Diversity Committee. The HBCU Faculty Development Network is 501(c)(3) organization functioning in many ways like a consortium. Consortia, seek to provide a safe community for their members or constituents (Del Priore, 2022). Hernandez et al. (2015) suggested a safe space within higher education where women faculty of color

meet regularly to brainstorm methods to take advantage of their marginalized position in academia and actively produce research. It serves as a sanctuary where an outlet for authentic expression is offered and women faculty of color gain an understanding of their various cultures (Hernandez et al., 2015). This forms camaraderie helping them cope with the hardships of bureaucracy, complacency, and politics that come with the dominant culture in higher education (Hirt et al., 2008).

A cornucopia of consortia exist in higher education with student-centric aims or with a region-specific scale like the Atlanta University Center Consortium, but there is yet to be a body focusing on the needs of URM faculty and instructors. Additionally, there are other networks, like the Associated Colleges of the South (ACS) where HBCUs are members of a larger population of college and university network. This work is vital, but detracts from the fact that HBCUs are in and of themselves uniquely positioned in the higher education landscape. Since the HBCU Faculty Development Network already has a framework for working with a diverse group of stakeholder institutions and people the creation of the IDC has much needed leverage then if it was to be fashioned from the ground up.

Evidence against the creation of an IDC as part of the HBCU Faculty Development Network centers on the discussions about diversity committees and diversity bodies in general. This includes but is not limited to the potential to revert to irrelevant or universalized approaches or programming (Suarez et al., 2018), performative rather than adaptive or transformative leadership (Gibbs et al., 2023; Kolluru et al., 2023), bureaucratic issues (Greene & Paul, 2021), trouble with assessments and setting measurable goals (Hadley, 2023; Welch et al., 2021),

misallocation of resources and/or lack of funding (Hadley, 2023; Jacobs, 2023; Kolluru et al., 2023), compositional handicaps (Kolluru et al., 2023), and limited engagement and buy-in (Greenfield, 2015).

Implementation of the Proposed Solution(s)

OID Offices at HBCUs

Goals and objectives, stakeholder buy-in, climate surveys, DEI initiatives, communication, feedback mechanisms, and funding should be discussed before OID offices are erected on HBCU campuses. Staff roles for the OID office would include a Dean, Education Developer, Recruitment Specialist, Data and Systems Analyst, Project Manager, and a Communications Specialist. Additionally, two student representatives would meet with OID office biweekly. Each of these roles has their own unique responsibilities and will contribute to decision-making and engagement with the broader campus communities. The Dean would report to senior leadership at each HBCU and serve on a larger institutional diversity committee. The burden on URM faculty and instructors to pay a minority tax and navigate multiple intersectional jeopardies can be alleviated with this robust structural support.

HBCU Faculty Development Network IDC

A unique combination of stakeholders must participate in a national HBCU Faculty Development Network IDC to grapple with questions of intersectionality, relationships with systems of oppression, and recommendations for institutional change. The IDC would include institution members from a variety of HBCUs interested in improving the organizational climates at their institutions. One need not be an URM or a woman faculty member or instructor, it is an opportunity for all faculty to participate in

community building and show intentionality. The most granular roles will be a Chair and co-chair, data analyst, communications specialist, faculty members at large, legal advisor, event coordinator, and if necessary, a legal advisor and human resources representative. The consortium will be responsible for providing summits on how to create stronger on campus mentoring programs, pathways to incentivization and reward, culture of Servant Leadership, and communities of trust and accountability.

Mentoring Programs

The HBCU Faculty Development Network IDC can help to create a mentoring program for URM faculty and instructors. These mentoring programs aim to be more inclusive and supportive of the URM faculty and instructor experience at HBCUs as inadequate mentoring hinder networking potential, collaboration, career decisions, and devaluation of URM faculty (Espino & Zambrana, 2019). The IDC can furnish a more formal, recognized, and institutionalized mentoring program (Espino & Zambrana, 2019). The program itself will address the needs of all the various intersectional lived experiences, examples being paths for new and early stage URM faculty (Ransdell et al., 2021), those of various racial and ethnic backgrounds and intragroup assistance (Hsieh & Nguyen, 2020), and those in particular fields of study such as STEM (Petersen et al., 2020).

Pathways to Incentivization and Reward

In regard to incentivization, reward and tenure evaluations there will be two major charges of the HBCU IDC. First members of HBCUs will serve as liaisons and proctor external review letters (ERL) for those seeking tenure and promotion. Masters-Waage et al., (2024) asserts external reviewers can appreciate innovation and objectively assess

URM, faculty and instructor contributions to the academy. This revamping can help to limit the biased and often oppressive nature of the tenure evaluation process (Masters-Waage et al., 2024). ERL success can be measured by whether there is an increase in tenure appoints for URM faculty and instructors. Since HBCUs are severely underfunded (Njoku & Murray, 2023) - especially on a state level -compared to their PWI counterparts (Evans et al., 2002), this impacts the institution's ability to recruit and retain high-quality faculty (tenure being a mechanism of recruitment and retainment), especially URM faculty and instructors. As shown in the narratives of 10 participants, URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs may face additional pressures to balance teaching, research, and service with limited institutional support.

The consortium will be responsible for either awarding or helping secure funding for faculty career development funds and pilot research. If funds are not available via the consortium, there will be a taskforce or committee whose charge would be to connect URM faculty and instructors to various funding outlets such as internships, fellowships, grants, and partnerships. These opportunities will have a particular focus on aiding URM faculty and instructors and hopefully remove some of the extra burden this population has to succeed in the academy.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership must compliment the seemingly transactional nature of faculty and administration relationships at HBCUs. This is not to say every interaction at HBCUs is based on managing job performance and punishment, rather it is an attempt to shift the culture at HBCUs to not only be more welcoming towards URM women faculty and instructors but also to shift the culture in such a way where Sipe and Frick's (2015) seven

pillars become the norm. When all stakeholders operate within the Servant Leadership ethos - Being a person of character, putting people first, being a skilled communicator, engaging in compassionate collaboration, practicing foresight, utilizing systems thinking, and leading with moral authority – there is a greater likelihood for institutional longevity and a health work environment. In a brief report of the Northeast Consortium of Minority Faculty Development, Butts et al. (2008) state one of the aims of service is to learn how to advocate for negotiating within and outside departments. Since faculty mentioned the siloed nature of their institutions, this could be one area where HBCUs start to broaden their systems thinking and compassionate collaboration.

Communities of Trust and Accountability

To foster a community of trust and accountability, the IDC will help participating members return to their institutions to sponsor team building breakfasts and luncheons, suggest skill building workshops, and share more about potential opportunities to partner with the IDC.

Timeline for Implementation of the Internal Solution

Developing an OID at HBCUs will require strategic planning to ensure effectiveness, inclusivity, and structural integration. This change will require multiple phases – preparation, planning, execution, evaluation, and sustainability. The length of time is dependent on the factors included in Table 5 below.

Table 5 - HBCU OID Office Implementation Plan

Phase	Duration	Action Items	Deliverables
Preparation	1-2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct surveys, focus groups, town halls, or interviews with faculty, staff, and students • Define office goals • Align mission with larger institutional mission and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment • Set of goals • Structural Requirements • Resource Requirements
Planning	2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline action plan, staffing needs, budget and resource requirements • Define DEI shared definitions and policies • Schema for DEI Initiatives • Plan DEI training programs • Brainstorm communication strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Plan • Selection of DEI policies and DEI framework • DEI training programs ready for piloting

Execution	4-6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire key staff • Launch OID • Utilize media platforms to spread awareness of OID 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OID is operational • Feedback systems in place
Evaluation	6+ months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review data, feedback, and institutional goals • Identify areas for improvement • Revise programs and policies not meeting established goals • Share successes and challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency to stakeholders • Adjustments aligned with assessments
Sustainability	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus-wide implementation of DEI ethos • Change culture to make DEI a core institutional value • Find ways to connect staff and faculty to outside conferences and events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and faculty development • Sustainable DEI strategy becomes institutional norm

Timeline for Implementation of the External Solution

Similar to the Internal Solution a multi-step process - from initial planning to long term sustainability - is needed for the external solution. Table 6 outlines the phases.

Table 6 - HBCU Faculty Development Network Institutional Diversity Committee

Phase	Duration	Action Items	Deliverables
Preparation	1-2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey HBCU campuses utilizing data from OIDs or institutional research offices (where available) • Define purpose and measurable objectives related to mentoring programs, funding and incentivization, Servant Leadership, and community building, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine committee members and their roles • Draft mission, vision, and goals • Climate assessment report
Formation	2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a comprehensive strategic plan aligned with the HBCU Faculty Development Network • Recruit and train committee members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of committee members. • A plan for engaging the broader community, through mediums such as

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather input from community and ensure there is a feedback loop 	<p>media forums and campus visits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic plan with defined goals and timelines.
Implementation	3-4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch short and long-term initiatives Collaborate and connect with outside organizations, businesses, alumni and other subject matter experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of diversity initiatives such as training, recruitment, cultural programming, and OID office support. Establishment of partnerships with external organizations. Regular progress reports to the committee and stakeholders.

Evaluation	2-3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at participation, and achievement of measurable diversity goals. • Organize feedback sessions • Identify areas for improvement • Share successes and challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation report with suggestions for adjustments. • Share summary of the IDC progress. • Refined strategies for ongoing initiatives.
Sustainability	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help HBCUs institutionalize DEI in their mission and open OID Offices • Create a sustainable model for ongoing committee funding • Feedback loop for committee improvement • Mentorship, training, and leadership opportunities for faculty, staff, and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with HBCUs to develop sounder DEI statements and objectives in their strategic plans • Work with HBCUs to erect OID offices • Long-term sustainability plan for diversity initiatives.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued partnership development with external organizations.• Annual report summarizing the committee's accomplishments and future goals.
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Evaluating the Outcome of Implementing the Solution(s)

For both the internal and external solutions the outcomes can be evaluated by qualitative and/or quantitative methods. As highlighted in both of the above-delineated plans, there is an ongoing collection of data from campus surveys and other feedback loops such as town halls and open media forums. Ultimately, both solutions seek to make deep, pervasive change (Eckel, 2002). The data collection will help with being able to assess the effectiveness of programming and larger DEI initiatives. It is also a means by which leaders and stakeholders engage in a community of accountability, transparency, and cultural competence. Evaluation metrics will include increasing the percentage of URM faculty and instructors in senior leadership positions or increasing the amount of URM faculty and instructor promotions. URM faculty and instructor retention can also be measured. Positive campus survey results will demonstrate both the OID offices and the HBCU Faculty Development Network IDC have helped improve feelings of inclusion and belonging. Conversely negative survey results will pinpoint areas for improvement. Participation in trainings, workshops and programs can be measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. Ongoing reflection will aid the continuous improvement of OID offices on HBCU campuses and the HBCU Faculty Development Network IDC.

Implications

Practical Implications

With the frameworks of intersectionality, systems of oppression, and organizational change at the helm, this study on URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs has several practical implications - both for the academic community and broader societal context. The practical implications of the proposed solution include but are not limited a

tool for leveraging institutional policy change and improved structural supports, an expanded knowledge domain surrounding discrimination and microaggressions, a guide to understanding URM faculty recruitment and retention, a source of inspiration for pedagogical change, and a social justice bend which encourages solidarity and allyship with marginalized communities within and outside the academy and equity for URM women. Ultimately, this research ensures the narratives of URM faculty and instructors are not overlooked.

Implications for Further Research

This study extends the conversation about intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change at HBCUs. Though thorough, there are many avenues to pursue as a scholar-practitioner that would serve to further the critical work in this dissertation. Four implications for future research emerged from this analysis. This list is by no means complete.

Recommendation 1

It was increasingly difficult to seek out specific subsets of the URM minority women faculty and instructor population. For example, we know from the tables provided in Chapter I there is a dearth of American Indian and Alaska Native faculty as well as Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander professors at these institutions. A more in-depth study would consider this population, and find ways to include American Indian and Alaska Native experiences.

Recommendation 2

Incorporate the lived experiences of URM women faculty and instructors at other minority serving institutions (MSIs). These include but are not limited to Hispanic-

serving institutions (HSIs), tribal colleges and universities (TCUs), Asian-American and Pacific Islander serving institutions (AANAPISIs), predominantly black institutions (PBIs), Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTIs), and Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions (ANNHIs).

Recommendation 3

To strengthen this qualitative study, I would suggest developing an index for measuring the state of organizational climates at HBCUs. This study took a deeper dive into URM women faculty and instructor lived experiences. Because the sample was limited to 10 participants, it is not generalizable across the entire HBCU landscape. As such, a quantitative measure could validate my findings further or offer more statistically significant vantage points from which to address intersectionality, systems of oppressions, and institutional change. This could be conducted through a larger climate survey and administered to the roughly 105 HBCUs recognized by the US Department of Education.

Recommendation 4

I would also be interested in a longitudinal study of URM women faculty and instructors who are new to teaching at HBCUs following them through their professorship journeys. More specifically, looking at retention and attrition variables over time and why some URM women faculty stay at HBCUs for their entire teaching career and why others leave the academy altogether. Some insight was gleaned from the limited sample in this study, but again, it is not generalizable.

Implication for Leadership Theory and Practice

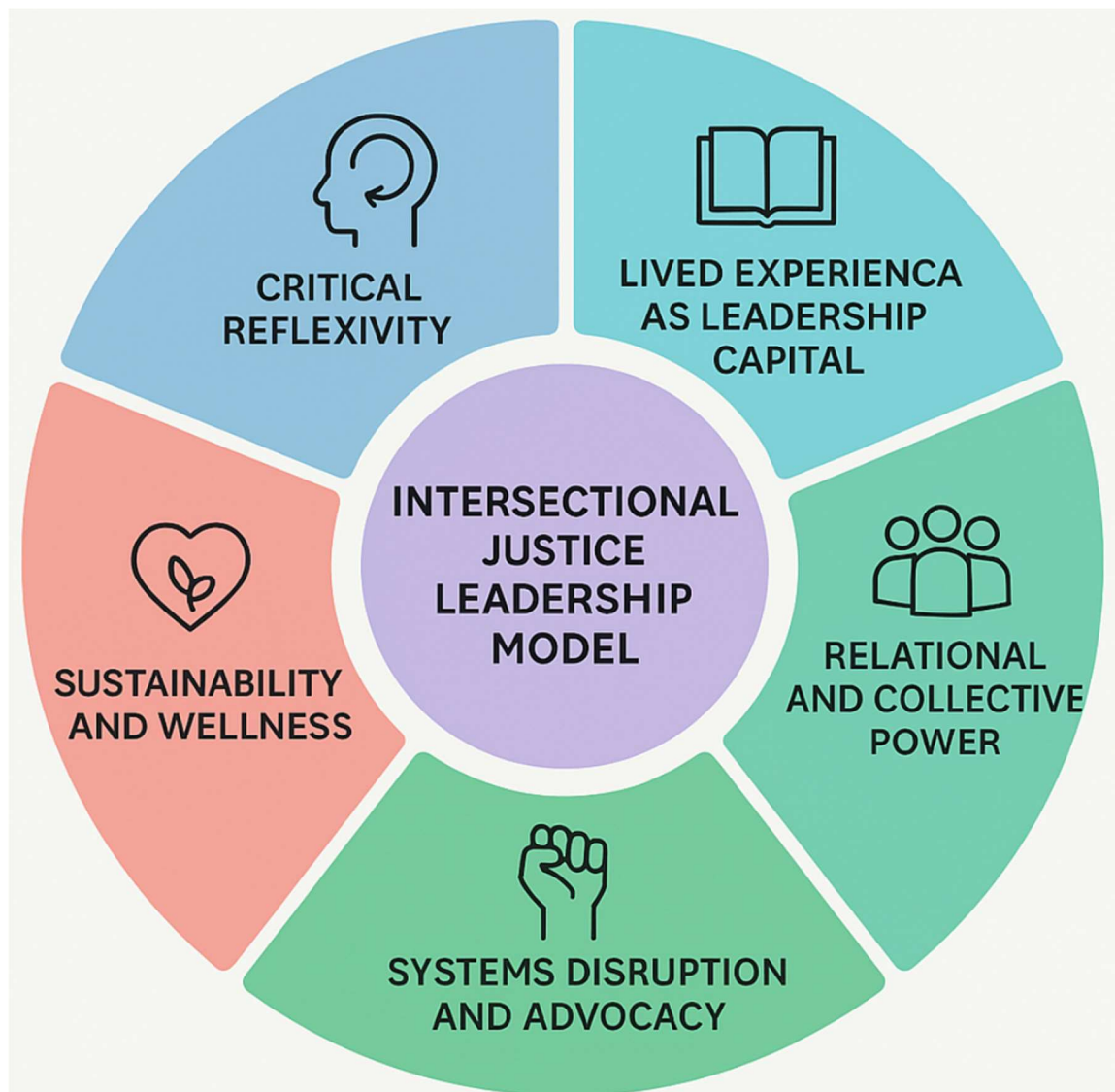
Though not explicitly addressed in the interview protocol, many URM faculty and instructors implicitly shared deep connections or opposition to certain leadership styles and philosophies. A handful of the lived experiences showed a disdain for patterns of transactional and toxic leadership. URM faculty and instructors also noted their intuitions do not lack transformational leaders or even servant leaders – they simply need to modify the institutional climate in such a way where servant leaders have the freedom to demonstrate more capability and influence. Additionally, toxic leadership can be strategically mitigated through the aforementioned proposed solution.

The implication for leadership theory and practice then becomes a question of what leadership styles are missing or fettered at HBCUs and how can their potential be recognized. What do higher education institutions need to do in order to mitigate the effects of a landscape where toxic and transactional leadership dominate the discourse and decision-making? One such vantage point is to concentrate on servant leadership. Throughout this study servant leadership has been highlighted as a major current flowing through the HBCU architecture. It is, however, either underutilized or underdeveloped. The findings of this research necessitate a more earnest dive into the nature of servant leadership at HBCUs. My proposed solution attempts to incorporate a servant leadership element into the broader HBCU sphere. It is critical, however, for HBCUs to revisit all of the tenets of Servant Leadership to see where improvements can be made.

In many ways, the study challenges and pushes the boundary of leadership theories and philosophies. It is an attempt to center marginalized voices in leadership, as service in suboptimal systems is qualitatively different for URM women. it also

challenges notions of the universal leader and top-down leadership approaches since intersectional identities compound and impact one's experience of authority, credibility, and agency. Intersectionality and systems of oppression should be foundational in expanding servant leadership into an intersectional justice model.

Figure 5 Intersectional Justice Leadership (IJL)



The IJL model is fluid – it is an ongoing process of experience, reflection, action, feedback, and adaptation. The lived experience tenet stresses leadership is fundamentally grounded in personal trust as capital in and of itself. The navigating of systems of oppression creates the necessary expertise to inform decision-making. Power then becomes relational and collective rather than isolationist, dyadic, or transactional. Leadership is built through collective effervescence, coaching, and community. Engaging in critical reflexivity requires all key styles of reflection as highlighted by Dickel (2017). Discernment and self-awareness are key in how one conceptualizes and navigates their identity, power, and positionality. Expanding on Sipe and Frick's (2015) systems thinking pillar, it is crucial for intersectional justice leadership actively challenge oppressive institutional norms, moreover mental models. Disruption also occurs through research and scholarship. An all too often forgotten element to leadership is ensuring leaders can simultaneously sustain their transformative efforts alongside their own personal adversities. Their well-being is predicated on setting boundaries, learning when to rest, and creating space for community members to take the reins. The IJL Model calls for a shift: from individual power to collective authority, from silos and hierarchy to community, from surviving and persisting in systems to transforming them.

Summary of Dissertation in Practice

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs, examining how they navigate and respond to structural and systemic barriers in higher education. The frameworks of intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change helped to inform how I analyzed URM faculty and instructors' experiences. I interviewed 10 participants who self-identified as female, as an

underrepresented ethnic or racial minority, and had the rank of assistant, associate, or adjunct, professor, or instructor. They also had to have taught at an HBCU for at least one year. Four themes emerged from the data analysis: 1) Navigating Organizational Climates, 2) Structures of Violence, 3) Leadership and Climate Conditions, and 4) Levels of Systemic Institutional Change. The themes were contextualized through the lenses of intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change. The major themes and subthemes unveil a more nuanced picture of the URM faculty and instructor experience at HBCUs. Ultimately, I attempt to answer the research question: What are the lived experiences of underrepresented, minority women faculty and instructors at HBCUs and how can their voices inform institutional transformation?

My research continues the conversation surrounding intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change in higher education. It pushes the boundaries of the current literature on HBCUs by engaging with the testimonies of Black women faculty alongside other URM, faculty and instructor voices. Though each URM, woman faculty member or instructor has had unique lived experiences with intersectionality and systems of oppression at their respective HBCUs, there are still salient points of interest when determining a course of action for institutional change. In short, HBCUs would benefit from consistent leveraging of URM faculty and instructors' voices and their push for servant leadership.

I have proposed an internal and external solution - a plan to help erect OID offices on HBCU campuses where such a structure is nonexistent and a plan for forming an IDC as part of the HBCU Faculty Development Network. By establishing OID offices on HBCU campuses, the broader community will have access to vital DEI resources,

support, and opportunities. The IDC will assist HBCUs in developing sounder mentoring programs, pathways to incentivization and reward, cultures of Servant Leadership, and communities of trust and accountability. Both solutions will require significant planning, stakeholder buy-in, subject matter expertise, funding, and reflection in order to be successful. Each plan will take roughly a year to implement with ongoing sustainability efforts. Qualitative and quantitative methods will be used to evaluate the legitimacy and impact of the HBCU OID offices and the HBCU Faculty Development Network IDC. The two solutions are one pathway toward deep, pervasive change (Eckel, 2002).

The practical implications of the study include tools for policy change, improved structural supports, and increased understanding of intersectionality and systems of oppression. It also challenges HBCUs, moreover higher education institutions, to critically assess URM faculty recruitment, retention, and attrition. Furthermore, it encourages strategic pedagogical shifts. This research, with its social justice bend, is a source of solidarity and allyship for marginalized communities, particularly URM women in academia.

Implications for future research involve addressing 1) the scarcity of data on underrepresented minority faculty at HBCUs in relation to the lived experiences of those who do not identify as Black and/or African American, 2) comparisons between HBCUs and other MSIs like Hispanic Serving Institutions and Native American Institutions, 3) the creation of an index to measure organizational climates at HBCUs, and 4) a longitudinal study of early career URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs and their professional journeys.

In regard to the implications for leadership theory and practice, my research exposes the transactional and toxic leadership undermining the organizational climate at many HBCUs. Servant leaders exist, but they are often foiled by the spoken and unspoken motivations of senior leadership. The servanthood legacy of HBCUs demands an overhauling of the practices, policies, and procedures contributing to the marginalization of underrepresented minorities. Realignment of the leadership ethos is paramount.

Final Reflection

In this particular project, I have discovered a deeper connection to my own intersectionality and relationship with systems of oppression in higher education. The participants in this study gave me hope, affirmation, and the utmost compassion. Dickel (2017) reminds us to engage with the fluid process of reflection. Without such a framework I would have been unable to bridge academics and practice rendering my work as a scholar-practitioner seemingly perfunctory. It is my responsibility as both a scholar-practitioner and underrepresented minority to use discernment and keep a critical eye toward systems of oppression. This project is one way in which I have personally and professionally engaged with the Jesuit Charisms. I will continue to be an ally for the marginalized and expand my understanding of their intersectional lived experiences.

HBCUs are, like many higher education institutions, at a unique crossroads. In order to remain relevant and influential, scholar-practitioners like me must acknowledge and honor the stories of URM women faculty and instructors. Their academic excellence, innovation, conversations, teaching, relationships, and untapped potential are exceedingly

valuable. HBCUs could benefit from internal adaptations and external support; they are not perfect, but they are invaluable.

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Appendix A

Demographic Eligibility Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in participating in the Improving Organizational Climates at HBCUs: Leveraging the Voices of Underrepresented, Minority Women Faculty and Instructors Research Study. Please provide some background information for consideration in the study.

Name:

Current Institution:

Department:

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to answer

Ethnicity

- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or American Indian
- White
- Other
- Two or more of the above races or ethnicities

Age

- Under 25
- 25 - 35
- 36 - 45
- 46 - 55
- 56 - 65
- Over 65

Educational Background (Please select the highest level completed)

- High School
- Some College - No Degree
- Associate or Technical Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate Degree

Rank

- Professor
- Adjunct professor
- Associate professor
- Assistant professor
- Instructor
- Other, please specify _____

Professorship

- Tenured
- On tenure track
- Nontenured, multiyear contract
- Nontenured, indefinite contract
- Nontenured, annual contract
- Nontenured, less than annual contract
- Without faculty status

Length of Time Teaching at Current Institution

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 6 years or more

Describe the gender and racial composition of your department:

Appendix B

Field Notes and Observations

Description	Reflective Notes
Attitude and energy	One professor was incredibly energized during the interview and espoused their social and political values in most of their answers
Attitude and energy	Two professors were physically uncomfortable talking about specific instances of discrimination but started to open up as the interviews progressed; seemed more a reaction to reliving trauma as well as witnessing it.
Repetition	Many would repeat the same story for emphasis or talk about the same recurring theme throughout their journey at their particular HBCU

Passion for Service	All participants spoke to their role as being one of service, with their purpose firmly grounded in the success of their students and mission of the university or college
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Appendix C

Recruitment Email with Informed Consent, and Participant Bill of Rights Attached

Creighton
UNIVERSITY

Creighton University Institutional Review Board
2500 California Plaza, Omaha, NE 68178 • Phone: 402-280-2126
Email: irb@creighton.edu

Date

[Participant Name]

[College or University Name]

[College or University Address]

Improving Organizational Climates at HBCUs: Leveraging the Voices of Underrepresented Minority Women Faculty and Instructors

Dear [Participant Name]:

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study about the lived experiences of underrepresented minority women faculty and instructors at HBCUs. This study is being conducted as part of an Ed.D dissertation by myself, Brittany Wideman at Creighton University. This study will help scholar-practitioners gain a better understanding of URM faculty and instructors' lived experiences with the current organizational climate at their respective HBCUS and their suggestions for institutional transformation. The aim is to develop a revamped leadership model that addresses intersectionality, systems of oppression and institutional change through a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens.

I conducted an initial scanning of HBCU websites and would like to include you in a list of potential participants for my study. At the end of this email is a link to an eligibility questionnaire. If you have any questions ahead of the initial eligibility questionnaire you are more than welcome to reply to this email or contact me at 503-312-6997.

Agreement to be contacted or a request for more information does not obligate you to participate in any study.

Please click the following [link](#) to fill out my study's eligibility questionnaire. Alternatively, you can copy and paste the following link into your web browser: <https://forms.gle/hspuzK1WT9NgUaoQ6>. Thank you again for considering this research opportunity.



Research Information Sheet

Improving Organizational Climates at HBCUs: Leveraging the Voices of Underrepresented, Minority Women Faculty and Instructors

Introduction

You have been invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this Research Information Sheet is to help you decide if you want to participate. It is up to you whether you want to take part. You should only participate if you want to. Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate after reading this letter, you can change your mind and stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this research or you decide to stop participating before the end of the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

This sheet may include words that you do not understand. Please ask the researcher to explain any words or procedures with which you are unfamiliar.

Study Summary

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of URM faculty and instructors' lived experiences with the current organizational climate at their respective HBCUS and their suggestions for institutional transformation.

You are being asked to take part in this research because you may meet the criteria as an underrepresented, minority woman faculty or instructor at any of the 107 accredited HBCUs. This study is for research purposes only. Your alternative to participating in this study is not to participate.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 45-to-60-minute one-on-one virtual interview over Zoom describing your lived experiences with intersectionality, systems of oppression, and institutional change at your respective institution.

We expect that your participation in this study will take no more than 2 hours of your time including the one-on-one interview and any follow up communication.

Risks and Benefits of Participation

This study is minimal risk research, which means that the risks to you by participating in this study are no greater than the risks you ordinarily encounter in your daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. Risks of participating in this study include emotional topics and the potential of triggering past traumas. As with participation in any research study, there may

be risks to your confidentiality and privacy because of your participation in this study. The following measures are in place to help guard against these risks: all interviews will be accessible via a zoom link with an encrypted password, interview recordings will be stored in a password protected Zoom cloud, transcriptions will be stored in a qualitative analysis software only accessible to myself. All transcriptions will be erased once data analysis is complete. Individual transcripts will only be shared with the participant who was interviewed.

There may or may not be direct benefit to you as a result of your participation in this study. This study may help researchers learn more about how to promote the advancement of underrepresented minority women faculty and instructors at HBCUs, contribute to the longevity of HBCUs and minority serving institutions as a whole, gauge the severity of failed or imperfect organization climates at HBCUs, and suggest recommendations for revamped leadership models at HBCUs with a particular focus on DEI efforts.

Compensation

Upon completion, you will be entered into a raffle to receive one of three \$25 gift cards. for your participation in this study.

What Will Happen to My Identifiable Private Information and/or Biospecimens?

Although we are asking for your institution name, department, gender, race and/or ethnicity, age, educational background, rank, professorship level, and length of time teaching it is unlikely that someone could identify you because I plan to redact personal identifying information and assign pseudonyms to both professors and their respective institutions.

The information collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Contact Information

If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact Brittany Wideman at bnw50428@creighton.edu or 503-312-6997. If you have questions about research participants' rights, contact the Creighton University Institutional Review Board (CU IRB) at 402-280-2126.

By choosing to participate in this study, I acknowledge or am aware that:

- The researcher(s) discussed the study with me and answered all my questions.
- I can contact the study team or the CU IRB using the contact information provided above if I have any questions or concerns about the study.

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.
2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.
3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.
4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.
5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.
6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.
7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.
8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research participant.
9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
 - a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.
 - b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

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Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Brittany Wideman, Creighton University

Interviewee:

I look forward to learning about your experience at (institution name). The interview today will take approximately 45 -60 minutes and will be recorded for transcription.

Description of Project: To investigate the lived experiences of URM faculty and instructors at HBCUs and the recommendations they have for institutional transformation regarding DEI climates at their respective institutions.

1. Please describe your current role at (institution name):
2. What has been your experience as a faculty member at (institution name)?
3. How do you define your own identity?
4. What have you observed of faculty experiencing discrimination at (institution name)? What has your experience been?
5. Can you reflect upon a time when you have felt included, welcomed, comfortable, and valued?
6. Can you reflect on when you have felt excluded, unwelcome, uncomfortable, or undervalued at (institution name),
7. As a minority faculty member, can you describe your relationships with your colleagues?
8. As a minority faculty member, can you describe your relationships with students?
9. What do you think are the barriers to increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion? How can these barriers be overcome?
10. What have you found to be helpful or positive in your experience as a minority faculty member?
11. If there is anything else you would like to add about your experiences or your institution that I have not asked you are welcome to expand upon this.
12. What suggestions do you have for institutional transformation?

Thank you for sharing your experience with me today. After all interviews are conducted, I will transcribe and analyze the data. If you are interested, I will share the findings with you. Thank you again for your time today.

Appendix E

Institutional Review Board Approval to Conduct Research

DATE: 29 April 2024

TO: Brittany Wideman

FROM: Social Behavioral IRB

PROTOCOL TITLE: **Improving Organizational Climates at HBCUs: Leveraging the Voices of Underrepresented, Minority Women Faculty and Instructors**

SUBMISSION #: 2004706-01

SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial Application

REVIEW METHOD: Exempt

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exempt 2iii

DETERMINATION: Exempt

Thank you for your submission. The CU IRB has determined this human subjects research study to be exempt under 45CFR46.104(d), Category 2iii. The following items were reviewed with this submission:

- Creighton University HS eForm and documents attached therein.
- Training, documentation and disclosure requirements for CU study personnel

Upon final determination of exempt status, the research team is responsible for conducting the research as stated in the exempt application reviewed by the CU IRB. Only the most recently approved study documents (consents, recruitment materials, scripts, etc.) may be used as part of this study.

Under the 2018 Common Rule, no continuing review is required. However, any modifications, adverse events, etc. to the study need to be submitted to the IRB for review.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 402-280-2126 or irb@creighton.edu. Please include your project title and number in all correspondence with this Board.