The lived experiences of Black women who completed their doctorate through a Community College Leadership Program in the United States

by

Millette King

B.A., Hillsdale College, 1989
M.Ed., Cleveland State University, 1998

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Community College Leadership
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

This hermeneutic phenomenological study was designed to understand the lived experiences of Black women who completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program. Black women were not completing doctoral degrees at the same rate as their peers. The National Center for Education Statistics (2023) states that in 2020-21, 61% of the doctorates earned by females were White females, 12% were earned by Black females, 10% earned by Hispanic females, 13% earned by Asian/Pacific Islanders and .4% American Indian/Alaska Native (NCES, 2023). The following research questions guided this study: What are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program? What factors supported Black women's completion of the Community College Leadership Program?

This study utilized the hermeneutic circle to gain insight into the lived experiences of 14 Black woman who completed a cohort model community college leadership program. Themes that emerged from the semi structured interviews, when viewed through the conceptual lens of Black Feminist Thought, included that Black women formed strong bonds with their cohort members that lasted well beyond the doctoral journey. The participants in this study were impacted by COVID during their journey both in a positive and negative way. Family illness and divorce also impacted the doctoral journey of the women interviewed. Finally, relationships with faculty, staff and peers impacted the doctoral journey of Black women in this study.

Recommendations for future research include exploring the lived experiences of other marginalized populations, conducting a qualitative study to survey all people of color that attend a community college leadership program, exploring other doctoral concentration areas and research on how cliques impact the learning environment in cohort models.

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A DISSERTATION

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Acknowledgements

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my children Demetrius Tucker Jr. and Olivia Dominique Tucker. Thank you for your support throughout my journey. Just remember, anything is possible if you want it bad enough. Persistence and dedication are the keys to success! I love you!

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Introduction

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCSE, 2023), Black women are not earning terminal degrees at the same rate as White women. According to Patterson-Stephens., Lane, and (2017), Black women experience a multitude of challenges while completing their doctoral program. The challenges include, but are not limited to, raising families, working fulltime and financing their education. In addition, Yi and Ramos (2022) state that Black women combat racism, genderism and tokenism as they seek their degree, especially in predominately White colleges. According to Roberts, T., Gutierrez, L., Grey, T., and Stanbrough, R. (2021), racism experienced by Black women is often embedded in the institutional policies, curricula and culture. Many Black women feel alone and isolated in their doctoral programs, especially at predominately white institutions (Shavers & Moore, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Black women are not completing doctoral degrees at the same rate as their peers. The National Center for Education Statistics (2023) states that in 2020-21, 61% of the doctorates earned by females were White females, 12% were earned by Black females, 10% earned by Hispanic females, 13% earned by Asian/Pacific Islanders and .4% American Indian/Alaska Native. Out of the males receiving doctoral degrees, 66% were White, 8% were Black, 9% were Hispanic, 13% were Asian/Pacific Islander and .4% were American Indian/Alaska Native (NCES, 2023). This supports Squire and McCann's findings (2018) that Black women are underrepresented in higher education settings.

According to Squire and McCann (2018), Black women have multiple identities that impact their educational journey, such as race and gender. Both identities are considered

marginalized populations in the United States of America. This marginalization of Black women provides an added layer of difficulty in completing a doctoral program. For example, Horsford, Carolan & Johnson (2019) state that Black women experiencing this type of marginalization can often feel isolated which can impact their academic success.

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of Black women who completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program.

Background of the Problem

During the 1950's, women made up one-third of people enrolled in higher education (Women In Academia Report (wiareport.com). Women attending higher education institutions and eventually seeking a degree were not a priority during the 1950's. According to Squires (2015), many women held the role of caretaker in the home at that time and completing an education was not important nor considered necessary. Additionally, Squire and McCann (2018) reported Black women often experience the historic and structural oppression that exists in this country's White male dominated society. This phenomenon is coined "double bind" by Patterson-Stephens, Lane and Vital (2017). Black women are part of two marginalized populations, being a female and Black. The oppression and marginalization experienced by Black women can impact their doctoral journey and their completion success. Yi and Ramos (2022) state that racism and genderism can impact the mental and emotional health of Black women. This may present itself as a physical ailment, depression or low self-esteem. This can contribute to Black women experiencing isolation in a setting where they may feel secluded because there are not many people that look like them as peers or faculty.

According to Yi and Ramos (2022), only 11% of faculty are Black women in the United States. This may make it difficult for Black women to see themselves in the faculty in their given program. According to Yi and Ramos (2022), Black women must develop strategies to navigate

their unique set of circumstances. Black women often wear an academic mask to cope with the oppression and marginalization (Patterson-Stephens et al., 2017). An academic mask is how a woman shows up in the academic setting to assimilate to the White middle-class norms, but they then shed the mask when outside of the academic setting. Women and specifically Black women have unique challenges that are not experienced by counterparts such as the "double bind" phenomenon. Double bind is experiencing two oppressive characteristics that you are born with, race and gender (Patterson-Stephens et al., 2017). You are unable to change either characteristic. In addition, similar to all women, they also face the challenge of balancing family obligations, full time employment and school (Nichols & Tanksley, 2004).

Mentorship is essential in the success of a doctoral program (Zeligman, Prescod and Greene, 2015). Completing a doctoral program can be a daunting task and having a mentor to guide and support students through the process is a key element for success. Nichols and Tanksley (2004) discuss how mentors can help students with understanding the unwritten rules of the institution. This part of mentorship would be key for Black women in navigating the doctoral program and the overall institution. Snyder (2014) states that mentoring for Black women cannot look like the traditional mentoring grounded in a White male framework. Snyder goes on to state that mentoring must be culturally relevant and based on a nurturing relationship. According to Snyder, this can only occur if the mentor has similar lived experiences or looks like the mentee. When a mentor is assigned that is not a woman of color, there is a risk that mentor may have implicit bias against women and Black people (Patterson-Stephens et al., 2017). If the mentor has any biases against Black people or women, the double bind that is faced by Black women may have a negative effect on the mentor/mentee relationship. This becomes a situation that may exacerbate an experience that can be oppressive and marginalized for Black women. This lack of diverse faculty can be a deterrent for Black women in doctoral programs.

Understanding the lived experiences of Black women could provide a clearer picture of why Black women are not successful or stop out of doctoral programs (Gordon, 1999; Snyder, 2014). Studies that address Black women in doctoral programs do not address the lived experiences of Black women in those programs. For example, several studies identified studying the lived experiences of Black women as another area of research needed (Snyder, 2014; Gordon, 1999). Studies have shown that there is not a lot of research available that looks at how the intersection of race and gender affects Black women in the quest for higher education. Many studies have focused on Black women from a problem perspective such as being a single parent or on welfare (Gordon, 1999). The gap that will be addressed by this research explores the lived experiences of Black women during their doctoral program journey.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of Black women who completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program.

Research Questions

The following research questions (RQ) will guide this study:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program?

RQ2: What factors supported Black women's completion of the Community College Leadership Program?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework selected for this study is Black Feminist Thought (BFT) which evolved from Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT posits that racism is not individual acts taken, but rather are "historical, systemic and ideological manifestations of power to serve, maintain and protect White privilege" (Writer, 2008, p. 2). Due to the oppressed nature of Black

women identified in the research, BFT explores bringing awareness and a voice to a population that experiences being oppressed by their gender and race (Collins, 2022). There are six unique tenets that BFT is built on that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. The tenets of BFT will be the lens that will be utilized to inform the research and interviews questions and to guide the identification of themes when analyzing the data.

Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT posits that racism is embedded into the framework of society (Cowley, 2022). Closson (2010) states that CRT contests that their framework is based on the unique perspective that people of color have vs the experiences of the White perspective as the standard. “Many practitioners believe racism is permanent and will never end” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998, p. 470). There are five tenets that guides CRT that will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Methodology

This study was a qualitative study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that qualitative research allows the researcher to explore and understand individual or groups thoughts and feelings around a phenomenon. The researcher took a phenomenological approach to this study. Phenomenological research allowed the researcher to gather information directly from individuals that have experienced a certain phenomenon (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007).

For the purpose of this study, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach was utilized. This approach provided the opportunity for Black women to share their lived experiences during the completion of their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program first hand. The focus will be in the interpretation of the data and not the description.

Alignment Table

The alignment table shows the alignment between the research questions, interview questions, and conceptual and conceptual frameworks. The alignment table is located in Appendix A.

Delimitations and Assumptions

Delimitations are boundaries that are placed on the study by the researcher (Peoples, 2021). A delimitation of this study is that the research participants will be from only cohort model Community College Leadership Programs. Another delimitation is that the participants will all self-identify as a Black woman. Lastly, there is a small sample population that meet the criteria for this study. An assumption is that all participants will provide accurate and true statements.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to gain insights into the lived experiences from Black women who completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program. This study will also provide insight into the experiences of Black women that may be beneficial to the Community College Leadership Programs, especially those with cohort models. Additionally, the research will fill a significant gap in the research with hope of adding to the body of literature.

Definition of Terms

Black Feminist Thought: BFT is a social theory that provides Black women with the strategies that are needed to address their intersecting oppressions that will end social and economic injustices (Collins, 1989).

Code-Switching: The switching from the linguistic system of one language or dialect to that of another (Merrian-Webster Dictionary, 2025).

Cohort Model- A structure by which students go through the doctoral process together ((Leland, Firestone, Perry, & McKeon, 2020; Reynolds & Herbert, 1998).

Community College Leadership Program- A program designed to prepare future community college leaders with practical leadership skills (k-state.edu, 2023).

Critical Race Theory: CRT is the "historical, systemic and ideological manifestations of power to serve, maintain and protect White privilege" (Writer, 2008, pp 2).

Marginalized- When a group of individuals are denied equitable access to areas of society (Masterclass, 2022).

Mentor- A trusted counselor or guide (Merrian-Webster Dictionary, 2024).

Oppression- The use of power over others and unfair or unjust treatment of an individual or group of people. (Squire & McCann, 2018).

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the statement of the problem and reviewed the background of the problem. The purpose of the study was discussed. Additionally, the research questions and BFT as the conceptual framework was explored. The methodology, delimitations and assumptions, significance of the study was addressed. Finally, definitions of terms were provided.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provided the opportunity to set the stage for the research study. Chapter 2 will be the literature review that provides the opportunity to research and analyze the literature on the topic of the study. Chapter 3 will be the methodology section. The type of methodology that was used to collect and analyze the data and how participants were chosen for the study will be examined. Chapter 4 will provide the analysis and presentation of the research findings. Chapter 5 will provide the conclusion, implications and recommendations section that concludes the study.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Black women have a unique vantage point in the world. They experience two oppressed identities and according to Patterson-Stephens et al. (2017), institutions of higher education were not established to address these issues. The literature review provides context to the study by examining primary sources, dissertations, scholarly journals, books, and Google Scholar. The themes that will be discussed in the literature review include, Black women in higher education, Latina women in higher education, Asian women in higher education, Native American women in higher education, the cohort model of education and, mentoring in higher education, leadership frameworks and the conceptual frameworks. The examination of these areas will provide a deeper understanding of the topic of the study and identify gaps in the research.

Black Women in Higher Education

According to Collins (2000), most Black women came to the United States as slaves in an oppressed state. “The history of Blacks and women in higher education is one of our nation’s most shameful stories. It is a story of a nation’s struggle to overcome overt and institutional racism and sexism (Jenifer, 2005, p. 5) Prior to the Civil War, Blacks were not allowed to obtain an education. This placed Blacks at a deficit once they were allowed to partake in the educational system. In addition, Collins (2000) stated that Black women were relegated to underfunded schools. There were few public high schools in the south prior to World War II (Perkins, 2015). This also varied based on the region where peopled lived in the south. Women in the north had access to educational opportunities before women in the south (Perkins, 2015). Women in the United States demonstrated their eagerness to obtain higher education through the obtainment of college degrees. In 1920, 18.9% of bachelor’s degrees awarded by Historically Black Colleges

and Universities were granted to women and that grew to 50% by 1950 (Crocco and Waite, 2007). According to Mann (1972), and Thomas and Jackson (2007) Mary Jane Patterson was the first Black woman to graduate in the United States from Oberlin College in 1862 with a Bachelor's degree. In addition, Baptiste and Harris (2014) indicated that Sadie Mossell Alexander, Georgianna Simpson, and Eva Beatrice Dykes were the first Black women to earn a doctorate in the United States in 1921. Most women during this time period were getting degrees in education in order to teach other Blacks in K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. Sixty percent of doctorate degrees in the early 1900's was awarded to men and 40% to women (Crocco & Waite, 2007). Mann (1972) states that outside of the field of education during the same time period 16% of doctorates were awarded to women.

According to Thomas and Jackson (2007) there were four colleges established specifically to educate Black women: Spelman in 1881, Bennett College in 1873, Tillotson College in 1877 and Barber-Scotia College in 1867. Perkins (2015) states that Bennett College was initially established as a coeducational institution, however, it became a women's college in 1926. All four institutions were founded and maintained by a variety of religious institutions and organizations (Thomas & Jackson, 2007).

The Plessy vs Ferguson ruling in 1896 brought forth the doctrine of separate but equal which was the Supreme Court's interpretation of the 14th Amendment (Groves, 1951). This meant that Black students were afforded the opportunity of an education, however it had to be provided separately from White students. According to Thomas and Jackson (2007), many Black public schools lost funding and were forced to close after the Plessy v Ferguson ruling. This had an impact on the increasing number of Black s obtaining an education post-Civil War. According to Walkington (2017), The Plessy vs Ferguson ruling placed Black women in Black schools and calls it the "genesis of sexism" (p.52). The Brown vs Board of Education decision in

1954 found that the Plessy vs Ferguson ruling was in violation of the 14th amendment and desegregated schools (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). This became a turning point for enrollment of Black women in institutions of higher learning (Jenifer, 2005).

According to Collins (2022), Black women experience higher education through a unique lens. Gender oppression and racism is embedded in most institutions of higher learning (Thompson, 2022). Collins (2000) as cited in Thompson (2022) states, "their lives are inextricably linked to a history of racist and sexist oppression that institutionalizes the devaluation of Black women as it idealizes their White counterparts" (p. 56). Horsford, S., Carolan, M., and Johnson, D. (2019) describes this phenomenon as institutional racism. Squire and McCann (2018), suggest that Black women experience racism and sexism because society is built on White male norms. These norms have been perpetuated throughout the years. Ellis (2001) also found that Black women in higher education experience both gender and racial oppression. In a study conducted by Zeligman et al. (2015), participants indicated that they experienced racism throughout their doctoral journey. The participants of this study were five Black women that were part of the counselor education doctoral program.

Dortch (2016) describes the intersection of being Black and a woman as a double bind. Black women are the only people that experience double oppression because of their gender at birth and the color of their skin. Squire and McCann (2018), refer to this phenomenon as multiple jeopardy. Patterson-Stephens et al. (2017) describe double bind as a Black woman experiencing oppression for being a woman and a person of color. According to Patterson-Stephens et al. (2017), institutions of higher learning are not prepared to support Black women's racialized and gendered identities. What results is the suppression of these identities in order to coexist (Patterson-Stephens, 2017).

According to Squire and McCann (2018), Black women often feel isolated in higher education and in particular doctoral programs where the number of Black women is so few. Snyder (2014) suggests that this isolation is due to the "patriarchal nature of academia and the intersections of race and gender discrimination" (p. 16). This isolation is described as the "outsider within" paradigm by Collins (1989, p.16). Black women may be physically represented however, their presence is not represented in the infrastructure of a predominantly White institution (Patterson-Stephens & Hernandez, 2018). Snyder (2014) describes this as becoming invisible by wearing an academic mask. This mask allows Black women to cover up their true identity while in academic settings and then in private, unveil their true self. This can be exhausting for Black women both physically and mentally.

Yi and Ramos (2021) suggest that Black women's peers and faculty members were tremendous sources of supports to one another. Developing support systems is essential in persisting in a doctoral program for any student. Support systems become crucial for Black women in doctoral programs. Horsford et al. (2019), found that it was difficult for most Black women to develop peer relationships because most of their peers did not have the same lived experiences. Squire and McCann (2018) states that many peers of Black women invalidate them in a classroom setting by not valuing and acknowledging their contributions. However, in like-race networks, the support was vital to the mental well-being of Black women. Established peer bonds among Black women increased the motivation and drive for them to finish their doctoral program (Dortch, 2016). This could come in the form of affinity groups or study groups.

Mentoring has been identified as a key factor in the retention and success of Black women in doctoral programs (Aryan & Guzman, 2010). Patterson-Stephen et al. (2017) state that mentoring is critical in the persistence and success of graduate students. Black women report less access to mentoring or a mentor that looked like them or had the same lived experiences

(Horsford et al., 2019). Patterson-Stephens et al. (2017) indicated that many of the Black women in their study did not have direct access to mentors. Mentors came in the form of family members, individuals found on social media, or an individual from a professional organization. Black mentees that have Black mentors served as advocates and provided the emotional support needed to stay engaged in courses. Positive mentoring relationships can also be linked with an increase in self-confidence of Black women (Zeligman et al., 2015). These mentors could also help the student navigate the unwritten rules of the institution (Nichols & Tanksley, 2004). Mentors in doctoral programs for Black women are lacking according to Dortch (2016). Mentoring needs to look different to address the needs of Black women. Most institutions' mentoring program are grounded in White, male frameworks (Snyder, 2014).

According to Williams (2000), on campus social and academic supports, peer interaction and social integration are institutional supports that have been linked to academic achievement for minority graduate students. Willams' (2000) study set out to ascertain the minority students' perception of institutional supports during their doctoral journey. The study sample consisted of 425 minority doctoral students and recent Ph.D. graduates (Williams, 2000). A 65-item survey was utilized to assess students' perceptions of social supports. The findings indicated that minority doctoral students perceived the academic environment and faculty advisors as the greatest source of support.

A barrier that exists in the path of Black women obtaining a doctorate is financial support. Patterson-Stephens et al. (2017) suggest that institutions of higher education can do a better job providing financial support. Many Black women rely on their own finances to pay for their doctoral program which often leaves them in severe debt (Nichols & Tanksley, 2004). Lack of financial support often leads to Black women not completing their degree (Aryan & Guzman, 2010).

Latina Women in Higher Education

Culture is heavily valued by the Latinx population. Latin culture is steeped in tradition, church, and the commitment to family (Louque & Garcia, 2000). This phenomenon describes how Latinas obtaining higher education are faced with cultural commitments such as caring for their immediate and extended family, language brokering and financial support (Espinoza, 2010). Espinoza (2010) identifies this phenomenon as the "good daughter dilemma." Traditional gender roles are prevalent in the Latin culture (Gutierrez, Gonzalez & Seshadri, 2022). Familismo as described by Ramos and Torres-Fernandez (2020) is the cultural value of family first. Both Louque and Garcia (2000) and Ramos and Torres-Fernandez (2020) indicate that familismo is a positive support for Latina women seeking higher education. Although the Latina woman may have to fill multiple roles, the support of her family ultimately helps her complete her degree. Gutierrez et al. (2022), describes familismo as sacrificing for the family. Espino (2016) describes the navigation of Latina women between family, cultural traditions, gender, social class and academia as navigating the borderlands. All of the borders of their identities touch and in some instances cross over one another.

Latinas face isolation in doctoral programs. This is due to the small number of Latinas that are enrolled in doctoral programs (Gonzalez, 2017). Berg (2016) states that 36% of the doctoral students interviewed indicated that they felt isolated in their doctoral program. Gutierrez et al., (2022) indicates that typically there is one Latina in a doctoral program. According to Gutierrez et al., (2022), this sense of loneliness impacts the emotional stability of Latina women in doctoral programs. Many times, this pushes Latina women to seek counseling to assist with coping with the isolation (Ramos & Torres-Fernandez, 2020). According to Villarreal and Gonzales (2021), despite the increase in the number of Latina(o) students that are enrolling in colleges across the country, the number of Latina(o) in leadership roles needs to be addressed.

According to Ramos and Torres-Hernandez (2020), spaces where there was a sense of belonging were not readily available to Latina women. Latinas felt that their institution was a place that was created to keep them out. Gutierrez et al., 2022 discusses the microaggressions that Latina women felt at their institutions. These sometimes small, covert signs of discrimination fueled the feeling of not belonging at their institution or in their doctoral program. According to Duran (2016), Latinas did well in creating community on predominately White institutions to alleviate the sense of isolation and lack of the sense of belonging. Testimonios or communal ways of support were utilized by Latina women to create that sense of belonging (Duran, 2016). This could be in writing that was shared or the sharing of your personal voice with others.

According to Santa-Ramirez (2022), Latina doctoral students do not have equal access to faculty mentorship. According to Duran (2016), mentorship is essential in the success of Black women in higher education. Some Latina students found it necessary to provide mentoring among themselves when they could not find a faculty member as a mentor (Ramos & Torres-Hernandez, 2020). Berg (2016) states that the matching of a mentor and a mentee is very critical. In the mentoring relationship, there needs to be a commonality that supports a strong bond. With Black women those commonalities range from gender, race, area of student, and lived experiences (Berg, 2016).

Asian Women in Higher Education

Research about Asian Pacific Americans is often missing or misrepresented in education research although they are the third largest minority group in the United States ((Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004). According to Vu (2022) Asian American women were extremely committed to completing their degrees. Their culture placed a high expectation on them to seek higher education (Vu, 2022). Asian American women faced “racism, bullying, and

discrimination" during their doctoral journey. (Vu, 2022, p12) Persistence and cultural traditions were determined to be a huge factor in the academic success of Asian Americans according to Vu (2022). Cultural values and the support role it holds for Asian Americans is similar to what was identified by the Latinx population.

According to Nguyen (2014), the Model Minority Myth suggest that all Asian Americans can excel in academics. This myth is not accurate. Many Asian Americans grew up believing this myth because it was ingrained in them throughout their academic career. According to Nguyen (2014), what was discovered is that the data used to perpetuate this myth was often aggregated data. It did not consider the diversity of Asian Americans, generational differences or that some Asian groups were left out of the data collection process. Nguyen (2014) states that the Model Minority Myth pitted Asian Americans against other students of color. Teranishi's et al, (2004) study focused on determining if Asian Pacific Americans students were the model minority at their institution of post-secondary education. Through survey information collected by a research firm in California, it was discovered by Teranishi et al. (2004) that there were barriers to Asian American's enrollment in post-secondary education such as socioeconomic status and distance from home. This study did not look at data by gender and the type of secondary education sought was also not reported. Assalone & Fann (2017) states that Asian American students are often overlooked on campus because the model minority myth has the college community believing that they did not need assistance or support. Castro (2018) also describes the invisible and model minority stereotypes. However, Castro's (2018) study focused on understanding the lived experiences of Asian American female doctoral students through their identities of race, gender and the field of science. The results of the study suggest that family dynamics and the campus environment significantly affected the shaping of the participant's identities (Castro, 2018). Gender and racial stereotypes did have a negative impact on Asian American doctoral students in

Castro's (2018) study; however, the students persisted through the program. The Asian American female students found that working in separate labs, seeking counseling or joining a support group aided them in combatting the toxic environment they were experiencing during their doctoral program (Castro, 2018).

Leigh, Pak and Phuong (2021) compare and contrasts leadership and activist roles of Asian American women doctoral students. In this study, intersectionality was used as the conceptual framework, which is rooted in BFT (Leigh et al, 2021). Intersectionality recognizes the interlocking systems of oppressions such as, sexism, racism, classism and ableism (Leigh et al., 2021). This is similar to BFT which focuses on the intersection of race and gender (Collins, 1989). Carmill (2022) also utilized the conceptual lens of intersectionality to explore Asian American and Pacific Islander women in a science based doctoral program. Carmill's (2022) study attributed strong mentorship as a significant factor in the success of the Asian women doctoral students.

Native American Women in Education

According to Blair (2015), the number of Native American doctoral students has not increased over the past 20 years. On the contrary, Shotton (2018) states that the number of doctoral degrees obtained by Native Americans has increased by 19% between 2003 and 2013. Blair (2015) found that there were individual and institutional factors that impeded Native American's enrollment in doctoral programs such as, social isolation, financial stressors, racism and access to indigenous faculty and mentoring. These factors are reminiscent of factors identified by Black, Latina and Asian women attending doctoral programs discussed earlier in this chapter. According to Dvorakova (2014), Native Americans remain underrepresented in the highest levels of education. Dvorakova (2014) explores the phenomenon of minority students living in two worlds as they navigate higher education and fitting into mainstream academia.

What was discovered is that the Native American participants learned to straddle both worlds (Dvorakova, 2014). The participants chose not to assimilate into the mainstream culture because their culture meant so much to them. This action was not a barrier but was a badge of honor that they wore on behalf of their tribe (Dvorakova, 2014). According to Shotton (2018), Native Americans view education as a vehicle to give back to their Native communities. This factor impacts and drives the persistence of Native American students through their graduate studies. The gap in the research that was identified by Shotton (2018) is the lack of research on Native American women obtaining their doctoral degree.

Cohort Model in Doctoral Programs

According to Leland, Firestone, Perry, and McKeon, (2020), the cohort model has both strengths and weaknesses for both students and faculty members. The cohort model is structured in a way that students go through the doctoral process together (Leland et al., 2020; Reynolds & Herbert, 1998). The cohort model can be adapted to meet the needs of the students and faculty in each cohort (Lange, Pillay, & Chikoko, 2011). Having this flexibility would allow faculty to adapt the assignments or discussion to meet the needs of the diverse group of students in the cohort. According to Horn (2001) educational leadership programs either create cohort models to benefit the administration or to provide a social environment for students to interact through the educational process. One of the strengths of the cohort model is that it provides the opportunity for students to build close relationships and develop collaboration skills (Leland et al., 2020). The cohort model supports the intellectual growth through learning in a collaborative environment (Lange et al., 2011). One of the weaknesses of the cohort model is group dynamics. Through the close-knit bonds that are made, often smaller groups are developed that isolate others in the large group (Leland et al., 2020). Leland et al. (2020) also states that opportunities for independent critical thinking may be stymied in group learning models.

Brooks (1998) states that cohort models provide students with tools that enhance their learning such as the feeling of being included and enhanced ability to collaborate with others. According to Brooks (1998) the most significant influence that the cohort model had on its participants was the respect for one another. This outcome is similar to building close relationships as identified in the Leland et al. (2020) study. Pemberton and Akkary (2010) state that the cohort model has been implemented in educational leadership training programs to meet the changing needs of the students. According to Pemberton and Akkary (2010) students experienced better academic performance, support and collaboration in the cohort model. Pemberton and Akkary (2010) also acknowledged several drawbacks with cohort models such as the potential influence of personal issues on the group dynamics, and strained relationships between cohort members and non-cohort members. Pemberton and Akkary's (2010) study was a qualitative case study that focused on seven women who completed their doctoral degree in educational leadership. Out of the seven women, four were white with the other three identifying as Black women. The researchers utilized a case study approach that applied an informal interview structure to allow the women to share their life history around suggested themes (Pemberton & Akkary, 2010). The two themes that emerged from the study were the insight into the lived experiences of the women and the bond that the cohort formed.

Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, and Norris (2000), through their study examined the cohort model to determine what the benefits of the model were and some of the difficulties that were experienced in the model. This study focused on the faculty perspective of the cohort model. One of the assets that was noted is that the students benefited from the cohort model academically and interpersonally (Barnett et al., 2000). A benefit for faculty was the ability to predict course sequences which allowed faculty to be better prepared to teach. Barriers that were noted by

Barnett et al. (2000) were that the rigid delivery structure of the program, particularly the course sequencing. This appeared to be a barrier for both faculty and students alike.

McPhail, Robinson and Scott (2008) completed a study focusing on how doctoral students in a cohort model perceived their experiences through the doctoral journey. This study was completed at Morgan State University, which is a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). The results of the study suggest that the cohort learning experience supported an increased feeling of accomplishment and that leadership competencies were developed among the cohort learners. McPhail et al. (2008) indicated that the community college leadership program at Morgan State University based their curriculum on the AACC's leadership competencies (AACC, 2022).

Mentoring

According to Mendez-Morse (2004), traditional mentoring is defined as "a person in a position of power that can teach, encourage, and facilitate the advancement of a protégé" (p.562). Santa-Ramirez (2022) defines mentoring as "a dyadic relationship where a senior member guides a junior member through formal and informal professional development experiences to help expand professional, psychosocial, political, academic, and resource gathering skills." (p. 124). Buck, Mast, Latta, & Kaftan, (2009) state that the traditional mentoring approach is too authoritative for the doctoral student journey. The thought of the mentor holding power over the mentee could be perceived as another form of oppression. Johnson, Long, Smith & Griffin (2023) espouses that mentoring relationships should be a reciprocal experience and one that develops over time.

Mentoring for Black women in doctoral programs can be essential in the persistence to completion trajectory. Duran (2016), states that for Latinas on predominately White campuses, mentoring helped establish a sense of community where many Latinas felt isolated. Santa-

Ramirez (2022) suggests that successful mentoring relationships are paramount in the success of Latinx doctoral students. According to Santa-Ramirez (2022), Latinx students believe that it is important to develop a relationship with a faculty of color that has similar lived experiences. Zeligman et al. (2015), espouses that the mentoring relationship has a significant impact on woman of color both professionally and personally during their doctoral journey. Brill, Balcanoff, Land, Gogarty, and Turner (2014) completed a literature review on best practices in mentoring in doctoral programs. They report that female doctoral students seek mentoring relationships more than their male counterparts (Brill et al., 2014).

On the contrary, Patterson-Stephens et al. (2017), states that mentoring experiences varied for doctoral students in their study of Black women who are seeking a doctorate degree. They discovered that some of the participants identified their mentor as a family member that supported them through their journey. Professional associations were another place where participants found mentors (Patterson-Stephens et al., 2017). Participants in the study also identified peer mentoring through social media platforms as very supportive through their doctoral journey (Patterson-Stephens et al., 2017). Mentoring has been proven to support individuals through their doctoral program. According to Zeligman et al. (2015), there is an underrepresentation of women that have similar lived experiences with Black women. It is apparent that there are not enough faculty that have the same lived experiences to support Black women.

Understanding the lived experiences of Black women could provide a clearer picture of why Black women are not successful or stop out of doctoral programs (Snyder, 2014; Gordon, 1999). There are studies that address Black women in doctoral programs, however, there are few that allow them to share their lived experiences and how that impacted them as Black women in doctoral programs. This researcher will advance the research by gathering data on the lived

experiences directly from Black women. A previous study by McPhail, Robinson, and Scott (2008) focused on both male and female graduate students and through a survey and focus groups. This researcher hopes that this more focused approach will provide more insightful data that will inform the field of community college leadership.

Several studies listed studying the lived experiences of Black women as another area of research needed (Snyder, 2014; Gordon 1999). The gap that will be addressed by this research is exploring the lived experiences of Black women during their doctoral program journey.

Leadership Frameworks

There are many scholars that have provided frameworks that address the qualities that great leaders should possess or aspire to develop.

> As our society becomes increasingly racially and culturally diverse, there is a need for leaders who can build consensus and egalitarian community respectful of difference, rather than for managers who are grounded in industrial-age theory and practice that promote the control and elimination of difference. (Horn, 2001, p 314).

The leaders highlighted in this study have demonstrated building respect and honoring the individuality of people.

The AACC has developed competencies for developing leaders in the community college setting. According to McNair, Duree, and Ebbers (2011), many community colleges utilize the AACC competencies as a guide in the development of their leaders. In 2022, AACC introduced a new version of their leadership competencies. These competencies take into consideration the diversity in the leaders that will be emerging as new leaders in the community college setting.

The 2022 leadership competencies have expanded to become inclusive driven competencies that were derived from two major events that had a significant impact on the world, the global pandemic and the social unrest and killing of people of color (AACC, 2022).

Diversity, equity and inclusion is a competency that is explicitly addressed in the 2022 version of the AACC competencies that was not explicitly or implicitly addressed in the 2018 version. The 2022 AACC competencies goes as far as creating competencies such as ageism and tokenism (AACC, 2022). This is a big step in identifying effective, qualified and caring future leaders of community colleges across the country.

Schein (2010) believes that learning leaders must be able to maintain culture in an organization and also embrace and lead through change. According to Schein (2010), a good culture, once established at an institution, is something that is embedded and embraced in everything that is done at the institution. However, change is inevitable and a leader needs to be able to stay ahead of the change and build trust within the institution to follow the leader through that change. Leaders must always be learning (Schein, 2010). A leader must be willing to acknowledge that they do not know everything and be willing to learn from others. Schein (2010) states that leaders need to "be able to analyze the culture in sufficient detail to know which cultural assumptions can aid and which ones will hinder the fulfillment of the organization's mission and have the intervention skills to make desired changes happen" (p. 375).

Schein has ten learning leader dimensions that leaders aspire to in their leadership capacities.

Table 2.1

Schein's Learning Leader Dimensions

Dimensions	Dimensions
Proactivity	Positive orientation toward the future
Commitment to learning to learn	Commitment to full and open task relevant communication
Positive assumptions about human nature	Commitment to cultural diversity
Belief that the environment can be managed	Commitment to systemic thinking
Commitment to truth through pragmatism and inquiry	Belief that cultural analysis is a valid set of lenses for understanding and improving the world

Schein's (2010) dimension of proactivity describes how learning leaders are actively engaging in problem solving and that this action increases the confidence of that leader. Schein's dimension of commitment to learning to learn labels how leaders are learning about both internal and external changes that may affect their institution. Schein also states that the key to learning is obtaining feedback and taking the time to reflect. Positive assumptions about human nature is Schein's dimension that discusses how a leader must believe that human nature is good and or flexible. Ultimately, humans all have the ability to learn if provided the resources to do so. The fourth dimension that Schein discusses is the belief that the environment can be managed. A leader must be aware that there will be turbulent times, however the management of that organization is possible through those turbulent times. Commitment to truth through pragmatism and inquiry discusses how leaders have to acknowledge that they do not know everything, but are willing to learn from others individuals internally and externally. Schein states that there

must be a positive orientation toward the future. Leaders must be able to see and think into the future in order to foresee changes that will need to occur for the betterment of the organization. The seventh dimension is the commitment to full and open task-relevant communication. Communication is key and essential in the culture of any organization. Leaders must provide the right amount of communication for everyone to efficiently complete their required tasks. However, feedback is crucial and genuine feedback can only happen when there is trust built between leaders and others in the organization. Schein's next dimension is the commitment to cultural diversity. Leaders should embrace and stimulate diversity within their organization. A multicultural group must value one another and be willing to learn from one another to optimize the diversity of that organization. Schein states that there needs to be a commitment to systemic thinking. He states that a leader cannot think linearly. The leader must think systemically and look at a variety of causes that that may be affecting an issue the leader is addressing. Lastly, Schein (2010) states the belief that cultural analysis is a valid set of lenses for understanding and improving the world. In an organization it must be ingrained that leaders and members analyze and reflect on their own culture in order for the organization to evolve. Schein provides these ten dimensions as a lens for leaders to view themselves as a leader and use them as a guidepost to evolve as a leader.

There are other great leaders in the community college sector that have addressed leadership qualities in their writings. Roueche, Richardson, Neal, and Roueche (2008) describe leadership qualities that have been demonstrated in some of the top leaders to lead their institution through innovative transformations. Some of those qualities include taking risks and to "celebrate success and learn from failures" (Roueche et al., 2008, p. 246). A transformational leader will be able to turn a threat into motivation and have a vison for your community college that demonstrates where the organization is going in the future (Roueche, et al., 2008). Integrity

is another competency or trait of an effective leader. Leading from a place of honesty and transparency is imperative in a leadership role (Roueche et al., 2008). “Relationships are a necessity within creative community colleges” (Roueche et al., 2008, p. 251). Relationships are key in getting buy in from the community college’s external and internal stakeholders. Buy in from your stakeholders will be the only way that an institution will be able to live out the vision and mission of the institution.

Mathis and Roueche (2019) also describe the traits of a transformative leader. Because change is inevitable, leaders must be flexible and innovative to address the needs of the institution (Mathis & Roueche, 2019). A transformative leader builds their leadership from within (Mathis & Roueche, 2019). The culture that is built can be easily transferred to a great leader that was developed from within. According to Mathis and Roueche (2019) transformative leaders surround themselves with subject matter experts. A transformative leader acknowledges that they do not know everything, however they surround themselves with individuals who are knowledgeable in a specific area, or the leader makes the effort to learn more about the subject matter. There is a similarity between Schein (2010) and Mathis and Roueche (2019) where both indicate that a great leader would possess the quality of remaining a learner as a leader. Another trait that is mirrored in both Schein (2010) and Mathis and Roueche (2019) is the ability to lead through change, which may be the hardest trait to master as a leader.

Boggs (2003) indicated that there are essential leadership skills required in a great community college leader; model integrity and honesty, have high ethical standards, be open to new ideas and consider equitable practices. Boggs’ perspective on leadership qualities mirrors that of Roueche and Mathis (2019). Boggs’ insight into the consideration of equitable practices comes decades before the AACC (2022) highlights equity and inclusion as a competency of an aspiring leader.

Yukl (2013) describes a variety of leadership styles, however, he provides a list of behaviors based on being task-oriented, relations-oriented, and change-oriented that transcend all leadership styles. Yukl describes some of a leader's task-oriented behaviors such as delegation, addressing items immediately if it will interrupt the workflow, and setting goals and expectations. Some of Yukl's relations-oriented behaviors are socializing to build relations, consult with others on decision making, and empowering others. Lastly, Yukl (2013) describes change-oriented leader behaviors such as, innovation, celebrating the implementation of change, monitoring possible threats and opportunities.

There are many similarities and differences in the leadership traits highlighted in this study. The biggest similarity is that of relationship building. Both versions of the AACC (2018 & 2022) leadership competencies discuss building teams. Roueche et al. (2008), indicated that relationships are imperative and Yukl (2013) provides leaders with a list of relations-based behaviors. The biggest difference is that diversity and inclusion has been recently added to the new AACC leadership competencies. Understanding the various competencies that have been identified and studied will assist this researcher in understanding how well the study participants have been prepared for community college leadership at their respective institution. Understanding leadership competencies will assist the researcher in identifying themes that emerge from the interviews with participants.

Conceptual Framework

This section will address the conceptual framework that will be utilized to inform this study. The conceptual framework is Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 1989). This framework will inform the research questions and the lens with which we view the study results.

Black Feminist Thought

According to Collins (1989), Black Feminist Thought (BFT) is based on the reality that Black women are faced with two oppressed identities that are interlocked. According to Crumb et al. (2020), the intersection of race and gender for Black women are bound together and cannot be separated. This is unique to Black women, as well as other minority (Latina, Asian, Chicana, and Native American) women who face similar challenges. BFT asserts that: new knowledge is created though the unique lived experiences of Black women; Black women have multiple shared and linked experiences that are unique to them; diverse social identities impact how Black women experience the world (Collins, 2022). Collins (1989) also describes BFT as the reality that is experienced by the oppressed group that may be different than that of the dominant group. The interpretation of that reality by the oppressed may be different than that of the dominant group. What remains is that the values, norms and thoughts that are perpetuated are those of the dominant group. The thoughts, values and norms experienced by the oppressed group remains unrealized. BFT believes that these voices have value and should be heard. Patterson-Stephens and Hernandez (2018) describes BFT as a way that Black women can make meaning of their lived experiences. Crumb et al. (2020), espouses that BFT allow us to study the "social and cultural capital" gathered from the unique perspective of Black women (p. 217).

BFT asserts that Black women occupy marginalized spaces in society (Patterson-Stephens et al. (2017). The marginalized spaces are at the intersection of being Black and being a woman. BFT helps society to better understand the bias faced by Black women. Grant (2021) suggests that Black women have been gaslit which causes them to question their worth and place in society. According to Grant (2021), gaslighting can be described as "a set of manipulation attempts that pressure someone to question the validity of their perceptions" (p., 940).

There are six BFT tenets that will serve as the framework for this study. The first tenet is attending to distinctive cultural group consciousness (West, 2020). This provides a unique worldview that comes from the intersecting oppressions that are experienced by Black women. No other group has two oppressed identities. According to West (2020) these experiences that are of an oppressive nature significantly impacts how Black women view the world. The second tenet is group individuality which states that not all Black women experience the oppressive experiences the same way (West, 2020). According to Collins (2020), although Black women experience the same oppressive experiences, their responses are very diverse. These differences could be rooted in era, age, social class, sexual orientation, skin color or ethnicity that is experienced by Black women (Collins, 2000). According to West (2020), Black women are individuals that perceive, interpret and respond to these oppressive experiences differently. The third tenant is interdependence of thought and action which asserts that Black women experiences as a group gets met with group knowledge which can cause resistance. A Black women's alternative approach that was created as a result of oppression is often met by the dominant group with resistance. The fourth tenet is the role of Black women intellectuals. This tenet looks at how Black women continue to use their lived experiences to clarify the theory (West, 2020). According to West (2020), Black women that contribute to the development of BFT must be reflective of their own thoughts and experiences and how that impacts their contribution to BFT (Collins, 2000). The fifth tenet is demonstrating responsiveness to social context (West, 2020). The changes in our society will impact how Black women feminist ideas are interpreted and understood in the new societal climate. Collins (2000) states that as social structures change, so does the knowledge and practices to address those conditions by Black women. The sixth tenet is connecting with the broader plight for social justice. Not only do Black women seek justice for themselves but extend their efforts to other oppressed or

disenfranchised groups (West, 2020). Collins (2000) states that Black women's struggle is part of a larger struggle for social justice.

According to Crumb et al. (2020), the BFT framework centers on the "Black women perspectives of their self, their families, and society that addresses the historical, economic, and sociopolitical contexts of their lives" (p. 217). Collins (2000) states that BFT centers around Black women experiences that produces new knowledge and provides a new way to process this new knowledge. Johnson (2015) states that Black women responses to oppression are based on their diverse experiences. This is illustrated in the first tenet of the BFT framework. BFT will be utilized as the worldview lens by which the researcher will look at this study.

Summary

In summary, the conceptual framework that will inform the questions and the lens that the researcher utilized to inform this study were explored. Several leadership frameworks were discussed that will provide a foundation to understand how the participants demonstrate growth in leadership skills throughout their doctoral journey. The history of Black women in education is examined. The unique experiences of Black, Latina, Asian, and Native American women in higher education were studied. The use of the cohort model in doctoral programs was explored along with mentoring in doctoral programs.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will review the purpose of the study, research questions, and the conceptual framework that will inform this study. Next the research design and the rationale will be discussed. The study selection and study participants along with the instrumentation will be explored. The data collection and data sources will be identified along with the analysis of these data. The alignment table will be examined and lastly, the limitations, ethical considerations and study quality will be discussed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of Black women who completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be used in this study:

1. What are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program?
2. What factors supported Black women's completion of the Community College Leadership Program?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that will be used in this study is Black Feminist Thought (BFT) (Collins, 1989). BFT will be used to inform our research questions and help analyze respondents' responses to the research questions and related interview questions. According to

Collins (1989), BFT is based on the reality that Black women are faced with two distinct oppressive identities and the oppressed voices of these women are not heard or valued. There are six BFT tenets that will serve as the framework for this study:

Table 3.1

Black Feminist Thought Tenets

BFT tenets
Distinctive worldview
Within-group individuality
Interdependence of thought and action
Role of Black women intellectuals
Demonstrating responsiveness to societal context
Connecting with the broader plight for social justice

BFT (Collins, 1989) suggests that knowledge is created through the unique lived experiences of Black women. Black women have multiple shared and linked experiences that are unique to them. Diverse social identities (race, sexuality, class, gender and identity) impact how Black women experience the world (Collins, 1989).

Research Design

This study was a qualitative phenomenological study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research allows for the researcher to explore and understand individual or group thoughts around a phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon was the completion of a Community College Leadership Program. A phenomenological study approach was chosen because it provides the opportunity for the researcher to gather information directly from individuals that have experienced a certain phenomenon (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007).

Trochim (2001) describes phenomenology as “a focus on people’s subjective experiences and interpretations of the world” p.159.

According to Peoples (2021), there are two major phenomenological philosophies that had an influence on qualitative research studies. The first is Edmund Husserl’s transcendental approach (Peoples, 2021). This approach entails nothing being assumed or taken for granted (People, 2021). According to Creswell (2007), researchers focus less on the interpretation of the data but more on the descriptions given by the participants. In the transcendental approach, bracketing or “epoche” occurs when the researcher sets aside their feelings and experiences as much as possible (Creswell, 2007; Peoples, 2021). The researcher analyzed the data and create “textual descriptions” of the participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2007, p. 60).

The second major phenomenological philosophy is hermeneutic, established by philosopher Martin Heidegger (Peoples, 2021). Heidegger believes that a researcher cannot completely remove themselves from the interpretation of data. He believed that researchers have pre-understandings and that those pre-understandings should be noted in the research as such. As researchers interpret the data their pre-understandings will inform the data and vice versa (Creswell, 2007; Peoples, 2021). These pre-understandings come from our lived experiences. Uncovering your pre-understandings allows you to compare/contrast your experiences as well as monitoring the researcher’s emotional reaction to the participants experiences (Dibley, Dickerson, Duffy & Vandermause, 2020).

The next step calls for the researcher to look at the entire document (written transcript), then breaks it down into pieces (codes), and synthesizes it to learn more (themes). Lastly, the researcher reflected on their own feelings (bracketing) and created new meanings as it relates to the phenomenon (Peoples, 2021). Sometimes this strategy is referred to as hermeneutic circles.

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows the participants to share their lived experiences as it relates to the phenomenon. The hermeneutic approach allows for the researcher's pre-understanding to be incorporated into the interpretation of the data (Peoples, 2021). According to Gademer's Hermeneutics, "it focuses on the human experience as it is lived (Alsaigh and Coyne, 2021, p. 2)." In a narrative inquiry, the participants tell their stories over a period of time, make meaning of experience through conversations and dialogue and there is a relational component between the researcher and participant (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). The researcher chose the phenomenological approach because they believe it will allow the researcher the ability to gain insightful thoughts that are directly related to the research questions.

Study Setting Selection

The setting for this study is Community College Leadership Programs in the United States. An example of such program is the Community College Leadership Program at Kansas State University. Under the leadership of John E. Roueche, the Community College Leadership program was developed through a collaboration of national community college leaders (About the Community College Leadership Program. (k-state.edu, 2023). This program is designed to prepare future leaders for practical leadership skills leading to an Ed.D. It was updated to align with the AACC leadership competencies (2018) when the program transitioned to Kansas State University in 2019. The program utilizes a cohort model that allows students to start together and finish together while providing peer support throughout the journey. The program prioritizes recruiting women and ethnically diverse populations to ensure that future leaders mirror the student population (About the Community College Leadership Program (k-state.edu, 2023).

In addition to Kansas State University, there are several other institutions that provide a doctoral program in Community College Leadership. Ferris State University in Big Rapids Michigan has an Ed.D. program that was created for leaders of mission driven 21st century community colleges. The program was designed to prepare leaders for the changing environments in higher education. The program utilizes a cohort model and classes are scheduled for a few days or on a weekend in person (Ferris State University, 2023).

Another institution is Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA that has a Ph. D. in community college leadership designed to meet the executive leadership needs for the nation's community colleges (Old Dominion University, 2023). Students are part of a cohort that allows them to build community and broadens professional networks. The program is designed for individuals that are working in the field. Classes are scheduled for the late afternoon or evenings. Students have the ability to interact with some of the most important higher education leaders and policy makers in the United States.

Morgan State University in Baltimore Maryland has an Ed.D. program in community college leadership that was created in 1998. It is designed to prepare students for executive level leadership within the community college setting (Morgan State University, 2023). This program was also designed with the working student in mind. The 2022 AACC leadership competencies were utilized to enhance the course offerings. Morgan State University also utilizes the cohort model. The institution has found that students support one another in the cohort model and it increases student persistence.

Northern Illinois University in Dekalb, Illinois has an Ed.D. program in community college leadership that is focused on developing the next generation of community college leaders (Northern Illinois University, 2023). Northern Illinois University utilizes the cohort

model and is offered online. This institution utilizes the Carnegie Project on Educational Doctorate (CPED) as the framework for the community college leadership program. Classes are provided asynchronously during the academic year with a one week on site intensive programming each summer.

The programs highlighted utilized either the AACC leadership competencies or the CPED framework to develop the curriculum for the community college leadership program at their institutions. The CPED is a network of over 135 graduate schools that are charged with transforming the education doctorate (CPED, 2023). Members of the CPED developed a framework for Ed.D. program design that provides a set of guiding principles for program development. All of the programs highlighted utilize a cohort model for educating their students. The programs have a goal of preparing the next generation of leaders to lead the nation's community colleges.

Study Participants

The researcher utilized a purposeful sampling method. According to Trochim (2001), purposeful sampling is when a sample is chosen with purpose or with a predefined group in mind. This sampling method aligns with the predefined group established for this study. The study participants must identify as a Black woman and must have completed their doctoral degree through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program in the United States in the past five years. Boddy (2016) states that a good sample size is when the size is representative of the population being sampled. The sample size for this study was 14. According to Morse (1995), saturation occurs when no new information is elicited from the interviewing of participants. Study participants will be identified at institutions that offer community college

leadership doctorates or through professional organizations. Study participants will be invited to participate in the study formally by email.

The women interviewed attended three institutions identified by this study that offer a cohort model Community College Leadership Doctorate Program. For anonymity purposes, we will refer to the institutions as Brown State University (BSU), Green College (GC) and Blue University (BU). Three women participated from BSU, eight women participated from GC and three from BU. All women identified as Black and graduated from their institution within the last 5 years. The average time it took participants to complete their doctorate ranged from 3.5 to 12 years. The ages of the women ranged from 32-58 years old. There were 6 participants that were married, 6 single and 2 divorced. Below is a chart of the participants' demographics:

Table 3.2

Demographics

Participating Institutions	
BSU	3
GC	8
BU	3
Race	
Black	14
Average Years to Complete Program	3.5-12
Age Range	32-58
Marital Status	
Married	6
Single	6
Divorced	2

Instrumentation

According to Creswell (2009), the researcher is considered the instrument because they are facilitating the interviews or reviewing documents. The researcher will conduct individual interviews with participants utilizing semi-structured interview questions (see appendix E). This method will allow for the ability to ask follow-up questions. The interview questions were developed utilizing the conceptual framework as a guidepost. The five core tenets of CRT were taken into consideration with the creation of the research question as well as the conceptual framework, BFT.

Reflexivity

The researcher is currently a Doctoral Candidate at Kansas State University. The researcher identifies as a Black, divorced female, mother of two. The researcher is the only Black female in her doctoral cohort. The researcher will maintain a reflexive journal throughout the interview process. Reflexivity allows the researcher to combine their knowledge with the experiences discovered in the data collected to avoid believing that their knowledge is the only viewpoint (Dibley et al., 2020).

Protection of Human Subjects

Prior to collecting data, this study will be sent to the Kansas State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. The researcher will put measures in place to protect that participants of this study. Participants will not be identified by name and the institution they graduated from will be provided pseudonyms in order to ensure anonymity. Transcripts, researcher notes, audio and video recordings will remain in a locked file cabinet for five years and then destroyed.

Interview Questions Peer Review

Interview questions were peer reviewed by peers in the field, which included Black women that are enrolled or graduated from doctoral programs. The valuable feedback assisted with revising or refining interview questions to ensure they elicit responses that answers the research questions. The feedback also determined if the questions aligned with the framework. The peer review of the interview questions occurred after IRB approval. This process is important because it establishes whether the questions will provide the data that will inform your research questions and provide validity to the questions. (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019).

Data Collection

The data collection process began with the submission of the proposal for Kansas State University IRB approval. The approval letter is in appendix G. Upon approval, the researcher sent a letter of introduction to the Dean of the College of Education (see example in Appendix B) at each identified institution describing the study focus and asking for permission to conduct research pertaining to the Community College Leadership Program (CCLP) at the institution. Upon approval, the researcher requested assistance from the Community College Leadership Program leaders in identifying potential candidates for the study. Email invitations (see example in Appendix C) were sent to potential participants. All potential candidates received an informed consent form (see example in Appendix D) to sign. The signed consent form included the option to exit the study at any time. After the signed informed consent was received, the researcher scheduled a time to complete the interview via Zoom. If a signed informed consent was not received, the researcher followed up with an additional email or phone call.

Interviews were utilized to gather data from each participant. Interviews are valuable because it allowed the researcher to gather information directly from the source (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Similarly, Rossetto (2014) states that interviews provide an opportunity for the researcher

to gather meaningful data, but in some cases can be a healing event for the participant. The interviewer utilized semi-structured questions that provided the opportunity for the researcher to follow up or ask additional probing questions to garner additional information from the participant (Alshenqeeti, 2014). At the time of the Zoom interview, the Zoom room was locked for added security. The session was video recorded and to maintain anonymity, each participant and the institution where they studied, will be referred to by a pseudonym. The interview phase of the study lasted approximately four weeks. All data is stored in a locked file cabinet and will remain for five years then it will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and provided to each participant to check their transcribed interview for accuracy. This is referred to as member checking. Member checking provides validity to the transcribed interview which in turn provides credibility to the study. Transcription was done utilizing Turboscribe online program. Through this process, unnecessary or filler language will be removed to provide a concise interpretation of the interview (Peoples, 2021).

The next step in the data analysis process was to identify pieces of data that related directly back to the phenomenon being explored. According to Peoples (2021) these pieces of data are called preliminary units. Before moving to the next data analysis step, the researcher identifies how their own experiences may be reflected in the text of the participants. These are called pre-understandings (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). I used journaling to reflect and put aside my pre-understandings that could influence my understanding of the phenomena as told by the participants (Dibley et al., 2020).

Subsequently, the units that were similar were combined to create codes (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). The identification of codes and themes were based on the underpinnings of hermeneutic phenomenology and the use of the hermeneutic circle (Dibley et al., 2020; Peoples,

2021). “The hermeneutic circle represents the converging of conversations with existing knowledge and understanding and the newly revealed from the research data (Dibley et al., 2020).” First the transcripts were read and reread. During this time the researcher journaled their insights about the data. From that process the researcher began to interpret the meaning of the lived experiences that were shared by the participants known as creating preliminary meaning units (Dibley et al., 2020; Peoples, 2021). These preliminary meaning units or codes were highlighted in the transcriptions (see appendix F). The codes that emerged from the analysis of data were: Covid, illness, divorce, death, cohort, structure, rigorous, support, financial assistance, rewarding, informal mentors, guidance, motivation and valued opinions. Based on the codes and the journaling process, themes emerged from the interpretation of the data (Dibley et al., 2020; Peoples, 2021). Lastly, there is the fusion of the horizon where the participant’s data and researcher’s insight present a common understanding of the data (Dibley et al., 2020; Peoples, 2021).

The conceptual framework was used to deepen the understanding of the codes and themes. The next step was to thematically utilize direct quotes that illuminated the participant’s responses to each interview question. Peoples (2021) identifies this as situated narratives. Once the situated narratives were established, the researcher created a general narrative from the experiences gathered from the participants. This provided the opportunity to highlight the themes that were demonstrated in most of the participant’s descriptions of their lived experiences during their doctoral program which illustrates a fusion of the researcher and the participants horizons (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021).

Alignment Table

A table was developed to demonstrate alignment of the relevant literature with the research questions and corresponding interview questions. Also included in the alignment table

were the framework that informed the interview questions. The alignment table can be found in Appendix A.

Limitations

There was a small response size due to the delimitation of the small sample size. Due to the small sample size and the delimitations of the study focusing only on Black women, transferability will be limited to the cohort model community college leadership programs with students that are Black women.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed of their rights through the informed consent form (see Appendix C), including the ability to withdraw from participation at any time. The researcher adhered to all IRB requirements in the performance of this study. The Researcher acknowledged that biases may exist. Confidentiality of each participant was ensured by the use of pseudonyms. Data, transcripts and recordings are locked in a file cabinet at all times and will be destroyed after five years.

Study Quality

The researcher utilized Tracy's Eight "Big Tent" Criteria (Tracy and Hinrichs, 2017) to outline study quality (see Table 5). The topic of the study is a worthy topic because if fills a gap in the literature. The use of the BFT as the framework for the study provided rich rigor. A reflexivity statement outlined the bias that the author may have with the study and the participants which provided sincerity to the study. The transcripts were member checked to ensure that the transcriptions are an accurate reflection of the participants interview which provides credibility to the study. The descriptions that were utilized were a vivid representation of the data collected in order for it to resonate with the audience. This study contributed to the understanding of the unique perspective Black women have as doctoral students who completed

their degree in a Community College Leadership. High ethical standards were upheld through the approval of the study through Kansas State University's IRB. Data is kept locked in a file cabinet for 5 year and then will be destroyed.

Table 3.3

Tracy's Eight "Big Tent" Criteria

Tracy's eight "big tent" criteria	Measures taken
Worthy topic	The lived experiences of Black women who completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program was the topic of the study.
Rich rigor	The Black Feminist Thought framework was utilized to frame the study.
Sincerity	Researcher reflexivity statement discussed any possible biases that may exist with the researcher.
Credibility	Member Checking occurred to ensure the accuracy of the interview transcripts.
Resonance with audience	Thick rich descriptions provided a vivid representation of the data.
Significant contributions.	This study contributed to the understanding of the unique perspective of Black women who earned their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program.

High ethical standards	IRB approval was obtained. Participants signed an informed consent form. Data is stored in a locked cabinet for 5 years. Interview questions were peer-reviewed.
Meaningful coherence	Alignment table demonstrates alignment of the literature findings, research questions, conceptual and interview questions

Summary

This chapter included the purpose of the study, research questions and the conceptual and conceptual frameworks to be used in the study. Next the research design, study selection, study participants and instrumentation were discussed. The data collection and data sources and data analysis were explored. Next, the alignment table, limitations and ethical considerations were discussed. Lastly the study quality was addressed.

Chapter 4 - Results

Research Questions

As discussed previously, the purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of Black women who completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. *What are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program?*
2. *What factors supported Black women's completion of the Community College Leadership Program?*

The lens of BFT and a hermeneutic phenomenological design was utilized to analyze the data and the themes that emerged from the interviews. This chapter will illustrate the themes that emerged from the interviews.

Findings

There were several themes and subthemes that emerged from the interviews with participants about what are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed their Doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program. The themes aligned with the research questions as the participants shared their mentoring experiences, how they were supported by their institution and the barriers that they faced while completing their doctoral journey.

Various Events Impacted the Doctoral Journey of Participants

One of the top factors that impacted the participants' journey was COVID. For most, COVID impeded the progress that the participants made. COVID brought a shift in their work

modality and feelings of isolation. The biggest factor was dealing with family illnesses and deaths. Seven out of 14 participants dealt with either illness or the death of a loved one during the pandemic. Mary stopped out due to family health reasons twice. Sam's study was delayed because she was relying on surveys to be completed by faculty members; however, faculty members were not showing up for work during COVID and or not replying to emails. For Cathy, COVID brought the opportunity for her to complete her dissertation. She indicated that she was able to transition from work to writing seamlessly. "I was forced to stay at my computer and work." Also, because everything was shut down, she took advantage of that time to write as well.

COVID

The analysis of the transcripts revealed that all the participants were working on their doctoral degree during COVID. Each participant was at a different point in their journey and COVID impacted them all differently. Leslie indicated that writing her dissertation during COVID was a struggle. Sarah stated, "a challenge was that I lost my father to COVID in 2020." In addition, Lori stated, "having the challenge of the onset of COVID and trying to just organize my life in such a way that ensured I completed the program was very stressful." Cathy indicated that the pandemic allowed her the opportunity to focus on her dissertation. Carla stated that it was a blessing to be working on her dissertation during COVID because her mother was sick and she was able to get her to appointments and have time to work on her dissertation. She indicated that COVID was the reason why she was able to complete the program in 3 1/2 years. Lastly, Barb indicated that she did not do much work on her dissertation during the pandemic because, "I was focused on making sure all my affairs were in order in the event that I had COVID and died." These examples align with the COVID code that was identified by the researcher.

Kim, Carla, Cathy, Sam, Mary, Sarah and Leslie experienced death in the family or an illness in the family or with themselves during their doctoral journey during the pandemic. Kim

describes losing a lot of people during COVID and experiencing some depression as a result. She states, “now, in hindsight, I’m just realizing that all of those factors affected me prolonging the completion.” Sarah shared that her mother died at the beginning of the pandemic right before she defended the proposal of her first three chapters of her dissertation. Death as a factor that impacted the participant’s journeys is another code that was highlighted through the direct words of the participants.

Personal Challenges

Personal challenges also impacted the doctoral journey for participants. Out of the 14 participants interviewed, Leslie and Kim experienced a divorce during their doctoral journey. This “loss” impacted each woman differently; however in the end, they were able to persist and complete their degree. Although each woman faced barriers, they all stated that their biggest accomplishment was completing the doctoral program.

Leslie described that she went through a divorce and was diagnosed with cancer during her doctoral journey. Mary states “I had received the transcript of my study, so I had done all of my interviews and I was sitting there reading the transcript of the interviews when my mother was given a week to live.” She states that she had to put her dissertation to the side for several months. Sam learned during her doctoral journey that her 21-year-old son was suffering from Schizophrenia. She indicated that this slowed down her dissertation writing process. Kim lost her sister, aunt, dog and went through a divorce during her doctoral journey. Illness as a code was illuminated by participants as affecting their doctoral journey.

Cohorts Provided Structure to the Doctoral Students

The cohort model provided structure to the doctoral programs identified in this study. Mary indicated that the cohort model was a great structure. Sam stated, “the cohort model is wonderful.” Participants stated that the cohort model was also very convenient. Prior to the

pandemic, the programs that had instructors off campus traveled to the home campus of the institution to provide instruction in a Friday and Saturday format. This afforded the opportunity for the faculty and students to have face to face interactions and build community. Leslie indicated that the cohort model allowed the students to move through together as a team and it felt like a family. Each institution utilized a cohort model to facilitate their community college leadership program. The cohort model is structured in a way that the students go through the process together. The diversity of the cohorts varied from institution to institution. These examples illustrate the code of structure and cohort as shared in the previous chapter.

Participants from two institutions experienced an all Black cohort. The other participants experienced being the only Black female or one of a few Black females in their cohort. The participants that did not experience an all Black cohort did not experience the closeness as described by the participants that experienced all Black cohorts. Lori stated that her cohort was unique because there was such a large group of Black students participating in their cohort. Lori also described the cohort as a support system that continued after the doctoral journey ended.

The mixed cohorts had a sense of community but did not express the closeness like family as often as the Black cohorts voiced. Mary indicated that her experience with the cohort model was that it "helped build a community." She goes on to explain that her cohort was very diverse and the students came from everywhere.

Most participants believed that their experience with the cohort model was "phenomenal." Some of the cohorts remain in touch with one another. Kim stated, "we still have our chat group up". All participants had a cohort experience that was supportive and built a sense of community. The strength of the cohort model is that it provides the opportunity for students to build close relationships. These quotes from the participants align with the cohort code that rose from the analysis of data.

Out of the three institutions identified in this study, two institutions were Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) and the other institution was a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). The first PWI, BSU, had both a diverse cohort and an all Black cohort represented in this study. The diverse cohort had Black, White and other nationalities represented. They also had an all Black cohort compared to GC which had only diverse cohorts represented. Much of the diversity of the GC came after it changed home institutions. Mary stated, "I was the only Black person in my initial cohort but after the program moved to another institution, there were other Black females." The participants for the most part felt that their cohort was close and resembled a family. Leslie shared "the cohort model is better than going through the program by yourself, you built a community that appreciates our differences." However, Amy from the diverse cohort at one of the PWI stated "I felt alone."

Many of the participants indicated that a major support system was the cohort members. Pam stated it was a benefit to "move through the program together." Carla states, "The cohort model is so much better than students going through a doctoral program by themselves." She goes on to describe how they built a community as soon as the program started. The only disadvantage that Carla saw in this cohort model is that everyone in the cohort model also worked at the same institution. She wonders if she would feel different if they were all from different institutions. She may have felt this way because there would not be as much diversity in the discussions because they are all drawing from experiences from the same institution. Deb stated that she persisted through the program because of the cohort model. "I love the cohort model in that we kind of help usher each one and encourage each one as we had challenges." Lisa asserts "being in a cohort, actually, I think it was wonderful. We were a very close-knit cohort." Lisa described how they still stay in touch with one another. Pam indicated that "The cohort was a safe space for me to further explore the essence of being an African American

woman and how that intersects with my career goals, my passions, my dreams and my education pursuits." Lisa described the cohort as a place where Black women from different cultures experiences merged. "Just like great minds coming together, learning from each other." In another instance, Leslie described how they called an older woman in the cohort "mama cohort" because she would send out messages to check in on how you are doing with assignments and provide some encouraging words. Support as a code is supported by many of the quotes illuminated by the participants.

Deb talks about how the cohort supported each other. "I had a great support system at home and having support within the cohort itself". Chris shared "we were African American women and men all working towards the same goal, and we were striving to make each other better." Kim stated that "each cohort probably has a support group within. Supporting someone else helps you to step away and gives you that thrust to get back into it." Pam shared "one of my cohort members also served as a mentor. She was a Black female, she was part of the program, but she's older." The cohort model provided motivation to one another. "Helping someone else gives you the motivation to get back to your work". Lori stated "I love the cohort model in that we kind of help usher each one and encourage each one as we had challenges". Barb discussed how the cohort got them motivated and brought synergy.

Support

Faculty and Staff Support

The participants in the study had various encounters with support and the degree to which they felt supported. Lisa stated "the faculty were very, very, very supportive. She also stated "we had mounds and mounds of support throughout the entire process. Carla states "the staff was very supportive, very knowledgeable. They work in the field, so they had a plethora of firsthand

knowledge of higher ed." She also states that the staff were invested in her success as an African American woman. She exclaims, "they never gave up on me." Lisa felt that the program faculty supported her personally and professionally throughout her doctoral journey. Amy stated, "the not so positive outcome of the program is quite often feeling like I was in it alone from the lens of support through the program representatives." Kim discussed how her chair supported her through the dissertation phase by sending her articles and being very helpful with chapters 4 and 5 of her dissertation. She states, "I just received so much help." Sarah described how the Program Liaison would send out encouraging emails to the cohort. Lori described one of the Program Administrators as being "steadfast, always giving an encouraging word." Support from faculty and staff were highlighted by the participants which align with the support code identified though the analysis of data.

The participants overwhelmingly believed that the instructors that were secured to teach the classes were individuals that were well known in the field of higher education. This included, Chancellors, current and past Presidents and persons who were instrumental in the creation of the Community College Leadership program that they attended.

Black Faculty

When it came to Black faculty members, there was a vast difference in what the participants experienced. Mary described a time after she resigned from her presidency, that she was connected to a Black female past President of a community college to talk with her about her future after completing her doctorate. Mary describes the experience as once in a lifetime. Chris stated that the support that I received from the Black faculty was phenomenal.

Non-Black Faculty

The cohort was diverse; however, the faculty members that instructed the courses were all White. Most participants agreed that the faculty members in their programs were all extremely supportive and knowledgeable. Amy shared that she had considered taking off a

semester and was told by a Non-Black staff that they too had personal issues occur during their doctoral journey and they persisted and suggested that she look for additional supports instead of taking time off. Amy took the statement as an insult stating, “comments like that let me know how void of reality these individuals were.” On the contrast Leslie describes a non-Black male faculty member as being very supportive with all the students in her cohort.

Program Support

Several programs supported the participant’s journey financially. BSU paid for their tuition at 100% and BU at 60%. The other program participants were responsible for the total cost of their program. This could have played a factor in how quickly participants completed the program. Some may have sat out a semester or two due to financial reasons. Fortunately, all the participants of this study were successful with completing their degree. The doctoral journey timeframe that the participants experienced was as short as 3 years and as long as 12 years to complete their degree. Program support was another form of support that was illustrated by the quotes from our participants that align with the code of support.

It was shared by several GC participants that during their journey their program made the decision to move from one institution to another. Participants had the opportunity to stay with the original institution or transition to what is now GC. Barb stated “I really wanted to stay with the folks who had seen me through not only my personal trials, my professional trials, and I knew who had a vested interest in me completing the program. They saw something in me.” This proved to be a stressful time for these participants. Those that transitioned to the new institution indicated that they had to get used to a new way of doing things in the middle of their doctoral journey. Kim stated, “there were the culture, the politics, everything changed when they changed and came over to GC.”

Mentors

All participants agreed that there was not a structured mentoring program or process at their institution. They had varying degrees of mentoring from a variety of different sources.

Lack of Mentoring

When asked did you have any experience with a mentor Amy stated "I'm sad to say that I didn't. Amy stated that there was no formal pairing of a mentor and she stated, "I know there are Black women in the profession that could serve as mentors. I don't feel as if I was given a mentor." Carla indicated that she did not have an assigned mentor, however, she had mentors that had supported her through her educational and professional journey through her place of employment. She further states her mentor had "some experience in one or two areas that I kind of lacked." When Deb was asked if she had a mentor that actively supported her throughout her doctoral journey she indicated "no, I did not have a mentor." Sarah describes having mentors throughout her life, for instance when she participated in the Upward Bound program. She states, "I can't say I had really any Black women mentors who necessarily mentored me into going into the community college leadership program." Informal mentorship as a code was highlighted through the direct quotes from the participants.

Faculty Mentors

Lori stated that the program coordinator supported her with resources and the chair of her dissertation committee and faculty helped along the way. Kim stated that her chair and two of her committee members were her mentors during her dissertation process. Kim stated that her mentor "encouraged me to never give up because it would have been really easy just when life happens." She also felt that she did not have as much mentoring as she would have liked after the program concluded. Leslie states that her program chair was her mentor along with faculty members in the program. They provided encouragement. She states, "I received plenty of

mentorship." Sarah had a few faculty members she could go to and ask questions. She felt that "the mentorship from the professors and faculty played a significant role in the completion of my program." Pam indicated that the faculty was available to look over her resume and provide interview tips. This occurred during and after the program. It appears that although there was a lack of formal mentoring the informal mentoring that was received by faculty and staff benefited the participants.

Black Mentors

Pam indicated that "a lot of our mentors within the program were African American women." One of those mentors was a former President of a community college in Texas. Lisa met the coordinator from another institution that her cohort visited and they bonded. She became the participant's mentor. The participant told her "I've never been mentored by a Black woman before." She also stated, "she helped not only keep me on track, but was a listening ear when things became challenging." Chris and Cathy stated that they had a Black male mentor, however that mentor passed away during their doctoral journey. "Lisa found a Black female mentor in one of the faculty members that she knew before beginning the doctoral program. She also felt that there were several persons in the doctoral program that mentored her as well. She mentions the Black woman that created the community college leadership program that she attended as well as the Black program administrator and one of the Black faculty members was instrumental in mentoring her. These women not only benefited from having a mentor, but they also benefited from having a mentor that had some of the same lived experiences as they did because they were Black.

Informal Mentoring

Across all three institutions there was not a formal mentoring process in place. The mentoring that took place was all informal mentoring that supported participants. Some participants did not have a mentor at all.

All the participants agreed that none of their institutions had a formal mentorship program. Many of the participants indicated that there were informal mechanisms that served as mentorship throughout their program. The cohort model encouraged peer to peer mentorship. This was very useful to all the participants. Faculty served as informal mentors in most instances. The dissertation committee chairs also served as mentors and stressed work/life balance. One faculty member was quoted by Mary as saying, "it will never be a good time to write your dissertation." It was also noted that there were not mentorship opportunities after program completion. It was recognized that personal relationships that were developed with instructors and guest speakers continued post-graduation. Sarah, Deb and Carla indicated that they had informal mentorships with their supervisor or other individuals at their place of employment. Carla, Lori and Sam named instructors and program staff that served as informal mentors during their journey. These names included Chancellors, Presidents, Senior Staff members and individuals that created the Community College Leadership program at their institution. Informal mentorship is highlighted by participants which aligns with one of the codes that emerged from the data analysis.

It was also noted that there were very few Black women faculty or guest speakers that were presented to the Black women in the cohorts, which limited the possibility of developing a mentoring relationship with a person that looked like them. Amy indicated "I feel that an opportunity was missed because I know that there are African American women in this profession or are a part of the community college world that could have been invited to serve as

mentors." It is apparent that there are not enough faculty that have the same lived experiences to support Black women at some of the institutions examined in this study. Despite the lack of Black mentors, Carla stated, "staff and faculty were invested in my success." All but one participant agreed with this sentiment. Amy stated, "the not so positive outcome of the program is quite often feeling like I was in it alone from the lens of support through the program representatives."

Valuing and Validation as Leaders

Most participants felt that their thoughts and opinions were valued by classmates and instructors. Most of the participants agreed that their experience as a Black woman was heard and valued. Sarah stated, "our instructors valued our voices, and they valued our experience and expertise." This was demonstrated through the asking of additional questions and asking specifically for the Black woman's opinion on issues discussed. Sam stated that they "valued diversity of thought". Mary indicated that "we were valued as human beings, women and women of color." In comparison, Amy felt that her thoughts and opinions as a Black woman were not valued. She describes the experience as "stressful from beginning to the end." She struggled to fit into her cohort. Leslie experienced a microaggression when she was told after a presentation by a White faculty member that she seemed overconfident. Later a Black female faculty member shared with the participant that the comment was a microaggression and not to let it get to her. Leslie stated:

> "If I had not been reaffirmed by the Black faculty member, I may have gone on to develop imposter syndrome because I felt the feedback that I was given was that I'm too confident and maybe I just need to retreat back in my shell."

Lisa stated "We appreciated and respected the fact that we all have different experiences that we bring to the table. And it was always valued because we added something to what was

going on." It was evident that the women brought their unique perspectives to their cohorts and it made the learning environment richer. Pam indicated "they valued my opinion more than I did." Chris indicated that all were open to hearing their voices. These were rich experiences because we were all geographically located in different regions. This brought different perspectives to the conversation. "I felt comfortable giving my opinion as a Black woman" was stated by Pam. One way opinions were valued was through feedback on assignments. Others received verbal feedback and encouragement to voice their opinions. Another participant stated, "the cohort was a safe space to explore being a Black woman." Kim indicated that they "valued the diversity of thought" everyone's opinion was welcomed. It is important for the lived experiences of Black woman to be shared with the broader community. This helps to ensure that the experiences of Black woman become part of the fabric of our country. Valued opinion as a code is illustrated through the direct words of the participants.

Addressing Research Questions

Research question 1, what are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program was answered through several of the themes and subthemes that emerged through the interviews with the participants of this study. Various events that impacted the doctoral journey of participants provided a view into the lived experiences of the participants of the study. All of the participants were impacted either positively or negatively by COVID. Several of the women experienced personal challenges such as death, illness and divorce that impacted their lived experiences as they completed their doctorate.

Participants felt that their opinions were valued throughout their doctoral journey. This was evident through verbal and written feedback or solicitation of their opinion. What the participants liked the most is that there were a diverse group of individuals that brought diverse

thoughts to the cohort. This was also demonstrated in the Black cohorts. Those individuals came from different backgrounds and in some instances geographical locations. This diversity of thought brought rich discussions to the cohorts. There were two instances in which students felt they were not valued. One where Amy describes a time when she felt insulted when advised to not take a semester off. The second is when Leslie experienced a microaggression. These instances did not preclude the participants from completing the program, but did have an impact on their journey.

Research question 2, what factors supported Black women's completion of the Community College Leadership Program was answered by several of the themes and subthemes that emerged through the study. The cohort model brought structure and support to the participants as they went through their doctoral journey. Participants all agreed that they felt supported by their cohort and that it was instrumental in them successfully completing the program.

Support from the faculty was also a key factor in the successful completion of the doctoral program. The participants indicated that although many of the faculty did not look like them, they were supportive in their efforts. There was one outlier participant, Amy, that did not have as much of a positive experience as the other participants. She did not believe that she was supported by the faculty.

Participants agreed that there was not a formal structure in place for mentoring, however; the majority of the participants received mentoring through informal means, such as cohort members, faculty or dissertation committee members. Some found mentors in someone from their workplace. The guidance received through the mentorships helped keep the participants on track and mitigate barriers. The few participants that did not have an informal mentor did not express that lack of a mentor negatively affected their doctoral journey. Perhaps they could have

used the assistance to mitigate any barriers or challenges that existed on their doctoral journey that would have assisted them in completing sooner.

Summary

In this chapter the results of the participant interviews were analyzed through a BFT lens and themes and sub themes emerged from the interviews with the participants. The themes that were extracted from the codes illuminated the lived experiences of women of color who completed their doctorate through a cohort community college leadership program. Chapter five will look at the interpretation of the findings, implications for research and recommendations.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

The following chapter will review the study's purpose and research questions. An interpretation of the findings will be outlined, followed by limitations, implications, recommendations and recommendations for future research.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of Black women who completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program. The researcher utilized the following research questions to explore this phenomenon:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of Black women who have completed their doctorate through a cohort model Community College Leadership Program?

RQ2: What factors supported Black women's completion of the Community College Leadership Program?

Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews. A hermeneutic phenomenological methodology was utilized to analyze the data. This approach allowed the participants' voices to be heard directly from them.

Interpretation of Findings

Findings in this chapter are compared and contrasted with the literature in Chapter 2. It will be noted if the results were expected or unexpected and the reasoning behind the determinations will be discussed.

Various events impacted the Doctoral journey of participants

There were various events that impacted the doctoral journey of the participants interviewed in this study. COVID was the most prevalent challenge that the participants faced.

For most participants, COVID interrupted their doctoral journey and prolonged completion. For others, it allowed them time to focus on their dissertation and complete the doctorate faster. Family illnesses and death also impacted the doctoral journey for some participants. Many of the family illnesses were due to COVID. Divorce was another hurdle that several of the participants experienced during their doctoral journey. Due to the untimely nature of the COVID pandemic, participants had to pivot and adapt their doctoral journey. Because the COVID pandemic was new not much research was available on the effect on Black women doctoral students. However, the COVID pandemic could be compared to 9/11 as the repercussions had an effect on many in the country and doctoral students affected would have needed to pivot and adapt after that tragedy. The interruption of COVID in the doctoral journey was unexpected. The global pandemic affected everyone in some way. What wasn't expected was the participants that utilized COVID as a time to move ahead with their doctoral journey.

The Cohort Model Provided Structure to the Doctoral Students

The cohort model is structured in a way that students go through the doctoral process together (Leland et al., 2020; Reynolds & Herbert, 1998). This is a theme that emerged in the responses from the participants of the study. They felt that going through the cohort together provided support to one another. According to Pemberton and Akkary (2010) students experienced better academic performance, support and collaboration in the cohort model. The participants stated that the cohort model provided a family like atmosphere. According to BFT, women bring different experiences that provide each other with different perspectives as well as provide new knowledge to continue to expand the experiences of Black women.

Although group dynamics could be experienced as a weakness, the participants interviewed appreciated the bonds that were formed. Through the close-knit bonds that were made, often smaller groups were developed that isolated others in the large group (Leland et al.,

2020). A few participants described how small groups or cliques formed in their cohort. With this comes the idea of "group think." Leland et al. (2020) states that opportunities for independent critical thinking may be stymied in group learning models. The results of the participants lived experiences as it relates to the cohort model was expected based on the literature. The participants interviewed thrived in the cohort model and persisted to completion.

Support

Participants believed they received tremendous support from the faculty and the staff. Faculty and staff, although they may not look like the participants, were very supportive and caring. They helped through support with the dissertation writing, encouraging words and through informal mentorship. Faculty and staff were very willing to provide students with their personal contact information and were responsive to calls, texts and emails. According to Williams (2000) minority doctoral students perceived the academic environment and faculty advisors as the greatest source of support. According to the research this was an expected outcome of the research.

Mentorship

According to Mendez-Morse (2004), traditional mentoring is defined as "a person in a position of power that can teach, encourage, and facilitate the advancement of a protégé" (p.562). The participants in this study agree that their institutions did not have a formal mentoring program. Mentorship is essential in the success of a doctoral program (Zeligman et al., 2015). Completing a doctoral program can be a daunting task and having a mentor to guide and support students through the process is a key element for success. Zeligman (2015), espouses that the mentoring relationship has a significant impact on woman of color both professionally and personally during their doctoral journey. Nichols and Tanksley (2004) discussed how mentors can help students with understanding the unwritten rules of the institution. This part of

mentorship would be key for Black women in navigating the doctoral program and the overall institution. The mentorship that some of the participants received was informal from program staff and faculty, a supervisor at their place of employment or from another cohort member. According to Buck et al. (2009), the traditional mentoring approach is too authoritative for the doctoral student journey. The thought of the mentor holding power over the mentee could be perceived as another form of oppression. BFT asserts that Black women already have two oppressive identities, being Black and being a woman. This is known as double-bind (Patterson-Stephens et al., 2017). The informal mentoring that they received, in most cases, was provided by someone that did not look like them. This could have impeded the informal mentoring process. However, the Black women in this study did not feel that the informal mentoring that they received felt like an oppressive act. The lack of formal mentoring was not expected.

Valued Opinions of Participants Increased Their Motivation to Persist

The participants in this study felt that their thoughts and opinions were valued. Participants stated that cohort members, faculty and staff were open to the various opinions that were shared in their cohorts. The valuing of opinion was demonstrated by asking of follow up questions and in writing in feedback on assignments. All the participants were encouraged to share their opinions from their vantage point. BFT asserts that voices of Black women need to be heard (Collins, 2022). During the dissertation journey of the women in this study, their voices were heard, embraced and amplified. The valuing of their opinions provided the participants with the motivation to persist through their program.

Black Feminist Thought

BFT asserts that Black women have two oppressed identities. Life challenges including COVID, family illnesses and death in the family may have affected the Black women in the

cohort differently than it affected their White counterparts. This could have affected the rate at which the Black women were able to complete their doctoral program.

BFT states that the oppressed group, Black women in a predominantly White cohort, could have felt they may not bond with the non-Black students because of the perceived dominants of the non-Black students. According to this study it did not appear that the Black women were impacted by this phenomenon. However, the majority of the women experienced occupying marginalized spaces in their institutions because they were of the minority which aligns with BFT tenets.

BFT asserts that all Black women interpret experiences differently. The result of this study illustrated that concept. All the women went through a similar cohort model doctoral program, but through the interviews, they described different experiences. BFT encourages women to make meaning of their lived experiences through the intersection of being Black and a woman.

The women of this study utilized their lived experiences to assist with the expansion of the BFT theory. This was done through the sharing of their experiences with one another during their doctoral program as well as the sharing of their lived experiences with this researcher because of this study.

The change of societal climate during the global pandemic had an impact on the Black women of this study. The impact was seen both as a help to the women and a hinderance. Some women were interrupted in the doctoral program due to illnesses or loss of loved ones. Others were able to utilize the lack of social outings to continue to work on their dissertations. Another societal issue that affected the women completing their doctoral degree was divorce. Two women were impacted by divorce during their journey.

Implications

One implication from the research was the lack of a formal mentorship program at the institutions in this study. Only an informal structure was in place for some of the participants. Those that had the opportunity to be mentored enjoyed the experience and felt that it was beneficial to their doctoral journey. However, mentors were not consistent across the cohorts. Some individuals had colleagues or work supervisors, some relied on the chairs of their dissertation committee and others relied on cohort members as mentors. Others shared that they wished they had a mentor through their doctoral journey and after they completed the degree.

A second implication was instructors and staff were not being culturally competent. One participant in the study suffered through a microaggression that put some doubt in her mind about her ability to be successful as a community college leader. Another student felt insulted because the staff at her institution were not supportive of her taking a semester off to deal with personal challenges. BFT speaks to the oppression experienced by marginalized populations, as experienced by these two participants.

A third implication was opportunities for cliques to form because students were allowed to choose their own group members for group projects. This could isolate some cohort members or cause "group think" within the group process which does not support the sharing of different perspectives by cohort members.

Recommendations

The results of this study provided a vantage point that was missing in the research. The lived experience of Black women obtaining their doctorate through a cohort model community college leadership program had not been studied in the research. These lived experiences provided insights into their doctoral journey. This study can provide a blueprint to community college leadership doctoral programs on how to better serve Black women.

Having a culturally competent faculty and staff is key to ensuring that all students feel welcome and safe in their learning environment. It is recommended that all staff and faculty, including mentors, be provided with cultural competency training. This training will occur on an annual basis and be a minimum of a day long training. The topics will include, but not limited to, understanding microaggressions, implicit bias, cultural humility and the creation of inclusive spaces. The training could also address how to support students that experience a crisis, such as a death in the family or stress from other forms of trauma. The training should be in person and or in a virtual environment. Students should be encouraged to share any instances where they do not feel comfortable in class because of lack of cultural sensitivity or inclusivity issues so that the situation can be handled immediately. The student can report any issues directly to the program director without fear of repercussion.

Given the complexities of today's society, the discussion of cultural competency is a very sensitive topic. When approaching institutions about these types of training, it is important to share that the training will provide all staff with skills to help all students feel welcomed and safe in their learning environment. It is not a race or culture attached to who needs the training and to whom it will support. The training would occur to ensure that all students feel that they were represented and respected in their classrooms.

It would also be recommended that when students work in group situations that the groups are predetermined by the instructor. This will help reduce cliques from forming as well as group think from occurring. The instructors will be encouraged to switch participants for each group project. If possible, the instructor will attempt to assign students that are from the same institution from being in the same group. This may not be possible in all situations because, for instance, one of the cohorts in this study all worked at the same institution. By switching the

participants during group projects, the instructor will still minimize the likelihood of group think or cliques from forming.

A formal mentorship program would be a great asset to a cohort community college leadership program, especially for Black women. This would provide the chance for Black women to have the opportunity to seek guidance from someone in the field that looks like them or have the same lived experiences. Each woman would be paired with a mentor at the end of their first semester in the program. This would give the opportunity for the women in the program to complete a survey that outlines what each student is looking for in a mentor. The program director of the community college leadership program would match each woman with a person from the faculty, the community college leadership community or even a more senior student. The expectation would be that each mentor/mentee pair would meet (virtually, in person or via phone) at least once a month. The mentor would assist the mentee with any barriers that may exist and provide support and guidance throughout the program. Mentees that are going through a difficult time, as was demonstrated in this study during COVID, would have a person to help them problem solve. If a mentee experienced a loss whether from death or divorce, the mentor can be the person they can turn to for emotional support and access to any necessary resources needed. This could also include support on what to expect from the proposal defense and how to prepare to defend your dissertation. These actions would not take away from the responsibilities of the dissertation committee or chair but would be the additional emotional support the student may need to be successful in their program. Each mentor/mentee would provide feedback at the end of each semester to the director of the program to ensure that the mentor/mentee relationship is a good fit and is meeting the needs of the mentee.

Through the analysis of research there were only a few experiences that were unique to Black women that were only experienced by them during their doctoral journey. One of the

experiences was the lack of mentors that looked like them. Similarly, there were few faculty members that looked like them. Many of the other experiences such as lack of formal mentorship and the impact of life challenges on the doctoral journey were not unique to the Black women of this study. The lack of unique characteristics exists because the Black women of this study may not have felt comfortable enough to share or they did not exist.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several areas in which additional research could benefit the field. Additional research could be done on how other marginalized population's lived experiences impact their doctoral journey. This could include Black men and other women of color. Another area that could be studied is the lived experiences of Black women that attended a community college leadership program that was not a cohort model program. A quantitative study could be conducted to survey all people of color that attend a community college leadership program and how their lived experiences compare. A study could also be conducted in other doctoral concentration areas such as Education or Human Services. Code switching and its impact on the lived experiences of Black women completing a doctoral program is another area that can be explored in future research. Lastly, additional research on how cliques impact the learning environment in cohort models could be studied.

Chapter Summary

As this study has shown, the lived experiences of Black women completing their doctorate through a cohort model community college leadership program have some unique challenges and successes. Black women formed strong bonds with their cohort members that lasted well beyond the doctoral journey. The participants in this study were impacted by COVID during their journey both in a positive and negative way. Another barrier was family illness and divorce. The analysis showed that some results were expected and others were not. COVID was

an entity that was not expected and had varying levels of impact on the participant's journey. The participants of this study shared their lived experiences and were very open, humble and inspirational in their thoughts and opinions that were shared.

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Appendix A - Alignment Table

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Conceptual Frameworks
RQ1 **RQ1/RQ2**	**IQ1:** Tell me about your journey through the cohort model CCLP program? **IQ2** During your CCLP journey, how were you able to express or cultivate the following: Thoughts or actions that were valued from your unique perspective as a woman of color; your unique identity from other Black women in your cohort; being responsive to current societal issues as it affects community college leadership and society as a whole? **IQ3:** How did the intersection of being a	**Black Feminist Thought (BFT)** Hill, P. (1989). The social construction of black feminist thought. *Journal of women in culture and society*, 14(4). **BFT**

RQ1/RQ2	Black woman impact your doctoral journey in the program and at your institution?	**BFT**
RQ1	**IQ4:** During group projects, how was your input, thoughts and beliefs valued by your classmates and instructors?	**BFT**

Appendix B - Sample Letter to Dean of Education

Dear Dean _____

My name is Millette King and I am completing my Doctorate of Education through Kansas State University Community College Leadership Program. My dissertation topic title is: *The lived experiences of Black women who completed their doctorate through a Cohort Model Community College Leadership Program in the United States.* The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of Black women who completed their doctorate through a Community College Leadership Program. The study will also explore how leadership competencies were perceived throughout their journey and what factors support or influence their success.

I would like to inquire how I might get in contact with graduates within the last 5 years from your Community College Leadership Program who identify as a woman of color to request participation in my research study? I am completing my dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Sandy Robinson (slrobins@ksu.edu) and Dr. Terry Calaway (terry74@ksu.edu) of Kansas State University's Community College Leadership Program. Please let me know what the next steps are to connect with alumni of your program.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Millette King M.Ed., L.S.W., C-CHW
milletteking@ksu.edu
219-374-9075

Appendix C - Sample Email Invitation

Dear (Participants Name)

My name is Millette King and I am completing my doctorate through the Kansas State University Community College Leadership Program. My dissertation topic title is: *The lived experiences of Black women who completed their doctorate through a Cohort Model Community College Leadership Program in the United States.* This is a letter of invitation to participate in this research study. The purpose of the study is to understand the lived experiences of Black women that completed their doctorate through a Community College Leadership Program.

By agreeing to participate in the study, you will be giving your consent for the researcher or principal investigator to include your responses in her data analysis. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences. You will be able to withdraw from the interview at any time and all data collected will be deleted, including the informed consent agreement.

Your participation will include a 60- 90 minute interview via Zoom. The results of the research study will be published in a dissertation however, your identity and the identity of the institution where you graduated will remain anonymous and confidential.

Please contact Millette King at milletteking@ksu.edu to opt in to the research study. An informed consent will then be sent to you with potential dates and times for scheduling your interview.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Millette King

Appendix D - Sample Informed Consent

Dear (Participant Name)

You are invited to participate in a voluntary research study being conducted by Millette King, a doctoral student in the Community College Leadership Program at_____.
Purpose of the Study: To understand the lived experiences of Black women that completed their doctorate through a Cohort Model Community College Leadership Program.

Participants will be given informed consent and interview protocols. An interview will be conducted with the researcher. The interview will be recorded and transcribed at a later date. There are no known physical risk or consequence. However, there may be a social, legal, or economic consequence or risks for completing the interview and having the results published. However, these risks and consequences are eliminated by the use of pseudonyms instead of actual participant names.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or may discontinue participation at any time.
No identifying information will be collected in the study and the informed consent will not be shared with anyone outside of the researcher and committee co-chairs.
Notes from the interviews, transcripts and electronic recordings will be saved on a password protected external hard drive that will be locked in a file cabinet when not in use.

If you have any questions, please contact Millette King at milletteking@ksu.edu.
I have read the information provided above and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. My completion and the return of this form will serve as my consent. I have been given a copy of this consent form for future reference.

Printed Name of Participant: Signature of Participant Date:

Appendix E - Interview Questions

1.Tell me about your journey through the CCLP specifically discuss:

- Did you experience any opportunities where you were mentored?
- Received advice on a school/life balance
- Were there any major impediments or barriers?
- Describe you biggest accomplishment.
- What had the biggest impact (positive or negative) on your persistence in the program?
- What impact(s) has the program had on your life overall?

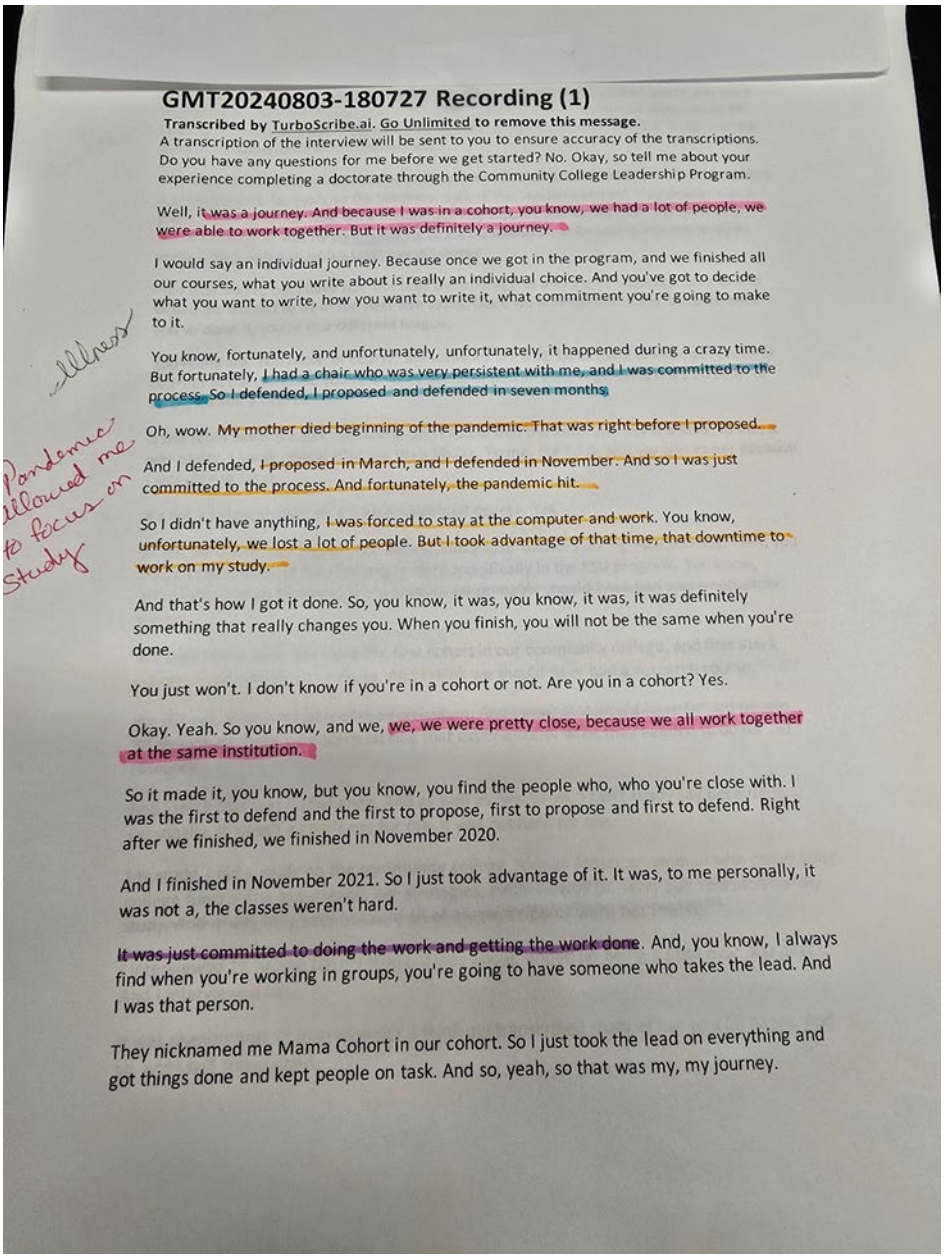
2. During your CCLP journey how were able to express or cultivate the following:

- Thoughts or actions that were valued from your unique perspective of a Black women
- Your unique identity from other Black women in your cohort
- Being responsive to current societal issues as it affects community college leadership and society as a whole.

3.How did the intersection of being a woman and Black impact your doctoral journey in the program and at your institution?

4. During group projects, do you believe that your input, thoughts and beliefs were valued by your classmates and instructors?

Appendix F - Sample Coding



GMT20240803-180727 Recording (1)

Transcribed by TurboScribe.ai. Go Unlimited to remove this message.
A transcription of the interview will be sent to you to ensure accuracy of the transcriptions. Do you have any questions for me before we get started? No. Okay, so tell me about your experience completing a doctorate through the Community College Leadership Program.

Well, it was a journey. And because I was in a cohort, you know, we had a lot of people, we were able to work together. But it was definitely a journey.

I would say an individual journey. Because once we got in the program, and we finished all our courses, what you write about is really an individual choice. And you've got to decide what you want to write, how you want to write it, what commitment you're going to make to it.

illness

You know, fortunately, and unfortunately, unfortunately, it happened during a crazy time. But fortunately, I had a chair who was very persistent with me, and I was committed to the process. So I defended, I proposed and defended in seven months.

Oh, wow. My mother died beginning of the pandemic. That was right before I proposed.

Pandemic allowed me to focus on study

And I defended, I proposed in March, and I defended in November. And so I was just committed to the process. And fortunately, the pandemic hit.

So I didn't have anything, I was forced to stay at the computer and work. You know, unfortunately, we lost a lot of people. But I took advantage of that time, that downtime to work on my study.

And that's how I got it done. So, you know, it was, you know, it was, it was definitely something that really changes you. When you finish, you will not be the same when you're done.

You just won't. I don't know if you're in a cohort or not. Are you in a cohort? Yes.

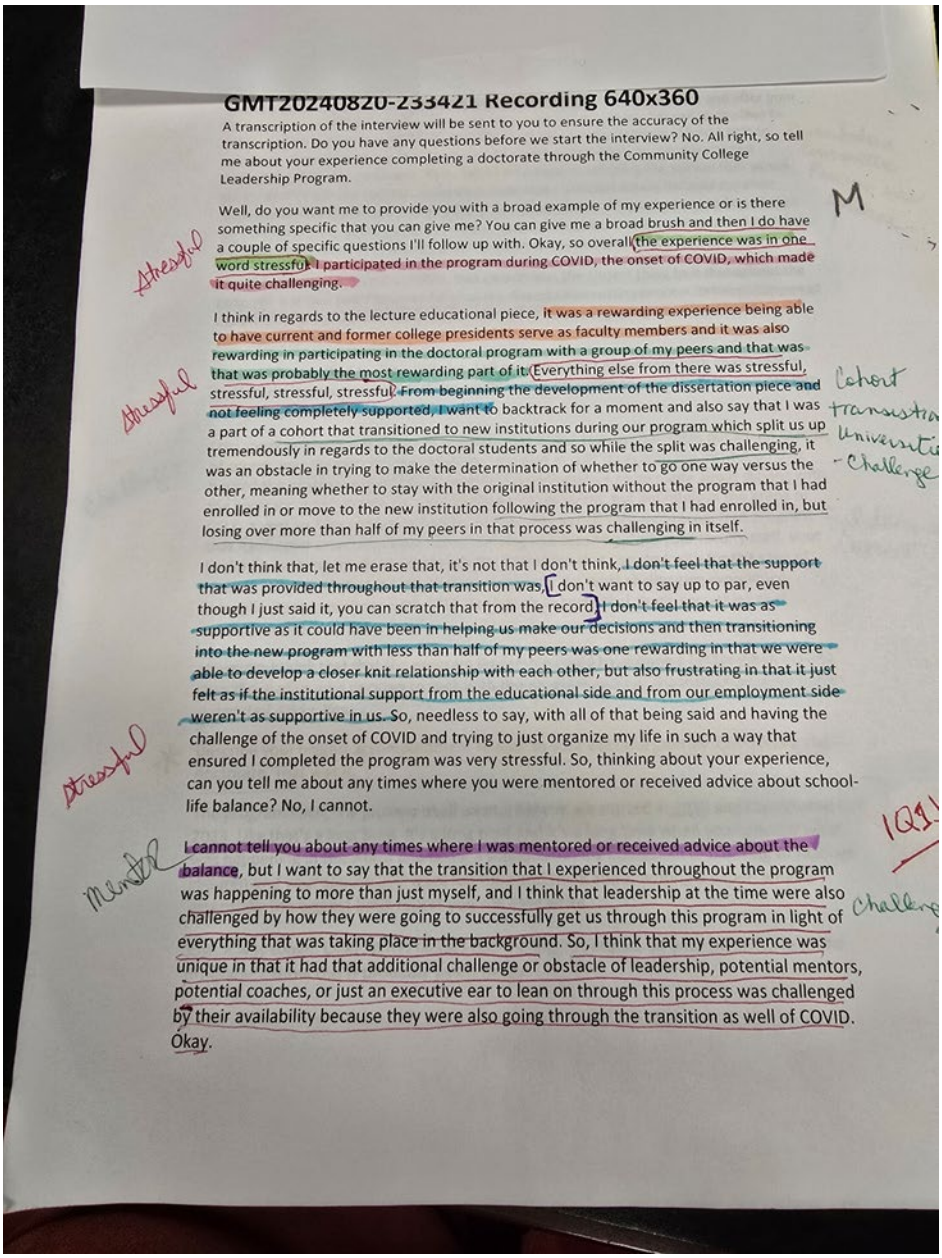
Okay. Yeah. So you know, and we, we, we were pretty close, because we all work together at the same institution.

So it made it, you know, but you know, you find the people who, who you're close with. I was the first to defend and the first to propose, first to propose and first to defend. Right after we finished, we finished in November 2020.

And I finished in November 2021. So I just took advantage of it. It was, to me personally, it was not a, the classes weren't hard.

It was just committed to doing the work and getting the work done. And, you know, I always find when you're working in groups, you're going to have someone who takes the lead. And I was that person.

They nicknamed me Mama Cohort in our cohort. So I just took the lead on everything and got things done and kept people on task. And so, yeah, so that was my, my journey.



GMT20240820-233421 Recording 640x360

A transcription of the interview will be sent to you to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. Do you have any questions before we start the interview? No. All right, so tell me about your experience completing a doctorate through the Community College Leadership Program.

Well, do you want me to provide you with a broad example of my experience or is there something specific that you can give me? You can give me a broad brush and then I do have a couple of specific questions I'll follow up with. Okay, so overall the experience was in one word stressful. I participated in the program during COVID, the onset of COVID, which made it quite challenging.

I think in regards to the lecture educational piece, it was a rewarding experience being able to have current and former college presidents serve as faculty members and it was also rewarding in participating in the doctoral program with a group of my peers and that was that was probably the most rewarding part of it. Everything else from there was stressful, stressful, stressful, stressful. From beginning the development of the dissertation piece and not feeling completely supported. I want to backtrack for a moment and also say that I was a part of a cohort that transitioned to new institutions during our program which split us up tremendously in regards to the doctoral students and so while the split was challenging, it was an obstacle in trying to make the determination of whether to go one way versus the other, meaning whether to stay with the original institution without the program that I had enrolled in or move to the new institution following the program that I had enrolled in, but losing over more than half of my peers in that process was challenging in itself.

I don't think that, let me erase that, it's not that I don't think, I don't feel that the support that was provided throughout that transition was, I don't want to say up to par, even though I just said it, you can scratch that from the record. I don't feel that it was as supportive as it could have been in helping us make our decisions and then transitioning into the new program with less than half of my peers was one rewarding in that we were able to develop a closer knit relationship with each other, but also frustrating in that it just felt as if the institutional support from the educational side and from our employment side weren't as supportive in us. So, needless to say, with all of that being said and having the challenge of the onset of COVID and trying to just organize my life in such a way that ensured I completed the program was very stressful. So, thinking about your experience, can you tell me about any times where you were mentored or received advice about school-life balance? No, I cannot.

I cannot tell you about any times where I was mentored or received advice about the balance, but I want to say that the transition that I experienced throughout the program was happening to more than just myself, and I think that leadership at the time were also challenged by how they were going to successfully get us through this program in light of everything that was taking place in the background. So, I think that my experience was unique in that it had that additional challenge or obstacle of leadership, potential mentors, potential coaches, or just an executive ear to lean on through this process was challenged by their availability because they were also going through the transition as well of COVID. Okay.

Appendix G - IRB Approval

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | University Research Compliance Office

TO: Sandy Robinson
Educational Leadership

Proposal Number IRB-12212

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 06/04/2024

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "The lived experiences of Black women who completed their doctorate through a Community College Leadership Program in the United States."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for three years from the date of this correspondence.**

APPROVAL DATE: 06/04/2024

EXPIRATION DATE: 06/03/2027

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

No more than minimal risk to subjects

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 06/04/2024 4:00 PM ET

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