Finding rainbows in the clouds: Learning about the full professorship from the stories of black female full professors

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Finding rainbows in the clouds: Learning about the full professorship from the stories of black female full professors

by

Natasha Nicole Croom

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

Program of Study Committee:
Lori D. Patton, Co-Major Professor
Daniel Robinson, Co-Major Professor
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Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
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DEDICATION

To Ma for her strength, courage, and wisdom … it’s been inside of me all along.
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ABSTRACT

There is little empirical research about the benefits, privileges, and experiences associated with faculty at the rank of full professor. This dissertation focused on the experiences of seven black female full professors, in various higher education programs and departments across the U.S., who successfully navigated the faculty promotion processes and attained the highest rank in the professoriate. Currently, black women comprise 1.26% of faculty at the rank of full professor nationally. Further, the number of black women at this rank in the subfields of higher education (e.g., higher education administration, student affairs, community college, adult education) is so low that it fails to meet reporting standards for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

While the lack of research and underrepresentation of black women in the rank of full professor is problematic, even more troublesome is the unexamined racial and gender hegemony that exists in the upper ranks of the professoriate (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2002). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and understand how participants perceived their promotion to full professor and promotions effects on their professional status and influence in their departments, institutions, and fields of study. Particular attention was paid to the ways in which both they and those around them enact power to influence their teaching, service, and research activities. Of particular interest in this study was how racism and sexism intersected to create unique experiences of oppression and empowerment for black female full professors.

Research design revolved around black feminist epistemology, critical race theory (CRT), critical race feminism (CRF), and a critical race feminist methodology, which drew upon methodological practices employed in critical feminism and CRT. Specifically, the
tenets of racism as endemic, critiques of liberalism, challenges of ahistoricism, experiential knowledge, whiteness as property, anti-essentialism, and intersectionality were used to illuminate the ways race (and racism) and gender (and sexism), and the confluence of both, influenced the process of promotion to full professor and the ensuing experiences of the participants subsequent to promotion. Findings were drawn from three semi-structured interviews with each of the seven participants, as well as documents collected from participants, and institutional data.

Findings indicated that race (and racism) and gender (and sexism) played a major role in the professional experiences, particularly those related to promotion to full professor and subsequent experiences, of the women in this study. Further, racial and gender hegemony exist to limit the power and influence the black women in this study were able enact. Participants were able to articulate tensions related to being promoted into and persisting in a rank that is predominately occupied by whites and males. The women provided a narrative related to why their black female colleagues do not persist to the highest faculty rank, which included specific practices by faculty and senior level administrators that were (and are) incongruent with institutional policy, procedure, and, often times, common practice. Despite the negative encounters, the participants recognized and articulated the importance of their presence in the academy and in the role of full professor.

Broadly implications from this study directly relate to the need to assess institutional promotion practices, procedures, and policies. Assessments may uncover systemic issues prohibiting the promotion of black women to the rank of full professor and access to its accompanying benefits. Future research implications focus on further understanding the role of full professors in the institution and the power and influence inherent in the position.
CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Background of Study

Clark (1987) wrote that, “research on academic careers in modern America, always fragmentary and confusing, leaves much to explore” (p. 188). While many facets of faculty work and career experiences have received an ample amount of attention (e.g., tenure, diversity, post-tenure review, reward structures), as Clark (1987) alluded, there is much left to investigate and understand. As a line of inquiry, little attention has been paid to the experiences of full professors. More specifically, scholarship focusing on the impacts of the full professor rank is scant at best. Unlike the “tutors” and “professors” of old, today’s faculty are more diverse by gender and racial/ethnic makeup and are more complexly engaged in the life of the institution through their service, teaching, and research responsibilities (Altbach, 2001; Boyer, 1990; Rosovsky, 1990). For full professors, the story goes, by virtue of their rank and accompanying status, that they are armed with many opportunities to influence their departments, institutions, and fields. From a hierarchical viewpoint, presumably assistant professors and, to a lesser extent, associate professors do not have access to the same kinds of influence that full professors do.

While a main consideration of this study is influence and the experiences of full professors, this study shifts the focus of inquiry towards the experiences of black, female, full professors. The dismally low numbers of Black female faculty tell a clear story of inequality and underrepresentation. In their analysis of the representation of faculty of color in the academy, notably one of few to add a racialized perspective to the problem, Delgado Bernal and Villalpando (2002) concluded that racial segregation exists within and across ranks.
For female faculty of color, particularly Black women, scholars have found the faculty experience to be marred by racially- and gender-based bias and discrimination. Some of those experiences include classroom hostility, double standards, persistent stereotypes, exclusion from networks, disproportionate service commitments, and devaluation and marginalization of scholarship (Alfred, 2001; Brayboy, 2003; Gregory, 2001; Hendrix, 2007; Holmes, Danley, & Hinton-Hudson, 2007; Moses, 1989; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2008; Stanley, 2006; Turner, 2002). Although Black female full professors represent a stark minority of U.S. higher education faculty, some have successfully navigated and negotiated through the faculty ranks of academe to that of full professor.

Statement of the Problem

Given the influential abilities of full professors in their departments, institutions, and fields, the virtual lack of empirical research on their experiences is problematic. Additionally, despite the relatively young existence of black female faculty at historically and predominately white institutions (i.e., approximately 50-60 years), the underrepresentation across rank is also problematic. Currently, black women represent only 2.86% of all faculty across institutional type and rank (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). At the full professor rank, black women sit at 1.26% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). While the previous statements above are issues, more broadly problematic is the racialized and gendered hegemony that persists to maintain the status quo in the academy and specifically in the faculty career. This hegemony is not only perpetuated by the lack of representation within and across the faculty ranks, but also by the evidence of the marginalization of the intellectual and practical contributions of faculty of color to their
respective fields (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Grant & Simmons (2008); Stanley, 2006; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how black women in various higher education programs perceive their promotion to full professor and promotions effects on their professional status and influence in their departments, institutions, and fields of study. Particular attention will be paid to the ways in which both they and those around them enact power to influence their teaching, service, and research activities. Also of interest in this study is how racism and sexism intersect to create a particularly unique experience for black female full professors. Considering the way scholarship on underrepresented faculty is presented as either faculty of color or women faculty (Howard-Hamilton, 2003), the stories, voices, experiences, and contributions of black female faculty are often lost in the history books. The lack of intellectual representation only serves to feed the assumptions that women of color do not contribute new and innovative knowledge in the academy and beyond.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this project:

1. How do Black women perceive/understand their promotion to full professor?
2. How are research, service, and teaching affected by promotion to full professor?
3. How is power enacted throughout/within the position of full professor?
4. How is the hegemony of whiteness perpetuated in the full professorship?

Epistemological, Theoretical, and Methodological Framework

The epistemological, theoretical, and methodological framework provides a
foundational understanding for this study. The epistemological perspectives, social constructionism and black feminist thought, provide a definition, albeit not fixed, of the ways in which both the researcher and participants construct knowledge and come to know that knowledge. The theoretical perspectives, critical race theory and critical race feminism, provided a lens with which to view and analyze the context of this particular research. A critical race feminist methodology influenced, and to some extent dictated, the way in which data were defined, collected, and analyzed.

**Epistemological Framework**

**Social Constructionism.** A constructivist epistemology implies that truth and meaning are not simply objective or subjective, but instead individually constructed (Crotty, 1998). Constructivism “suggests that each one’s way of making sense of the world is worthy of respect as any other” (p. 58). While constructivism infers an individual meaning construction process, social constructionism is the way in which social cultures influence “the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). While faculty members construct knowledge based on their experiences individually, academe and the professoriate are social spaces in which meaning and knowledge is often co-constructed, shared, and/or transmitted, across the academy. Given the historical context of black women’s racialized and gendered experiences in American higher education, the way in which knowledge is constructed, shared, and transmitted may be unique based on their social locations.

**Black Feminist Thought.** As a constructionist epistemological perspective, black feminist thought (BFT) scholars contribute a unique framework toward understanding how black women construct and generate meaning and knowledge and experience the world (Hill Collins, 1991). Black feminist thought is distinctive from traditional feminist epistemology in
that it calls attention to the intersections of race and gender (as well as class) that create
distinct circumstances and ways of knowing dissimilar from those of White women
(Fordham, 1993). Specifically, black feminist theorists articulate a particular social
perspective, the outsider-within. This perspective situates marginalization and the margins as
a particular social location where Black women develop a dual consciousness in order to
survive experiences mediated by racism and sexism (Alfred, 2001). As outsiders-within,
black women who are full professors have unique positions in academe, worthy of both
exploration and understanding. Considering the times in which the women in this study have
lived through (e.g., Jim Crow, Civil Rights Movement, Brown v. Board of Education, Black
Womanist Movements), they bring to their faculty work valuable knowledge that is shaped
by their pasts and social locations on the margins. Black feminist epistemology enhances my
understanding of a constructivist and constructionist viewpoint by explicitly linking the
knowledge production and creation by and of black women with intersectionality or “the
ability of social phenomena, race, class, and gender to mutually construct one another”

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory. Critical race theory (CRT) in education acknowledges that
racism is endemic and rampant in American society and particularly throughout education
(Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000). This framework challenges
prevailing ideologies of liberalism, meritocracy, colorblindness, objectivity, equal
opportunity, and race neutrality in order to unmask the historic and contemporary ingrained
systems of power, privileges, and self-interests of dominant groups (Calmore, 1992;
lens, acts of ahistoricism are replaced with a revisionist history (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) allowing for the critical examination of majoritarian interpretations of ideologies, policies, and practices that have historically and traditionally harmed persons of color in American society and education (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Further, critical race theorists in education assert that experiential knowledge and the voices of people of color are critical and central to uncovering, addressing, and eliminating racial oppression and subordination (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). CRT scholars assert that praxis, racial and social justice agendas, is necessary to bring about the empowerment of people of color to eliminate racism, sexism, and classism (Bell, 1987; Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Additionally, Harris’ (1993) whiteness as property thesis, which articulates the ways whiteness is accorded benefits and privileges similar to other forms of property, is used to understand the privileges and benefits inherent in the professoriate and full professorship. Specific to this project, CRT provides a particular lens with which to view the seemingly objective, race neutral or colorblind ideologies, practices, and policies of faculty life and work.

**Critical Race Feminism.** While CRT provides a broader understanding of how racism has served as an oppressive vehicle to limit access for persons of color in multiple contexts, critical race feminism (CRF) privileges the experiences at the intersection of both marginally raced and gendered people. In addition to the tenets that critical race theorists posit, critical race feminists build upon CRT to include the concepts of intersectionality and racial- and gender-essentialism (Harris, 1997; Wing, 2003). Crenshaw (1991) stated, “when the [social and political] practices expound identity as ‘woman’ or ‘person of color’ as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling” (p.
Further, CRF scholars challenge the monolithic woman or black experience, to argue the interdependence of individuals’ experience based on the multiple facets of their identity, to include race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. More directly, Wing (2000) argued, “our anti-essentialist premise is that identity is not additive. In other words, Black women are not white women plus color, or Black men, plus gender” (p. 7). Critical race feminists assert that because of the social locations of women of color, their individual experiences can provide insights into the greater social and political landscape, of education for example, and their collective experiences can help to unveil the systemic effects of racism and sexism. As a part of this framework, CRF assists in addressing the essentialization that often occurs when research is conducted under the guise of women (translated as white women) and/or faculty of color (translated as (Black) men).

Together critical race theory, critical race feminism, and black feminist thought, as a constructionist epistemological perspective, provide an underpinning framework that allows me to understand the broader social and political contexts of higher education and faculty work, as well as the social and political locations of Black women within this system (Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Hill-Collins, 2009; Perkins, 1993; Scott, 1982). Explicitly, this framework will assist in describing and (re)presenting the experiences of these black women in the institutional and systemic processes of promotion to full professor and their subsequent experiences in the faculty role.

**Methodological Framework**

**Critical Race Feminist Methodology.** In the tradition of critical scholarship that privileges and centers “telling” by those at the margins, this dissertation is influenced by a critical race feminist methodology. While the terminology may be new, many scholars
have used critical race feminist methodology to inform the ways research is conducted. As feminist scholar Olesen (2005) wrote, “work by women of color significantly shaped new understandings [of feminist scholarship] that displace taken-for-granted views of women of color and revealed the extent to which whiteness can be a factor in creating otherness” (p. 241). Through use of a critical race feminist methodology I seek to unpack the taken-for-granted idea that perhaps one’s race and gender do not matter once they become full professors. Specifically, this will be (re)presented through use of counternarratives, an analytical tool that “uses race as a filter to deconstruct and contradict majoritarian stories…challenge dominant thinking, and introduce alternative realities for those on societal margins” (Patton & Catching, 2009, p. 716). Stories of experience and interpretation (Scott, 1991) by Black female full professors can illuminate cultural and structural dynamics that either encourage or inhibit their abilities as senior faculty to exert power and influence and fully participate, as valued and respected members of the academy, in the decision-making and governance of the institution.

Methods

Participants and Sites. This project will focus on Black female full professors who earned their promotion to full professor in the field of higher education, to include higher education administration, college student personnel, community college, and adult learning programs (housed in higher education departments). After employing several search methods, to include hunting through the websites of the 2009 U.S. News and World Report top ten higher education and student personnel programs and tapping into collegial networks of student peers and faculty colleagues, eight potential participants were identified for
recruitment. Seven of the eight potential participants took part in this project.

**Data collection.** In order to generate data that addressed the research questions related to the experiences of Black female full professors, multiple forms of data were collected, to include interviews and documents. Interviews were conducted either over the telephone or via Skype, an internet-based video conferencing system. Three in-depth interviews (Seidman, 2006) using a semi-structured, open interview protocol (Blee & Taylor, 2002), informed by the research questions and theoretical framework were used to gain a “greater depth and breadth of information” (p. 92). Interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. While the majority of the data came from conversations with and stories told by the participants, they were also asked to share other evidence of their experiences (e.g., memos and letters during their process of promotion to full) as they felt comfortable. Further, institutional data and information on faculty, promotion, and rank were gathered in order to gain a greater understanding of each institution. I was also mindful of other sources of data that could provide a richer and deeper understanding of the participants’ experiences (e.g., informal encounters at professional conferences, opportunities to speak with family and students, etc.).

**Data analysis.** Once all data were collected, each transcript was read through individually and emergent themes were highlighted. Specifically, information the researcher would expect to find, issues or concepts not anticipated, and experiences that seemed to stand out were highlighted. Convergent patterns (Patton, 2002) were identified and these patterns became the primary themes for this study. While generalization was not the goal of this project, finding convergent patterns across participants’ experiences provided an opportunity to explore emergent themes across contexts and experiences and increased the credibility and
validity of the information (Hackmann, 2002; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002). These themes were then subjected to a critical race theory and critical race feminism analysis.

**Authenticity, Trustworthiness, and Rigor.** In an effort to maintain authenticity, trustworthiness, and rigor in my work, several techniques were employed. Using multiple methods of triangulation (i.e., data and theory) helped to demonstrate rigor (Patton, 2002). Triangulation is a common strategy for combating internal validity concerns (Merriam, 2002). While the primary source of data stemmed from interviews, documents were also collected from participants. Documents such as vitae, memos from their processes, and institutional information were collected and available to provide contextual support. Theory triangulation occurs when there are multiple theories from which to interpret the data (Patton, 2002). In this study critical race theory and critical race feminism, albeit similar yet distinct, were the theoretical lens from which the data was viewed and interpreted.

The use of thick description serves to provide authenticity and builds trustworthiness as more context is provided for the analysis (Patton, 2002). Throughout the research process, the researcher engaged in member checking with the participants. Member checking was used to get feedback on theme development. Important in a critical race feminism methodology is the co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and the participants. Therefore, participants were involved to an extent in the analysis of the data. This transforms traditional member checking in a way that values the knowledge production and reflexivity of the participant in the research process. Peer debriefing was used to gauge analysis and to obtain feedback on themes (Creswell, 2005). Lastly, this type of research requires researchers to discuss and understand their positionality, as it impacts the research process. The interviews were dialogic in nature, allowing for the researcher to share her own
positionality in this project.

**Significance of the Study**

Findings from this study will influence and contribute to many critical areas in higher education research, to include policies and, more importantly, practices surrounding promotion and post-promotion experiences. It also contributes to our understanding of the many roles full professors play as it relates to faculty work (i.e. research, service, teaching). Additionally, this study enhances the already extensive literature regarding access, equity, and success for underrepresented faculty and their respective academic communities.

This study is particularly significant as it fills a lacuna in the scholarship of the experiences of full professors. Specifically, it will provide an overarching view of their work, career advancement opportunities and processes, as well as the ways they are able to use their status and influence to make important changes or contributions to their fields of study and practice. Further, this topic is important to examine as the percentage of people of color entering the professoriate remains stagnant at best and clear patterns exist in the number of female faculty of color persisting through the faculty ranks.

While this study centers and privileges the experiences of black female full professors in higher education, their individual perspectives can help us to understand not only their standpoints but also how these experiences mediate faculty work and influence from their particular social locations as women of color. Collectively as outsiders-within, their perspectives and stories can bring understanding to the greater landscape that is faculty work and the expectations and experiences of full professors in the seemingly objective and meritocratic system of academe. Further, their stories may provide some
insights on how to improve the dismally low numbers of Black women entering the faculty realm and those pursuing the rank of full professor from a systemic purview. Lastly, but most important, this study will benefit not only the researcher and audience, but also the black women in the study. This project can serve as a reflective opportunity. In particular, it may be a chance to for them to reflect on their career and life choices, past and current professional contributions, and future life and career goals. This type of reflection can be powerful, especially for marginalized and minoritized individuals who may not be able to readily see their contributions to their work and the people around them.

**Audience for the Study**

Audiences for this research range from larger organizations and institutions to individuals. This work is aimed at broadening the empirical research and scholarship on faculty promotion as well as the experiences of senior faculty of color. Findings may inform institutional and departmental promotion policies and practices. Beyond the institutional benefits, organizations such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) may find it relevant as they review and revise documents pertaining to tenure and promotion, as well as faculty influence and governance. Additionally, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) might find it useful in their policy-work with particular institutions as it relates to equity and equality for women in academia. On a more individual level, this work may benefit faculty of color who are considering post-tenure advancement and mobility strategies. Knowledge uncovered in this work may also provide opportunities to disrupt racist and sexist practices that are so inherently ingrained in higher education that they often go unnoticed. Lastly, perhaps findings will assist HE/SA programs in beginning intentional interrogations of their own practices that hinder black female faculty from
persisting as smoothly as their white colleagues.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter one provided an overview of this dissertation including the background and purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, methodological overview, and significance of the study. Chapter two serves as a review of key literature related to status and influence in the many roles of faculty, experiences of black women in higher education, and higher education as a field of study. Chapter three focuses on the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological frameworks. Participant profiles are presented in chapter four. Chapter five is a (re)presentation of the findings and analytical discussion. Chapter six focuses on particular implications of the findings as well as recommendations and enduring questions raised from this work.

In an effort to provide some insights as to how the researcher has come to this project a brief counternarrative is provided below. This counternarrative serves as a way to communicate some context around a jarring experience that helped to propel this topic for study.

**Finding My Rainbows in the Clouds**

*I attend one of the sessions where aspirings like me can hear from some of the Legacies from the profession about the intellectual development of our future professionals. I notice first...all the panelists are white. Second...I’m one of a handful of people of color in the room. The white woman sitting next to me does not smile back after I greet her with my best “welcome to my table” smile...we’re not going to be friends! A member of the faculty from my program is on the panel. A smile between us acknowledges our presence in the same*
space. It’s feels more genuine than when we are actually on campus. Each faculty member gets time to philosophize on where the profession is going and how we can academically and practically prepare folks for the journey. These people are funny, I find myself chuckling at their attempts at humor. Reminds me of Frasier and the crush I have on Kelsey Grammer.

My faculty member begins his spiel. He begins to talk about diversity and multiculturalism. Really? After years of being in your program, I’ve never witnessed your commitment to these concepts, but O.K. Conference Me is politely smiling and throwing in an occasional affirming head nod...as if he needs it. Real Me is zoning out a little, until I hear my name. Why am I hearing my name while he is talking. I hear “As MY student Natasha [as he points directly at me] can attest I strive to incorporate diversity and multicultural perspectives in my classes and my interactions with my students.” My non-smiling tablemate is now smiling at me...hard. I give her the look with my eyes but smile with my mouth. It’s my take on Tyra’s smile with your eyes technique...the look isn’t good but the smile deflects it. I don’t have time or the desire to explain to her how she rendered me invisible when she did not return my smile, and how I was made a whole person, visible, and worthy of acknowledgement when the well-known, white, male, Legacy said my name and pointed at me. At once I felt the power of association. At once I felt like a scapegoat, an object. Look at the little black girl that I am shaping, creating, making whole, making visible. I felt alone in the room. Not because I am shy, HA. I felt alone because I wondered if anyone else was trying to recall how his scholarship reflected his words in this moment, how his teaching, pedagogy, and course content reflected his claims, how our experiences together certainly did NOT convey to me his care for me as a black woman aspiring to a full professorship. In that moment I
wondered, where are the black female faculty legacies? Where are my rainbows in the clouds?
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF KEY LITERATURE

The purpose of chapter two is to provide a contextual foundation for understanding this study. While much of what will be learned will emerge from the experiences of the Black female full professors in this study, it is important to examine the research and literature concerning the various topics at hand. Therefore, this chapter is divided into three sections: (1) status and influence in the many roles of faculty, (2) experiences of black women in higher education, and (3) higher education as a field of study.

Faculty are a primary constituency on college and university campuses (Birnbaum, 1989; Smart, Feldman, & Ethington, 2000). They are a core component of the institution, responsible for developing curriculums, validating and creating new knowledge, teaching students, and participating in the governance systems of their institutions (Green, 1989; Rhoades, 2000; Turner & Myers, 1999). As with many of the other principal members of the academy (i.e., students, administrators, etc.), constant changes over time demand regular assessment and examination. Although previous research has focused on various aspects of the faculty experience (e.g., tenure, academic freedom, workload issues) from multiple perspectives (e.g., junior faculty, women, people of color), little attention has been paid to the experiences of full professors. Specifically, scholarship focusing on the impacts and perceptions of status and influence of full professors is meager at best. While all faculty members have some level of status and influence, it is fair to assume that full professors have earned a fair amount of status allowing for influence in many aspects of higher education in ways that differ from their junior and mid-level faculty colleagues.
Faculty Influence and Status

The Role of Faculty

Where college faculty were once only involved in the instruction of students, today they are involved in various levels of research, institutional and discipline-specific service, as well as teaching (Adams, 1976; Altbach, 2001; Birnbaum, 1989; Bogue & Aper, 2000; Boyer, 1990; Rhodes, 2006; Rosovsky, 1990). Recognizing interdependence among and across institutional actors (e.g., administrators, governing boards, students) with regard to authority, influence, and decision-making, faculty, specifically, are able to wield their authority and influence through their primary responsibilities of service, teaching, and research (Birnbaum, 1989). Birnbaum (1989) wrote, “as the faculty became more professionalized during the early part of the twentieth century, much authority on many campus, particularly in curriculum and academic personnel matters, was further delegated to faculties” (p. 5). Before discussing faculty influence across their main areas of responsibility (i.e., service, teaching, and research), it is necessary to provide definitions and a discussion on the types of power that provide faculties with influence and status.

The Role of Power and Influence

Given the scope of this project, multiple perspectives of power are necessary to understand the complexities of higher education, the professoriate, and the experiences of black women in the academy. Specifically, three theories of power are advanced: Birnbaum’s (1989) brief definition of power in higher education, French and Raven’s (2001) taxonomy of social power within the professoriate, and Collins (2001, 2009) matrix of domination and domains of power thesis. The first two will be discussed in this section, while the latter will be introduced and discussed later in this chapter.
Given his influence on the multiple ways higher education scholars understand academe, I take as a point of departure Birnbaum’s (1989) definition, in which he posited, “power is the ability to produce intended change in others, to influence them so that they will be more likely to act in accordance with one’s own preferences” (p. 12). In order to systematize and control the business of people and groups in universities, power is necessary. Further, as it relates to this study, an understanding of power is necessary because it is the basis of influence. The premise being put forth is that power and influence are interrelated concepts, but without power, influence, or the capacity to have an effect, is not possible.

Based on the hierarchical nature of the faculty and the rank system, it is also necessary to discuss ways power can be enacted in an organization based on rank. French and Raven (1959; 2001) provided a taxonomy of social power which included five types of power – coercive power, reward power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. Faculty may have opportunities to exercise all of these types of power at one time or another in their career. Coercive power refers to “the ability to punish if a person does not accept one’s attempt at influence” (Birnbaum, 1989, p. 13). Reward power refers to one faculty person’s capacity to provide reward or decrease negative impact (French & Raven, 2001). Legitimate power happens when one person believes that another has a legitimate right to determine something over them (French & Raven, 2001). Referent power exists when one faculty member can relate to another and as such is willing to be influenced by that person. Lastly, expert power results from the belief that a faculty person has a greater level of expertise and competence in a particular subject (Birnbaum, 1989). Although there are other types of power at play on college and university campuses, French and Raven’s taxonomy
seem appropriate for understanding the day-to-day influence being enacted by faculty in their work.

While Birnbaum’s definition provides a broad perspective of power and French and Raven provide a theory more relevant to the hierarchical nature of the academy, these theories seem void of the social aspects of an institution of higher education.

As political organizations (Adams, 1976), “the power structure of any…institution is a complex network of forces, both seen and unseen” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 115). As aforementioned, faculty members have opportunities to exercise these different types of power in both overt and covert ways. However, not all faculty members can exercise influence in the same way. The more status one has, the more influence and power they are able to employ. For example, junior faculty likely have less opportunities to exert power and influence than senior faculty. This is a result of legitimate power, which fuels “a hierarchical authority structure in formal groups” (Birnbaum, 1989, p. 13), such as college and university faculties. Therefore, processes and designations such as promotion and rank are important to the abilities of faculty to exert certain kinds of power in certain situations. Further examination of influence, power, and status across rank will be discussed later in the chapter.

**Influence through Service, Teaching, and Research**

Through the use of power, faculty are able to have influence in their service, teaching, and research activities (Clark, 2001). At this juncture, a treatment of important influential opportunities faculty members may have will be provided. To be sure, research, teaching, and service comes in many forms for faculty and is influenced by many factors. Full-time faculty are expected to engage in a wide range of work assignments, and as Austin (2002) stated, “implicit institutional expectations tend to require individual faculty members to
participate in the diverse responsibilities that support the range of missions of the particular institution” (p. 100). The assumption in this study is not that every faculty member is employed to research, serve, or teach, or that each faculty member has any influence or equal amounts of influence in their many roles. Rather, what is being put forth is that within these traditional roles of the core faculty (Altbach, 2001) they may have opportunities to influence decisions and actions on many levels in their discipline, institution, and departments.

Service. While volumes of literature exist regarding the research and teaching functions of the faculty role, scholarship on faculty service is a more recent phenomenon. Service can be defined as participation in activities outside of research and teaching, to include serving on departmental and institutional committees, as well as in senior level administrative positions (i.e., deanships, program and department chairs), consulting, and participating in national and international professional associations (Clark, 1987). Despite the lack of mainstream scholarly attention and financial compensation, as well as the failure to add significant value to tenure and promotion activities, some faculty today spend a considerable amount of time doing service.

Tierney (1997) found that service was the least valued function of the faculty. However, through service, faculty members play a crucial role in the decision-making and governance of the institution (AAUP, 2008; Kerr, 1995; Rhode, 2006). Committees that faculty participate in, and often chair, determine the curriculum (Bogue & Aper, 2000; Rhode, 2006), are responsible for hiring key staff and administrators of the institution (Bogue & Aper, 2000), and oversee and manage tenure and promotion cases (AAUP, 2008; Rhode, 2006). Faculty also participate in committees dealing with student life/affairs and university,
statewide, and national task forces. In short, through service activities, faculty have the ability to wield a great deal of power and influence (Clark, 1987; Smelser, 1993).

Take for example faculty who participate on tenure and promotion committees. In most cases, only tenured faculty are allowed to sit on those committees and vote on candidates for tenure and promotion. Legitimate power is being exercised as these faculty are legitimated through their own perspective ranks (i.e., associate professors, full professors). Without higher rank, than that of the candidate, one is unable to be involved in the conversation and/or vote on the worthiness of the candidate in question (Adams, 1976). And although the faculty does not have the complete authority to tenure or promote someone, because of the diffusion of power across institutional actors, recommendations originate with the faculty (Adams, 1976).

Another example of power and influence at work in the area of faculty service is that of expert power. Often times faculty are called upon to serve on certain types of task forces or committees due to a particular type of expertise or knowledge base they may have. This expertise can be based on their discipline or field, their particular research areas, and/or their institutional or professional experience. Regardless of what they are called in to do specifically, their presence in that space may provide the person with the ability to influence decisions. Of course this will not always be the case, as power dynamics occur in even the smallest of decision-making and governance groups on college and university campuses (Birnbaum, 1989).

**Teaching.** Although service and research are less fixed responsibilities of faculty members, teaching is a more common activity across the board even though “it is a task that varies greatly in nature and allotted time, shading off for some into a minor role” (Clark,
To be sure, teaching is a major function of the institution, if not of each faculty member. As it relates to this dissertation, the interest is less about teaching loads and time spent teaching, both widely studied topics, and more about the intellectual and social opportunities, allowed through teaching, between faculty and students in and out of the classroom. Of particular interest is what is being taught?, why?, and who is teaching it?. Unlike the limited subjects of the past – philosophy, divinity, and ancient languages, all of course important – taught to young white men, by slightly older white men, to prepare them for the ministry or the limited occupations of the time (Finkelstein, 1984), the curriculum today is vast and surely more diverse (Cheney, 1990). With the development of science, higher education, and the professorate itself, teaching, the curriculum, and the professorate changed to include more subjects and problems to learn about and address from some diverse perspectives.

Although recent conversations regarding teaching are necessarily shifting to discussions on student learning and outcomes (Boyer, 1990; Martin, 1999), both focus on the questions of what is being taught?, why?, and to a lesser extent by who?. In terms of what is being taught, faculty have the ability to shape the curriculum (Cheney, 1990; Clark, 2001; Kerr, 1995). While this is being influenced by issues such as industry demands, as well as the demands of state legislatures and higher education governing bodies (Kerr, 1995), the bottom line is that the faculty member in the class is the one facilitating learning. As such, they choose what information and knowledge is shared and passed on to students (Boyer, 1990; Cheney, 1990). Additionally, through the decision of what to teach, they privilege, legitimize, and validate certain information and knowledge rather than other pieces of
information (Green, 1989). Curriculum reform allows for faculty to exert expert power in an effort to influence what is being taught.

**Research.** While teaching and service are important aspects of the faculty experience, research and “scholarship has become the principle foundation of status” (Rhode, 2006, p. 33). For faculty at high to very high research institutions (see The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching) particularly, research and scholarship not only drives their agendas, but is found to be the most valued activity (Boyer, 1990). This is evidenced by the faculty rewards systems, which have played a major role in creating this particular dynamic (Altbach, 2005; Clark, 1987; Fairweather, 1996).

While there have been many conversations regarding what is research and scholarship, important to this study is Boyer’s (1990) distinctions of scholarship, as it is within these multiple types of scholarship that great influence lies for faculty. Boyer outlined four types of scholarship – scholarship of discovery, of integration, of application, and of teaching. Scholarship of discovery refers to scholars’ ability to pursue knowledge for knowledge sake. This control over one’s agenda yields significant power and influence as “they can hope…that whatever sense they make of their subject will have some social value, and leave a lasting legacy” (Rhode, 2006, p. 33). The pursuit of new knowledge is crucial to the development of the intellectual and institutional life, as well as the expert status bestowed upon faculty. The scholarship of integration refers to the “disciplined work that seeks to interpret, draw together, and bring new insight to bear on original research” (Boyer, 1990, p. 19). Here faculty have the ability to insert their opinions, experiences, wisdom, and insights as they make connections between new knowledge across disciplines. Further, through
challenging the knowledge that is already in existence, they are able to create new ways of thinking about a subject.

The scholarship of application refers to applying knowledge to real world problems and situations. Many American institutions of higher education were founded on this principal (i.e., land-grant institutions, technical schools). The influence within this type of scholarship is that faculty can choose what real world problems they want or need to address and apply their scholarship to them. Lastly, scholarship of teaching calls attention to the intersections of research, service and teaching. As Boyer (1990) stated, “Those who teach must, above all, be well informed, and steeped in the knowledge of their fields” (p. 23). Through the knowledge that faculty bring into the classroom, they can ask key questions that helps students develop their own knowledge and understanding (Mercer, 1995) as opposed to taking every piece of information at face value. These different types of scholarship have major implications for the types of power faculty wield in and out the classroom or allegorical laboratory. Expert power surely serves as a foundation for how faculty who participate in research and scholarly activities are perceived. As other scholars have mentioned, faculty who do research, and in turn publish, are often times the most valued and highly influential of the institution (Boyer, 1990; Cheney, 1990; Rothblatt, 2001).

“Teaching, research, and service are interrelated and mutually reinforcing processes” (Birnbaum, 1989, p. 12) that provide faculty members with a significant amount of influence. As illustrated above, faculty have multiple opportunities to exert influence through their respective roles. Germane to this study is the way in which full professors perceive status and exercise influence. Therefore, it is important to discuss influence and status from an academic rank perspective.
Influence and Status Across Academic Rank

As this dissertation is focused specifically on the experiences of Black women at the highest traditional rank of the faculty, that of full professor, it is necessary to discuss influence and status as it is enacted through promotion and rank. Martin (1999) alluded to the conspicuous nature of faculty promotion as a reward system of the institution. Clark (1987) asserted, “the ranks define basic status, including tenure, and apportion monetary rewards. In this profession careers are openly and significantly rank-defined” (p. 210). Because rank has the ability to determine who can participate in certain activities of the institution, it is fair to assume that with a higher rank, a symbol of status, comes more opportunities for influence. Before delving into the specifics of full professors and status and influence, a brief treatment of how the faculty rank system came into existence, how it has evolved over time, and the subsequent development of the promotion processes used to regulate movement throughout that system is necessary.

Development of a Faculty Rank System. In seventeenth century U.S. higher education, “instructional staffs were composed entirely of tutors, young [white] men…who had just received their baccalaureate degree and who were preparing for careers in the ministry” (Finkelstein, 1996, pp. 23-24). They were responsible for teaching all subjects required to earn a degree (Finkelstein, 1996; Thelin, 2004). In addition to pedagogical responsibilities, tutors were also expected to tend to the social aspects of the students’ institutional life (e.g., extracurricular activities, moral and spiritual development). However, the tutor positions were by no means permanent, nor were they locked into any sort of contractual agreement with the institutions.
By the mid-eighteenth century, as a result of student enrollment growth and the development of new colleges, institutions needed more stability in the instructional staff. In response to both the “revolving” nature of the tutorship and the need for more expertise in the curriculum, philanthropists began endowing a limited number of permanent faculty, or professors, at institutions such as Harvard and The College of William and Mary (Finkelstein, 1996). It is important to note that these were handpicked positions and often depended more on who one knew than what they knew. These endowed professorships marked the first distinctions in faculty rank as well as status and influence. Not all institutions could afford professorships, therefore some schools transformed the tutorship into less temporary positions.

Professors and tutors were similar in a number of ways, to include coming from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and families whose fathers were engaged in professional careers (i.e. medicine, law). Professionally, both groups tended to the pedagogical and social development of the students (Finkelstein, 1997). However, the distinctions in rank and status soon became evident in the everyday work of both tutors and professors. Tutors remained with a cohort of students throughout the students’ academic experience, continued teaching general courses, and still existed in temporary, short-termed appointments. Professors, however, did not follow a class of students, were “appointed in a particular subject area (e.g., natural philosophy, divinity, ancient languages), and were for the most part engaged in the supervision within that area” (Finkelstein, 1997, p. 82), and had permanent appointments.

Again, these divergences signified the first distinctions in faculty rank across and within institutions, with the professorship, endowed with long-term appointments, academically specialized, and supervisory in nature. Thus, professors possessed a higher
status than tutors, solidifying a key difference between the two academic positions. These
two groups quickly became termed as senior (professors) and junior (tutors and the Harvard-
created instructors) faculty (Finkelstein, 1996). Although a rare occasion, a few institutions
were promoting men from tutorships to professorships. At most other institutions,
tutorships/instructorships and professorships were completely separate academic career
tracks (Finkelstein, 1996). In terms of the work faculty were doing in this era, it is important
to note that faculty taught, engaged in service in the form of religiously affiliated outreach
(e.g., preaching) to the community with some involvement in professional associations, and
on occasion published, although the publications were not empirically based and usually
were of previous sermons (Finkelstein, 1997).

By the Civil War (1860’s), curriculums were changing at many of the original
institutions (i.e., Yale, Harvard, Columbia) and more faculty were needed with
specializations and subject expertise (Metzger, 1984). The professoriate was marked by an
emergence of more than half of the faculty entering after graduate education with training in
academic specializations from German institutions (Smith, 1989). Scholarship of discovery
was the primary purpose of the German model of higher education. The German (i.e.,
scientific) model, focused on knowledge production, would forever change American higher
education, which had, up to this point, been following a “classical” model of education,
which focused on diffusion of knowledge (Cheney, 1990). This shift marked a dramatic
change in the academic career. Where once teaching was the primary focus of higher
education and a symbol of status, research and scholarship took its place in the newly
developing research institutions (Bogue & Aper, 2000).
With the development of graduate education and research and scholarship, mobility opportunities became abundant as faculty became more loyal to a particular discipline instead of an institution (Finkelstein, 1996, 1997). These adaptations to the professoriate signaled a change in the formal structure of the academic career. A systemic progression through the ranks was created and new roles as instructor and assistant professor were established and forged into a career sequence that at once gave shape to the academic career and regulated the movement through the junior ranks to a professorship. Concomitantly, the junior faculty ranks were expanded and professionalized. Together, these developments served to integrate into a single structure the dual career track system of junior and senior faculty that had characterized the early part of the nineteenth century. (Finkelstein, 1996, p. 30)

The streamlined academic career and appearance of the assistant professorship quelled the tutorship at most institutions, as now the tutorship did not lead to the professorship. As an aside, what once was the tutorship would now be the work of student affairs professionals today. With the continued increasing student enrollments, booming institutional developments, and increased professionalization and specializations of the professoriate, the academic career became a more attractive career opportunity attracting many new faculty (i.e., assistant professors) into the newly rank-defined system. The professors, now commonly known as “full” professors, would be handpicked by Presidents to select bright scholars to fill the academic ranks (Smith, 1989). With the development of American research institutions, “crowding of the lower ranks [in research institutions] was even more pronounced: in 1908 three-quarters of the faculties of Harvard, Wisconsin, Yale, and California were instructors and assistant professors” (Metzger, 1987, p. 145). This is
striking when juxtaposed against the approximately one-third of faculty at Yale and twenty-five percent at Harvard, for example, that held full professorships. In short, gaps in the career trajectory began to develop as considerably less faculty went on to be promoted to full professor, a trend that continues today.

What this brief historiographical overview highlights is the way in which the rank-defined academic career transformed. Where tutors were once the mainstay of the American college, endowed professors became the central figures in developing research-oriented institutions. The professorship in the era of the research university became the new symbol of status as opposed to the teaching mission of the tutor. Professors, deemed experts in their fields were rewarded with permanent positions, curriculum oversight, and supervisory administrative functions (e.g., handpicking junior faculty). The productivity and scholarship focus of the research institution would influence the ways in which faculty would be eventually evaluated for promotion (Fairweather, 2005; Youn & Price, 2009). Where promotion to full professor was once based on being handpicked (Kerr, 1995), today, promotion (to associate or full professor) is, at least in theory and on paper, based on one’s teaching, research, and service record (Boyer, 1990; Fairweather, 2005; Rhode, 2006; Youn & Price, 2009).

**Contemporary Rank and Promotion System.** The rank system (i.e., assistant, associate, full professor) has been, to a large degree, standardized among institutions as a hierarchical structure (Tien & Blackburn, 1996) with the full professorship as the pinnacle. Clark (1987) defined the current system as “a continuous, incremental structure of ranks…firmly institutionalized: [where] usually one progresses from assistant to associate to full professor, with the possible addition of instructor on the front end and the endowed chair
at the peak” (p. 211). How academicians understand the role and expectations of each rank is also to some extent uniform, although individual faculty members negotiate contractual agreements that detail their job more comprehensively. While not all faculty approach their work activities in the same way or to the same extent, broadly, faculty can be expected to teach, conduct research, and/or engage in service (Finkelstein, 1984) regardless of rank.

Although promotion upgrades status and can be a highly public reward (Long, Allison, & McGinnis, 1993; Tien & Blackburn, 1996), the process of promotion, particularly to full professor, has been ignored in much of the higher education research and literature (Finnegan & Hyle, 2009). Clark (1987) stated, “progress in an academic career is widely associated with movement up the ranks” (p. 189). However, much of the literature on faculty progress and professional mobility focuses on tenure but fails to discuss or interrogate promotion – the mechanism by which one progresses through the ranks (Commission on Academic Tenure, 1973; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2008; Shaw, 1971).

Youn and Price (2009) found that tenure evaluations relied more on ‘cut and dried’ rules, whereas promotions were subject to elaborate ‘interpretations’ and complex negotiations between the faculty committee and other social actors [i.e., deans, provosts, and presidents] in the organization over the issue of how the basic values [of the institution and department] are understood. (p. 227) Their findings indicate two distinctive processes governed by different practices. More directly stated, the tenure process is purportedly based on a set of fixed criteria, while the promotion process is based on more subjective criteria, such as collegiality and loyalty, and is more institutionally specific (Youn & Price, 2009). Just as the tenure process has been described as obscure and ambiguous, despite the ‘cut and dry’ nature of its governing
policies, the promotion process has been viewed similarly. Katz (1973) found, in a study on faculty productivity, salaries, and promotion, that “faculty members may have only vague ideas as to how their…promotions are determined. A symptom of the chaotic process is the almost total lack of written departmental policy statements on…promotions” (p. 476). While Katz’s work is thirty years old, research institutions are just now seeking to examine their faculty promotion criteria and policies. For example, Ohio State University is currently engaged in a self-study of their promotion policies governing promotion to full professor. Thus far they have found that “…research appears to be the dominant factor at that stage, despite official policies to weigh teaching and service as well” (Jaschik, 2010, p. 1). Ohio State’s initial findings are not surprising as the most highly valued activity at research institutions is research and scholarship (antonio, 2002; Fairweather, 1993; Finkelstein, 1984; Long, Allison, & McGinnis, 1993). So, what then determines promotion to full professor and how does that promotion effect their status in the academy?

**Full Professors.** Merriam Webster (2010) defines status as “high rank or social standing,” and “relative rank in a hierarchy of prestige” (n.p.). In terms of hierarchy and rank, full professors are at the top. Promotion to full professor is an acknowledgement of status within one’s academic community (Long, Allison, McGinnis, 1993; Tien & Blackburn, 1996). Full professors have a great deal of authority and influence at the departmental, institutional, and disciplinary levels of academia. Despite their potentially highly influential status, not much scholarship has centered their experiences in an exploratory, empirical way.

Clark (1987), Long, Allison, and McGinnis (1993), and Tien and Blackburn (1996) all espoused that promotion to full professor is a delicate balance between time, or seniority, and productivity, or merit. With regard to time and seniority, assistant professors can expect
to remain at that rank for up to six years before promotion to associate professor, cued by tenure attainment. Conversely, promotion to full professor is less structured in terms of time (Perrucci, O’Flaherty, & Marshall, 1983; Rosenfeld, 1991; Youn & Price, 2009). Because promotion to full professor is mostly managed institutionally, variation in time to promotion exists (Long, Allison, McGinnis, 1993).

Promotion to full professor is also based on productivity and merit, which are defined as the research, publications, teaching, and service faculty contribute to their institutional and disciplinary communities (Finkelstein, 1984; Perrucci, O’Flaherty, & Marshall, 1983). While one researcher found that publishing declined upon promotion to full professor (Silverman, 1999), others have found that higher ranking faculty are more productive, based on publishing in refereed journals (Baldwin & Blackburn, 1981; Bellas & Toutkoushian, 1999; Dundar & Lewis, 1998; Fairweather, 2002; Fairweather & Beach, 2002; Johnson, Kuykendall, & Laird, 2005; Tien & Blackburn, 1996; Wanner, Lewis, & Gregorio, 1981). Johnson et al. (2005) argued that these faculty may be more productive because their main motivation, particularly at research institutions, is to produce research and contribute to the advancement of knowledge (Gaff & Simpson, 1994). Another contributing factor may be that they no longer have to deal with the roadblocks that are present at the assistant and associate ranks.

Despite the lack of sufficient evidence regarding the actual experiences of those at the rank of full professor, there is a quite of bit of information regarding demographics and academic appointments. Trower and Chait (2002) found that

94% of full professors in science and engineering are white; 90% are male;

91% of the full professors at research universities are white; 75% are male;
87% of the full-time faculty members in the United States are white; 64% are male; 5% of the full professors in the U.S. are black, Hispanic, or Native American; the gap between the percentage of tenured men and the percentage of tenured women has not changed in 30 years. (p. 34)

Such alarming statistics can be corroborated with the work of several scholars’ whom found that women, faculty of color, and female faculty of color have lower rates of promotion to full professor (Carter, 2010; Carter, In Press; Hesli & Burrell, 1995; Long, Allison, & McGinnis, 1993; Tesch, Wood, Helwig, & Nattinger, 1995; Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2008). Much of what has been written about women, faculty of color, and female faculty of color espouse that much of their time is spent in areas that are not deemed as valuable to the promotion process (i.e., service and teaching) (Chamberlain, 2001). A more recent study by Johnson, Kuykendall, and Laird (2005) found that this was not the case for faculty of color. They asserted that faculty of color actually spend a great deal of time on scholarship, service, and teaching in the hopes to not be deficient in any area come time for tenure and promotion activities.

Trower and Chait’s (2002) findings indicate a severe problem. Faculty of color, female faculty, and female faculty of color are underrepresented in the most influential positions in faculty ranks (Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Rhode (2006) posited that, “those who begin without [status] may be unable to move from the margins of the academic establishment” (p. 13). Given Rhode’s statement and the lack of incorporation of the experiences and voices of women, people of color, and women of color in the development of the academic career, the extreme whiteness and maleness of the upper echelon academic ranks is not surprising.
For black women who, by virtue of residing in a white, male dominated society, have been relegated to the margins for most of their existence, this is particularly problematic. Given the lack of representation and full incorporation of black female faculty into the professoriate, this study of the experiences of those women who have made it to the rank of full professor is warranted. Particularly, at stake in this study is whether or not black female full professors feel they have gained the full privileges and influential power in their respective areas of faculty work that traditionally has come with being a full professor.

**Experiences of Black Women in Higher Education**

Although this study privileges the voices and experiences of Black female full professors in higher education and student affairs programs, it is necessary to provide a context from which to understand the broader context that shapes their experiences. As Howard-Hamilton (2003) wrote, “Their voices remain unheard because many people assume that issues that pertain to women in general or to African Americans in general pertain to African American women in the same ways” (p. 1). Given these dangerous forms of essentialism of black women and their experiences based on race and gender, this study utilizes an intersectionality premise. Through use of an intersectional perspective, scholars can examine “the relationships and interactions between multiple axes of identity and multiple dimensions of social organization – at the same time” (Dill, 2002, p. 4).

**From Essentialism to Intersectionality**

In order to truly understand the experiences of any one person and their social location in society, a shift must occur from essentialist analyses to intersectionality-based analyses. An essentialist perspective presumes that there is perhaps a monolithic,
generalizable experience shared among particular groups of people (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). That is to say, for example, that perhaps every woman experiences sexism and discrimination in the same way, or that every person of color experiences racism similarly. These assumptions are dangerous. First, essentialism assumes that identity is additive in the sense that black women are essentially white women who happen to be black. This assumption is dangerous as it serves as a vehicle to silence those who may experience discrimination in a much more complex manner, such as those who may occupy more than one non-dominant social location (i.e., women of color who are both female and racial and ethnic minorities). This act of silencing serves as a conduit to maintain the structural and cultural power dynamics that keep minoritized people on the margins (Hurtado, 1996). Additionally, essentialist perspectives allow for individuals to ignore the sociohistorical positions of non-dominant groups who have historically been marginalized and oppressed in the United States (Zambrana & Macdonald, 2009). Failure to examine the historical events that have led to the unfortunate current state of affairs for people of color, particularly in the educational arena, also serves to maintain the status quo and leaves the power structure unchecked (Hurtado, 1996). As Márquez (2003) stated, “discrimination has created structures of subordination which determine outcomes in distribution of goods and services and frustrate minority aspirations at every terms (Bell, 1992; Hacker, 1995)” (p. 17).

It is with these understandings of social location and power that intersectionality becomes the necessary tool for exploring the experiences of the women of color in this study. Collins (2004) defined intersectionality as “analysis claiming that systems of race, economic class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape African American experiences and, in turn, are shaped by
African Americans” (p. 351). Through the use of an intersectionality perspective, scholars argue the interconnectedness of statuses in the social hierarchies in place in society (Collins, 1990; Henderson & Tickamyer, 2009).

Intersectionality also serves as a vehicle to validate knowledge of inequality constructed by those on the receiving end of said inequality – people of color. By centering the experiences of people of color, “we see that opportunity is not just constructed by race, but by the confluence of race, class, gender, and other dimensions of difference” (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 6). The voices of those on the margins can create new knowledge that has historically been left out of the public conversations of inequity and inequality. Intersectionality perspectives also seek to complicate both individual and group identity. As such, it allows for discussions on within group difference, which has long been ignored in favor of “ascribed identities that brand racial minorities as inferior and relegated them to lower social and economic status…” (Márquez, 2003, p. 1). As previously mentioned, another underlying premise of intersectionality is the ability to unveil the multiple types of power in the “interconnected structures of inequality” (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 7). Collins (2009) outlined four domains – structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal – in which power has been used not only to shape oppression and domination, but also to serve as sites for empowerment and resistance.

The structural domain refers to the way social institutions (i.e., colleges and universities, legal systems, media, etc.) “are organized to reproduce Black women’s subordination over time” (Collins, 2009, p. 295). The disciplinary domain deals with the constant need to surveillance black women as a way to resist the structural changes (e.g., affirmative action laws) that disallow discrimination based on race and gender. The
hegemonic domain of power “deals with ideology, culture, and consciousness” (Collins, 2009, p. 302). Ideas of the black woman as an oversexualized jezebel or mammie are examples of the hegemonic ideology that exists in society. Lastly, the interpersonal domain on power refers to the ways in which individuals operationalize oppression focusing specifically on how individuals “replace individual and cultural ways of knowing with the dominant group’s specialized thought – hegemonic ideologies that, in turn, justify practices of other domains of power” (Collins, 2009, p. 306).

At stake in the use of an intersectional analysis is the way in which the knowledge produced by people of color, as it relates to the ways in which domination exists across many societal domains, can be used to empower and enlighten people and work towards a social justice and social change agenda for all. This can only be accomplished by uncovering power and how it is used to maintain the social locations of marginalized people (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). With that said, it brings me back to Howard-Hamilton’s (2003) point about the essentialization of black women in higher education. If scholars are to understand the experiences of black women on college and university campuses, an intersectional perspective is necessary. Further, as this study deals specifically with the experiences of black female faculty, it is important to note that most of the research on minority or underrepresented faculty is from an essentialist point of view (i.e., faculty of color and women faculty). However, the argument here is not that these issues are not relevant for black female faculty, rather that the issues raised in these two bodies of scholarship may play out differently for black women. One way to make these is through using Cohen’s (1999) conceptions of consensus issues and cross-cutting issues distinctions to discuss anti-essentialism.
Cohen (1999) defined consensus issues as matters “framed as somehow important to every member of ‘the black community,’ either directly or symbolically” (p. 11). In the case of black female full professors, a consensus issue would be race and the ways racism has been used to marginalize and silence people of color in higher education. As such, it is necessary to examine the scholarship centering the experiences of black people in higher education. The cross-cutting political issue is gender. Cohen (1999) defined cross-cutting issues as those concerns which disproportionately and directly affect only certain segments of a marginal group. These issues stand in contrast to consensus issues, which are understood to constrain or oppress with equal probability (although through different manifestations) all identifiable marginal group members. (p. 13)

When using an intersectional analysis, consensus and cross-cutting issues are efficient and useful ways of organizing intersectionality (Henderson & Tickamyer, 2009).

**Consensus Issues: Blacks in Higher Education.** Feagin, Vera, and Batur (2001) wrote, “white racism and the black struggle against it have shaped the character not only of founding documents of the United States, such as the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, but also of a huge body of law and much social practice over the intervening centuries” (p. 6). As a social practice, higher education is no exception. Whereas in the early 1970s black colleges and universities (BCUs) educated most blacks in the U.S., “by 1988 the proportion…was down to less than 17 percent (sic)” (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 1993, p. 9). Since this “integration,” black people (and other people of color) have faced many challenges and barriers in their education journeys. In *Responding to the Realities of Race on Campus*, Harper and Patton (2007) along side several scholars
made clear that although more people of color are accessing higher education in ways that were not readily available to them sixty years ago, racism still exists and worse yet is shifting to more covert forms (e.g., colorblindness, racial microaggressions, and artificial diversity statements).

Using the pipeline metaphor, Jackson (2007) and colleagues illuminated the many challenges African Americans face in education as students in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education and as teachers, faculty, and administrators. Howard (2007) stated, “The matriculation through the pipeline is contingent upon each of the areas of the pipe to be unobstructed and working in proper order, which allows for a free-flowing exchange from point to point” (p. 18). Poor elementary and secondary schooling opportunities, lack of support in postsecondary education, and continuing racial inequities along the way have caused major leaks in this pipeline (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Siddle-Walker, 1996).

The scholarship addressing the experiences of black students in elementary and secondary education maintain that black students are overrepresented in special education, failing to meet grade-level proficiency on standardized achievement tests at higher rates than their peers, and not participating in gifted and talented programs or advanced placement classes in high numbers (Darling-Hammond, 1985; Oakes, 1985). Across the field of teacher education, scholars have called for a shift to culturally relevant pedagogy to address these types of issues that disproportionally effect black students (and other students of color) (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Culturally relevant pedagogy “recognizes the cogent role that cultural socialization plays in how students receive, analyze, and interpret information and structure instruction accordingly (Au and Jorda, 1981; Allen and Boykin, 1992; Cazden and Leggett, 1981)” (Howard, 2001, p. 135). These scholars recognize that a
major barrier black students face is the lack of empowering and supportive learning environments fostered by schools and teachers. Unfortunately, these barriers (i.e., poor academic preparation, lack of support, and culturally insensitive environments) create a cumulative effect as students attempt to access and persist through postsecondary education. McDonough and Gildersleeve (2006) stated “[there are] categorically different contexts of schooling amid and between compulsory education and post-secondary opportunities” (p. 66). For black (and other underrepresented minority) students, access to higher education is confounded by systemic issues such as low expectations from schools and teachers, lack of general knowledge about college, a lack of advisors, and “a climate of presumed lack of merit, racial hostility, and unwelcomeness” (McDonough & Gildersleeve, 2006, p. 65).

For black students matriculating at predominately white institutions of higher education, campus racial climate has been shown to play a major role in their experiences (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) defined campus racial climate as “the overall racial environment of the college campus” (p. 62). In their qualitative study of 34 African American students across three predominately white top tier research universities, Solórzano et al. (2002) found that racial microaggressions, or “subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously,” (p. 60) were a common and normal part of these students’ everyday experiences. Black students often report feelings of invisibility and isolation in academic and social settings, low expectations from faculty, and tokenism (as a result of being the only one in class or on a residence hall floor and often being asked to represent one’s race). These feelings do not subside in graduate education.
There is a growing body of literature illuminating the racism that black students experience in graduate education, particularly doctoral education. Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies, and Smith (2004), in their study of African American Ph.D. students at a predominately white, top research university, found that in conjunction with questioning academic ability, perceptions of faculty support and encouragement, financial support, and other characteristics that effect doctoral students (regardless of race and ethnicity), these students experienced perceived individual and institutional racism. Gay (2004), McNair (2003), Turner and Thompson (1993), and Watts (2003) add lack of mentoring, racialized and cultural isolation and tokenism, and lack of diverse epistemological perspectives in the curriculum to the many challenges to the success of black doctoral students. Students’ (at all levels) agency and resilience shine through in a number of cases as they resist and persist in their formal education experiences, but as Gildersleeve, Croom, and Vasquez (2011) point to, the time has come for the interrogation of the cultural practices that inherently make doctoral education dehumanizing and marginalizing.

**Black Faculty and Faculty of Color.** Despite the status that comes with being a university professor, Black faculty do not necessarily have it better. While much of the scholarship focusing on the experiences of black faculty focus on earning and gaining tenure, scholars have revealed the ways in which racism (and other social identities) has effected their everyday experiences as faculty of color. To be sure, black faculty are an underrepresented population in academe (Turner & Myers, 1999). A simple math equation highlights just how underrepresented they can be. There are over 1,300,000 faculty across all institution types. There are only 87,107 black faculty, approximately six percent (6%). If there are nearly 5,000 institutions of higher education, if one were to evenly disperse the total
number of black faculty across these schools, there would be approximately 17 black faculty members at each college or university. Given the fact that some institutions have hundreds and thousands of faculty, only 17 is problematic. In 2005, the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* published a study about the number of black faculty at the nation’s highest ranked 28 colleges and universities. With faculty numbers ranging from 282 to 3,313, black faculty represented only one percent of their sample.

In a study with 64 faculty of color, 28 of which were African American, across institutions in seven states, Turner and Myers (1999) found that these participants identified …racial and ethnic bias as the most troubling challenge[s] they face[d] in the academic workplace. Issues commonly cited involve feelings of isolation, lack of information about tenure and promotion, unsupportive work environments, gender bias, language/accent bias barriers, lack of mentorship, and lack of support from superiors. (p. 87)

Turner and Myers went on to list major concerns these faculty of color identified as burdens and barriers to their full incorporation into the academy:

1. denial of tenure or promotion due to race/ethnicity
2. being expected to work harder than whites
3. having color/ethnicity given more attention than credentials
4. being treated as a token
5. lack of support or validation of research on minority issues
6. being expected to handle minority affairs
7. having too few minorities on campus. (p. 87)

Turner, Gonzalez, and Wood (2008) analyzed and synthesized twenty years of literature across 252 publications focused on the experiences of faculty of color in departmental, institutional, and national contexts. From a departmental context they found that teaching was one main reason faculty of color persisted in academe, despite the devaluation of
teaching in tenure and promotion cases. They went on to find that “undervaluation of their research interests, approaches, and theoretical frameworks and challenges to their credentials and intellect in the classroom….isolation, perceived bias in the hiring process, unrealistic expectation of doing their work and being representatives of their/racial group” (p. 143) were all common themes in the experiences of faculty of color. Faculty of color are also consistently overworked in the area of service. Brayboy (2003) argued the detrimental ideology of diversity implementation as it relates to the service workloads of faculty of color. He maintains that colleges and universities depend on the faculty of color to serve as the “diversity” by virtue of their bodies of color in these spaces (i.e., people of color serving on committees and advising students based on the color of their racial and ethnic designations versus their expertise). This type of service, he notes, is detrimental to the advancement of faculty of color through the ranks of academe. Brayboy further insists that the ‘language of diversity and efforts to implement diversity are bound to fail in the absence of an institutional commitment to incorporating strategies for diversity into their research, teaching, and service missions” (p. 72).

When full professors of color are contributing to this literature it is often not about their own current experiences as full professors, but rather about empowering and mentoring the next generation of junior faculty of color, particularly in surviving the tenure process. The American Association of University Professors provided a definition of tenure in their 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure (AAUP, n.d.):

Tenure is a means to certain ends; specifically: (1) freedom of teaching and research and of extramural activities, and (2) a sufficient degree of economic security to make the profession attractive to men and women of ability. Freedom and economic
security, hence, tenure, are indispensable to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society. (n.d.)

While tenure does not guarantee job security, for the most part those who secure tenure, and subsequent promotion, have a great weight lifted off their shoulders. As Adams (1976), prior to tenure assistant professors “find their role” in a department or institution, while associate and full professors can now “make their role.” Thus, tenure is important step that faculty of color must take in the academy if they are to begin making their own way, to include doing research they want to do, teaching what they want to teach, and serving in capacities that make sense for them. In terms of status and influence, gaining tenure lifts one’s status and should, theoretically, increase one’s influential power in the academy.

As previously stated, when senior scholars of color contribute to the faculty racial equity literature, it is often from a reflexive, mentoring perspective as opposed to reflections on their current experiences. One exception to this trend was Padilla’s (1993) chapter in The Leaning Ivory Tower: Latino Professors in American Universities. Padilla (1993) discussed the capricious behaviors and contradictory rationales of the promotion committee’s decision to deny him, and later grant him, promotion to full professor. He shares with the reading audience memos from the promotion committee highlighting his research, publishing, teaching, and service record. However, despite the institutional policy indicating that promotion to full decisions could not be based on length of service (i.e., time at the institution), the committee initially denied him promotion to full professor based on this very issue. Padilla ultimately earned promotion to full professor, as his teaching, service, and scholarly records (i.e., his merit) greatly outweighed his time at that particular institution (i.e., seniority) and shared, “the process is not altogether rational and does suffer from
ambiguity and procedural quirks” (p. 136). Padilla’s story highlights the lack of balance between seniority and merit in his own process, where he shared “the principal issue in promotion decisions should be productivity and effectiveness, not merely how long one has been hired” (p. 133). Padilla’s point is particularly relevant when considering the valued activity of producing scholarship at research institutions (antonio, 2002; Long, Allison, McGinnis, 1993). Examples such as Padilla’s illuminate the need to examine the more current experiences of senior faculty of color, who even at the pinnacle of status in academe, may be still experiencing racism or other forms of bias. The reality of both tenure and promotion between any ranks is that there are irrational, political, unwritten rules and expectations of the institution, broadly, and department, specifically, that affect minoritized and underrepresented faculty in disproportionately negative ways in comparison to their white faculty counterparts (Alfred, 2001; Tierney & Bensimon, 2002; Stanley, 2006). The implications of the promotion system are evidenced by the low tenure achievement rates (Perna, 2001; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996; Turner & Myers, 1999; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999), dramatic overrepresentation in the lower ranks (i.e. assistant professor) (Alex-Assensoh, 2003; Carter, 2010; Menges & Exum, 1983; Turner & Myers, 1999; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999), and inequitable salary issues (Chamberlain, 1991; Hesli & Burrell, 1995).

While faculty of color, and black faculty specifically, may face challenges and constant blockades in their work, one theme is resilience and persistence. Through forming important mentoring relations, counterspaces of resistance, and coalitions among one another as well across racial/ethnic lines, faculty of color and black faculty live to fight another day. Problematic in this observation is that at every turn systemic racism inherent in the
educational system is being maintained. Therefore, more studies are needed to understand and challenge the endemic racism underlying the social practice of education in the U.S. Furthermore, more studies are needed that focus on how racism intersects with other issues, such as sexism and classism, in that ways to continue to perpetuate hegemony.

Cross-cutting Issues: Women/Female Faculty. Based on the intersectional analysis of this study and the focus on black female full professors, the main cross-cutting political issue (Cohen, 1999) is gender. Cross-cutting political issues are those that disproportionately affect a smaller segment of a larger marginalized group. When thinking about the ways in which gender play a role in the experiences of women in higher education Acker’s (1990) theory of gendered organizations comes to mind. That is to say that organizations, such as colleges, universities, and academe broadly, are far from gender-neutral bodies and in fact are male-centric. Acker stated,

Images of men's bodies and masculinity pervade organizational processes, marginalizing women and contributing to the maintenance of gender segregation in organizations. The positing of gender-neutral and disembodied organizational structures and work relations is part of the larger strategy of control in industrial capitalist societies, which, at least partly, are built upon a deeply embedded substructure of gender difference. (p. 139)

Given that in colonial times compulsory education was for boys only, and not until “50 years after the American Revolution [did] coeducation…become the norm in public elementary education” (Sadker, Sadker, & Klein, 1991), and women did not enter colleges until 200 years after Harvard, the first American college, was founded, it is fair to assert that maleness and masculinity are built into the very fabric of higher education. Despite the many
feminist and women’s movements that have led to great gains in the realm of educational access, participation, and graduation, the leaking pipeline metaphor has been applied to the experiences of women in education as well (Kulis, Sicotte, & Collins, 2002; Long, 2001). Corbett, Hill, and St. Rose (2008) stated, “women are attending and graduating from high school and college at a higher rate than their peers” (p. 2). However, gender equity is still a relevant topic as gender bias and discriminations seeps into the everyday experiences of women.

Gender equity literature reveals the ways boys were tracked into ministry, law, and medicine, engaging with math and science and other curricular opportunities, in the 18 and 1900s, while girls were tracked into homemaking, in preparation for becoming mothers and housewives, and later teaching (Chamberlain, 1988). The cumulative disadvantage from these actions, as well as the ways sexism has become more covert, can be seen today, as girls and women are guided into fields other than science, technology, engineering, and math (Sadker, 2000). Sadker (2000) provided an update on the gender equity issues still effecting female students. He illuminated the gender segregation happening in some school districts that are requiring students to sit on certain sides of the bus based on their gender and creating single-gender classes and schools. Further, Sadker pointed to the misconception that girls do not drop out of school and that if they enter gifted and talented programs they more often than not graduate from these programs. A report from the National Women’s Law Center (NWLC) (2007) estimated that for the 2003-2004 academic year, 40% of Black and 50% of Native American/Alaskan Native female students either failed to graduate from high school in four years with a regular high school diploma or dropped out. In a study with over 100 fourth, sixth, and eighth-grade students and teachers across four states and the District of
Columbia, Sadker and Sadker (1986) found that consistently males received more attention in the classroom than females and directed constructive feedback was provided to male students more so than female students. They asserted that through the behaviors and responses of the teachers, regardless of teacher backgrounds (i.e., race, gender, etc.), “boys are being trained to be assertive; girls are being trained to be passive – spectators relegated to the sidelines of classroom discussion” (p. 513).

As stated previously, women have made gains in their access to higher education. Since the early 1980s, women have earned more than 50% of the bachelor’s degrees conferred (Glazer-Raymc, 1999). However, most of these degrees are being earned in the humanities, education, and psychology, with very low percentages graduating with degrees in engineering, math, and the physical sciences. Scholars, such as Glazer-Raymc (1999), posit that this is due to the belief that these disciplines are considered more feminine. Additionally, scholars have found that the differential treatment of students based on gender continues into postsecondary education. Scholars have found women engage in self-censoring due to men constantly interrupting women in classrooms and faculty failing to recognize the gender dynamics and further failing to address or remedy the situation (Boersma, Gay, Jones, Morrison, & Remick, 1981; Brooks, 1982; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Sadker & Sadker, 1986).

Moreover, in the area of leadership development, although women outnumber men on college campuses, they engage in student leadership roles in student organizations at lower rates than women (Leonard & Sigall, 1989; Sagaria, 1988; Whitt, 1993).

Gender bias is also found in graduate education, wrought with sexist language, exclusionary behavior by faculty, and the absence of scholarship by and about women.
outside of gender studies courses (Fassinger, 1995; Myers & Dugan, 1996). Myers and Dugan (1996) found, in their study of gender bias in social science graduate programs, that Students who have negative experiences in classrooms because of gender bias may suffer longer-term consequences, such as the loss of potential advisers and mentors; difficulty in constructing a thesis, dissertation, or general exam committee; a loss of self-efficacy; being tracked away from subdisciplines that seem unwelcoming; or leaving a graduate program altogether. (p. 346)

Mentoring and advising relationships have been proven to help diminish some of the aforementioned issues. When female faculty advocate for female graduate students they are able to assist students and other faculty in changing their views on the roles of women in the academy (Heinrich, 1995). However, female faculty also have challenges they must deal with regularly.

Female Faculty. Bellas (2001) and West and Curtis (2006) found, the gender gap gets wider the higher up in the faculty ranks one goes. Forty-two percent of all full-time instructional faculty are women (NCES, 2008), of that number 38% are below the rank of assistant professor, 28% are assistant professors, 19% are associate professors, and 16% are full professors (NCES, 2008). The trend for men is opposite. Thirty-one percent (31%) of men are full professors, 21% associate, 22% assistant professor, and 26% below the rank of assistant professor (NCES, 2008). Many scholars who have studied the experiences of female faculty, have noted that women perceive gender discrimination as a major barrier to their success (American Council on Education, 2005; Astin & Bayer, 1973; Carr, Szalacha, Barnett, Caswell, & Inui, 2003; Ginther & Hays, 2001; Valian, 1998). In a survey of approximately 47,000 faculty across ranks, Wolfinger, Mason, and Goulden (2008) put forth
that the academy is configured in an inflexible way that supports a male-centered career. As such, women are forced to choose between family and work. Other scholars show that women must balance their multiple roles, in and out of the academy, with little in the way of institutional support (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). For many, it is less of a balance and more of a choice between starting a family and remaining steadfast to the traditional path of tenure-track professors (i.e., focusing solely on research, teaching, and service to get tenure) (Finkel & Olswagen, 1996; Finkel, Olswagen, & She, 1994; Raabe, 1997). In addition to the major gaps in rank attainment (Menges & Exum, 1983) and gender discrimination via family “un”-friendly policies and practices, women still experience salary differences (Perna, 2001). Perna (2001) found that “overall, [the] data show that women full-time faculty at four-year institutions receive institutional base salaries that are about 26% lower than the base salaries men receive as full-time faculty at four-year institutions” (p. 295).

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004), in their study of 29 female faculty from across nine research universities, found that while women enjoy their teaching and research responsibilities, challenges included some common faculty concerns like not having enough time for tasks, work overload, and ambiguous tenure expectations. However for the women who were planning on having children or already mothers, they found they had to carefully plan the timing of having children around tenure and that the mothers were responsible for much of the childcare and housework in their homes, making it more stressful for them as they balanced work and home. Ward and Wolf-Wendel stated,

Today, as the demographics of the faculty change and the concerns about balancing work and family are becoming more public, it is incumbent upon academic institutions to rethink their policies. Understanding the experiences of women faculty
with small children and responding proactively to their needs will provide institutions
with necessary returns on the investment that these institutions make in their faculties.
It will also encourage more high-quality individuals to consider academic careers. (p. 255)

What the scholarship reveals about the experiences of girls and women in education is that
gender-bias and sexist behavior still exists. Lack of support, tracking, the allowance of male-
dominate spaces (physically and intellectually), and insensitive institutional policies and
colleague and peer behavior all provide a “chilly climate” (Hall & Sandler, 1982) for women
in academe. Undoubtedly women have come quite far in terms of access and participation in
education, but if one applies an intersectional analysis, examining, for example, the
experiences black women, scholars might find that the same issues might not only effect
these women differently, but the reactions may be different as well. As Hull, Bell Scott, and
Smith (1982) proclaimed, “all the women are white, all the blacks are men, but some of us
are brave” (n.p.). In that braveness can be found resilience, struggle, tensions, successes, an
eagerness to complicate the misleading perceptions and implications for those who are
neither male or white, and a whole host of other actions, reactions, and outcomes that deserve
voice and light.

**Black Women in Education**

Look at me, look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns and no man
could head me...And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man---
when I could get to it--- and bear the lash as well and ain't I a woman? - Sojourner Truth,
1797-1883
In her famous speech to the Women’s Convention in 1851, Sojourner Truth asked a simplistically complex question to her (mostly white) female audience, “ain’t I a woman?” Her question underlined a major issue in the first wave feminist era: the systematic exclusion of black women from the movement. Based on the enslavement of black women and the subsequent systematic discrimination (Perkins, 1993), a new definition of womanhood was necessary. Davis (1981) stated,

Black women were equal to their men in the oppression they suffered; they were their men’s social equals within the slave community; and they resisted slavery with a passion equal to their men’s…the groundwork was created not only for Black women to assert their equality through their social relations, but also to express it through their acts of resistance. (p. 23)

Black women have been resisting for a long time, particularly in the arena of education, as education has been seen as an opportunity to better oneself and the entire racial community (Collins, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lomotey, 1997). Thus, the struggle is necessary, because as Collins (2009) pointed out, “no matter how highly educated or demonstrably competent Black [women] may be, their accomplishments remain questionable” (p. 89) in the eyes of others.

As previously discussed all levels of the education system are gendered and raced in ways that disproportionally effect blacks and women. But, because black girls and women hold unique positions in two (and sometimes more) traditionally marginalized groups and given the complex nature of the intersectionality of these positions, detailed attention should be paid to multiple positions (i.e., social, political, and educational) of black women”
In order to gain a better understanding the issues that at times affect black female faculty some historical context is needed.

**More than Mammies and Jezebels In the Educational Pipeline.** Hill Collins (2009) wrote

> Within U.S. culture, racist and sexist ideologies permeate the social structure to such a degree that they become hegemonic, namely, seen as natural, normal, and inevitable….From the mammies, jezebels, and breeder women of slavery to the smiling Aunt Jemimas on pancake mix boxes, ubiquitous Black prostitutes, and ever-present welfare mothers of contemporary popular culture, negative stereotypes applied to African American women have been fundamental to Black women’s oppression. (p. 7)

Despite the archetypal models (i.e., mammies, jezebels, etc.) put forth by a sexist and racist hegemony, black women have been instrumental in making educational opportunities available in the black community (Sule, 2009). For example, in the mid- to late 19th century black female educators such as Anna Julia Cooper, Fanny Jackson Coppin, and Mary Church Terrell had to break the ‘mammie’ stereotypes, that suggested black women were only good for taking care of white people, and become courageous leaders in the black community (hooks, 1994). Through the creation of associations, such as the National Association of Colored Women (1896), and schools (e.g., Bethune-Cookman College now University) advocacy through the engagement “in community development by creating college scholarships, resettlement programs, day care programs, and healthcare facilities” (Sule, 2009, p. 93) black women showed their commitment to social justice (Giddings, 1984). Further, in the first half of the 20th century, more than 80% of black women with college
degrees went into the field of education (Crocco & Waite, 2007). Despite the persistence and resistance, black women still experience injustices in the educational pipeline.

While there is a small literature base on black girls in compulsory education, to be sure they are resisting daily in ways that differ from their white girl and black boy peers. In the literature on “girls” in school, self-censorship and silencing is seen as a result of being acquiesced. However, Fordham (1990), in her study of black female adolescents, found that self-censoring was seen as an act of defiance, a way to reject the low expectations of teachers and administrators in their schools (Ward, 1996). The American Association of University Women’s (AAUW) report entitled, Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America, found that black girls in the study “began with and were better able to retain higher levels of self-esteem through adolescence than their white and Latina counterparts. A sense of individual and personal self-worth was important in the structure of self-esteem for black girls” (Ward, 1996, p. 88). However, although there is a sense of resilience, the psyches of black girls are sensitive and fragile and interactions in the educational pipeline can serve to slowly chip away at their self-esteem. Due to the constant unchecked racism and sexism, some black girls might feel, they can lose faith in teachers and school (Thompson, 1998). The blatant ignoring of the effects of multiple marginality required and still necessitates black women to take bold and brave steps to ensure the success of not only black women, but also other oppressed people.

Similar to the lack of literature on black girls in compulsory education, there is a lacuna in the scholarship on black women in college. The tenacity of women like Georgiana Simpson (German Language and Literature, University of Chicago, Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander (Economics, University of Pennsylvania), and Eva Beatrice Dykes (English
Philology, Radcliffe College) who would earn the first Ph.D.s by black women in 1921 (Crocco & Waite, 2007), paved the way for black women to access higher education. What scholars do know is that black women are participating in higher education in record numbers. The graduation rate for black women is 47% and they are more likely to graduate from college than their male counterparts (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2007). However, their day-to-day experiences on college and university campuses are being masked. In a study of black and white college women across 11 predominately white institutions and seven historically black institutions, Fleming (1984) found that black women at PWIs were more assertive, able to use coping skills, and served as role models more often than their peers at HBCUs although there was no evidence of academic gains across institution type. However, Fleming also found that women at PWIs experiences greater isolation and were ostracized for their assertive behaviors. Exemplar of the way gender cross-cuts race to create a unique experience, Fleming’s (1984) study also found that black women at coeducational HBCUs experienced less support for their academic motivations and ambitions than their male counterparts. In a study of 135 black women across two coeducational HBCUs and two women’s PWIs, Jackson (1998) found that black women “at women’s colleges have strong ethnic and gender identities” (p. 371). Jackson concludes, in tandem with Dillard (1994) and Moses (1989) that institutions of higher education, regardless of type, need to do a better job of meeting the needs of black women on their campuses, to include recognizing the ways in which current programs and efforts marginalize parts of their identities.

**Black Female Faculty.** The scholarship and literature related to the experiences of Black female faculty does not provide a prettier picture and warrants review. Through
agency, resilience and courageousness, black female faculty have entered into academic careers in spaces not meant for them. Although most, if not all, of this literature focuses on Black female faculty in the lower ranks (i.e., assistant professors) and promotion to associate professor (i.e., coupled exclusively with tenure), the experiences shared in this body of scholarship indicate patterns of inequity and inequality, as well as persistence and resistance, for this sub-group of faculty. If the distribution equation from earlier in this chapter were duplicated for black female faculty, one would find that there would be four black female faculty members at each of the 5,000 institutions of higher education.

To be sure, Black women are an underrepresented group in the faculty ranks (Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Analyses of Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data reveal that there were 703,463 full-time faculty members employed at U.S. higher education institutions in 2007¹ (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2009; National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Black women represented a dismally low 2.86% (N=20,148) of that number (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). A ten-year glance into past data indicated Black women represented 2.40% of faculty in 1997 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000), indicating not much in the way of percentage change. In terms of rank, approximately 25% (N=173,395) of all faculty have attained the academic rank of full professor (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). However, Black women represented only 1.26% (N=2,193) of all faculty holding full professor rank in 2007 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). While one could argue that the academy has become more accessible for Black women seeking faculty positions (Gregory, 2001), I

¹ Reflects all full-time instructional faculty employed at U.S. higher education institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs and granting associate’s or higher degrees.
concur with Cole (2001) who stated, “…it is critically important to acknowledge the obvious: that being present in a college or university does not mean that one is welcomed, given the support needed to gain tenure [or promotion], or paid equally for equal work” (p. 231). Further, although there are more Black women faculty today, than say 20 years ago, their concentration in the lower ranks, likelihood of being in part-time, untenured positions, and slower promotion rates indicate that their status has not changed much in the academy (Gregory, 2001; Williams-Green & Singh, 1995).

Many scholars have documented the challenges Black female faculty face (Bowie, 1995; Cole, 2001; Grant & Simmons, 2008; King, 1995; Myers, 2002; Turner, 2002; Womble, 1995). An extensive review of this literature indicates that Black female faculty experience a lack of mentoring, sense of isolation, and endure racially and gender based occupational stressors that challenge them on a daily basis and limit their authority and influence as full fledged members of the professoriate (Turner, 2002).

**Mentoring, Isolation, Occupational Stress**

Success in the professoriate is marked by mentoring from senior faculty (Blackwell, 1989; Boice, 1993; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Through mentoring, senior faculty can provide invaluable counsel with regard to teaching, service, and research and serve as bridges for Black female faculty to both formal and informal networking groups within and outside of their departments and institutions. They provide crucial information about important aspects of a successful faculty career, such as particulars on promotion practices and expectations, as well as insights into departmental and institutional histories, behaviors, and cultures (Bowie, 1995; Smith, 2000; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Further, mentors can assist Black women in their resistance to institutional and organizational barriers by
illuminating the unwritten rules often present in academe (Britt & Kelly, 2005; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Without mentors, faculty life can be isolating and difficult for Black women as they navigate their disciplines, departments, and institutions.

When Black female faculty are not connected to networks in their disciplines, departments, and/or institutions and find themselves situated as the only Black female in their program, department, or college, feelings of isolation and marginalization can occur (Atwater, 1995; Bronstein, 1993; Grant & Simmons, 2008; Myers, 2002; Tillman, 2001; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Being the only black woman or one of a few in a department (or on a campus) not only leads to feelings of isolation, but also feelings of tokenism. Tokenism surface when responsibilities are automatically delegated to Black female faculty because they are black and female. Some of these responsibilities include leading diversity efforts and committee overload. Tokenism is further exhibited, when faculty colleagues regard their Black female faculty peers as “token hires” (Greene, 2003; Turner, Myers, Creswell, 1999). This perception is often accompanied by low expectations and a lack of respect for the work that Black female faculty contribute. Further, this could lead to chilly environments (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Chilly environments can have a doubly harmful effect on black female faculty as they are constantly trying to negotiate their place in these spaces. This constant negotiation can lead to excessive stress.

**Racial and Gender Influenced Occupational Stress**

In the area of research, one source of occupational stress for Black female faculty has to do with the devaluation of their scholarship (Grant & Simmons, 2008; Milem & Astin, 1993; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Black female faculty are often engaged in research that examines and illuminates social issues in their
communities and use non-traditional epistemological, methodological, and theoretical paradigms. Further, their scholarship is accepted more often in journals that are considered less prestigious than the traditional disciplinary journal outlets (Womble, 1995).

In the area of teaching experiences, King (1995) illuminated ways in which students’ behaviors “reflect deeply-embedded race-gender related feelings, beliefs, assumptions and needs” (p. 16) in a classroom with a black female professor. Her premise was that black female faculty experience burnout as a result of needing to negotiate several psychological roles for differently racialized and gendered students. The underrepresented status of Black female faculty at predominantly white research universities has another adverse effect. They are often overloaded with the call to serve on departmental, divisional, and institutional committees where racial and gender diversity is desired (Brayboy, 2003; Turner, Myers, Creswell, 1999). Thompson and Dey (1998) found that the greatest source of stress was time constraints and overloading of responsibilities.

Although these issues serve as barriers to opportunities, Black women have opened and at times bust down doors to be successful in their careers. As Ladson-Billings (1997) stated,

The academy is shaped by many social forces. More women of color are defining and redefining their roles within it. New ways of thinking about teaching and research have provided spaces for women scholars to challenge old assumptions about what it means to be in the academy. While both the women's movement and black [ethnic] studies movement have helped increase the parameters of academic work, new paradigms emerging from black women's scholarship provide me with a liberatory lens through which to view and construct my scholarly life. The academy and my
scholarly life need not be in conflict with the community and cultural work I do (and intend to do). (p. 66)

Ladson-Billings’ words speak to the daily battle black women fight in the academy as they challenge the power structure (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001).

**Black Female Full Professors**

What is known about black female professors, after much research and scouring of individual institutional and professional websites are the names of black women who were among the first to earn the title of full professor. However, because of the systemic exclusion of black women from the faculty ranks of predominately white institutions, it is difficult to narrow down those who can claim to be the pioneering full professor in their field. But in an effort to acknowledge the accomplishments of these women and provide some perspective on the timeframe in which black female full professors came into existent, below is a list of some of the first black women to hold the rank at historically and predominately white institutions. Some of these women include, Dr. M. Lucia James, appointed in 1965 as the first tenured full professor at the University of Maryland (General Education); Dr. Eileen Southern, appointed in 1976 as the first tenured full professor at Harvard University (Afro-American Studies and Music); and Dr. Anne S. Pruitt-Logan, appointed 1979 as the first African American female full professor at Ohio State University (Educational Policy and Leadership). Unfortunately, but not shocking, none of the popular history of higher education administration books and articles used in higher education and student affairs academic programs highlight the significant contributions of these women.

This lack of documentation is problematic, as it perpetuates the assumption that black women have not contributed to their field in any way. For example, I present here a brief
sketch of the contributions of Dr. Anne S. Pruitt-Logan, who may be the first black female full professor in a higher education and/or student affairs academic program. This information was presented in an archival document found through the Bowling Green State University archival database entitled, Anne S. Pruitt: Thirty-Seventh President, 1976-77 (BGSU Archives, 2010) and a press release from Ohio State University when she was finally awarded a distinguished service award in 2005 after having served for 20 years at OSU. In 1964 Dr. Pruitt-Logan received the Ed.D. degree in Guidance and Student Personnel Administration from Teachers College (Columbia University), one of the first schools to offer a full higher education and student affairs curriculum and program. She was a full professor of Education at Case Western Reserve University in 1974 before going to OSU to assume the positions of full professor of education and Associate Dean of the Graduate College. Her scholarship includes minority student retention and access, teacher education, graduate student socialization, and faculty preparation. She is co-founder of the nationally renowned Preparing Future Faculty Program. Furthermore, she served as the first African American female president of the American College Personnel Association. At Ohio State, she also served in the roles of Associate Provost and Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence. In her career, she also served as a consultant for my groups working to “dismantle the dual segregated system of higher education” (Ohio State University, 2005, n.p.). Without having had any personal interaction with Dr. Pruitt-Logan, I would say that her record seems to speak for itself in terms of her contributions as a scholar, teacher, and administrator. I think of important note is the 2005 Ohio State award she received. Every other scholar in the ceremony was awarded an honorary doctorate, while Dr. Pruitt-Logan received a service award. Whether consciously or not, this suggests that the work of Dr.
Pruitt-Logan is not scholarly enough to receive an honorary doctorate, unlike her white peers. It is these kinds of injustices that can be disheartening when it happens to scholars who have earned their status in their field.

**Higher Education and Student Affairs (HE/SA) as Fields of Study**

This study focuses on the experiences of Black female full professors in higher education and student affairs (HE/SA) programs. There are few studies that examine the experiences of black faculty in HE/SA programs (Patton & Catching, 2009), and even fewer on black female faculty in these programs. Higher education and student affairs programs “prepare future practitioners, teachers, and scholars to facilitate the holistic development of postsecondary learners and pursue careers in higher education as administrators and leaders” (Patton & Catching, 2009, p. 715). Despite the 100+ years HE/SA programs have been in existence, black female faculty are a more recent phenomenon in these programs, as evidenced by the career timelines of women like Dr. Anne S. Pruitt-Logan. Given the history of higher education and the development of the academic career, coupled with the marginalizing experiences of black women in higher education, it is not surprising that the actual number of black female full professors of higher education is dismally low; so low in fact that the data on black female full professors do not meet reporting standards for the National Center for Education Statistics. In an effort to get a better understanding of HE/SA programs some historical context will be provided. Of particular interest in the discussion is the way the curriculum was and is formed, the role faculty play in these programs, and the importance of diversity and the full incorporation of black female faculty into the ranks.

**History of HE/SA Fields of Study**
G. Stanley Hall, first president of Clark University, was one of the first professors of education and the first to offer a course on higher education (Burnett, 1973). Hall outlined topics appropriate for study in speeches, journals, courses, and other publications. Early topics for consideration included “the administration of colleges and universities, the teaching of college students, differentiation of the roles of the college and university through research and specialization, the presidency, and the need for interinstitutional cooperation to prevent program duplication” (Goodchild, 1991, p. 17). Since 1893, HE/SA programs have grown steadily and topics have shifted in myriad ways. The main impetus of this growth was Hall’s and other scholars’ constant call for the study of higher education to be added to the work of education departments (Hall, 1916) as well as the growth of junior colleges and need for faculty and administrators on these campuses. Ohio State University, Teachers College (Columbia University), and the University of Chicago were among the first schools to have full-fledged higher education programs, and through the competition (e.g., securing funds for new projects and institutes, expanding curriculum and the faculty, and prestige) between these schools a market for more higher education programs was born and nursed throughout the country. For example, in 1954 there were only 27 HE/SA programs but by the 1960s there were approximately 100 master’s and doctoral programs (Goodchild, 1991).

Ohio State University’s (OSU) curriculum included six courses, “two introductory courses…administrative theory, curriculum, teaching, source materials, and achievement tests” (Goodchild, 1991, p. 19) that led to a graduate degree in higher education. The OSU program would go through curricular reform adding teacher training and curricula theory, which would later be the foundations for student affairs programs. Ohio State’s program would eventually offer three concentrations: student affairs, higher education administration,
and college teacher training. By 1928, Teachers College was granted departmental status for a higher education program, hired several faculty (who would become the largest HE/SA faculty of its time) to teach its research-focused course offerings, and offered the doctorate. Through funding from the Carnegie Foundation, Teachers College was able to establish the Institute for Educational Research and by 1956 additional funding was secured for the Institute of Higher Education where they did “policy research in administration, organization, and financing at institutional and state levels….Later, the role of liberal arts in the professions and all levels of education was emphasized (Russell, 1960)” (Goodchild, 1991, p. 21). The Teachers College program would offer sixty courses spanning topics in higher education and become a research powerhouse when the U.S. Department of Education placed the site of the National Center Postsecondary Governance and Finance on their campus. The University of Chicago’s main contribution to the HE/SA program movement was adding social theory and science to the curriculum. By 1930, faculty such as John Koos, whose research on junior colleges was considered groundbreaking, were conducting research and teaching courses based on their findings and experiences. Although the University of Chicago’s program was in line with the research boom of the broader higher education movement, when teacher education was moved out of the HE/SA area advocacy waned for these programs. Other early programs at institutions such as University of Pittsburg, University of California at Berkeley, and University of Michigan, grew and contributed to the research and teaching of higher education and student affairs. Of all the previously mentioned institutions, the University of Michigan’s incremental growth, interdisciplinary curriculum focus, research oriented faculty, and grant acquirements made them (and keep them) a top higher education program.
Important to understand is that the study of higher education and student affairs grew as higher education grew and changed and mirrored much of the broader ways curriculum and programs were changing and emerging in other fields. Although the main impetus was centered around the expansion of junior colleges and teacher education, the HE/SA curriculum as it is known today, although not consistent across institutions, include the organization and administration of higher education, the business and finance of higher education, college teaching, governance, adult education, and the college student, to name a few. Furthermore, more faculty were incorporated into HE/SA programs as curriculums became more specialized and as research and knowledge production became the goal of the day.

**Faculty in HE/SA Programs**

Faculty in higher education and student affairs programs were particularly important to the study of these fields. The faculty of HE/SA programs came from diverse disciplinary backgrounds (e.g., philosophy, educational psychology, nursing education, history) and to some extent there is still some variety in the educational training of HE/SA faculty. Exemplary of this was G. Stanley Hall who was a professor of psychology, then education, and lastly of higher education. Given the time of these programs development, the systematic shutout of black faculty at white institutions, and the ahistoricism applied to the intellectual and professional contributions of black faculty, it is a fair assertion that the founding faculty were white and male. For sure, most full-time faculty in HE/SA programs were men (i.e., G. Stanley Hall, Samuel W. Brown, H. Gordon Hullfish, Edward S. Evenden, Robert J. Leonard, R. Freeman Butts, Earl James McGrath, Karl W. Bigelow, Leonard V. Koos, Samuel Capen, Floyd Reeves, Cyril Hall, Norman Burns, Allan Pfnister, Alexander Astin,
Burton R. Clark, Martin Trow, Algo Donmeyer Henderson, Robert Blackburn, Marvin Peterson), with the contributions of a handful of women (i.e., Esther Lloyd-Jones, Thyrsa Wealththeow Amos, Kay Moore, and Joan Stark) being mentioned in the historical literature.

A few studies investigating HE/SA programs included demographic constructs (Campbell & Newell, 1973; Crosson & Nelson, 1986; Dressel & Mayhew, 1974; Johnson & Drewry, 1982; Nelson, 1991; Newell & Morgan, 1983). Each of these studies reported the number of full-time (and some part-time) faculty, full-time faculty by gender, and faculty age, consistently missing was racial and ethnic demographics. Consistent in these studies was the finding that women were underrepresented in the faculty ranks, moving from 4.5% in 1973 (Campbell & Newell, 1973) to 22% by 1989 (Nelson, 1991). Further, findings indicated that more than half of the full-time faculty in HE/SA programs were full professors, likely a residual effect of university presidents and deans hiring (mostly men) and appointing faculty (to full professor) to these programs. Of the 200+ faculty in Nelson’s (1991) study, 49% and 88% of female and male faculty (p. 74), respectively, had earned tenure.

**Why Study HE/SA Faculty?** As Patton and Catching (2009) made clear, HE/SA faculty are training and developing the intellectual minds of future higher education professionals. As alluded to earlier in this discussion, by virtue of their research and administrative roles, HE/SA faculty shape the curriculum and provide insights and knowledge about the intellectual and professional development of higher education. Without their experiences (i.e., practice) and expertise (i.e., theory generation) the field would be stagnant. While the curriculum is diverse (Fife, 1991), based on institutional type, program function (Dressel & Mayhew, 1974), and the scholarly interests of faculty, voices remain marginalized and/or left out. Tierney and Bensimon (1996) wrote, “if we do not investigate
the systems in which cultural capital is defined, then we shall be forever attempting to acculturate individuals to the mainstream rather than trying to change the system itself” (p. 18). Given their statement, the time has come to irritate the engrained practices in this field.

In the chapter, *Visions and Priorities: The Future of Higher Education Doctoral Programs*, Murrell and Davis (1991) suggested that administrators needed to be able to “deal with population diversity...” (p. 105) and that “collaborative efforts are essential if we are going to capitalize on new markets and learn from [corporations] practices, infuse broader purposes into the corporate culture, and assist American businesses in the transition to a predominantly female, African-American and Hispanic work force (Johnston, 1987)” (p. 105). While their assertion is viable in the sense that our society is becoming more female and more racially and ethnically minoritized, perhaps problematic is the idea that collaboration must happen so these groups can work. While work is important and a necessary function of the economic and social system that makes up the United States, these types of recommendations shift the conversation away from the need to expand the knowledge base of the field and change the social fabric of higher education and the opportunities to do so through the full incorporation of faculty of color. What is most troubling about the volume of New Directions for Higher Education that Murrell and Davis’ (1991) chapter closes out, is that there is not a well-treated conversation regarding the incorporation, or lack thereof, of multiple perspectives and ways of thinking, particularly the involvement of faculty of color, female faculty, or female faculty of color in HE/SA programs.

This failure to highlight the influence of people of color, and particularly women of color in the development and future of HE/SA programs drives this study. Of major concern
in this research are the perceptions of influence and status of black female full professors of higher education. Given their newness to the positions, broadly, and relative newness to HE/SA programs, it is critical that their voices and experiences, as senior faculty, are brought to the forefront. Rhode (2006) stated, “with appalling speed and regularity, contributions are forgotten, or replicated anew by a generation that fails to notice, much less credit, its predecessors” (p. 13). For some of us, our predecessors’ contributions, both early and continued, have been completely left out, leaving the new generation to wonder where to find their rainbows in the clouds. Given their experiences in the field and the classroom the women in this study bring with them the possibility of changing the curriculum and how we understand pedagogy, opportunities to engage in and create new scholarship, epistemologies, and theoretical frameworks, as well as a wealth of experiential and practical knowledge that does not allow us to forget the past but it does allow us to listen, learn, and change.

Chapter two served as a vehicle to engage in some of the relevant literature related to this study. Specifically, three broad areas of scholarship were merged: (1) status and influence in the roles of faculty, (2) experiences of black women in higher education, and (3) higher education as a field of study. The first area provided an opportunity to discuss the ways power and influence operate within the three primary roles of faculty, research, service, and teaching, and across faculty rank. The limited scholarship on the full professorship was also treated. Reviewing the key literature black women in education provided an opportunity to introduce the concepts of intersectionality and anti-essentialism. Additionally, the literature on higher education as a field was presented. Taken together, these bodies of literature helped the researcher to understand and put into context the current state of black
women in the rank of full professor in the academy. For example, exploring status and influence in the professoriate helped to illuminate the fact that the faculty role is power-laden, meaning through service, research, and teaching there are many ways faculty can have influence. Reviewing the historical literature on the development of the faculty and the rank system divulged how status and influence was imparted upon white male faculty who were tapped, or selectively chosen, by institution presidents to serve in the supervisory role of full professor. This historical perspective also indicated how white males dominated the faculty ranks for centuries prior to the entrance of white women and men and women of color in these roles. Exploring the literature on black women in education revealed the various experiences of black women in K-20 environments and as faculty members in the academy. Given that the experiences of black female faculty are often couched in the discourse of black faculty or women faculty and in an effort to understand these experiences from an intersectional and anti-essentialist perspective, consensus (blacks in education and black faculty) and crosscutting (women in education and female faculty) issues were presented. Presenting this literature in this way was also useful given the limited scholarship on black women in higher education and in the faculty role specifically. Reviewing the literature on higher education programs helped to illuminate what is known about the development of these programs and the faculty that have developed curriculums and taught in many of them. Surveying this literature highlighted the continued white male dominance in faculty of these programs and the lack of attention given to the intellectual and practical contributions of black female faculty.
CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Chapter three provides a detailed description of the research design for this project. This study is grounded in a black feminist epistemological perspective that informed the selection of critical race theory and critical race feminism as theoretical and analytical frameworks, a critical race feminist methodology, and the ensuing research methods. The chapter is divided into four major subsections: (1) epistemology, (2) theoretical framework, (3) methodology, and (4) methods.

Epistemology

More than a perspective on ways of knowing, Ladson-Billings (2003) articulated epistemology as a “system of knowing that has both an internal logic and external validity” (p. 399). As such, this research is guided broadly by social constructionism and, specifically, a black feminist epistemology. Taken together, these epistemological paradigms privilege “the interaction of individuals with each other and their environments as fundamentally shaping how individuals understand themselves and their social world” (Stewart, 2002, p. 582). Social constructionism asserts that meaning and knowledge is collectively generated and transmitted with historical and cultural specificity (Burr, 2003; Crotty, 1998; Hughes & Giles, 2010). As an epistemological perspective, Black feminist thought asserts that Black women produce knowledge and come to know the social world through racialized, gendered, and classed experiences that provide particular perspectives on life (Collins, 1990). Coupling social constructionism and Black feminist thinking as the epistemological foundation for this work allowed for the examination and exploration of the experiences of black female full professors and their perceptions of status and rank with an understanding that their
knowledge, perceptions, and experiences have likely been influenced by race (racism),
gender (sexism), and class (classism).

**Black Feminist Epistemology**

Four tenets undergird black feminist epistemology: (1) lived experience as a criterion of meaning, (2) use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, (3) ethics of caring, and (4) ethics of personal accountability (Collins, 2009). The lived experience tenet of black feminist epistemology distinguishes between two types of knowing – knowledge and wisdom. Collins (2009) wrote, “Knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate” (p. 276). Collins’ assertion about knowledge situates epistemology, broadly, as a political notion in which power and privilege both exist and shape claims of knowledge. For example, for black women, who have existed on the margins of society in the U.S., knowledge is wholly influenced by the lived experience given that their experiences have the ability to contradict what is widely accepted as “known” and “truth.” Thus, the raced, gendered, and classed lived experiences, as Ladson-Billings suggested, both individually and collectively provide external validity of knowledge and truth claims.

Partly informed by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule’s (1986) theory of women’s ways of knowing, the second tenet of a black feminist epistemology highlights the importance of connectedness through use of dialogue in making and assessing knowledge claims. “Black women’s centrality in families, churches, and other community organizations provides African-American women with a high degree of support for invoking dialogue as a dimension of Black feminist epistemology” (Collins, 2009, p. 281). It is through dialogue that wisdom and knowledge can be interrogated and shared.
The third dimension of this epistemological perspective is that of an ethics of caring. This dimension involves three correlated components that suggest, “personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy are central to the knowledge validation process” (Collins, 2009, p. 282). The personal expressiveness component relates to the value placed on individual uniqueness in black communities. The emotions component focuses on the importance of the appropriateness of emotions and feelings in validating meaning making and intellectual knowledge production. The third component, empathy, relates to the importance of being able to understand the feelings and experiences of others. Together, individual uniqueness, appropriateness of emotions, and empathy all contribute to an understanding that acknowledges that knowledge is value-laden and holistic. Black feminist epistemology “doesn’t require the separation of the researcher from her or his own experiences nor does it require or assume that it is possible, to separate our thoughts from our feelings” (citation).

The fourth dimension is that of an ethic of personal accountability. “Not only must individuals develop their knowledge claims through dialogue and present them in a style proving their concern for their ideas, but people are expected to be accountable for their knowledge claims” (Collins, 2009, p. 284). Collins (2009) asserted that given that knowledge is often derived from and connected to internal values and beliefs, people should be held responsible for validating their views.

**Outsiders-Within and the Margins.** Turner, Myers, and Creswell (1999) posited, “the perspectives of faculty of color are especially valuable because they speak from uniquely…revealing vantage points” (p. 54). From a black feminist epistemological standpoint, this vantage point is that of the outsider-within (Alfred, 2001; Collins, 1986, 2000). This perspective situates marginalization and the margins as a particular social
location where Black women develop a dual consciousness in order to resist and survive experiences mediated by racism and sexism (Alfred, 2001; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1990; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001; Turner, 2003). This is not a location of deficit or deprivation, rather, as hooks (1990) proclaimed, it is

…the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance….a central location for the production of counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives…. a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one’s capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds. (pp. 149-150)

hooks’ statement is particularly poignant for Black women who have been able to navigate the professoriate. A community of resistance (hooks, 1990) is built in the margins, a space not solely used to learn and survive, but to support and celebrate (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001).

As it relates to this study, the margins provide a space to create and transmit knowledge. Specifically, knowledge about the ways the educational pipeline and academy serve to replicate a sexist and racist status quo that must be resisted in order to survive can be shared. Further, from the margins, black female faculty may be able to see how the status quo is maintained, because the margins provide a view of the professoriate and its practices that perhaps those in the center cannot readily see or understand.

**Theoretical Framework**

As evidenced by many scholars, the academy and the professoriate is by no means a race- and/or gender-neutral environment (Grant & Simmons, 2008; Roithmayr, 1999; Turner,
Therefore, in an effort to examine policies, practices, and processes embedded within, it is important to use theories that help address the ingrained racism and sexism that often goes unchecked and ignored but has real effects on female scholars of color. Critical race theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (CRF) are such theories that support the premise of socially constructed knowledge and realities, as well as the importance of positionality and voice from multiple perspectives (Crenshaw 1995; Grant & Simmons, 2008).

Critical Race Theory

Branching from critical legal studies and drawing on an interdisciplinary foundation of law, ethnic studies, history, and sociology, “a critical race theory in education challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses, and insists on analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in both a historical and contemporary context” (Solórzano, 1998, p. 123). Critical race theory acknowledges that racism is endemic, particularly in the realm of education (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2003, 2009). Although not exhaustive, scholars studying the experiences of female faculty of color in the academy have corroborated this claim time and time again (Alfred, 2001; Atwater, 1995; Bowie, 1995; Grant & Simmons, 2008; Holmes, Danley, & Hinton-Hudson, 2007; Moses, 1989; Myers, 2002; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Stanley, 2006; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001; Turner, 2002). A CRT framework challenges dominant ideologies of liberalism, meritocracy, colorblindness, objectivity, equal opportunity, and race neutrality in order to unmask the historic and contemporary ingrained power, privileges, and self-interests of dominant groups (Calmore, 1992; Crenshaw, 1997; Harper & Patton, 2007; Roithmayer, 1999; Solórzano, 1997; Sweeney, 2006). In the professoriate, these dominant ideologies represent the status quo in processes such as promotion, where faculty of color, to include
Black females, are less likely than their white peers to earn promotion to associate or full professor (Carter, 2010; Perna, 2001; Tesch, Wood, Helwig, & Nattinger, 1995; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996; Trower & Chait, 2002).

Critical race theorists assert that experiential knowledge and the voices of people of color are critical and central to uncovering, addressing, and eliminating racial oppression and subordination (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). With regards to studying the process of promotion to full professor and faculty work post-promotion, there has yet to be an extensive study of the topic from the perspective of Black female faculty, or any other racialized person’s perspective. The experiential knowledge of the women in this study may illuminate the ways in which inequity has been enacted and maintained in the upper echelons of the faculty ranks. As Hughes and Giles (2010) wrote, “American higher education, as a self-replicating system, promotes many norms and values worth questioning under the lens of CRT” (p. 42). Because of the self-replicating nature, ahistoricism has to be challenged and replaced with a revisionist history (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) allowing for the critical examination of majoritarian interpretations of ideologies, policies, and practices that have historically and traditionally harmed persons of color (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2000). As the historical contexts in chapter two of this dissertation suggests, black women have been systematically left out of the history books regarding higher education. Further, examination of the hi’stories’ that are out there might suggest that black women, and other people of color, have made no intellectual and practical contributions to their fields.

Lastly, CRT advances a racial and social justice agenda. Praxis is necessary to bring about the empowerment of people of color to eliminate racism, sexism, and classism (Bell,
Critical race theory praxis can be used to “analyze, re-interpret, deconstruct, and reform educational settings” (Hughes & Giles, 2010, p. 41), to include the professoriate. New perspectives on processes such as promotion to full professor might provide a new map for equity in the academy.

For the purposes of this study, in addition to the aforementioned tenets, whiteness as property is a central tool in the analysis of this work. In explicating a definition, albeit not fixed, of whiteness, Brayboy, Castagno, and Maughan (2007) wrote:

One helpful explanation of Whiteness…argues that Whiteness is an identity, ideology, and an institution (Chennault, 1998; Dyson, 1996). As an identity, Whiteness refers to the racial characteristic of being White, and although some good work has been done on Whiteness as an identity in various contexts (Perry, 2002), we are more concerned here with Whiteness as an ideology and an institution because of the ways this informs educational achievement and issues of equality and equity in education. Put bluntly, institutions are organized such that being White buys both privilege and protection from discrimination, distrust, questions, and a host of other negative experiences (Brookfield, 2003; Fine, 1997). (p. 176)

Harris’ (1995) thesis of whiteness as property, while complicated through the legal scholarship, can be quite simply articulated as the privileges and benefits associated with whiteness as shaped and defined over time through both the U.S. legal system and the social world (DeCuir-Gunby, 2006; Harris, 1993; Higginbotham, 1996; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Rothman, 1989). Several scholars (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1997) have used the whiteness as property thesis to implicate whiteness in the inequitable and dehumanizing experiences of people of color in schools.
Furthermore, “as Harris (1995) pointed out, White-controlled institutions, including universities, imbue whiteness with a property interest by consistently rewarding those who learn and use conventional perspectives and ways of categorizing knowledge” (Ryan & Dixson, 2006, p. 178).

Cheryl Harris (1993) suggested four property right functions of whiteness: rights to disposition, right to use and enjoyment, reputation and status property, and the absolute right to exclude. The right to disposition refers to the ability to transfer, or confer, whiteness and its privileges and benefits across generations and from one person to another. It also refers to the right to dispose of the privileges and benefits of whiteness. The right to use and enjoyment refers to the ability to use and enjoy the benefits and privileges of whiteness. Reputation and status property refers to the values possessing a white identity affords its possessor. The absolute right to exclude refers to the ability to both exclude and include other groups from the social, political, and legal benefits of whiteness, whether spatially (i.e., limited access to predominately white institutions, the professoriate) or otherwise (i.e., limited access to information, resources). Use of whiteness as property as an analytical tool assists scholars in going beyond equating race as an issue of skin color to explicating how “ways of being, knowledge construction, power, and opportunity are constructed along and conflated with ‘race’” (Dixson, 2004, p. 1003).

**Critical Race Feminism**

Much of the scholarship on minorities and underrepresented people in the professoriate focuses on two distinct groups, women and faculty of color. Within each of those contexts reside the experiences of women of color, who experience multiple marginalities, which are often hidden (Crenshaw, 1998; Turner, 2002). Therefore it becomes
necessary to incorporate theory that elucidates the existing challenges and subsequent ways of resistance in Black women’s everyday lived experiences. While sharing a common foundation in critical legal studies and multidisciplinarity, critical race feminism diverges from CRT in that it questions the power dynamics at play when race and gender, as well as other social categories (e.g., class, sexual identity), intersect. Crenshaw (1995) stated, “because women of color experience racism in ways not always the same as experienced by men of color and sexism in ways not always paralleled to experiences of white women, antiracism and feminism are limited, even on their own terms” (p. 360). Myriad scholars have validated Crenshaw’s statement through their examination of Black women’s experiences in higher education (Fleming, 1984; Grant & Simmons, 2008; hooks, 1991; Hurtado, 1997; Moses, 1989; Turner, 2002). While critical race theory is used in this project to address the ways in which race and racism serve as oppressive vehicles to uphold the racial status quo embedded in policies, practices, and processes, critical race feminism contributes the concepts of intersectionality and anti-essentialism as ways to analyze ostensibly race and gender neutral practices.

Critical race feminism’s intersectionality premise posits that the experiences of Black women, and other women of color, cannot be addressed solely as race, gender, or class issues (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991; Crenshaw, 1997; Hurtado, 1997; Wing, 1997). Rather, gender and race, as well as class, intersects to “shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s…experiences” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244). Although CRF has mostly been used in the legal realm to uncover the embedded inequities women of color face in the legal system, it also has a very relevant place in education and research on faculty issues. Further, while women, broadly, are more likely to be in the lower ranks of tenure-track positions (i.e.,
assistant professors, etc.), by not exploring the experiences of minoritized women, one could miss that women of color are more likely to be in non-tenure track, part-time positions. Crenshaw (1989) posited, “the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (p. 149).

A critical race feminism lens also brings to the table an anti-essentialism premise. Gender and racial essentialism suggests there is a singular monolithic, authentic female or Black voice and experience (Harris, 1997; Wing, 2003). “Critical race feminists…call for a deeper understanding of the lives of women of color based on the multiple nature of their identities” (Wing, 2003, p. 7). Further, an anti-essentialist perspective illuminates the richness and distinctiveness of each woman’s lived experiences. There is a need in higher education scholarship for theoretical frameworks that address both racial and gender inequities, as well as the resiliency and agency of black women in the academy. Under the guise of women and/or faculty of color, the stories of women of color, particularly black women’s, get lost.

Together, the epistemological and theoretical bedrock of this study provide two major presuppositions. First, individually and collectively, black women’s knowledge, voices, experiences, and interpretations of the social world around them are valid and necessary. For black female full professors who find themselves in a community of resistance at the margins of the professoriate, their sense-making is critical to understanding how departmental and institutional practices, policies, and processes, specifically that of promotion, either aid or hinder professional and social mobility. Secondly, this framework allows the researcher to focus attention directly on the supposed racially and gender neutral processes, practices, and
policies that deserve analysis from a more critical angle. Understanding how power is constructed, manipulated, understood, and navigated in the professoriate is necessary in order to implement positive, socially just change.

**Methodology**

The black feminist epistemology and critical race theory and feminism framework of this study calls for a methodology that centers and privileges voice, relationships and sociocultural, historical, and contemporary contexts. Further, it requires a data-rich methodology that allows the researcher to explore the complexities embedded in the participants’ experiences. Therefore, the methodology employed in this study was a melding of critical race and feminist methodological practices.

As a methodological framework critical race methodology incorporates the core tenets of CRT. As such, a CRT methodology challenges notions of neutrality and objectivity in the research process, opting, instead, for a process that acknowledges sociopolitical and sociocultural implications of research (Yosso & Solórzano, 2005). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) defined critical race methodology as,

…a theoretically grounded approach to research that (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process. However, it also challenges the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by showing how these three elements intersect to affect the experiences of [people] of color; (b) challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of [people] of color; (c) offers a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, and class
subordination; and (d) focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of [people] of color. (p. 24)

In thinking about feminist methodology, it is important to note that feminist methodologists do not necessarily endorse any particular method. Rather, scholars employing feminist methodology are centrally concerned with varying efforts to center the lives, experiences, and concerns of women while simultaneously attempting to minimize harm in the research process. Articulating the contributions of feminist methodology, Devault (1996) shared three primary goals. First, feminist methodology seeks to center the concerns of women. Second, “Feminists seek a science that minimizes harm and control in the research process….What marks the feminists discourse is not only a particular concern for women’s welfare, but particular sources for research strategies….[additionally, they] develop inclusive procedures and less hierarchical structures (Strobel, 1995)” (Devault, 1996, p. 33). Third, those employing feminist methodology should be uniquely concerned with systemic change that is beneficial to women.

Critical race feminist methodology in this project is also used to highlight participants’ ways of knowing and understandings of particular contextualized experiences and events (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Context is particularly crucial to understanding how individuals interpret their experiences. From a contextual standpoint, the institution and its policies and practices shape the experiences of black female full professors, for example. From a critical race theory and critical race feminism theoretical and analytical lens, these multiple contexts might also include personal and institutional histories, as well as local, state, and federal laws and political events that are more likely than not racialized,
gendered and affecting the principal issues at hand (i.e., promotion to full professor, experiences post-promotion to full) (Chapman, 2007; Dixson, Chapman, & Hill, 2005).

Relationship building is also crucial to a critical race feminist research process. The researcher views relationship building as “fundamental to self-understanding, to mutuality and validity, and to the development of knowledge” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 136). Relationships rely on authenticity, and refraining from using and othering research participants. Within the aspect of relationship building is an aim to search for goodness and success, as opposed to pathology and failure (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Within the scholarship of faculty work, many researchers have focused on the social problems impeding equity for certain groups (Gay, 2000; Harper & Patton, 2007; Howard, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso, 2000). This dissertation is situated to focus on “the ways in which [research participants] meet, negotiate, and overcome challenges” (Dixson, Chapman, & Hill, 2005, p. 18). The search for goodness, however, is not a reflection of naiveté. Rather, it is a springboard for investigating a particular issue, recognizing the complexities of experience, the good and the bad, the successes and failures, the opportunities and challenges. Further, the goodness aspect can be emancipatory and empowering for both researcher and participant, as in CRT and CRF, through the listening to and sharing of stories and reflection on experiences (Chapman, 2005; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1986).

Together, CRT, CRF, and a critical race feminist methodology allow the researcher to take into account the participants’ experiential knowledge – wisdom, understanding, and authority – as raced and gendered individuals operating in spaces that influence and impact the ways they navigate and operate the multiple aspects of their lives (Dixson, 2005; Dixson,
Chapman, & Hill, 2005). Researchers are central in the research, understanding the ways in which their own identity, experience, knowledge, politics, values, and biases influence the interview protocol, data collection procedures and analysis, and the (re)presentation/construction of the final product (Chapman, 2007; Crenshaw, 1995; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Following a CRT and CRF analysis, the stories constructed and conveyed in this research have the ability to challenge the seemingly race- and gender-neutral policies and practices of the promotion process for black female faculty. Further, through these women’s stories may emerge ways in which hegemony persists to negatively influence the experiences of black female full professors. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) explained,

> We engage in acts (implicit and explicit) of social transformation, we create opportunities for dialogue, we pursue the silences, and in the process, we face ethical dilemmas and a great moral responsibility. This is provocative work that can disturb the natural rhythms of social reality and encounter; this is exciting work that can instigate positive and productive change. (p. 12)

**Counterstorytelling as method.** Counterstorytelling serves as an analytical tool for examining stories and is prevalent in research using critical race theory. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), counterstorytelling “aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority” (p. 144). Counterstories function to (1) build community among marginalized individuals and groups, (2) challenge claims of knowledge and wisdom of dominant groups, (3) illuminate alternative realities of those at the margins of society, and (4) provide context in an effort to transform current systems of belief and value (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado, 1989; Lawson, 1995;
Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Through use of counterstorytelling in this study, privileged discourses around the full professorship can be challenged and the voices of black women in these roles can be illuminated.

There are multiple types of counterstories. Most common are autobiographical narratives, biographical narratives, and composite narratives. This study uses a combination of biographical and composite narratives, meaning that the data is derived from the stories and experiences of the participants individually, but a cross-case analysis was conducted. From an intersectional perspective it was important to allow the stories and experiences of each woman to stand alone, recognizing that their experiences are diverse. However, the cross-case analysis provided an opportunity to see the multiple ways in which race (and racism) and gender (and sexism) influenced those experiences. Additionally, counterstories are generally presented in the format of an actual story, with themes interwoven throughout the story to make points and counterpoints. However, the findings in this project are presented in a more traditional format in that themes were constructed and presented in narrative form.

Methods

Participants

Participants. At the onset of this project, I reflected on whether I knew any black female full professors in higher education programs (i.e., higher education administration, student affairs, community college, adult education). One woman came to mind. Through discussions with my major professor and other faculty, we were able to name four more. A sixth potential participant was discovered in conversation with peers, a recently promoted
full professor. Unfortunately the dismally low number of high-ranking black female faculty in our field did not surprise my major professor or me. However, the reaction from many white faculty members was similar: dismay, disbelief, and shock.

Thus began the search for black female full professors in higher education graduate programs. An analysis of the U.S. News and World Report (2009) top ranked programs resulted in two potential participants, one in higher education and one in student affairs. Not satisfied with only the two, snowball sampling was employed through accessing my professional networks. These inquiries led to eight potential participants. Each potential participant was contacted via email and asked their interest in participating in the study. Each woman received a follow-up phone call to discuss the project. This conversation focused on reviewing the informed consent documents and answering any questions the women had. Ultimately, seven of the eight women opted to participate in this research. Their profiles are presented in chapter four. All seven women are currently full professors in higher education departments at seven different institutions across the country (See Table 3.1 below) and identify as black and female.
Table 3.1.

*Study Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Full Institutional Type</th>
<th>Current Institutional Type</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Major Admin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>RU/H</td>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Master’s L</td>
<td>RU/H</td>
<td>Higher Education/Student Affairs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>RU/VH</td>
<td>RU/VH</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>Master’s L</td>
<td>Master’s L</td>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juanita</td>
<td>RU/VH</td>
<td>RU/VH</td>
<td>Adult Education/AA Studies</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laverne</td>
<td>RU/H</td>
<td>RU/H</td>
<td>Black Studies/Women’s Studies/Adult Education/Student Affairs</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>RU/VH</td>
<td>DRU</td>
<td>Student Affairs/Higher Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

Data consisted of information from interviews and documents, with the interviews contributing the most significant portion of data in this study. Each participant was interviewed individually three times via teleconference or Skype, an internet-based video conferencing system. Interviews followed a semi-structure, open-interview protocol (Blee & Taylor, 2002), informed by the research questions and theoretical frameworks. Interviews lasted anywhere from thirty minutes to two hours. Twenty-one interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed by a hired transcriptionist.

Document data was any written materials from the participants or institutions that
might shed insight into the particular phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002), in this case promotion to full professor and faculty work life. Participants were asked to share any memoranda or other correspondence related to their experiences in the promotion process as they felt comfortable, as well as their vitae and any publications they felt were relevant to our discussions. Further, public documents were collected from each institution (i.e., institutional data on faculty rank and promotion, department guidelines on faculty promotion) at which the participants earned their full professorship, as well as the institutions at which they currently work, if the two were different. Institutional documents assisted in understanding institutional processes and policies. Vitae helped to gain an understanding of the breadth of professional experiences of the women in the study. Some women sent some of their scholarship in which they addressed some of the very issues we were discussing. By reading their work, it helped to verify their understandings of the issues. Additionally, the research engaged in memoing. Researcher memos were used to reflect and record thoughts and ideas throughout the research, and particularly interviewing, process (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). After each interview, the researcher crafted memos as to not forget any pertinent thoughts about information shared.

**Data Analysis**

Given the feminist methodological influences, interviews were more dialogic in nature “in that both the researcher and respondent[s] reveal[ed] themselves and reflect[ed] on these disclosures” (Bloom, 1998, pp. 17-18). Further, given the critical race influences, within the conversations both theoretical sensitivity and cultural intuition were employed. Introduced by Strauss and Corbin (1990), theoretical sensitivity implies that the researcher comes to the research process with varying degrees of sensitivity and insights to the subject based on both
theoretical and conceptual understandings as well as experiential knowledge. In this study, while I, the researcher, am not a faculty member, I am a black woman who has gone through various experiences in the academy as an undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral student, and full-time employee all at predominately white institutions. Given the discussions on race and gender, and racism and sexism, the common identification with the participants as a black woman has the ability to “enhance [the] researcher’s interpretive abilities, rather than jeopardize validity” (Bloom, 1998, p. 18). The concept of cultural intuition is an extension of the theoretical sensitivity idea incorporating personal experience with collective experience and community memory (Delgado Bernal, 1998). As Patton and Catching (2009) indicated, “cultural intuition is practiced in data analysis as a collaborative sensemaking process between the participants’ and the researcher” (p. 718).

Finding emergent themes was both iterative and generative (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997; Maxwell, 2005). The process of illuminating convergent patterns, as the researcher engaged in the myriad data, defined the analytical and interpretative processes in this project (Hackmann, 2002; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1986; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). All of the participant’s transcripts were read through, thoroughly independent of one another. While reading each transcript notes were made about the information the researcher would expect to find, issues or concepts not anticipated, and experiences that seemed to stand out. These notes then became codes. After completing this process within and across each interview, multiple themes emerged across the information the participants shared. A cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1988) was employed to uncover emergent themes. While generalization was not the goal of this project, cross-case analysis provided an opportunity to explore emergent themes across contexts and experiences and increased the credibility and validity of
the information (Hackmann, 2002; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002). Thereafter, each theme was subjected to an analysis using a critical race theory and critical race feminism lens. Specifically, the themes were analyzed using the CRT and CRF tenets of endemic racism and sexism, liberal ideologies, whiteness as property, intersectionality, and essentialism.

**Authenticity, Trustworthiness, & Rigor**

In this study, the researcher strove for trustworthiness and authenticity rather than objectivity and generalization (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). Trustworthiness and authenticity requires a researcher to be “balanced, fair, and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple realities” (Patton, 2002, p. 575). Multiple procedures were used to achieve authenticity, trustworthiness, and rigor.

Using multiple methods of triangulation is one way to ensure rigor and validity, as well as reduce systematic bias (Stewart, 2008). There are multiple types of triangulation and two were employed in this analysis; data triangulation and theory triangulation. *Data* triangulation is possible when multiple forms of data are collected and available for analysis (Patton, 2002). Data triangulation makes thick description possible (Stewart, 2008). The multiple forms of data included interview and document (i.e., institutional, personal and professional, and researcher memos) data. *Theory* triangulation was also employed in this study. Theory triangulation occurs when there are multiple theories from which to interpret the data (Patton, 2002). In this study critical race theory and critical race feminism, albeit similar yet distinct, were the theoretical lens from which the data was viewed and interpreted. While critical race theory allowed for an analysis of race and racism in the data, critical race feminism required an acknowledgement and analysis of the intersections of race (racism) and gender (sexism).
Member checking (Creswell, 2009) was another attempt at achieving trustworthiness and validity in this project. As previously mentioned, emergent themes were shared with the participants. At the beginning of each interview follow-up questions, developed during the memoing process of the researcher, were asked and discussed. Given that no research is ever truly complete, the researcher and participants continued to discuss the findings in this study. Use of thick description was also a means to achieving authenticity, trustworthiness, and rigor. Creswell (2009) noted,

> when qualitative researchers provide detailed descriptions of the setting, for example, or provide many perspectives about a theme, the results become more realistic and richer. (p. 192)

Peer debriefing was also be used as a strategy. Peers familiar with and incorporating critical race theory and other types of standpoint and non-dominant feminisms (i.e., chicana feminism) into their own work were able to ask critical questions related to the CRT and CRF analysis of this project. Another strategy was positionality articulation. As previously stated, the researcher’s experiences, biases, assumptions, knowledge, and background influence the entire research process. Critical race theory and critical race feminism require the researcher to

> acknowledge her…presence – physically, psychologically, spiritually, and emotionally – in the research, thereby dismantling the notion that the researcher is the only knower and expert on the lives and experiences of the participants. (Dixson, Chapman, & Hill, 2005, p. 17)

In conversation with each participant, the researcher shared information about herself (i.e., career aspirations) and her own experiences with racism and sexism.
**Researcher Positionality**

Understanding researcher positionality is key in qualitative work (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Specifically, it is crucial to understanding and “explaining…possible biases and how [the researcher] will deal” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 108) with them. Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) described positionality as “the relationship between the researcher and her participants and the researcher and her topic” (p. 31). Therefore, the researcher’s positionality is presented below as her relationship to the topic and her relationship to the seven women in the study.

**Relationship to topic.** As an aspiring faculty member and full professor, the researcher entered into this experience with a vested interest in understanding the full professorship and how black women before her have successfully navigated the professoriate. The desire to understand influence and status in the role of the full professorship is directly related to the conference experience presented in the counterstory at the end of chapter one. For the researcher, attending a session about the future of her chosen academic field (i.e., student affairs (and higher education)) and not seeing any women of color, broadly, or black female faculty, specifically, was quite disheartening and led to the questions in the study. Furthermore, the researcher comes to this study having had one black female faculty member, for one class in her K-20+ educational experience and that occurred in the second year of her doctoral work. As it relates to the interest of race and gender in this study, while not being a faculty member, the researcher has served as a co-instructor for several courses at a predominately white institution in the Midwest. As such, she has encountered many racialized and gendered experiences with both students and faculty. These experiences have caused her to question to what extent racism and sexism will remain a part

of her daily experiences in the academy as she progresses through the faculty rank system. Given her experiences with racism and sexism, it was important for the researcher to be reflexive in this research process as to not project her own issues and beliefs onto her participants. Further, it was important to not wholly assume that each black woman in this study had a black feminist epistemological perspective on life and work or that they would articulate a racialized and gendered way knowing and understanding. In addition to crafting reflexive memos, the researcher often shared with her own experiences with the participants when relevant and in all cases in which this happened both the experiences of the participant and the researcher were validated.

**Relationship to participants.** Prior to the beginning this project, the researcher had no direct relationship with any of the participants. In fact, she had not ever met (as in been introduced to) any of them prior to this study. However, the researcher was no more than two degrees of separation from each of the women in this study. A similarity between the researcher and the study participants, which may have provided a sense of “insider” privilege, is that each identifies as a black woman. There were other life experience similarities (i.e., similar work values, military families, attendance of the same universities) shared between the researcher and the participants that contributed to the development of trust in the relationship. Relationship building was key and exercised in each interview through discussing topics not directly related to the interview protocol for the day (i.e., pets, their children, health issues, conferences). By the end of our time together each participant expressed their joy and excitement in participating in this study and indicated an interest in continuing this work and continuing their reflections on their career experiences.

**Limitations**
Recognizing limitations is another way to promote trustworthiness and rigor in the research process. There were two chief categories of limitations to this study: (1) use of intersectionality, and (2) research design. This study focused on the how the confluence of race and gender influenced the experiences of black female full professors. This is quite an appropriate tool for analysis and as Bannerji (1995) argued, the simultaneity of social relations such as gender, race, and class should be taken into consideration rather than trying to separate each. However, there are two specific concerns related to the use of intersectionality in this study. First, this study only focused on race and gender. In an effort to truly understand each participant in this study and how they interpret their own experiences in the professoriate and full professorship, it may have been useful to include class, nationality, and sexuality as well. One participant self-identified as both a black woman and as Jamaican, having been born in Jamaica and completing compulsory education in Jamaica. Delving more into her nationality identity and the role that played in her understanding of higher education and her faculty role may have proved useful. Additionally, including class in this study may have also yielded some crucial information. For example, all of the women discussed their upbringings and it would seem that class status in their youth and their current class status may differ. These differences might also shape how they interpret their experiences in the academy. Thus, the limitation here is that by bounding the study to race and gender, the researcher may not have a complete understanding of the women’s experiences and their interpretations of their experiences. The second limitation related to the use of intersectionality in this study relates to conceptualization and measurement. More specifically, there were no strict or clear demarcations for blackness and femaleness other than the participants had to self-identify as black women. Given that both
are social constructions it might have been helpful to engage in an intentional conversation with each participant about these concepts. Additionally, as it relates to measurement, it may seem that much of the analysis is directly related to racialized perspectives. As many of the participants would indicate, in some situations it is difficult to distinguish how race (racism) and gender (sexism) are working in tandem to create particular circumstances.

As it relates to research design, one limitation was the amount of time and the manner in which that time was spent. While each participant was interviewed three times via telephone or Skype, conducting in-person interviews would have likely strengthened the relationships built in this process and would have provided opportunities to collect data that is not readily available in a technological environment (e.g., meeting family, observing work and home space, meeting colleagues, attending meetings). Additionally, this study is guided by four interrelated research questions. However, it may have been helpful to be more concise in this project regarding what questions and experiences were most pertinent and pressing. The last limitation to be addressed here relates to the participants in the study and the use of their real names as opposed to pseudonyms and the decision to exclude direct connections to specific institutions. Each participant was given the option to use a pseudonym and although most were still deciding as we began the project, they all eventually chose to use their real names. This is a possible limitation because this may have limited the information they chose to share with the researcher. Despite their rank, political ramifications may have also limited what they shared in this study given that they used their real names. However, participants were able to redact any information they did not wish to be shared beyond our conversation and were very clear when that point was in a conversation. This did not happen often, but it did occur. Finally, while each IRB gave permission to interview each
woman, consent beyond that did not exist. Thus, the researcher made attempts to ensure there were no direct connections of specific events or experiences to any one particular institution.

Chapter three focused on detailing the research design of this project. Specifically, the epistemological (Black feminist thought), theoretical (critical race theory and critical race feminism), and methodological (critical race feminist) frameworks were shared. Lastly, specific methods employed to recruit participants, collect, analyze, and share data were presented. Chapter four presents participant profiles.
Chapter four provides information about each of the participants in this study. Seven full professors who identified as black women took part in this study. Each profile involves a brief glimpse into both who these women are as I have come to know them and more information about their professional experiences. Each of the women agreed to use their real names.

**Beverly Bower, Ph.D.**

I had not ever met Dr. Bower prior to conducting this study. I learned of her from contacting another woman to be a potential study participant. Through that unsuccessful recruitment, as this woman was an associate professor, I was provided with Beverly’s contact information. Every time I spoke to Beverly, I felt like she was smiling. Her warmness, openness, and honesty only helped to make this process smoother. Beverly was the newest full professor in this study, having earned promotion upon taking a new position at a different school just two years earlier. This perspective was especially helpful because she is still in the process of transitioning, learning, and fully understanding what it means to be a full professor at her new institution, in her new department, and with her new colleagues.

I learned that Beverly is from Leavenworth, KS. She earned her bachelor’s degree in education from the University of Kansas and her master’s degree from Emporia State University. Her Ph.D. is in higher education from Florida State University.

Dr. Bower entered the professoriate with a number of experiences but most notably she previously had two different careers: a K-12 teacher and a librarian. As a teacher she taught Reading, English, and French to middle and high school students. Later she would move to Pensacola Junior College as a circulation and campus librarian for 12 years. Her
love for community colleges ignited in this time and she would join the professoriate in a
tenure-track faculty position at the University of South Carolina teaching in their higher
education graduate program. Dr. Bower left USC for Florida State and earned tenure and
promotion to Associate Professor at Florida State University in 2002. In 2008, Beverly
became the Director of the Bill J. Priest Center for Community College Education at the
University of North Texas. Simultaneously she was promoted to full professor and named the
Don A. Buchholz Endowed Chair in the College of Education at UNT. She holds one of four
endowed chairs in the College of Education at UNT.

Beverly is author or co-author of more than 70 publications and is the co-author of
the books *Answering the Call: African American Women in Higher Education Leadership,*
*From Distance Education to E-Learning: Lessons Along the Way,* and *Women at the Top:
What Women University & College Presidents Say about Effective Leadership.* She is also
co-editor of the *ASHE Reader on Distance Education.* While much of her work focuses on
the experiences of minorities and women in higher education and leadership, her scholarship
centers community college issues. She has published numerous articles in *New Directions for
Community Colleges,* *Community College Review,* and the *AACC Community College
Journal.* Additionally she has served in an editorial capacity for the ASHE Reader Series,
*Equity & Excellence in Education,* the *Journal of Negro Education,* the journal for the
National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASAP), the *NASPA Journal about
Women in Higher Education,* and the *On-Line Journal of Distance Learning Administration.*
Dr. Bower is also actively involved in a number of national organizations, to include the
American Association of Community Colleges, the Association for the Study of Higher
Education, the American Educational Research Association (Division J), and the National
Association of Student Personnel Administrators. She has also secured more than $250,000 in grant funds, to include a grant from the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation. Additionally, Beverly has worked as a consultant for the Florida State Board of Community College and the South Carolina Department of Education.

LaVerne Gyant, Ed.D.

I had not met Dr. Gyant prior to this study. I came upon her information while reviewing the website of another participant. LaVerne has got to be one of the hardest working women at her institution. She teaches in four different programs, to include Black Studies, Women’s Studies, Adult Education, and Higher Education. Although she was not a higher education scholar, per se, when the program called on her to assist in teaching their courses she answered. Not only did she answer but she jumped in head first by teaching student development theory. I’m sure the students in her class, should they choose, gain so much from her knowledge in the multiple areas in which she teaches. Her activism lies in her ability to draw from her multiple scholarly areas to broaden students, and my, ideas about higher education.

I learned LaVerne is from Chester, PA. She earned her bachelors degree from Cheyney State University, an institution noted as one of the first historically black colleges and universities in the country, and a master’s and doctoral degree, in adult education, from Pennsylvania State University.

Prior to going to NIU, LaVerne was an instructor in the African American Studies program at Penn State. In that time, she also served as the interim director of the African/African American Studies Program. Much of her time at Penn State, post doctoral degree, was spent in service, advising several student organizations, to include the local
chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Interest House. Dr. Gyant began her faculty career at Penn State. She would leave PSU to assume the position of Assistant Director of the Center for Black Studies at Northern Illinois University and later join the faculty in the Counseling, Adult, and Higher Education department. Beverly earned tenure and promotion to associate professor in 1999. In 2006 she was promoted to full professor.

At NIU, LaVerne teaches in four different programs. She currently teaches courses in Higher Education, Adult Education, Women’s Studies, and Black Studies. Additionally, she is Director of the Center for Black Studies. LaVerne’s commitment to students is shown through her efforts both on campus and off, having served as an advisor or doing programming for several groups on campus and taking active roles in community service. Dr. Gyant is past president of the African Heritage Studies Association and has been an active member of the National Council for Black Studies, the International Black Women’s Congress, the Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists, the American Association for Adult Continuing Education, and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated.

Dr. Gyant has several publications centering on her scholarship on Africana women and the contributions and participation of African Americans in education. Her work highlighting the contributions of black women includes *All That and More: A Genealogy of African American Women Educators*, *Educating Head, Hand, and Heart*, *Anna Cooper and Nannie Burroughs*, *Passing the Torch: African American Women in the Civil Rights Movement*, *The Missing Link: Black Women in Black/Africana Studies*, and *Henrietta V. Davis and Amy J. Garvey, Women of the UNIA*.

**Mary Howard-Hamilton, Ed.D.**
The first time I met Dr. Howard-Hamilton was at an annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, however I had knowledge of her through her past students and colleagues. Worthy of note, while searching for participants for this study, Mary was the only black woman anyone could name consistently. From her requests of Montell Jordan’s *This is How we Do it* and T-Pain’s *All I Do is Win* at Iowa State University’s now infamous “reception” at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education to her accounts of her cognitive and psychosocial development during the Civil Rights, Feminist, and Womanist movements, Mary gave me breadth and depth of her experiences as a black woman in America and black female full professor in academe.

I learned Mary is from Alton, Illinois and attended the University of Iowa for both her bachelors and masters degrees. She holds a masters degree in College Student Personnel Administration and a Doctorate of Education (Ed.D.) from North Carolina State University. Mary entered the professoriate with 15 years of professional experience in student affairs, working in multicultural affairs, developmental education, judicial affairs, orientation, and residence life at multiple institutions. She has held the professional titles of Assistant Director, Director, and Associate Dean of Students over her professional career.

Dr. Howard-Hamilton’s faculty career began in 1990. She has taught at Bowling Green State University, the University of Florida, Indiana University, and Indiana State University. She earned tenure and promotion to Associate Professor at the University of Florida in (1996). While at the UF, she served as the Program Chair for the graduate preparation master’s program in Student Affairs and taught in the Counselor Education program. Dr. Howard-Hamilton arrived at Indiana University – Bloomington tenured and
holding the rank of Associate Professor in Higher Education and Student Affairs. As an Associate Professor she served as the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies in the School of Education. Mary was promoted to the rank of full professor in 2005 at IU. Dr. Howard-Hamilton is currently a (Full) Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Foundations in the Higher Education Program at Indiana State University. As a faculty member she has taught numerous courses including student development theory, diversity and multiculturalism in higher education, and counseling skills.

Dr. Howard-Hamilton has published more than 80 articles, books, and book chapters. Books and monographs she has co-authored include: *Standing on the Outside Looking In*, *Unleashing Suppressed Voices on College Campuses: Diversity Issues in Higher Education*, *The Convergence of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender: Multiple Identities in Counseling*, *Student Services for Athletes*, and *African American Women in Higher Education*. These selections are not nearly a tip of the iceberg. Mary has also been awarded several grants totaling over $80,000. She has also presented hundreds of scholarly and professional presentations at several venues. Some conferences and organizations she has presented for include the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators, the American College Personnel Association, the American College Personnel Association Mid Managers Institute, the Association for Student Judicial Affairs Officers National conference, and the Southern Associations for College Student Affairs Administrators. She has also served as faculty-in-residence for programmatic efforts at several institutions, to include James Madison University, The Ohio State University, and Radford University.
Her belief in bringing others along is evidenced by her scholarly collaborations with doctoral students and younger faculty. Additionally, she is active in the communities in which she resides. She has participated in activities coordinated by organizations such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, University of Iowa Alumni ASIST (Alumni Seeking Iowa Students) program, Girl Power Cultural Arts Coalition, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated. Mary has also been recognized for her accomplishments through several honors. From national organizations she received the Robert S. Shaffer Award for Academic Excellence as a Graduate Faculty Member from NASPA (NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education), the Standing Committee for Women “Wise Women Award” from ACPA (American College Personnel Association), and the S. Earl Thompson Outstanding Contributions to Residence Life and Food Service Award from Association of College and University Housing Officers International. She has also received many honors from several institutions to include mentoring, service, teaching, and scholarly awards. These honors include the Albert Hood Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Iowa and the Monroe County (Indiana) Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentor of the Year Award.

Juanita Johnson-Bailey, Ed.D.

I had never met Dr. Johnson-Bailey prior to this study, but happened upon her information while fact checking another potential participant. As a self-proclaimed non-traditional student, I think her career journey is non-traditional although she always aspired to be a college professor. Despite the many roadblocks placed before her, Juanita has become one of the current 39 (of ~1,800 total faculty) black faculty at her institution.

Juanita was a military dependent growing up but spent much of her time in Columbus, GA. She attended Mercer University for her bachelor’s degree and earned her
masters and Doctorate of Education (Ed.D.), both in Adult Education, from the University of Georgia. Juanita described herself as a non-traditional graduate student having gone back to pursue her doctorate later in life and coming from a different field.

Juanita’s faculty career began at Georgia State College and University before accepting a tenure-track joint appointment in Adult Education and Women’s Studies at the University of Georgia. In 2000, she received tenure and was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor. In 2005, she was promoted to Full Professor where she is today. In addition to being a Full Professor of Lifelong Education, Administration, & Policy at the University of Georgia she also serves as Director for the Institute of Women’s Studies. Upon promotion to full professor Dr. Johnson-Bailey took on several administrative roles including Graduate Coordinator, Associate Department Head, Interim Director of the Institute for Women’s Studies, and eventually Director of the Institute for Women’s Studies.

Dr. Johnson-Bailey has several publications including three books in which she has either authored, co-authored or edited: Flat-footed Truths: Telling Black Women’s Lives, Sistahs in College: Making a Way out of No Way, and The Handbook on Race and Racism in Adult and Higher Education: A Dialogue Among Adult Educators. Juanita has more than 75 publications, over 70 presentations, and has also received several awards and recognitions. She was the recipient of the Lilly Teaching Fellowship, the Graduate Research Award from the Annual Adult Education Research Conference, the Sadie T. Mossell Alexander Award for Outstanding Scholarship in Black Women’s Studies given by SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women, The Josiah Meigs Distinguished Teaching Professor award, Graduate School Outstanding Mentoring award, and the Outstanding Faculty Service award to name a few. She also received the Phillip E. Frandson Award for Literature in Continuing Higher
Education for her *Sistahs in College* book. Her work has resulted in her leading several study abroad opportunities in South Africa and publishing in journals outside of the United States, to include Austria, Australia, Botswana, Canada, England, France, Mexico, and South Africa. Dr. Johnson-Bailey has also served in significant leadership positions. She has been active in the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Adult Education Research Conference, and the Commission of Professors and has been awarded grants totaling $50,000.

While most of her work is in the area of adult education, she has made contributions to higher education. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Higher Education* and the *Harvard Educational Review*. Her scholarship has revolved around mentoring, the experiences of black faculty and students, participation and retention of black students, and graduate student experiences. Further, she has served in an editorial role for the *Adult Education Quarterly* and the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. In addition to her scholarly work, teaching, and institutional service, Juanita also finds time to serve her community. She has been involved with Partners for a Prosperous Athens, Antipoverty Initiative, the St. Mary’s Highland Hill Nursing Home, and the Even Start Family Literacy Program.

**Carol Patitu, Ph.D.**

I had known Dr. Patitu by name only, as she had been at Texas A&M University prior to my arrival there as a masters student. I first met her during an annual meeting of NASPA, where I was having breakfast with my mentor and major professor and she was having breakfast with her mentor. Through this work, I learned that Carol has taken on major projects that have pushed her programs and departments further at each institution she has
worked. Whether she was creating a stand-alone higher education program or creating new study abroad opportunities for her students, Carol’s vision never waned from her purpose as a faculty member – to help students be successful.

Carol is from Marion, OH and earned her bachelor’s degree from Ohio Wesleyan University. Her master’s degree is in Student Personnel Services in Higher Education from the University of Florida and her Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.) is in Educational Administration and Supervision with an emphasis in higher education from Bowling Green State University.

Prior to arriving at her current institution, Carol served as a faculty member and/or an administrator at several institutions, including Buffalo State (SUNY), Texas A&M University, Texas Tech University, Miami University (Ohio), Bowling Green State University, and the University of Florida. Prior to joining the faculty ranks Carol served as the Executive Assistant to the vice president for student affairs at Miami University (Ohio). Carol began her faculty career in 1993 in a tenure-track position at Texas A&M. By 2000, she was named a Fulbright Senior Scholar and spent a year teaching and learning at the University of Durban-Westville in South Africa with the Faculty of Education. Also, in 2000, while in South Africa, Dr. Patitu earned tenure and promotion to associate professor at Texas A&M University. While at TAMU she served as the coordinator for the Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education program. In 2002, Carol left A&M for SUNY Buffalo where she would become chair of the Department of Student Personnel Administration, a department in which she played a key role in establishing at the institution.

In 2005, Dr. Patitu earned promotion to full professor at Buffalo State (SUNY). Carol would later be recruited to her current institution in the position of Associate Dean for
Academic Affairs in the College of Education and serve as a Full Professor of Adult and Higher Education at Northern Illinois University. She is co-author of the book *Faculty Job Satisfaction: Women and Minorities in Peril* and has published a book of poetry titled, *Peace Be Unto You*. Additionally, she has published numerous journal articles and contributed several chapters to edited books on student development, issues and concerns of minority students, and minority and women faculty in higher education.

Carol’s commitment to her work extends beyond the boundaries of the United States of America. She has served a three-year term on the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars U.S. Peer Review Committee for Southern Africa (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, and Swaziland) and was an Associate Editor for Safundi: The Journal of South African & American Comparative Studies. Additionally, Carol remains active in the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and is highly involved in local and global chapters of the Fulbright Association, to include a regional chapter presidency.

**Christine Stanley, Ph.D.**

The name Christine Stanley was one that I was slightly more familiar with since I attended Texas A&M University for my graduate work. Unfortunately, our paths never crossed in Aggieland. We first officially met at an annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Through her participation in this work, I learned that most of the posts she has held in her career have been accompanied by the title of “First Black Woman to…” Given her expertise in faculty development, her stories and insights provided me with detail about what the faculty career entails.
Christine is originally from Jamaica, West Indies and earned her bachelors degree from Prairie View A&M University, a historically black college and university in Texas. She earned her masters and doctorate from Texas A&M University (College Station). Unlike many of the other women in this study, Christine’s undergraduate and master’s degrees are not in education, rather biology and zoology respectively. Her Ph.D. is in Curriculum & Instruction.

Dr. Stanley’s story is also dissimilar from her colleagues in this study in that her primary role has been as an administrator. Currently, she serves as the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity and as (Full) Professor of Higher Education Administration in the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University. Her previous posts at TAMU included serving as the Executive Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs in the College of Education and Human Development and Associate Dean of Faculties. In addition to these roles, she served in other administrative positions, such as Chair of the Vision 2020 Study Team for Diversity and Globalization, Task Force on the Graduate Experience, and Co-Chair of the Teaching and Learning Roadmap Committee.

Prior to going to Texas A&M, Dr. Stanley served as the Associate Director of the Office of Faculty and TA Development at The Ohio State University. Christine accepted a tenure-track faculty position in the College of Education and Human Development at TAMU in 2000 and was tenured and promoted at A&M in 2003. Christine was promoted to the rank of Full Professor in 2006.

Dr. Stanley has published more than 40 publications, which is no small feat given that during her entire faculty career she has had a high-ranking administrative position in her academic college or the university. Her edited books include, *Faculty of Color: Teaching in*
Predominantly White Colleges and Universities and Engaging Large Classes. In addition to her publications and more than 50 presentations, she has done extensive work as a journal editor. Christine has served in an editorial role for publications such as the Journal of Graduate Teaching Assistant Development, the National Teaching and Learning Forum, the Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy, the journal of Innovative Higher Education, and the International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education. Given her focus on administration, practice, and scholarship she has also served as a consultant nationally and internationally, to include consulting in Armenia, China, Mexico, and South Africa. Christine’s efforts have been acknowledged by her peers and colleagues and she has received many awards and recognitions. To name a few, she received the Distinguished Staff Award from The Ohio State University, Outstanding New Faculty Award from TAMU’s College of Education, and the Robert Pierleoni Spirit Award from the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education.

The purpose of this chapter was to give the reader a glimpse into both some professional information about each woman who participated in this study, as well as some thoughts about how the researcher would describe her interactions with each woman. Each woman is highly accomplished and has contributed much to the scholarship in their respective areas. Further, their commitment to service to their profession and communities is evident. Chapter five focuses on the findings and the analysis from this study.
CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS & ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

The purpose of chapter five is to share findings from this study and provide an analytical discussion around each of the developed themes in an effort to begin answering the research questions. The analytical discussion is driven by the critical race and critical race feminism frameworks used in this study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and discussion presented in the chapter.

In this chapter, four major themes are presented: (1) *Defining the Full Professorship*, (2) *Terminal Associates*, (3) *Freedom of Academics*, and (4) *Purpose and Price*. The first theme, *Defining the Full Professorship*, serves as a (re)presentation of what it means to be a full professor. Specifically, this theme provides some substantive understanding to what full professors do and how they are/should be perceived in the professoriate. The *Terminal Associates* theme reflects the ways in which the women in this study understand the lack of representation of Black women at the rank of full professor. The third theme, *Freedom of Academics*, is related to the many ways in which those at the rank of full professor enact power in the professoriate. The last overarching theme, *Purpose and Price*, serves to illuminate how these women perceive their overall purpose in the academy as black, female, full professors of higher education. A summary follows each theme.

**Defining The Full Professorship (Theme 1)**

The first theme, *Defining the Full Professorship*, provides understanding of what it means to be a full professor. As the women shared their stories, a narrative about the role of full professors and how both full and non-full professors perceive them emerged. For some of these women that narrative was not wholly congruent with their actual experiences as full
professors in their departments, institutions, and fields of study. In an effort to unravel the complexities underlying their definitions and experiences, four subthemes were developed: *Status and Merit, Leadership and Service, Opportunity and Access, and Power and Influence.*

**Status and Merit**

Being a college professor comes with a certain perception of status. In fact, it has consistently ranked high among lists of top jobs to have nationally. This subtheme directly relates to the status that is often perceived as being bestowed upon those that reach the rank of full professor. Status can be understood as the relative social and professional standing of a faculty member. Given that the faculty rank system is hierarchical in nature, the relativity of status can be and is, in most cases, associated with one moving up in the hierarchy or ranks. For example, the status of an assistant professor is different from the status of a full professor. Additionally, in the faculty career, merit plays a big role in how status is perceived as well. Merit can be understood as the “bundle of ability and skills that individuals possess and upon which they can and should be allocated opportunities and rewards” (Haney & Hurtado, 1994, p. 228). For example, tenure-track faculty who consistently produce and publish research, teach, and serve are often rewarded through tenure and promotion. Earning tenure and promotion then positively affects one’s status as a faculty member. But, the relativity of status can also be complex and complicated by other factors. Mary provided a quite succinct definition of what being a full professor means, stating:

To be a full professor, it’s the highlight of your career, the pinnacle, the shining star, the ultimate compliment from your colleagues that they feel you have achieved national and international success…that you [have] not only the respect from
colleagues on your campus, but of course respect from colleagues nationally and internationally.

Mary’s statement illuminates a poignant point that is often not discussed in thinking about faculty moving through the faculty ranks and status – the importance of collegial perception. Beverly’s assertions of the full professorship aligned with Mary’s. She stated:

[Being a full professor] means that you have done the work to be regarded by your peers as someone deserving of being in the top ranks of the faculty. I guess that’s pretty much what it means. It’s a sign of respect…a sign of appreciation for the work that you’ve done.

The idea of status in the full professorship is linked directly to the work that one has produced, or their merits, in their fields. However, there is little discussion centering the interconnected concepts of merit and respect from one’s colleagues in the process of promotion to full professor. Juanita described her envisioning of promotion to full professor in the following way:

It would be just like that professor in the Paper Chase where he’s so respected and everything that comes out of his mouth is just brilliant and people just want his autograph, they line up to take classes from him.

The Paper Chase, a novel adapted into a major motion picture in the late 70’s, was the story of a Harvard Law student who was enamored with one of the law professors, Professor Kingsfield. Kingsfield is well respected for his expertise in contract law. His status as a top law professor manifests in the film through the protagonist’s desire to read everything Kingsfield wrote, take every class he taught, and get to know him. This depiction highly influenced Juanita’s perception of what the full professorship would be like.
Through these women’s definitions of the full professorship, concepts of status, merit, and respect are woven throughout. However, for some of these women, while they recognize and see in their own experiences these concepts, they also spoke about issues that seemed counterintuitive for a full professor to endure. Juanita continued her previous sentiment by stating:

When that didn’t happen to me, when actually the opposite happened, I wrote about it….I really went into a tailspin when I became a full professor because I had always basically believed that was the pinnacle and once I got there the clouds would part, the sun would shine, and I would be respected and acknowledged because I had reached this really high level. I went into a real depression.

Juanita understood and had an expectation of what becoming a full professor meant and when there was dissonance in her understandings and expectations there were clear effects. LaVerne, in describing what it meant to her to be a full professor, stated:

…to be in that position [of Black female full professor] to further the work, to assist graduate students, undergrads, to do more research, add to the literature, and just to prove that we can make it…not because of affirmative action but it’s through our own personal hard work, determination, and faith.

LaVerne incites an issue that many faculty of color face, and at the least are often thinking about – being perceived as an affirmative action hire or promotion. What is invoked in this statement is that affirmative action and hard work are incongruent ideas. However, the perception of being an affirmative action hire or promotion in no way stops these women from fulfilling their roles as full professors.

**Leadership and Service**
The next subtheme is that of leadership and service. As these women described what it means to be a full professor, leadership and service surfaced as important distinctions between their current rank and those at the ranks of assistant and associate professor. From an institutional standpoint, according to Mary, leadership and service differed in the following ways:

The service is very different because instead of being a committee member and people protecting you, you step up to the plate and you become the chair of major committees and your service is…not only in the department level but it’s above and beyond even [in] the college. For example, you may become very active with faculty senate…you get involved with governance. I’m chair of the College of Education Congress, which is the policymaking body in our College of Education. You get on the committees that do a lot of heavy lifting, [like] tenure and promotion. That’s a committee where most full professors do at least…three tours of duty either at the college level or at the university level. You get asked to do major projects for the president or even for the dean. You’re asked to do grant writing and to network with grant funding agencies. For example, last semester I went with the dean and the associate dean to the Lumina Foundation to pitch a grant. So there are things that you do, that you wouldn’t normally do as an assistant professor or even as an associate professor. It’s a lot more connection and contacts with the academic leaders on the campus because just as one of the books in higher ed states, you’re first among equals. I mean really truly you become a first among equals with the provost and some of the other individuals on campus. And as a full professor there is an
assumption that you have the ability to be an advisor and the eyes and ears at the ground level for your colleagues.

Mary’s description shifts the understanding of service in the full professorship to one of leadership. Furthermore, she indicates the existence of committees where leadership and service is restricted to full professors only. Carol offered a supporting sentiment:

...[there are] a lot of universities that have certain committees where they want senior people on it, because of the work load or it could be because of the politics. I do a lot of service as a full professor, but it’s not just limited to my campus. I do a lot at the national and international level.

Carol’s observations, having been at several institutions, provide clues into a few key notions. First, there are spaces to which only full professors are privy in an institution. Mary cited the example of the college or university-level tenure and promotion committees at her institutions. Second, Carol brings into focus the idea of workload. Beverly helped to unravel the connection between workload and the full professorship by asserting:

When you’re at the full professor rank, I think you can expect to get more service no matter where you are, because it should free you up because you don’t have another rung ahead of you. It should free you up a little bit to be able to put more of your efforts in that direction if it’s needed for the faculty community that you’re in....You don’t have the same pressures as somebody else who’s climbing through the ranks. So in a lot of ways I really think that full professors should rebalance their priorities and provide more leadership in their programs than perhaps they had done in the past. Because you’re at that point where you are the senior person and people look to you for leadership and I think you should be there to provide that and that may mean
doing a little bit more service than you probably do, definitely more service than you
had in the past. But it’s kind of the payback in some ways because along the way if
you were fortunate people may have shielded you from that aspect.

A third idea brought forth in Carol’s short, yet insightful, statement about service and
leadership is the idea of national and international service. Christine provided an in-depth
description of the expectations of leadership and service in the full professorship, connecting
it directly to status and merit, stating:

…from associate to full the bar is even higher. You have gained tenure, so you have
proven yourself. The bar from associate to full is where people are going to be
looking at national prominence and the only way to gain national prominence is if
you are being appointed or nominated to serve on national boards that influence
policy, on editorial boards where you are making decisions about research that’s
going to be published or not published or adding something new to what’s out there.
You are being nominated for example to serve on a foundation [board] or a funding
agency where they’re asking you because of your particular research expertise…to
help whether it’s the National Science Foundation, [U.S.] Department of Education,
the National Institute of Health or you’re invited overseas to help a country or a
university think through some things based on your expertise.

Full professors take on a great deal of responsibility in their departments and institutions, as
well as in their fields. As Christine pointed out, these opportunities are based on their merits
and status as a scholar. While increasing service and leadership is to be expected for full
professors, a divergent voice surfaced as well, that perhaps is less acknowledged. In
discussing how becoming a full professor changed any of the major roles of the faculty position (i.e., teaching, research, and service), Juanita shared:

I don’t think being promoted has changed my research. What has changed my research more is that I went into administration almost at the exact moment that I was promoted to full and that’s because [of] that whole citizenship thing in the academy and it’s time for you to give back and so that’s why I think my research has changed.

Other women in this study also spoke to the fact that other areas, such as teaching and research, were in some way affected by service and leadership loads. However, they recognize that the increased leadership and service is necessary and, as Beverly stated above, it is needed in an effort to allow junior faculty to be successful in a research and/or teaching institution: research and teach. Given merit, service, and leadership, it follows that full professors would be afforded opportunities that perhaps their colleagues are not.

**Opportunity and Access**

Closely related but slightly distinct from the leadership and service subtheme is the third subtheme of opportunity and access. The perceived status of full professors and the many leadership and service responsibilities can be and, in a number of cases, is accompanied by access to opportunities that non-full professors do not always have. Building off the access to certain spaces premise introduced in the previous subtheme, Dawn stated:

As full professor, everything that is available to a faculty member is available to you…committees, as well as, access to significant administrators. I think if a full professor wants to see the dean, it carries a different status if you will than if someone who’s not goes to the dean with an issue or concern….

Beverly supported Dawn’s assertion, stating:
Being a full professor does give you access to certain people and it also gives you a lot of credibility. You do have some stature in the field.

Access and opportunity in this sense is directly related to their ability to communicate with high-ranking officials in the institution, such as deans, presidents, and provosts. Expanding on the idea of physically being in a space and being able to contribute professionally, Dawn went on to say:

…the rank probably gives me entry into the conversation that I wouldn’t be asked to participate as part of the process if it weren’t for the rank. For example, you have to be a full professor to serve on the personnel committee and that’s the committee that does all the tenure reviews and promotions.

Additionally, with any type of organization made up of many, there are other, more informal, opportunities for access. Juanita provided an example of the literal and figurative doors that are opened up to full professors. She shared:

I know one of the things that happens for people who [are] awarded this professorship that I got is [getting] invited to go to the football game. Well when I first got invited I said no and so then a friend of mine in the president’s office called me back and said ‘Juanita you can’t say no. You have to come.’ I said okay, but I don’t even like football, but okay I’ll come. And so we [my husband and I] got to the president’s house and we go on this special convoy that they take to the game and we’re sitting there in the president’s box. First of all, when I get off the elevator one of the pages tried to stop me because you know this is restricted area. I flash my little badge, my little thing they had given me to hang around my neck and I got to go in. But I’m sitting there in the president’s box and trying to pretend like I’m interested in the
football game and there’s the governor sitting across from me. There are all these dignitaries. The only people there who were black are me, my husband, and the people who were waiting on everybody. But just the idea that I got to chit chat with these politicians and…a lot of the business leaders from the area. There’s a possibility of consulting and even the possibility of job offers. But the fact that nobody else [other black people] was there except me and the service staff says something. I have colleagues who make twice their salary in consulting because they get at tables that people who look like me don’t usually get to sit at. It’s very telling.

Juanita’s story shows how informal opportunities can provide a great deal of access to people and resources that might not be readily available to faculty in the lower ranks. It also illuminates the opportunities for full professors to network and connect with high-powered officials outside of the institution, which can lead to more opportunity for the faculty member. Also, engrossed in her story about the football game is a racialized context and concern. Being stopped at the door after exiting a private convoy with the president of the institution and being the only non-service Black people at the event, at an institution of approximately 44,000 (faculty, staff, and students), in a community with approximately 37,000 black people, is problematic. The problem – the lack of black professionals in that space and the excess of black service staff – sends a message that blacks are only welcome in a service capacity. Despite the concerns, access to these kinds of opportunities is important. In fact, access, coupled with merit, status, service, and leadership provide opportunity for these women and other full professors to enact power and influence things around them.

**Power and Influence**
The fourth subtheme in defining what it means to be a full professor revolves around the ideas of power and influence. In reflecting on the previous ideas of status, merit, leadership, service, opportunities, and access, it easily follows that people in the position of full professor have a great deal of power and influence. Juanita described positional power in the following terms:

In terms of just being a regular faculty member I think faculty members have an awful lot of power. I think it’s one of the best positions to have at a university because you have degrees of freedom and you set your own schedule and as you move through the ranks you really do have a lot of say over what you teach and what you research and the students that you work with. So that type of power that you get just from the position, that positional power, I think faculty have a tremendous amount of power. Especially once they’re tenured.

Juanita acknowledged that power is enacted across the faculty career and throughout the different ranks, but even more so upon tenure. When the additional layer of being a full professor is added, the ways in which that power is enacted changes. Dawn described power and influence in the full professorship as the following:

I would describe it as the ability to influence decisions, directions, and purpose. For example, when I was a junior faculty member, I could have an opinion and share my opinion with the community of scholars, and they listened. But I didn’t have the ability to change the course or direction of a program or course, unless it was a course that was mine. But in terms of anything beyond my scope of responsibility it was difficult. It wasn’t the same as it is now…. when I say something people will listen
and people are going to pay attention to what I share and what I say. They may not always agree, but they’re going to pay attention to me.

Beverly added additional insights, sharing:

I’m on the curriculum committee, we’re redesigning [the curriculum]… and I have some pretty strong ideas about some things that should and shouldn’t be included in the curriculum…and ways of doing some things. So I can in that committee, in particular, bring new ideas to the table and advocate for them in ways that I know I could not do if I was assistant professor. Because we did have some assistant professors on the committee and I see that their ideas sometimes are good and sometimes they’re not accepted until I get behind them… And everybody’s free to bring forward their ideas, but I just recognize that if I get behind something really strongly it’ll probably move forward and I know [they] have wonderful ideas, but I know that’s not the only thing that’s making it move forward. It’s not the strength of my argument and my wonderful ideas. It’s also the strength of the position that I hold.

Beverly’s comments stressed the idea that the full professorship is in fact a power-laden position, one perhaps built on bureaucratic positionality. More explicitly, because of one’s position in the organization, that is full professor, they have the ability to enact power and in turn influence decisions and directions in a way that is not available to those in lower ranks. Other women in the study expressed the complexity with which power is enacted in the position. Christine, for example, shared:

When promoted to professor it shifts in a sense that the expectation is now you have obtained that last level in terms of faculty rank. So with that is a perception that you have more power as opposed to somebody who’s an assistant professor. I’ve seen
people use that power very well to effect change and to make change for the good of others. And I’ve seen people use that power to abuse.

Christine went on to share:

I think of academic power on some level as gate keeping as well. You know those who have the power, in essence, they’re gate keeping at some level deciding who gets in or who stays out.

Dawn conceptualized power in the following way:

It means that I’m responsible for setting the political agenda for my program area and what battles we will fight and won’t fight. And I have to make sure that I protect the junior faculty.

Taken together, Christine and Dawn asserted that power can be enacted in positive ways, such as to protect junior faculty and positively effect outcomes for others. Mary’s understanding of her ability to enact power also aligned with Christine and Dawn. She stated:

It also comes along with not only the perks of moving up within the academic ranks administratively, but also you can empower others by writing letters for their tenure and promotion process. So you can bless others with that blessing that you’ve gotten of full professorship.

Dawn specifically related her ability to enact power to her capacity to influence the political agenda in her program, where she is the senior most faculty member. In a reflection on how she decided to join the faculty ranks, Dawn shared:

I knew enough then to know faculty have a lot of power, because you decide who’s going to be taught, how they are going to be taught, and what will be taught. And it was the what will be taught part that really convinced me that I should do it [become
a faculty member] because I knew that what I had been taught did not necessarily include issues of advocacy, challenging the system, and pushing for diversity.

All of the women acknowledged the importance of using their influence to push a political agenda of equity and the importance of doing so in the role of full professor. Beverly stated:

Because we’re top of the heap [at full professor rank]…if we don’t have the power to talk about stuff and don’t use that power to talk about certain things [i.e. diversity issues], nobody else is going to be able to. So it’s very much a power differential.

Dawn spoke to the need for power and influence:

I think it’s [power] something you got to pay attention too. I think it’s important. I think that’s where you land, how you’re able to do what you do, how effective you can be. I don’t think you can ignore it. I think some people like to [ignore it] cause they think of politics and power and influence as dirty words, not so much influence but politics and power. But politics are not, from my view, they’re not a dirty thing. They require that you pay attention to what’s going on in your environment and I think it definitely allows you to determine how much influence you can have in a situation.

For Beverly, the most recently promoted participant in this study, recognizing her new power-laden positionality has taken time. She shared:

Between colleagues I see [power differential] there as well. I mean I understand it’s there, but again [I am not] a person who thinks of myself in those kinds of terms. I know that there were times when the fact that I am a full professor has more weight in what I say in a faculty meeting. And then I realize oh yeah I can use power to do this. And I can use that to move things in this direction...but I know that I am in this
position. I actually had a colleague of mine who helped to remind me that yes you are a full professor now and you need to step up and act accordingly and yes you do have some power so remember that and use it for good. But I just tend not to think in those kinds of terms.

Power and influence came up as an important aspect in the experiences of the full professors in this study. These women recognized their abilities to affect change through their teaching, scholarship, service, and leadership.

**Theme Summary**

This theme, *Defining the Full Professorship*, is directly related to how the women in this study understand the full professorship. Furthermore, the theme illuminates some ways in which their experiences are not congruent with their expectations and understandings of the position and/or their observations of others experiences in the position. As outsiders-within their viewpoints are valid given that their seats on the margins of the professoriate may provide them with a bird’s eye view of what is happening in the faculty ranks.

The four subthemes, *Status and Merit*, *Leadership and Service*, *Opportunity and Access*, and *Power and Influence*, served as a way to explain in more detail how they articulated their understanding of the full professorship. Through the *Status and Merit* subtheme, the women linked the concepts of merit and collegial perception to that of status. They discussed just how significant colleagues’ perceptions merits influences perceptions of status. In the *Leadership and Service* subtheme the women talked about the expectations of an increase in both leadership and service requirements in the role. The *Opportunity and Access* subtheme was used to highlight how rank influenced opportunities to access people (i.e., more senior level administrators) and resources. The fourth and last subtheme, *Power
*and Influence*, was used to discuss the women’s understandings of power and the ability to influence decisions upon promotion to full professor. As mentioned previously, these women’s understandings of the full professorship seemed to be influenced by not only their own experiences (both prior to and after promotion), but also through their observations of others’ experiences, as well as through external depictions of senior level faculty.

**Terminal Associates (Theme 2)**

The second major theme is that of *Terminal Associates*. Inherent in reflecting on their own experiences as full professors was the solitude that many of them faced as often the only black woman in their departments. Several of them used the phrase *terminal associate* while talking about how and why they think more women of color, particularly black women, do not aspire or advance past the associate professor rank. Within and throughout these conversations the importance of information, mentoring, and affirmation continued to surface. In an effort to further unravel this phenomenon, four subthemes were identified: *Misconceptions of the Position, Mentoring, Beyond Expectations, and Interlopers.*

**Misconceptions of the Position**

As many of the women reflected on their journeys to becoming full professors, they talked about the misconceptions surrounding the full professorship. These misconceptions often came from a lack of knowledge surrounding both what it means to be a full professor and the benefits of becoming a full professor. For one woman in the study, pinpointing the significance of being a full professor was hard to do. LaVerne expressed:

> Honestly, I’m still trying to figure [the full professorship] out. I mean it’s nice to have but I’m not sure I understand what the prestige about it is. It hasn’t caught on to me
yet and I guess I don’t know whether it’s because…I do more administrative work and I’m not the full time faculty where I have those opportunities to be in the midst of everything. But even if I look at some of my colleagues who are full time professors [i.e. mostly teaching] they’re still not in the midst like serving on faculty senate and being one of those people to go to the high-powered meetings. They’re still not being recognized. So understanding the prestige of what it means to be a full professor hasn’t come to fruition for me.

LaVerne’s perspective may be familiar to other women of color who do not readily see the benefits of going up for full professor. Mary shared some of her “ah hah” moments, or the moments she realized the greater benefits of becoming and being a full professor. She shared:

I watched, I observed, I was really very careful about making sure that I prepared…I wanted to make sure that I could see the path that could be ahead of me. So I thought going up for full, was the end all be all. But as I was nearing the full professor timeline, seeing the resistance and then having the epiphany and understanding that ‘oh I see why there is so much resistance because there’s more even beyond that. There’s more.’ And I said, ‘wow, no wonder the fraternity is so closed. It’s so selective.’ Now I see. So I knew I wanted to do it, no doubt about it…the ah-hahs were the deanships and the department chair positions and the doubling and tripling of money when you get those academic administrative posts…and at some institution quadrupling of money… the prestige and the opportunities beyond full professorship to bless others to make the road rough or to make the road easy…the ability not only to make the road rough or easy for faculty colleagues, but the road could be made easy or rough for students coming into your program too…to have the voice to make...
those decisions and even make decisions to change policy if you wanted to. So that was the ah hah for me.

However, as Mary indicated, these “ah hah” moments were only fully understood after she became a full professor, not before. Other women in this study spoke about the benefits that come along with being a full professor. Beverly stated:

Certainly your academic career is shaped by the promotion process, but once you get to the end of the promotion process, there’s even more freedom. You get to shape your work life a little bit more freely.

Here, Beverly indicates that once one gets promoted there is an opportunity to control work life in a way that differs from those who have not gone through the academic ranks. Beverly went on to clarify, laughing while sharing:

It’s not really freeing me up, it’s just a matter of changing the balance. Changing the balance of the three: your teaching, research, and service. That’s another thing for me because my teaching role has also changed with this position.

As put forth in an earlier section, becoming and being a full professor does change priorities around teaching, research, and service. But Beverly spins it as a benefit, one with less repercussions than if it were an assistant and associate professor changing the balance of their faculty work. LaVerne more explicitly stated:

I think it’s the academic freedom to a certain extent that you can do what it is that you are interested in, you can integrate that into your classroom. You can integrate that into your community work or you can bring your community work into the classroom and into your research. Your creativity to a certain extent is not inhibited or held back. The other thing is that even though you have a lot of work to do your time after
you have been promoted is a little bit of freedom where you can really go out and stretch yourself. I guess that’s how to put it, because there’s still some restrictions and things that you [have] to maintain until you get promoted [to full]. And then you can stretch your wings and let your voice be heard with the faculty and with other administrators and colleagues and you’re not restricted.

LaVerne’s comments connect ideas of academic freedom to the ability to do the things one wants to do, suggesting that while academic freedom is guaranteed to faculty members, it is not until reaching the rank of full professor that one can truly fully benefit from it. Juanita posited:

I look at other faculty members and for a lot of people being a full professor means you pay a lot of dues. You’ve done a lot and now is the time you reap that harvest. Juanita did not use the term freedom, but is talking about the benefits earned by full professors given that they have done a great deal of work to get to this level. She went on, however, to infer:

But I don’t think it’s that way for people who are members of disenfranchised groups and I especially don’t think it’s that way for black women. I think it becomes a time of having to give more.

Although Juanita acknowledges that this is now the time to do what one wants, she believes that for black female full professors it is really just a time for more work. And while the more work premise is valid, Mary put a more positive spin on the idea, stating:

…[being awarded full professorship] is the opportunity to fulfill future career dreams…a lot of people don’t go up for full professorship because they assume there’s nothing left beyond that. Some people don’t want to do it because they feel
that there’s more work, even more involvement. But even though there’s more work involved there’s an additional sense of power and achievement. The power being that you have the opportunity to name your destiny and place others in that path of destiny with you because you have so much credibility.

Although there are misconceptions about what it means to be a full professor, most of the women recognize the benefits that accompany it, to include opportunities to assist others on their faculty career journeys. As many scholars have indicated, these types of mentoring opportunities are crucial to the academic career (Atwater, 1995; Blackwell, 1989; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999).

**Mentoring**

Much of the scholarship on faculty development cites the importance of mentoring in the faculty career (Boice, 1993; Bronstein, 1993; Grant & Simmons, 2008; Myers, 2002; Patton & Harper, 2003; Tillman, 2001). Through their experiences, the women in this study also indicated the importance of mentorship. What their stories add to the literature on faculty mentoring is the need to have a senior faculty mentor who can share both the basic written and the covert unwritten rules of what it means to be a full professor and how to get there. Unfortunately, the majority of the women in this study indicated that they did not have an intentional or formal senior mentor to guide them. Many of them spoke of having to find information on their own, either through their own observations or through building networks. Juanita shared:

…too often people don’t tell us the inside story of how to accomplish something. And so you have to be studious in studying the culture and finding out what the culture’s about and then be strategic in making sure that you’re doing the right things
and that you have goals. Too many women in particular, and I would say women of color especially, we’re afraid to do that goal thing that men do so readily.

The latter part of Juanita’s statement is referring to her perception of a lack of strategic goal setting among female scholars of color. Mentors can assist in both constructing and accomplishing these goals. Speaking directly about the mentoring she received, or did not receive, at her institution, LaVerne said:

Here nobody talked about the process, how you needed to do it, and what you needed to do. But I’ve always been the one with some of the junior faculty that come on board to say this is what you need to do. This is how you need to go. If you need me to review your stuff, I’ll be glad to review it and look over it and then tell you what to do. No, I didn’t get that here. I didn’t get any of that stuff.

Beverly reflected on when she did receive a senior mentor, stating:

I was not fortunate enough to have a faculty mentor early in my career, and that’s something that I wish I would’ve had. As far as having senior mentors I didn’t have one of those until I was already an associate professor, and then I was able to develop a relationship with a senior faculty member at another institution, who was very helpful to me and really helped moved my career along and helped me with the writing and co-wrote with me on some things and presented. Those [are the] sorts of things people should have earlier on in their career that I hadn’t had.

Often times, these women were encouraged informally by their peers to go up for full professor. Carol shared:

The reason I went up is because in my department I had one person who was a black female who was an associate professor. There was another black male who was a full
professor and they were encouraging me to go up for full because they said I had more stuff than some people who are already a full professor. And so due to the encouragement from two other black faculty members in my department, we were the only three, I went up for full and I got it.

Further, after becoming full professors themselves, as LaVerne mentioned above, they became the ones to encourage their colleagues to go up for full. Mary stated:

I was in a black faculty meeting earlier this week and I have a black female colleague, there are only four black female faculty members at ISU. And my one sister colleague in arts and sciences, she’s been there way too long to still be an associate professor and so I said something at the meeting. I said you know you should be full and she said ‘it’s not that there [are] people telling me that I shouldn’t be.’ She said ‘it’s me, I’m afraid because I’ve seen other women with credentials far better than mine who were rejected.’ And I told her that you don’t know what’s happening behind the scenes with those other women. But I said it seems to me that someone, the dean, the department chair, someone should be protecting you and those other women.

It is not uncommon for female faculty of color to build their own support systems. What is problematic is when female faculty of color are the only individuals pushing each other to go to the next level.

**Beyond Expectations**

Some of the women aspired to become full professors early on in their careers, although that was not the case for all of them. This subtheme, *Beyond Expectations*, addresses the ways in which aspirations did not always match up with the expectations of
others around them. Further, the women in this study provided their own interpretations of why that might be the case. Mary revealed:

I knew that when I got into the professorial ranks that there was no way I was going to stop at associate. That was just a no brainer for me. I think it’s because I was fortunate enough to have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly with the full professors around me. And even with the bad and the ugly outweighing the good, it didn’t deter me from still wanting to be a full professor. I had no doubt about it. Actually when I became an associate professor, shortly thereafter, I started asking myself and asking others what do I need to do to become a full?

Similarly, Beverly also aspired to be a full professor. She shared:

I wasn’t just going to settle in at associate, which I think some people do. They just kind of decide, it’s going be too hard, I don’t want to do it. And that’s a fair decision, you do have to make these kinds of decisions. [I could] get into my teaching and spend more time doing that. [I could let] the research part not be as important to me and I know the consequences of that. But I didn’t want to do that. I just didn’t want to do that. I didn’t feel like I could do that. So I was definitely moving toward full professor and trying to do things that I thought would get me towards being a full professor.

Beverly went on to share:

If you’re on the tenure track you don’t quit running until you get to the top. So I wasn’t going to be one of those people that settled in at associate and just said I don’t want to get to full. I didn’t want to do that because I saw that really as kind of giving up. And if I was going to give up then I would have gone on and done something else.
I mean I’ve been looking for the challenges and there was a challenge to moving up for full. So I saw that as the next step.

However, not all of the women aspired to the rank of full professor. As mentioned in the previous subtheme, some were pushed by their peers. Carol stated:

I knew I always wanted to get tenure. I had no plans to go up for full professorship.

While reflecting on aspirations, LaVerne also noted that she did not desire a full professorship. However, when talking with her colleagues, they helped her to see the possibility. LaVerne shared some things her peers told her to convince her to go up for full, sharing:

It wasn’t even the job security. It was ‘you deserve it. You’ve worked at lot and you deserve it. You work, you put in the hours, your scholarship is just as good or better as some of your other colleagues. What are you afraid of?’ Which tends to be the big thing with everybody that knows somebody is ‘why are you afraid of it.’ So I’m like I’ll just merely put it in and see what and just have to trust God.

One of the big issues that came up was that perhaps some of these women’s aspirations for themselves were beyond the expectations their white colleagues envisioned for them. For example, Mary shared:

I was always amazed at how most white men were always taken aback when I told them quite deliberately and quite firmly that I was going to go up for full professor. I had no doubts about it. And I think that it took them aback because they felt as though they were the ones that were to tell me when it was supposed to happen instead of me having the voice to say this is what I’m going to do. The reaction from white men in particular [was] very different from my colleagues of color who very
carefully talked to me and prepared me to walk that path…[some] don’t want to empower others to achieve to that level, to aspire to that level.

Mary’s comment strikes a cord regarding who becomes a full professor and why. She elucidates the traditional notion that faculty are chosen, or tapped, to be full professors as opposed to aspiring to and seeking to be full professors. Juanita challenged this notion of waiting to be tapped for promotion to full, adding:

That idea of just being patient and showing that you’re a good citizen and waiting longer than other people, I think black folks sort of know that’s a myth now. But what we also know is a myth is that it doesn’t matter how long we’ve been in rank we’re not welcome to the club.

This subtheme reveals the notion that for those who did aspire to the rank of full professor they were met with resistance from colleagues and in most cases their white colleagues. For those who did not necessarily aspire to the highest rank, they had to be convinced to go up and reminded of all the hard work they had done. While aspirations and expectations did not necessarily match up, some of the women were met with more overt hostility to them becoming full professors.

**Interlopers**

The fourth subtheme, *Interlopers*, highlights the ways in which the women in this study were made aware that the full professorship was not a space in which they were truly welcomed. Juanita shared some of the resistance she faced, stating:

Colleagues came and said ‘why are you doing this? You know you don’t ever have to go up for full.’ And I am thinking, why not? Why would I want to be a terminal associate? Why if I had the record wouldn’t I want to do this? ‘The black male in the
department isn’t a full professor, and he was here before you were. It’s not your turn yet. You need to wait on him.’ I cannot tell you the things people said to me. They said I was arrogant. And then after I got it, one of my former students, a young white woman, came to me and said ‘who the hell did you ‘do’ to get that job? To get promoted so quickly.’

In the case of being directly discouraged, Mary shared:

…they tell you don’t do it…I remember a white male at IU telling me you know ‘oh well it’s not a big deal. There really aren’t that many financial benefits or that many benefits in going up for full.’ Bullshit!

As noted in other areas in this chapter, there are several benefits to becoming a full professor. Both Juanita and Mary reflected on and shared some explanation as to why they believed they were discouraged. Juanita stated:

[It’s] because I’m totally out of my place. I wasn’t supposed to be a full professor and I was just supposed to make it to the associate level. They didn’t expect anymore from me. I think that we’re seen as interlopers. We don’t belong because you’re generating knowledge and so that isn’t something we’re [black women] supposed to do. We’re seen as arrogant thinking that we should be members of the club and so I think we’re held out, purposely excluded. I knew for a very long time, way back when I was in college that I wanted to be a professor. Figuring out how to get here was a different thing because I was discouraged. I was discouraged by a lot of people.

Juanita related her experiences and her colleagues’ aggressions towards her directly to her identity as a black, female scholar. She particularly points to the dissonance faced by those
colleagues when thinking about black female colleagues as intellectual equals. Mary supported Juanita’s assertions, stating:

Here’s the other rub. In most instances when African-American women do make it to [the] full professorship there still is doubt that we were challenged. So when we do go up they make us go up more than once. They challenge our academic materials and our research. So when you have that type of doubt as you go up, the individuals in the profession continue that doubt. Therefore, you’re not a legacy. Your work, your research is not really research, it’s not valid. Your credentials…your writing, it’s not the type of writing that [they] want. [It’s not] considered to be scholarship and so we are not scholars. That is why what you just said validates again what I’m telling you. We are not smart enough. That is why we weren’t on the stage. They don’t see us as people who are intellectuals. That’s why we’re not pillars of the profession.

Mary’s reference to not being pillars refers to a recent conference that highlighted pillars of the profession and failed to recognize or incorporated any senior black female faculty.

Despite only two women speaking specifically about this theme, it is still relevant. They both provide examples of practices that occur that often lead to black women remaining in the associate professor position. More specifically, they perceive these practices as intentional threats against black women.

**Theme Summary**

This theme, *Terminal Associates*, directly relates to how the black women in this study understand their current status in the professoriate and why they believe there are so few of them. A number of the women indicated that there was a misconception about what it means to be a full professor and the benefits associated with the rank. Not all of the women
in this study experienced these benefits in the same ways nor did they interpret those benefits in the exact same way. While one of the women felt as though she was still trying to figure out what it means and the benefits inherent in the position, other women indicated that through observing colleagues they learned that the position entailed greater leadership opportunities, chances to earn more money, opportunities to voice concerns to audiences with more power, and the ability to bring others along.

Mentoring was another topic discussed by many of the women. Mentoring, or lack thereof, seemed to be directly related to the reason why many black women have misconceptions about the full professorship. Mentoring from senior faculty members can aid in helping assistant and associate professors prepare for their careers, to include a full professorship. Not surprising, many of the women in this study did not have mentors, thus they were left to figure it out on their own. The women in this study also talked about their aspirations and the expectations of some of their colleagues. Of particular concern is how their aspirations did not necessarily match the expectations of their colleagues. Incongruent aspirations and expectations is problematic, but expected given how some of the women were and continue to be treated as foreigners. Through both covert and overt acts some of the women discussed how they came to understand that the full professorship was not meant for them. Many of the women talked about not being viewed as scholars despite their merits.

**Freedom Of Academics (Theme 3)**

The third theme is that of the *Freedom of Academics*. As the women in this study shared their experiences, it was unmistakable that academics in powerful positions were using their power and authority to influence processes and procedures and/or behave in
inappropriate racist and sexist ways without repercussion, reprimand, or any other form of accountability for their actions. In an effort to get to the bottom of the phenomenon, three subthemes were developed: Policy, Procedure, and Practice, Microaggressions, and Socialization vs. Hazing.

Policy, Procedure, and Practice

As the women in this study discussed their experiences of going up for full professor, some of them indicated that there were discrepancies between the policies and procedures of going up for full at their institutions and the actual practices in their departments and colleges. Policies and procedures refer to the official rules and guidelines governing processes with the institution, while practices refer to what actually happens at the institution. This subtheme illuminates these experiences. Juanita shared:

I went up for full the first year I was eligible, because [my department chair and mentor] pushed me to do it, and [another mentor] said absolutely, positively don’t do it. And I thought about it, moaned over it, and I went ahead and went for it because [my department chair] was intimately acquainted with my vita and by that time [my other mentor] wasn’t because we were on different parts of campus. Well, I went for it. We had a school director because at that time we had departments, schools, and then colleges. The school director called [the department chair] in and said to him ‘I am going to put together a special committee to look at Juanita’s CV because you and Juanita work together so closely.’ And at the time he had gone from being my professor to being the department head. [The school director continued,] ‘I don’t think you have any objectivity where she’s concerned.’ She put together this special committee and the committee looked at [my materials] and said ‘yeah she’s ready to


go up, let her.’ And so I had to go through that extra step of being vetted by this [special] committee.

In a follow-up question about whether this extra step was a documented policy or procedure, Juanita stated:

It’s nowhere in any procedural document. It does not exist. And I thought it was terribly disrespectful to the chair to basically say you have no objectivity about one of your faculty members.

When asked if this practice had been done since her promotion, Juanita indicated that it had not. But, she also indicated that there have been no other black women to go up for full professor in her department since her. In terms of extra procedures in the process, LaVerne also was subjected to an extra step in her process. LaVerne shared:

The dean of the college recommended as I went up for me to write an essay on the connection between black studies and adult education. And I was furious. Why do I have to do this?

Despite the request being presented as a recommendation, LaVerne had to write the essay. LaVerne stated that her frustration came from the fact that:

My contract already states the work that I’m doing in black studies is legitimate research.

LaVerne brought up an important point about women of color scholars having to prove that their work is legitimate, despite the fact that they have already gone through tenure, successfully. Furthermore, based on the definitions and descriptions the women in this study provide of what it means to be a full professor, there is less concern about scholarship and more about potential for leadership.
Although there was no extra step, in Mary’s experience going up for full professor there were several unexpected and unexplained rules and prerequisites that were not shared with her. She said:

They had several excuses. They said that I hadn’t been at IU long enough [despite no policy governing time at institution for promotion to full]. I’d been there four years. They said that I had not been in rank and tenured long enough [despite no policy governing time in rank for promotion to full professor]. I had been ranked tenured for eight years, 1996 to 2004. They said that I hadn’t been publishing enough, but of course I was an associate dean at the time. They wanted to see more research publications because unbeknown to me, I didn’t realize that all the books and things that I had been doing aren’t considered research; they’re considered under service.

Mary went on to provide her thoughts on why these extra steps happened. Mary shared:

It’s history repeating itself and it’s the same but it’s just a different package. It’s exactly the same [thing whites] did to [blacks] when we wanted to vote. Think about the parallel. We want to go up for full. We want to vote. We want the right. We have the right to vote. We have the right to go up for full. The policies are clearly in front of us. But we get the polling place and they put a big jar of marbles in front of you and ask how many marbles are in this jar? You have to tell me the exact number of marbles in this jar before you can register to vote. Or you have to pay poll tax. Or you have to take a test. It’s the exact same thing. I mean it’s the same shit different package. And you may quote me on that. Same shit, it’s just a different package.

Mary posited that the phenomenon of incongruent policies, procedures, and practices is directly related to race and is similar to practices in the Jim Crow era when non-whites were
eventually given the legal right to vote but faced practices that made it virtually impossible for them to exercise those rights.

**Micro- and Macro-Aggressions**

Another common freedom of academics that arose was that of racialized and gendered micro- and macro-aggressions. Sue et al., (2007) defined racial micro-aggressions as “commonplace verbal or behavioral indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults” (p. 278). However, these aggressions can also be on a macro scale or “large-scale, systems-related stressors that are widespread, sometimes becoming highly publicized, race-related, traumatic events” (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007, p. 554). The women in this study shared a number of racialized and gendered micro- and macro-aggressions in their experiences. Christine shared:

I’ll never forget this. [A black female faculty colleague] and I had a faculty meeting that morning and she came to my office and we’re walking down the hallway going towards the faculty meeting. Now at the time [my colleague] and I were the only two black women professors in my department. So we’re going to the faculty meeting and this colleague of ours is coming in the opposite direction towards us, heading to his office. I don’t know if he forgot something or whatever, but saw us and said ‘oh this side of the hallway is sure looking darker lately.’ And [my black female faculty colleague and I] exchanged glances at each other and he must have seen us looking at each other and he said ‘oh you ladies know I was just kidding. You know I was just kidding about that comment.’

Sometimes the aggressions are as blatant as the one in Christine’s story. Similarly, Juanita shared:
I think my race and gender have significantly influenced my life as a faculty member. I think that’s the filter…whenever you have hierarchy there are things that influence the status that you have or that you don’t have. And so I think that race and gender significantly influences my daily life, whether I’m at the library trying to check out a book and someone turns to my Asian graduate assistant and asks her if I’m really a faculty member. Certainly I look old enough to be one. I think that it just influences everything I do. I wish I was one of those people that the light bulb had never gone off and I wasn’t cognizant of the things that happen but I can’t think of a time when it doesn’t. Even when I’m sitting behind my desk and someone knocks on the door and they’re looking for me and they want to know if Dr. Johnson-Bailey is in and I’m sitting behind my desk. So you have to wonder what is that cognitive dissonance for them that they don’t get that if there is nobody else in the room and there’s a black woman sitting behind the desk that it’s probably her desk.

Often times these aggressions are subtler. Dawn said:

There’s that one where people come to you when it’s a black student problem. Thinking you can fix it. You’re kind of the in-house consultant for all black students. One incident that happened was where I wanted to hire an African-American woman, who’s actually multiracial but perceived as being African-American. I got into a huge disagreement with folks because they saw her as the same as me. They did. Both of us were black [women] and we were both interested in minority issues. That was at a progressive school, by the way.

Here Dawn brings up two points that can be viewed as hostile toward black women. The first, while it might seem innocent, is quite covert in that it is automatically assumed that
because an individual is Black she can handle any issue that might be presented when other Black people are involved. The second issue Dawn brings up relates to the essentialism of Black women in the academy. Dawn’s colleagues saw no value in hiring another Black woman whose scholarship centered minority issues because they already had Dawn. Mary reflected on many of the subtle aggressions colleagues make towards black women, stating:

[White colleagues] will come up with so many excuses about why [black women] can’t do certain stuff [i.e., go up for full professor]. Oh [black women] need more time. ‘She needs more time in this position to get trained and get prepared.’ But when it’s a white male, they’ll go ‘you know he’s sharp, he’ll learn this, he’ll pick it up.’ But [black women] can’t pick it up.

Mary’s comments reflected the challenge to black women’s intellectual capabilities by white male colleagues. While discussing reactions from colleagues on committees, LaVerne similarly stated:

I do know some other things and when I’m at a meeting or in a conversation or sitting on a dissertation or master’s thesis [committee] people look at me like ‘oh I didn’t know she knew about that.’ And to me that’s very frustrating. Just because [Black Studies] is my first love does not mean that I don’t know anything about anything else. And that’s very frustrating. The other part is always being the one to call to answer questions about African-Americans or Latinos … So I think for me most people see this idea of well she’s African-American so she’s gonna be the expert.

LaVerne’s comments supported both Mary’s assertions about how colleagues view the intellectual capabilities of black women, as well as Dawn’s statements about being called
upon to respond to issues only when they deal with race. Christine’s example of a microaggression is also very covert, but one that happens more often than not. She shared:

Another incident that was associated with [promotion] is the day my department was taking a vote on my dossier. I was sitting in my office and the same colleague [dark side of the hallway white male full professor], whose office happens to be next door to mine, said ‘oh Christine you have nothing to worry about. You know you are the golden child.’ I said ‘I wish somebody would have told me!’ So it’s comments like that and you know I’m sure if I were to play that back to him he would have said ‘you know that’s not what I meant at all.’ But that’s not the point; it’s how I perceive those comments.

Christine’s colleague’s comments insinuate that, as the only black woman to go up for full in her department, ever, she has nothing to worry about. Comments such as this are viewed as backhanded comments regarding the assumed affirmative action status of black women who persist in predominately white spaces. She makes a very important point about perceptions versus intentions. Given that she was the first and only black woman to go up for full, insinuating that somehow Christine might automatically be granted promotion, despite her efforts, could be taken the wrong way or it could be taken exactly how it was meant given the covert nature of the message.

**Socialization vs. Hazing**

The third subtheme is *Socialization vs. Hazing*. As it relates to the freedom of academics, this subtheme addresses the way academics treat each other, particularly full professors who have the ability to enact power in ways that make a significant difference. Dawn shared:
There’s this whole notion in faculty that you fall into rank. And you have to earn your place and your space. And if you don’t, you defy, or go against the faculty culture, like any other culture, it spits you out.

Dawn is acknowledging that there is in fact a faculty culture and a lot of it is based on rank.

When asked how she learned about the role of full professors in a department culture, Beverly shared:

I saw it modeled by senior professors when I was [an] assistant and associate. Not all of them obviously but the ones that really were interested in the well being of the assistants and associates. You could definitely see them urging assistants and associates not to do some things and picking up the load themselves. So I try to do that as well.

Dawn and Beverly provided examples of how positive socialization can occur in a department. Socialization, defined as the way in which individuals acquire identity and learn the norms, values, behavior, and social skills appropriate to their field (Beiber & Worley, 2006; Fairweather, 1996), is particularly important as junior faculty learn how to be senior faculty in an academic community. However, the socialization of some of the women in the study bordered more on the lines of hazing. Hazing, similar to socialization, is ritualistic, but involves abuse, harassment, and humiliation. Christine reflected:

Power can be abused. I’ve seen that happen where the people who have power abuse that power, in terms of how they relate or how they treat students, staff, or other faculty members. One that happens a lot in the academy, it doesn’t always get a lot of discourse in terms of abuse of power in my opinion is bullying. I see that happen a lot. I mean with senior faculty and with junior faculty. I see that with faculty and
students. The whole notion that tenure gives you academic freedom and in some cases it’s a positive thing to have academic freedom, but that also can be abused as well. Christine refers to it as bullying, but it is a similar sentiment to hazing. Carol expanded on the concern about bullying, sharing the following experience:

But one of the reasons, the main reason for [me] leaving [a previous institution was] because there was one person who was really, I hate to use the word, harassing, but that’s kind of what it was. There was one person who made it difficult for people, and it wasn’t just a race thing, they made it difficult for people of color, [and] for women. And, I had expressed some concerns to the department chair at that time, over some years.

In her experience, the harassment was enough to drive her to a different institution. Carol went on to share:

People in authority positions they can’t turn their back and act like nothing is going on. And I tell people they need to deal with people. Whenever you have people attacking other people verbally, you do something about it. Because the people that are unhappy leave and then the attackers just get a new victim if you don’t do anything to them.

Carol is clear that there should be repercussions for senior faculty, and any other faculty members that harass other faculty. Mary discussed academic hazing in relation to her black female identity, stating:

It was amazing the things that were said and done. And when you’re an assistant professor you have, for black women, to keep your mouth shut. Keep quiet. It’s just all these covert messages that are, some are covert [and] some are overt.
In reflecting on her experience of going up for full, Mary shared:

I stuck to what they told me to do and I rewrote my statement 50 million times trying to hammer it down and did what I had to do and I got stopped at the college level.

Mary’s experience indicates that even if one does what they are asked (i.e., rewrite statements, write new statements, allow last minute, out of protocol review committees to review their credentials) there is still the possibility that they will not be successful at the end of the process. Carol provided her take on why this happens, stating:

It’s almost as if they see you in a certain role and as long as you stay in that role they have no issues with you. But as soon as you come out of that role then that’s when they just change on you. I don’t know, but it’s hard to explain. I think some people just view you as some subservient role. And once you get out of that box they try to put you back in your place.

This notion of putting individuals in their place is a classic excuse, or reason, for hazing.

With a seemingly exhausting voice, Juanita stated:

I think this academic world is so hostile. And I’m amazed that people survive and that people even thrive. Just the way that we treat each other is sad.

To be sure, socialization is important in learning the cultural practices of any organization or group, to include faculty. For these women there were examples of positive ways to socialize people (e.g., protect them from service overload, be caring, etc.) but there were also examples of academic hazing. While hazing is generally unacceptable, when black women bare the brunt of the hazing, it is particularly problematic given that it compounds other challenges they face in the academy.

Theme Summary
The *Freedom of Academics* theme focused on specific practices of faculty and senior level academic administrators (who are also faculty) in the academy. The theme title depicts the notion that these practices often go unchecked or changed thus making them seem in some way acceptable. As it relates to policies, procedures, and practices, some of the women in this study recalled having to complete tasks or be subjected to processes that were incongruent with what had been commonly practiced in their departments. Others would later find out that, despite all of their efforts and work (i.e., publishing books, etc.), the rules would change and that their work would not count toward their promotion to full professor.

The issue of racialized and gendered micro- and macro-aggressions came up several times across conversations and across interviews. Examples of blatant racist and sexist remarks included being referred to as the “darker side of the hallway” and being asked “who did you sleep with,” to get promoted. The insinuations and expectations that these women deal with all issues related to black students also stood out across participants. Additionally, assumptions about their intellectual capabilities stood out as micro-aggressions against many of the women in this study.

Another issue that surfaced was hazing or bullying. As one of the women mentioned, if one does not integrate into the faculty culture they may ultimately not be accepted. While socialization is an important part of faculty life (Austin, 2002; Rosser, 2003; Tierney, 1993), many of the women talked about actions and behaviors that seemed counter to the purposes of socialization. Furthermore, they characterized these behaviors as hostile and an abuse of power.
Purpose And Price (Theme 4)

The last major theme to be presented in this particular project is that of *Purpose and Price*. Despite the many negative experiences shared, all of the women were overwhelmingly clear about their purpose in their roles. More explicitly, the black feminist epistemological dimension of an ethic of care was prominent in many of their reflections on their purpose. However, their efforts toward a specific purpose are not without consequences. In our dialogues, some of the women shared very real effects and ramifications for existing and working within a system that has situated them as outsiders-within. In an effort to understand these phenomena, two subthemes were developed: *Giving Back, Paying it Forward* and *At What Cost?*

**Giving Back, Paying it Forward**

There were two concepts that seemed central to the work of many of the women in this study, giving back and paying it forward. Giving back, as a concept, relates directly to their understandings of their responsibility to provide resources, access to resources, and make a difference in the lives of others. Paying it forward relates to the idea that these women have a desire to bring other black female faculty, and other faculty of color, along and share their knowledge in an effort to create more equitable circumstances for those coming behind them. Christine shared:

> I learned that from all my mentors, but I also learned that from my grandparents growing up in Jamaica. It was just always engrained in me to remember where you are coming from and always remember people who are less fortunate than you are or people who don’t always have the same kind of access and networks or information that you have. It’s part of who I am.
Christine continued:

I have an opportunity to make a difference. I have an opportunity to make an impact through my teaching, research, and my service activities. I also have an opportunity to give something back to the community and to others that have helped me along the way. That may sound simple, but to me that’s the essence of why I do what I do and why I enjoy what I’m doing.

Important in Christine’s reflection was that giving back, and learning to give back, was not necessarily a direct outcome of being a faculty member, but rather a concept and action that was ingrained in her throughout her life. Her family, as well as her mentors, and experiences shaped her understanding of giving back. For Christine, being able to give back is at the center of who she is. For Carol, giving back was demonstrated through her care for students of color in the academy. She shared:

Even though we are of service to all students, just like our white colleagues, for me I’m sure some of the others may feel the same, I feel a critical role in meeting the needs of students of color, especially African-American students. I think it is important for them to see people that look like them not only to be a professor in the classroom, but to be a mentor [and] a role model. I think even though anybody can encourage and support a student, [the] reality is sometimes those minority groups don’t get supported by the majority, and they need that encouragement and support from people who look like them.

In our conversations about how Carol came to be in the field, she mentioned several times the importance of the black male and female role models she saw around her. Further, she noted the importance of having people who looked like her in spaces where no one looked
like her, making the point that it helped her to know that she could aspire and achieve to those levels and beyond. Carol’s desire to emulate the role models from throughout her life is reflected in her wish to serve students of color.

The desire to serve was salient in the lives of others as well. While discussing what it meant to her to be a black female full professor, Dawn shared:

> I wear it as an honor and a privilege, and I’m humbled and I’m respectful of those who went before me that didn’t have the same kind of positive experience that I had, but they opened the doors and paved the way and pushed in some cases. [They] pushed and kicked doors down so that I and others like me would have the opportunity to serve, the privilege to serve in this role and in the capacities that I find myself in.

Dawn recognized the struggle of those who came before her and how that struggle has afforded her opportunities. Dawn went on to share:

> [Being a Black woman full professor] means I don’t let anyone take away any of my freedom or rights as a black woman full professor. I participate in faculty governance, typically at the department and college level. I participate on planning committees that will make a difference for the future of the organization that I’m working for. I participate nationally, professional associations and organizations, [and] typically raw planning and visioning for the future. And I really try to serve as a role model and an advocate on behalf of those that are coming behind me. It means a lot.
In addition to serving as a role model, Dawn uses her service to give back in the form of advocacy in spaces where black women are not normally located. The idea of serving others and paying it forward came in other forms as well. Mary stated:

I try very hard to lift as I could climb, as much as I possibly can. But that’s full professorship for me it’s being empowered to help others beyond what anybody could tell you about [it] and what people have told you about [it]. It’s an amazing empowerment opportunity. Being a full professor means that I need to covertly and overtly try to empower other women of color to go up for full. And make sure that is their goal.

Mary’s statement represents the importance of empowering others to both aspire and achieve to the rank of full professor. Christine also shared the sentiment of paying it forward and bringing others along. She stated:

There are not a lot of us. And obviously there’s not a lot of black women full professors in the academy. I don’t take that very lightly either. I mentor, particularly to faculty of color. It’s about paying it forward. It’s about bringing other people along.

To be sure, the women in this study did not take their rank, positions in the institutions, and ability to make a difference lightly. They all have worked and continue to work toward a purpose of equity and social justice through their teaching, research, and service. However, this work does not come without a price.

At What Cost?

In one way or another all of the women in this study have demonstrated their commitment to social justice. All of the women have written and published about the
experiences of black women in higher education. Others are quite deliberate with their pedagogy in the classroom as they help students to see their advocacy roles or how they reify social ills such as racism, sexism, and classism. Additionally, each has been in a meeting where they have had to remind their colleagues about issues of diversity. While these women continue in these efforts daily, they do not come without a price. From feelings of invisibility to bouts with depression, these women have bore the brunt of resistance. Regarding feelings of isolation, Christine shared:

   I’m the most senior level black administrator at Texas A&M. It’s very isolated. Here it’s up front and center. If you look at the folks in administration who are in the president’s cabinet I’m the only woman of color.

With regards to being a member of such a small group, that is black female full professors, Juanita shared:

   [It’s] burdensome when there are so few that you end up having to carry quite a lot. It’s lonely.

While talking about how race and gender impact her work, Mary shared:

   [Race and gender] impacts what I want to do professionally because the academy is not accustomed to seeing that model. So we’re invisible.

While issues of isolation and invisibility are not new ones for black female faculty, it is disheartening that these issues continue despite having earned the top rank of full professor. Another price to pay relates to being the first. Many of the women hold the title of “the first black woman to….” While that is commendable and speaks volumes to the abilities of these women, the title of “first” can come with some burdensome consequences. Carol shared:
I just think that’s pathetic that a person can go through undergrad and not have a black faculty member or maybe not a faculty member of color period. I think that’s terribly wrong.

The burden of being the first black female professor students have ever had is heavy. Dawn shared:

Many times, I’m the first black professor that my students have ever had. Which amazes me because I only teach masters and doctoral students. That means that they’ve gone through elementary, middle school, high school and undergraduate education and never had a black professor. So I think it’s important because I’m sure that my presence in the classroom for students breaks some of their stereotypes about African-Americans and African-American women. I can be caring, kind of the nurturer, but I can also be demanding and expecting and push them to be a better student, a better critical thinker, [and] a better person.

The price lies in the need to battle racialized and gendered stereotypes of black women.

Furthermore, some students are resistant to seeing a black woman as an intellectual authority. Speaking to this very issue, Juanita stated:

…we were experiencing a type of animosity, that we were still being assaulted in a sense by even undergraduates who questioned our credentials, questioned whether or not we should even be where we were. And we noticed that with our colleagues [we] had to deal with more resistance. And at the time I was the associate department head and the resistance that we had to deal with from faculty about everyday things was demoralizing. In terms of my scholarship and being a full professor, [it] doesn’t seem to matter the number of publications that I have. If I am acknowledged as being a
scholar in my area it’s seen as an anomaly, but most of the time I don’t think I’m acknowledged at all. And that’s not something I expected to have to deal with anymore when I was full professor. And I remember saying to [my seasoned black female colleague] when I was an assistant professor after a particularly difficult class where luckily I had dinner scheduled with her after the class because by the time I got to her I was just in tears about how disrespectful this one student had been and how I had to confront her in class. And while I remained calm it was very injuring to my spirit. And I said when I’m like you, when I’m a full professor and I’m teaching out of my own book, I know I won’t have to deal with these issues. And she said to me ‘as long as you’re a black woman in America it doesn’t matter your rank you are going to have to deal with this in the academy.’

Some of the women also talked about having to be twice as good as their colleagues. The ‘work twice as hard for less’ phenomenon is also burdensome. Christine reflected:

I mean I always feel like I have to be on top of my game. I always feel like I have to make sure when I walk into a meeting or if I’m asked to chair a committee, the first thing that they’re going to see even [though] they may not always admit it and want to say this whole thing about ‘I’m colorblind. I don’t see color.’ That’s a bunch of BS, because I know when I’m in the room, you [think] I’m suspect. When I’m in the room I’m being held under a microscope. So I make darn sure that I have my stuff together. I mean all the time and I’m on.

Dawn’s reflection aligned with Christine’s. Dawn shared:

I’ve always felt like I had to be more prepared, more engaging, more versed and read than my counterparts. That I would be held under a microscope and that the
expectations would be higher for me. And I had to learn not to let that get in the way of my work. That was a given and I was used to that given my previous experience before I started teaching. But I knew that I’d be scrutinized or I expected that I’d be scrutinized and held to a higher standard than my colleagues. So if I made a mistake, that mistake would be magnified as compared to one of my male or female white counterparts.

Both Christine and Dawn recognized that their social status as black women very much dictates how they are perceived. Therefore, they have to ensure that they are more prepared than their colleagues across different situations. Mary stated:

We’re the few that represent all African-American women on all fronts. We’re the people that literally just blow peoples’ minds anywhere and everywhere we go. There are minimal expectations of us, but we’re the ones that push whites and other people to see us as their intellectual peers and for some even beyond their intellectual peers. So I’ve known for a very long time that this work is to be honored, it’s sacred, it’s to be revered, it is rigorous, and that every African-American woman in the world, her reputation rests upon my ability to clearly articulate and represent her in a way that blows everybody’s minds and expectations and their socialized image and the systemic image that has been constructed of us. So that’s what being a black woman scholar means to me and being a black female faculty member means. I’ve always known that it was above and beyond what anyone could ever imagine the role and responsibility to be.

Another price that comes with being a black female faculty member revolves around black women’s scholarship choices, as exemplified in Beverly’s reflection. She shared:
I have not confined myself to that perspective [diversity and/or black women’s issues] in my research consciously because I did have a variety of interests. [That’s] not all that I am and therefore I did have other interests that are neutral as far as [race is] concerned. And I think it’s a good idea too. I thought as an assistant professor looking for tenure that it would be a good idea to have more than one particular area of interest in my research and to have a more neutral area of interest in my research, in case there was somebody around who thought ‘oh she’s just one of them black women not doing real research.’ So I consciously made that decision to have some other areas as well.

While on one hand this could be viewed as a wise and informed decision, on the other hand, it represents a cost directly associated with being a black woman in the professoriate. The fact that Beverly had to consciously decide to have “neutral” areas of interest is a burden.

A major cost that came up with many of the women was health, both mental and physical. Carol shared:

I’m sure we die at a younger age than many of these other subgroups, because we take too much on. So that’s why it’s important, staying focused, keeping a balance, because otherwise you are going to kill yourself. Even with myself, I don’t do a good job sometimes, I’ll be honest with you. I don’t practice what I preach, but I try to make sure that I take care of myself. I try to exercise. I try to take time for myself. I get my vacations in, because for years, Natasha, I didn’t even take my vacation. Even when I went home for Christmas I would take a suitcase load of work.
Many in academia know all too well about not taking breaks and lugging suitcases of books across the country at the holidays. Beyond this, the health concerns are greater. Christine recounted:

I had an incident happen to me a couple of months ago. It angered me so much, I mean I actually cried. I cry from a place of anger and then I talked with one of my mentors about it and she helped me to put things in perspective.

Carol shared:

If people tried to tell me I couldn’t do something, my goal was to always prove them wrong. But the sad thing is for some of us it tears us down. They do wear you down, but I’m not going to let anyone tear me down. But it happens.

Dawn’s sentiments were similar to Carol’s. Talking about not being able to stay at an institution, Dawn stated:

In a way, had I stayed there I would have had to compromise everything that I believe in and would have been sick mentally and psychologically. Cause you can’t stay in the place or I could not stay in the place where my spirit was going to be broken.

While reflecting on how to deal with some of these issues, Mary declared:

You’d have to prepare yourself and put on the full armor every day as you walk into the academy, walk into the institution, into the building and encounter the people that you’re going to encounter be it the individuals who put your best interest at heart and also those who covertly and overtly harm you. So the prayer is really important.

Talking about the effects of micro-aggressions and how to respond to them, Juanita reflected:

If I hadn’t been so shocked I probably would have dealt with it differently, but it really depends on whether it’s one of those micro-aggression things that I can just
brush away or things that I need to stop and deal with. I realize that if I try to fight every single battle that I’ll be too weary to win the war. So I don’t fight every single battle. The important battles I fight. The small daily indignities, I don’t have time to deal with them. Those I will ignore.

As it relates to her promotion to full professor, Juanita shared:

I actually was so depressed about people’s reactions to my getting promoted, that I do what I always do when I am having a hard time handling something. In my heart I have to intellectualize it. And so that Harvard Ed piece that I wrote on how race and gender effects your academic career, came out of that pain of thinking that everyone would be happy for me and thinking that everything would change.

Whether through prayer, conscious decision-making, or intellectualizing the problems and publishing about them, all of these women have exercised agency in their journey thus far. Despite the costs, they all make the decision, each day, to continue in service to their students, colleagues, and those who are coming up behind them. Additionally, they are all aware of the ways their gender and race intersect to inform their experiences. While talking with one of her mentors, and later her husband, about being disappointed in the lack of change toward her after being promoted, the two men shared with Juanita:

[My white male mentor] said to me, ‘But Juanita why’d you think it was going to change? If you have always been looked at as an interloper. You’re at a research one. Why did you think things were gonna change just because you cleared one more hurdle?’ And I thought to myself, wow that’s a no brainer. And my husband put it a little more distinctly. ‘So did you forget you were black?’
While Juanita did not forget she was a black woman, this quote brings several key points together. Even at the rank of full professor, black women are faced with racism and sexism and deal with it rather regularly. They have likely dealt with it their whole careers. But, rather than giving up or giving in, they all in their own ways remain true to their purpose. They continue to fight the big battles and seek change for those coming up behind them.

**Theme Summary**

The *Purpose and Price* theme directly relates to the how the women in this study see their purpose and what costs that purpose has. Despite the long list of roadblocks erected to stop these women from entering the top rank, they have struggled and persisted. They recognize the importance of their presence in the academy and in the role of full professor. And despite the fact that they feel pressure to work twice as hard as others and endure the constant blatant and covert acts of racism and sexism they continue to persist and push back.

**Analysis Using Critical Race Theory and Critical Race Feminism**

The women in this study provided rich insights into the full professorship, particularly with regard to issues of status, influence, power, race, and gender. Few studies have explored the full professorship and even fewer have examined the experiences of black women in these roles. These findings play a central role in understanding each of their experiences, as well as the professoriate and the full professorship broadly. The voices in this study supplied a great deal of data pertaining to what it means to be a full professor and how black women are positioned in those roles. What the data revealed from their stories was that race and gender, and the confluence of both, affects their daily lives as full professors and played a major role in their journey to the top rank. Therefore, the critical race theory and
critical race feminism frameworks were appropriate analytical tools for understanding their experiences.

Before beginning the analytical discussion, it may be appropriate to briefly highlight the analytical tools I am borrowing from the critical race theory and critical race feminism frameworks introduced in chapter three. Critical race theory is used as a vehicle to examine race and racism in the professoriate, the promotion processes to full professor, and subsequent experiences of black female full professors. Lopez (2003) stated

The role of CRT is to highlight the fact that [race neutral/colorblind] beliefs only serve to maintain racism in place – relegating racism to overt/blatant and unmistakable acts of hatred, as opposed to highlighting the ways in which our beliefs, practices, knowledge, and apparatuses reproduce a system of racial hierarchy and social inequality. (p.85)

As an analytical framework the following CRT tenets will be used to guide this discussion: 

experiential knowledge,  

race and sexism as endemic,  

challenging liberal ideology,  

whiteness as property.

Critical race feminism is also used as a theoretical framework and analytical tool in this study. Critical race feminism is being used to analyze the manner in which race and gender intersect to create unique experiences of both oppression and empowerment in the experiences of the women in this study. Specifically the analytical tool of intersectionality and anti-essentialism are being employed.

**Intersections of Experiential Knowledge and Ahistoricism**

Bell (2003) wrote, “stories are a bridge between individual experience and systemic social patterns…thus, their analysis can be a potential tool for developing a more critical
consciousness about social relations in our society” (p. 4). From a CRT and CRF standpoint, in order to address systems of racialized and gendered oppression in the faculty ranks, and specifically in the full professorship, the experiential knowledge of communities of color must be centered. Collectively, despite their varied experiences, their stories, when brought to the center, provided an alternative perspective to the common masternarrative that often seeks to ignore racism and sexism while simultaneously constructing interpretations and beliefs about race and gender.

As DeCuir and Dixson (2004) stated, “counter-storytelling is a means of exposing and critiquing normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes” (p. 27). Although not constructed as a traditional counterstory (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2003; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002), this project reveals a counterstory in that it illuminates the experiences of black women and uncovers the ways racism and sexism are perpetuated in the professoriate. Through this project, the voices of black women are centered and privileged as valid constructors of knowledge.

As discussed in an earlier chapter, masternarratives, sometimes referred to as majoritarian stories, are “description[s] of events as told by members of dominant/majority groups, accompanied by the values and beliefs that justify the actions taken by dominants to insure their dominant position” (Love, 2004, p. 229). While dominant groups usually construct and share masternarratives, non-dominant groups are well aware of some of the stories and at times can come to incorporate these stories into their own understandings and expectations of how things are and should be. The masternarrative of the full professorship is quite succinct and is informed by both the women in this study and the limited literature on full professors. To be certain, full professors are at the top of the professoriate (Clark, 1987;
Long et al., 1993; Tien & Blackburn, 1996), exceeded only by a small group who may be honored with a preceding “University,” “Distinguished,” or “Endowed Chair” title (Clark, 1987). All of the women described the full professorship as the career pinnacle (Clark, 1987; Tien & Blackburn, 1996). Full professors are viewed, within and outside of their academic community, as top scholars and experts in their fields of study (Long, Allison, McGinnis, 1993; Tien & Blackburn, 1996). As such, they assume leadership positions in their departments, institutions, and fields (e.g., department chairs, governance committee chairs, deans, journal editors, association presidents). Additionally, full professors have access to people and resources that their colleagues do not. Given their status as scholars, experts, and leaders, they are able to play a crucial role in the decision-making and governance of their institutions, as well as influence their academic fields.

To be clear, the masternarrative above, mainly presented in the Defining the Full Professorship theme, was one not only informed by the limited literature, but also disclosed by the full professors in this study. However, although they were able to share these aspects of the position, some of them also recognized that their experiences were in some ways incongruent with the majoritarian story of the full professorship and were able to process their understandings of the differences. The stories shared by these women are counter to the dominant narrative and as such can be viewed as counterstories. Furthermore, they are counterstories because they inform audiences about oppression and serve as a form of survival, solidarity, self-preservation, and healing (Delgado, 1989). It is within their experiences that challenges to the meritocratic, color- and gender-blind/neutral, equal opportunity masternarrative that is primarily understood about the full professorship can occur. However, before delving into that discussion it is important to revisit, briefly, the
historical context that has helped shape the master narrative of the full professorship. Placing this into the proper historical context helps to disrupt ahistoricism and create a more holistic and accurate understanding of the issues being discussed.

As pointed out in an earlier chapter, the history of higher education is rooted in both racist and sexist hegemonic ideologies, to include the fact that higher education was only for white men by virtue of the exclusion of white women and people (men and women) of color. The exclusion of white women and men and women of color was not based on lack of merit or some failed (formalized) standardized exam or process. Rather, white women and men and women of color failed the white, male standard, seen as intellectually incapable of being academic peers with white men and/or considered less than a whole person, as was the case for black men and women in the U.S. when the first college, Harvard, was established. Of note is that Harvard and the enslavement of blacks in the U.S. coexisted for more than 200 years. As the women in this study indicated, black women are still viewed as intellectually incapable and considered less than a human being by virtue of issues of invisibility. Being perceived as intellectually incapable in this study was reflected in white students and faculty constant challenging of their academic authorities. Further, being viewed as an affirmative action promotion feeds the intellectual inferiority belief. As it relates to feelings of invisibility, by virtue of not existing in certain spaces (i.e., committees, social events), these women are invisible to their white colleagues who dominate these spaces.

As it relates specifically to the faculty, white men exclusively filled these positions. Therefore, as the faculty expanded and the professorial ranking system came into existence, white men were tapped by white, male presidents to serve in the full professorship role. These positions were limited and coveted, given their authoritative positionality and
eventually would be viewed as a high status position in the professoriate, with the individuals in these roles being viewed as top scholars and leaders on their campuses and in their fields. Despite the legal shifts in discourse around race, gender, and discrimination, the demographics of the full professorship indicate a clear pattern that these positions continue to be coveted and limited to white males, with whites and males respectively making up 91% and 75% of this rank nationally. As evidenced by the women in this study, tapping still occurs and for the most part (by virtue of the sheer numbers) white men are the ones being tapped to advance to the highest rank. As the data indicate, none of the women in this study were tapped by a department chair or academic administrator to go up for full professor.

This history has a direct impact on how black female full professors are perceived today. Masternarratives are a “bundle of presuppositions, perceived wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings persons in the dominant race bring to the discussion on race” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, p. 462) and are perpetuated through history and historical accounts. What makes masternarratives powerful is that racialized and gendered hegemony is so engrained that people of color often find themselves telling and sometimes buying into dominant stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). One example of this came from Beverly who talked about needing to have neutral items in her research agenda as to not be viewed as a black woman scholar who only does research for or with other black women. Her use of the word neutral was code for research not dealing with social issues such as race (and racism) and gender (and sexism). More explicitly, it was code for conducting objective research, as oppose to research that implicates ones’ self within it (e.g., black women and race and gender). Ideas such as objectivity in the research process have been consistently connected to Eurocentric, westernized ideals of research (Collins, 1990).
Through centering the experiences of the women of color in this study, the dominant discourses of the full professorship, that perpetuate racial and gender inequality, were illuminated. Through listening to and dialoging with them it was evident that the process of promotion to the full professorship is not and was not free from inequitable practice. Further, it was clear that earning promotion to full professor does not and did not preclude them from experiencing racialized and gendered assaults.

**Racism and Sexism as Endemic**

A primary tenet of critical race theory and critical race feminism is the centrality and normalcy of racism and sexism. The women in this study exposed the racism and sexism they experienced both prior to becoming full professors and after acquiring the rank. While some of the women fully expected to continue dealing with these issues, by virtue of having faced them their entire lives in predominantly white spaces, some of them were taken aback when they were met with racism and sexism as full professors. However, to paraphrase one of the participant’s mentors, whether you are a black woman in the academy or a black woman working at McDonald’s, issues of racism and sexism (and other social identities of difference) will surface. Juanita’s mentor was pointing to the endemicity and normalcy of racism and sexism in society and given that colleges and universities are microcosms of the larger society, they are not immune from these issues.

Throughout the conversations in this study there were obvious accounts of racism and sexism that stood out to the women. Many of these were captured in the *Freedom of Academics* theme and the *Micro- and Macro-aggressions* subtheme specifically. Through identifying racialized and gendered micro- and macro-aggressions the women were able to discuss both the overt and covert ways racism and sexism manifests on a regular basis. Some
examples of these common, conscious and subconscious, verbal and behavioral assaults (Sue et al., 2007) included being subjected to racialized jokes from full professor colleagues (e.g., “it’s looking mighty darker on that side of the hallway”), being expected to be the only person to deal with black student issues or any issue dealing with race, and being mistaken for a custodial worker because the only other black women in the building are custodial workers. Other examples were being used as a scapegoat to not hire other black women by being compared to black female candidates and essentialized as a “black woman” when black female candidates were in the hiring pool, having their intellect insulted because people assume they only know about race or black women’s issues, being asked if they engaged in a sexual relationship with someone to be promoted, having to complete extra steps in the promotion process despite the incongruence with institutional policy, procedure, or common practice, or being viewed as an affirmative action promotion. The plethora of examples the black female full professors in this study shared served to unveil “the various forms in which racism [and sexism] continually manifests itself, despite espoused institutional values regarding equity and social justice” (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009, p. 390) and despite holding the highest rank in the professoriate. The evidence that the full professorship rank and status does not preclude black women from these issues is significant. The masternarrative of the full professorship does not implicate the influence of race (and racism) and gender (and sexism) within it; instead, it focuses solely on merit.

Experiences of micro-aggressions, insidious due to their often subtle nature, and macro-aggressions are harmful to those on the receiving end because they have a cumulative effect (Pierce, 1974). But in addition to their dangerous nature, these aggressions and assaults shed light on some of the ingrained beliefs about black women, regardless of their
professional standings in institutions of higher education. Looking back at some of the examples provided by the women, there are some that certainly standout as racist or sexist, like racialized (“darker”) and sexualized (“who did you sleep with”) comments for example. However, others are much more subversive. Take for example the case of the black woman in the hiring pool. As Dawn noted, her white colleagues saw no need to hire another black woman and indicated that it was because her research was too similar to Dawn’s, the only black woman in the department. However, as Brayboy (2003) argued,

The idea that faculty bodies constitute a program of implementing diversity is often considered ‘good enough.’ Once these bodies are present, institutions appear to believe that diversity has been implemented; the bodies represent and carry (out) the implementation. In this case, [black female] faculty…are marked bodies whose presence implements diversity. White faculty and administrators have already done their part by hiring faculty of color… (p. 74)

Brayboy’s point is significant here because as Dawn pointed out, her colleagues viewed the applicant as the same as her: black, female, and interested in issues of equity and advocacy. In other words, Dawn was the only diversity needed, despite the fact that the applicant identified as a multiracial individual and likely had a research agenda that differed from Dawn’s although it might have centered issues of equity.

Furthermore, the expectation that black women deal with everything diversity related (i.e., diversity courses, advising all the students of color, dealing with any issue related to black students) is problematic. This practice only serves to reify the notion that only people of color, and in this case black women, can “deal with” diversity. “Simply arguing that the hidden role of faculty of color should be considered additional work also reifies the
marginalized status, because the faculty will continue to serve in special roles rather than
being recognized as vibrant, viable members of the academic community” (Brayboy, 2003, p.
85). Juanita’s example of a white female student asking her with whom she had a sexual
relationship with is a form of a macro-aggression. One assumption underlying this comment
is the perceived intellectual inferiority of black women in the professoriate, rather than
accounting for Juanita’s knowledge, experience, and education. Given the history of black
women being viewed and portrayed as exploited sexualized bodies, the immediate reaction of
connecting her promotion to full professor with sex was not only inappropriate, but called to
mind this historical context. A cumulative result of these micro- and macro-aggressions is
battle fatigue. Racial battle fatigue is the “physiological and psychological strain exacted on
racially marginalized groups and [also refers to] the amount of energy lost dedicated to
coping with racial microaggressions and racism” (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007, p. 555).
The *Purpose and Price* theme highlights some of the consequences and burdens some of the
women in this study consistently face that might lead to racial and gender battle fatigue. The
experiences of the women in this study indicate that racism and sexism is endemic on both an
individual and systemic level. Further, their experiences show that despite one’s hard work,
efforts, or merits in reaching the pinnacle, racism and sexism permeates the social, political,
and institutional systems that are supposedly rooted in meritocracy, race and gender
neutrality, and equal opportunity.

**Challenging Liberal Ideology**

Critical race theory and CRF is also used to interrogate dominant claims of neutrality,
objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy. As illustrated in the *Defining the Full
Professorship* theme, all of the women shared that earning the full professorship rested on
their colleagues’ perceptions of their merits. Given the focus on collegial perception, the idea that the full professorship is solely or greatly based on merit can be challenged as a mythological liberal idea. The liberal ideas of meritocracy, race and gender neutrality, or colorblindness, and equal opportunity are rampant in the U.S., in higher education, the professoriate, and the understandings and articulation of the full professorship. Commonly, these liberal ideologies exist within the masternarratives that are shared and understood about the professoriate. Before proceeding with this portion of the analysis a working definition of liberalism is necessary. Zamudio, Russell, Rios, and Bridgeman (2011) write, “Liberalism, equates the ‘rights of man’ with individual political and property rights, as well as with the freedom to pursue one’s self-interest unrestrained or unfettered by government intervention….Equality, freedom, individual rights, and meritocracy are some ideals often associated with liberalism” (p. 15). From a CRT and CRF standpoint, these ideologies of liberalism fail to account for the historical and contemporary influences and effects of racism and sexism. Therefore, when it comes to the experiences of women of color, for example, concepts such as meritocracy are only myths to be complicated and exposed as such.

In discussing what it meant to be a full professor, all of the women discussed the significance of their colleagues perceiving them as top scholars and showing them respect for their influential scholarship. Merit, or scholarship, and collegial perception were very much tied together. However, merit is usually the focus of the discussion around promotion to full professor and the role of full professors. When thinking about the faculty rank system and the promotion process, one’s accomplishments, or merits, as a scholar come to the forefront. As previously stated, merit is seen as a cut and dried measure of performance (Youn & Price, 2009). However, Haney and Hurtado (1994) provided a treatment of merit, asserting that race
and racism affect perceptions of merit. Haney and Hurtado (1994) do so by interrogating some core assumptions of merit, as constructed legally, that permeate the masternarrative of merit in the workplace.

First, there is the assumption that merit is measurable and unitary. This means that while specific types of merit may vary by job, it can be measured in the same ways. Using faculty promotion as an example, all faculty conduct research, teach, and serve in some combination. The assumption would be that when merits in those areas are judged, despite the variability in the role, all faculty merits are judged the same way. As this relates to the experiences shared by the women in this study, merit in the professoriate is not unitary, and measuring it is complicated. As was the case with the participants, a major difference throughout their careers lay in their service requirements, both written and unwritten. As many of the participants stated, their service load has always been quite significant and they have always had to work twice as hard in all three areas of teaching, research, and service to ensure that they would be perceived well by their white colleagues making promotion (and tenure) decisions.

Another assumption of merit is that lack of sufficient merit is individual or group based in nature and has little to nothing to do with environment or systemic discrimination (Haney & Hurtado, 1994). From a faculty perspective, that would mean that research, teaching, and service is conducted in a certain way and institutional environment should have little effect on that because only individual effort drives how much is produced. As it relates to this study, this assumption could be used to suppose that if there are only ten black female full professors in higher education departments and programs it is based on their lack of merit, individually and as a group, rather than their systemic and systematic historical and
contemporary exclusion from the academy and professoriate. Examples such as those shared
in the *Terminal Associates* theme, allude to the systemic contributions to the exclusion of
black women from the full professorship. Specifically, lack of information or misinformation
about the position, lack of mentors, and being perceived as out of place all contribute to the
low numbers of black women pursuing and attaining the full professorship.

As previously mentioned, merit is usually the focus of the discussion around
promotion to full professor and the role of full professor with little consideration about how
collegial perception shapes how merit, and consequently status, is perceived. Despite their
hard work and merits, most of the women in this study still felt as though the rank did not
afford them the same respect as their white colleagues. As Haney and Hurtado (1994)
explained, the assumptions of merit come with little to no regard of the judgment by
colleagues who are determining whether those merits are worthy. From a CRT and CRF
standpoint, these judgments are not objective, race-neutral, gender-neutral, or colorblind. For
some of the women there was a disconnect between what promotion to full professor was
supposed to be like (e.g., respected, seen as worthy, recognition from peers) and what it
actually was (e.g., disrespect, depressing, seen as unworthy). For example, LaVerne’s
statement: “just to prove that we can make it…not because of affirmative action but it’s
through our own personal hard work, determination, and faith” is worth revisiting. Being
viewed as an “affirmative action” promotion is counter to the idea that colleagues will
respect an individual as a scholar and negates any possibility of being perceived as a hard
working faculty member deserving of promotion to the full professorship because the
affirmative action discourse is focused on deficit thinking. For example, in studies that focus
on affirmative action and college admissions, some people believe that students who benefit
from these policies (i.e., black, Latino, and Native American students) are not smart enough, good enough, or in any other way qualified to get into these institutions because of their race (Patton & Croom, 2009). Today, lawmakers and others are fighting to replace affirmative action ideology with colorblind ideology as evidenced by the state referendums that have banned the use of affirmative action in public institutions in states such as California, Michigan, and Washington.

This same deficit thinking permeates the professoriate. A colorblind ideology, as Bonilla Silva (2006) defines it, is often used to minimize racism (e.g., there are 1.26% black female full professors in the country, so race and gender are not factors), tends to rely on cultural racism (e.g., black women are not promoted to full professor because they are not working hard enough, their scholarship is not relevant or important, or because of some other individual choice they have made), insists that racialized occurrences happen naturally (e.g., black female faculty are just not as smart as white male faculty), and uses abstract ideas of liberalism to espouse equal opportunity (e.g., promotion to any rank is based solely on merit in the areas of research, teaching, and service). Viewing the professoriate, and specifically the promotion to full professorship process, as race and gender neutral is problematic as evidenced by the women in this study. Using a colorblind perspective, which is what happens when race and gender are not taken into account in discussions about promotion to full and the full professorship itself, only serves to perpetuate fallacies like black women being affirmative action promotions. Their experiences illuminate that these processes are not at all solely meritocratic, colorblind, or equal opportunistic. Furthermore, their stories help to dismantle the liberal ideology that persists in the upper echelon of the professoriate.

**Whiteness as Property**
Harris’ (1993) whiteness as property premise was also an analytical tool in this study. Whiteness, “the system and ideology of white dominance and superiority that marginalizes and oppresses people of color” (McIntyre, 2002, p. 31), and examples of white and male privilege were rampant throughout the stories the black women in this study shared. Harris (1993) posited that whiteness is a legally constructed and recognized property interest. As such, holders of whiteness are accorded with many privileges similar to the rights in other forms of property holding. The property functions of whiteness include reputation and status property, the right to use and enjoyment, disposition, and exclusion.

**Reputation and status property.** This property function of whiteness relates to the value that possessing a white identity affords its possessor. More explicitly, being white allows for a person to be perceived as good, well intentioned, qualified, educated, and trustworthy, for example. The full professorship is a haven of reputation and status property. As the women in this study indicated, those who earn full professor are respected by their peers and colleagues, seen as top scholars in their fields, and are leaders on their campuses and beyond. However, the experiences of the women in this study demonstrate ways reputation and status are hindered for them as black female full professors. More specifically, there were instances where the validity of their scholarship was questioned, their intellectual capabilities and capacities were doubted, and their very existence in the faculty role was challenged. Undoubtedly, black women are underrepresented in the rank of full professor (1.26% nationally) and the continuance of the intellectual defamation of the black female scholar serves to keep that number low. Explicitly, being a black female full professor means being perceived as bad, ill intentioned, unqualified, uneducated, and untrustworthy. For Mary, this manifested through the devaluation of her scholarship. As she explained when
scholarship is devalued the producer is seen as unscholarly or not smart. Thus, the reputation and status associated with being a top scholar falls short. As LaVerne explained, being perceived as a recipient of affirmative action also devaluates ones merits. As she stated, hard work becomes inconsequential and instead is replaced with assumptions of laziness and a lack of qualifications. These assumptions also serve as barriers to achieving status and reputation associated with the full professorship. Juanita used the term interloper to describe how she is treated by her students and colleagues. Being mistaken for a custodial worker, having students constantly challenging her authority in and out of the classroom, being subjected to unequal treatment in the promotion process, and having others insinuate sexual misconduct all serve to ensure that Juanita does not garner the same reputation and status that her white male and female colleagues may, given the expectation of their presence. Additionally, maintaining reputation and status for white and male faculty has the ability to keep the women in this study from achieving their purpose of working toward equity and social justice.

**Right to use and enjoyment.** This property function of whiteness relates to the ability to enjoy white privilege. As the literature on the demographics of the full professorship indicates, the full professor rank is mostly a white, male privilege. According to Trower and Chait (2002), 91% of full professors at research universities are white, 75% are male. They also noted that in the STEM fields, 94% are white and 90% are male. Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans, collectively, represent only 5% of the full professors in the U.S. Given that white men dominantly occupy the full professorship; it is a fair assertion that they benefit most from the rewards of the rank. Further, as many of the women indicated they are the only black female full professors in their departments, with the exception of LaVerne
and Carol who are in the same department. When they attend departmental, college, or institutional meetings they are usually the only black female full professor in the meeting.

McIntosh (1988) wrote about unpacking an invisible knapsack of white privilege. White full professors may in fact be in possession of this same sack. The black female full professors in this study disclosed many issues they consistently battle by virtue of racism and sexism. White privilege, and male privilege, gives white people, men and women, the freedom to be oblivious to racism and sexism in individual acts as well as systemically.

Presented below, in McIntosh (1988) form, is a list of effects of white privilege that white full professors may have that the black women in this study did not:

1. White full professors can go to work and not feel isolated because they are the only white full professor in their department or college.

2. White full professors can think of their status as a scholar as based on their academic merits and hard work and not worry about being viewed as an affirmative action case.

3. White full professors can go to a Division I football game in the president’s suite where they are not the only white person in the room, with the exception of the wait-staff.

4. White full professors can serve on faculty hiring committees and not worry about being unable to hire another white faculty member because they are white and their research is similar to other white faculty.

5. White male full professors can be comfortable in knowing that no one will ask them who they had sexual intercourse with to get promoted to full professor.
6. White full professors can choose to mentor white faculty and students without thinking about the benefits or detriments of cross-race mentoring or racially homogenous mentoring.

7. White full professors can be assured that their scholarship is validated because they receive national research (and other scholarly) awards that validate them.

8. White full professors can go against policy, procedure, and common practice without fear of repercussion related to race.

9. White full professors can make racist comments and harass other faculty without consequence.

10. White full professors can go to the library and check out a book without having their status as a faculty member questioned.

11. White full professors can avoid handling issues concerning race or involving minoritized individuals.

The above list illustrates that white male and female full professors may enjoy privileges that the women in this study could not because of racism and sexism. Although presented from an assumed perspective of white faculty, these are all issues that the women in this study faced that stood in their way of fully enjoying the benefits of holding the rank of full professor.

**Right to disposition.** This property function relates to the ability to transfer whiteness from one generation to another. The benefit of whiteness in the full professorship is access to information and resources both about the role and benefits of the rank. This information can be passed down in myriad ways but the most common is through mentoring.
In this study many of the women indicated that they lacked information about the full professorship and that most of what they learned came from observations. Additionally, most of the women lacked mentors to inform them about the covert and overt practices and written and unwritten rules of the full professorship.

Despite not having these types of formal mentors themselves, all of the women recognized the significance of having senior mentors to provide crucial information about the faculty career (Bowie, 1995; Smith, 2000). Through their articulation of their purposes, the women indicated a desire to bring other black women along and share with them the resources and information that will help others be successful in earning the highest rank. The importance of mentoring is not a new concept. However, thinking about mentoring in this sense, as a racialized and gendered act in the professoriate, provides a better understanding of just how important it is. Mentoring allows for information to be passed along across generations. Given that white men have occupied this space since its inception it would follow that they have been passing down information about the position to one another since then. Black women, and other women of color, being on the margins, have had to watch and learn and support one another in providing information and pushing each other to move forward and persist. The act of observing and learning from white and male peers has both advantages and disadvantages with relation to learning about the professorate and full professorship. Disadvantages may arise from women observing, learning, and replicating oppressive behaviors. As Christine and Mary explained, they have observed female scholars partaking in the same kinds of gatekeeping activities that have traditionally been behaviors associated with male colleagues. However, advantages can arise by observing as well. Many
of the women in this study enact agency by reshaping what they have learned in an effort to work toward more equitable practices and circumstances for people of color in the academy.

**Absolute right to exclude.** This property function relates to the ability to exclude people spatially (i.e., predominately white universities, professoriate) as well as exclusion from the social, political, and legal benefits of whiteness (i.e., information, resources). The women in this study gave several examples of how black women are being systematically excluded from the full professorship. While historical exclusion was based on overt legal constructs of discrimination and segregation, today black women are being excluded from the full professorship in covert ways. Lack of mentoring ensures that black women do not receive pertinent information about the full professorship and the accompanying benefits. Enduring racism and sexism in tenure processes, with no assurance that status of the full professorship will quell these assaults, does not motivate black women to endure the process of going up for full. Continued invalidation of black women as scholars also serves to ensure they are excluded from the full professor ranks.

As discussed in the themes, the shift from a service orientation to one of leadership is important as well. Given that the full professorship allows these women into meetings to which they would not normally be privy, based on rank, the opportunity to become leaders in these spaces is critical. The exclusion of black women from these spaces assures that they will not serve as leaders on major committees. Thus, they will continue to not be viewed as leaders and remain without a voice or a vote in these spaces. Additionally, opportunity and access is important. The full professorship gives access to people and resources that are not readily available to other faculty members. Moreover, the full professorship provides access to spaces in which informal opportunities present themselves. These informal interactions
with powerful people can lead to tremendous opportunity for full professors, such as consulting positions, research projects, and community-based ventures. Limiting access to these opportunities by keeping black women out of these spaces may serve to ensure that they will be viewed as second-class scholarly citizens in the academy.

The women in this study also talked about their aspirations and the expectations of some of their colleagues. Of particular concern is how their aspirations did not necessarily match the expectations of their colleagues. They discussed this idea of being tapped, or chosen, to go up for full professor. Historically, faculty were tapped by institution presidents, and later department chairs, to serve in the positions of full professor (Finkelstein, 1996). The tradition of being chosen to go up for full professor is one to be interrogated given that some of the women in this study aspired to be full professors, yet none were tapped to go up. As such they prepared themselves by doing the kinds of things they observed their colleagues doing to prepare themselves, as well as going beyond what they saw (i.e., conducting research, consistently publishing, having intentional pedagogy, serving in major administrative roles). The practice of being tapped or waiting to be tapped is counter to the equal opportunity ideology that is often associated with the professoriate. Equal opportunity would suggest that all faculty, or associate professors, have the same chance at going up for full and achieving it based on their merits. However, when someone is tapped it is not always clear why or how they were selected (Youn & Price, 2009). Furthermore, when black women who have aspirations attempt to go up, they are often, as Mary indicated, told they are not ready, despite their merits. Incongruent aspirations and expectations are problematic, but expected given how some of the women were and continue to be treated as foreigners. Through both covert and overt acts some of the women discussed how they came to
understand that the full professorship was not meant for them. Many of the women talked about not being viewed as scholars despite their merits. The resistance to seeing black women as scholars and accepting their scholarship only serves to reify that positions such as the full professorship are for white men only.

Findings from this study also suggest that black women may be playing a role in their exclusion by not considering the full professorship as a viable option. As presented in the *Terminal Associates* theme, fear of facing experiences similar to those in the tenure process (e.g., intense scrutiny and devaluation of scholarship, teaching, and service), can cause black women to intentionally remain at the associate rank. Lack of information and misconceptions about the role and benefits of the full professorship only serve to perpetuate this self-inflicted exclusion.

The *Purpose and Price* theme directly relates to the how the women in this study see their purpose and what costs that purpose has. Despite the long list of roadblocks erected to stop black women, and these women in particular, from entering the top rank, these women have struggled and persisted. What is evident in their success is the ways in which power can be shifted and changed to ensure that this top rank remains white and male. Having to deal with constant blatant and covert acts of racism and sexism could serve as warnings that these women are not welcomed in these spaces. An intersectional analysis reveals the ways in which the knowledge produced by black women can be used to empower and enlighten people and work towards a social justice and social change agenda for all.

**Intersectionality and Anti-Essentialism**

Critical race feminists assert that because of the social locations of women of color, their individual experiences can provide insights into the greater social and political
landscape, and their collective experiences can help to unveil the systemic effects of racism and sexism (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). Exploration of the experiences of the black female full professors in this study helped to uncover how racism and sexism permeates the processes to and experiences in the full professorship. While not all of the women shared the same experiences, influences and impacts of racism and sexism were present in all of the stories.

Specific to these interrelated concepts of intersectionality and anti-essentialism, Collins’ (2000) matrix of domination and power domains helps to understand how racism and sexism intersected to subordinate or empower these women in their role as full professors. Collins (2004) defined intersectionality as “analysis claiming that systems of race, economic class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape African American experiences and, in turn, are shaped by African Americans” (p. 351). Through the use of an intersectionality perspective, scholars argue the interconnectedness of statuses in the social hierarchies in place in society (Collins, 1990; Henderson & Tickamyer, 2009). An underlying premise of intersectionality is the ability to unveil the multiple types of power in the “interconnected structures of inequality” (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 7). Collins (2009) outlined four domains – structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal – in which power has been used not only to shape oppression and domination, but also to serve as a site for empowerment and resistance.

**Structural.** The structural domain refers to the way social institutions (i.e., colleges and universities, legal systems, media, etc.) “are organized to reproduce Black women’s subordination over time” (Collins, 2009, p. 295). From a historical perspective, the exclusion of black women from higher education, and particularly predominately white institutions, has had a lasting effect on the status of black female faculty in general. Today, while colleges
and universities espouse values of equal opportunity and diversity the numbers of black
female faculty in full-time, tenure track positions remain low. This limited pipeline has a
direct effect on the full professorship. As stated earlier, black women only represent 1.26%
of full professors across institutional type and discipline. The structural domain remains
relevant because of the longitudinal effects on the positionality of black women in the
academy.

Earning the full professorship provided access to spaces in which major decisions are
made and these women have the potential to become leaders in these spaces (i.e., personnel
committees, curriculum committees). Based on rank, their sphere of influence expands. It is
this expansion that allows for them to have influence both in their departments and across
their institutions. As the women in this study indicated, this power and influence can be used
in both good and bad ways. They recognized that this power could be used to maintain the
status quo. Given that many of them are the only black women in their department, their
ability to influence the social and political landscape could be muted by the majority.
However, many of them talked about using their power to influence curriculum, discuss
diversity and other seemingly controversial topics in those limited spaces, and change the
politics of their departments. In other words, they are working from the inside to create
structural changes in their fields, institutions, and the professoriate.

Disciplinary. The disciplinary domain deals with the constant need to surveillance
black women as a way to resist the structural changes (e.g., affirmative action laws) that
disallow discrimination based on race and gender. Some of the women shared experiences
that are relevant to this domain. The Freedom of Academics theme focused on specific
practices of faculty and senior level academic administrators (who are also faculty) in the
academy. The theme title depicts the notion that these practices often go unchecked or unchanged thus making them seem in some way acceptable. As it relates to policies, procedures, and practices, some of the women in this study recalled having to complete tasks (e.g., reworking materials several times, writing additional essays) or being subjected to processes that were incongruent with what had been commonly practiced in their departments. Others would later find out that, despite all of their efforts and work (i.e., publishing books, etc.), the rules would change and that their work would not count toward their promotion to full professor. Ultimately, these incongruent practices only serve to maintain the status quo and faculty system as it is by ensuring that the rank of full professor remains mostly white and mostly male.

Specifically, the gatekeeping phenomenon associated with who gets promoted and the fear mongering that is spread through bad experiences in the promotion process are related to the disciplinary domain. As it relates to gatekeeping, many of the women talked about gaining access to committees, information, and human resources that had not been readily available to them prior to promotion to full. Some of the women indicated that committees such as the tenure and promotion committee were restricted to full professors only. Given that these spaces have been and continue to be predominately white, it is no wonder that the number of black women to be promoted to full professor is so low. Another example of gatekeeping stemming from the experiences of the women in this study was the convening of a “special” committee. By superseding the institutional policies, procedures, and common practices, the academic administrator in that case was practicing gatekeeping. Due to the fact that this had never been done before and has never been since, one can easily conclude that this action was a direct attempt at excluding that black woman from the full professorship.
Other women talked about having fear of submitting their materials for promotion to full professor based on stories shared by other black women who had not had good experiences. This fear mongering can also be viewed as using power to ensure that other black women do not feel competent in going up for full professor. The surveillance comes in the form of “disciplining” others and making examples out of them so that other black women do not even consider themselves worthy of being full professors or see the benefit of enduring such practices given the cost to their psyche (i.e., it is not worth it).

**Hegemonic.** The hegemonic domain of power “deals with ideology, culture, and consciousness” (Collins, 2009, p. 302). Ideas of the black woman as an oversexualized jezebel or mammie are examples of the hegemonic ideology that exists in society. The consistent theme throughout the women’s experiences was the constant attacks on their intellectual capabilities. However, this is not a new phenomenon. Delgado-Bernal and Villalpando (2002) provided an in-depth treatment of the struggles of faculty of color over the legitimation of their knowledge. They wrote, “by marginalizing the knowledges of faculty of color, higher education has created an apartheid of knowledge where the dominant Eurocentric epistemology is believed to produce ‘legitimate’ knowledge, in contrast to the ‘illegitimate’ knowledge that is created by all other epistemological perspectives” (p. 177).

In addition to the challenge of the women’s knowledge, other expressions of hegemonic power surfaced when one participant was asked with whom she had sexual intercourse with to secure her promotion. As mentioned above, one of the main archetypal constructions of a black woman is that of the oversexualized jezebel. While, the statement could be taken innocently, the impact resulted in feelings of disrespect and awe that someone would ask such a question. Lastly, the constant expectation for black women to handle issues
of students of color is also reminiscent of the archetypal mammie persona of black women. As full professors, they are not only expected to continue their heavy workloads, but also attend to everything racial or diversity related in their departments.

The issue of racialized and gendered micro- and macro-aggressions came up several times across conversations and across interviews. Through blatant racist and sexist remarks such as “darker side of the hallway” and “who did you sleep with,” these women’s colleagues demonstrated the deep-seated racism and sexism that continues today. This illustrates how strong the hegemonic domain of power is. The insinuations and expectations that black women deal with all issues related to black students helps to maintain the characterization of black women as mammies (Collins, 2009; hooks, 1994). Furthermore, the assumption that black women are not as intelligent as men, black, white, or otherwise, further perpetuates the stereotype of intellectual inferiority.

**Interpersonal.** The interpersonal domain of power refers to the ways in which individuals operationalize oppression focusing specifically on how individuals “replace individual and cultural ways of knowing with the dominant group’s specialized thought – hegemonic ideologies that, in turn, justify practices of other domains of power” (Collins, 2009, p. 306). A prime example is that of the neutral research agenda that Beverly discussed. In an attempt not to be identified as “one of those black women,” she talked about the need to study topics outside of race and gender. She recognized this was “necessary” given her pursuit of tenure and later promotion to full professor. Her use of the word neutral is what is most relevant here, because it supposes that there is such a thing as neutral, or objective, research. Critical race theorists and feminists would reject this notion in favor of an explanation of research that centers the epistemologies of people of color (Solórzano &
Yosso, 2002). However, despite the use of the terminology of “neutral,” this participant’s scholarship clearly centers the experiences of minoritized people, so there seemed to be some conflict in the ideology around research and scholarship.

Another issue that surfaced was hazing or bullying. As Beverly mentioned, if one does not integrate into the faculty culture they may ultimately not be accepted. While socialization is an important part of faculty life (Austin, 2002; Rosser, 2003; Tierney, 1993), many of the women talked about actions and behaviors that seemed counter to the purposes of socialization. Furthermore, they characterized these behaviors as hostile and an abuse of power. Bullying, harassment, and hazing are all practices that indicate these women are not welcomed in their various environments. The interpersonal domain of power refers to the “routinized, day-to-day, practices of how people treat one another. Such practices are systematic, recurrent and so familiar that they often go unnoticed” (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 11). As such, power is being exercised through hazing and bullying and that power serves to keep black women, and other women of color, out of the top faculty ranks.

**Conclusion**

Chapter five served as a vehicle to present the findings from this study. Additionally, a discussion tying the findings to the analytical frameworks followed each theme. Through the four major themes, *Defining the Full Professorship*, *Terminal Associates*, *Freedom of Academics*, and *Purpose and Price* the experiences of the black female full professors in this study provide evidence of agency and resilience as they face racism and sexism in a multitude of ways. Collectively, their stories provide a counternarrative to the seemingly merit-driven, race- and gender- neutral, status and power-laden position of full professor. The analytical discussion section served to illuminate the ways critical race theory and
critical race feminism were used as analytical frameworks for understanding their experiences. Chapter six provides an overview of the study, a discussion driven by the research questions, implications for practice and research, and a conclusion to this dissertation.
CHAPTER SIX. OVERVIEW, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, IMPLICATIONS, & CONCLUSION

The overall purpose of chapter six is to draw some key conclusions based on the findings in order to provide answers to the research questions guiding this project and provide implications and conclusions for higher education. In an effort to achieve this purpose, this chapter consists of several sections. First, an overview of the study is presented. The second section focuses on providing answers to the research questions, directly followed by implications. After the implications, recommendations for future research are provided, as well as a conclusion to the dissertation.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand how black women in various higher education departments and programs perceive their promotion to full professor. Furthermore, I sought to understand how they believed their promotion to full effected their professional status and abilities to influence their departments, institutions, and fields of study. Of particular interest in this study was how race (and racism) and gender (and sexism) intersected to create particularly unique experiences for the participants. Seven of eight black female full professors in higher education and/or student affairs departments and programs across the country, at the time this study began, participated in this study. The following research questions were asked in this project:

1. How do Black women perceive/understand their promotion to full professor?
2. How are research, service, and teaching affected by promotion to full professor?
3. How is power enacted throughout/within the position of full professor?
4. How is the hegemony of whiteness perpetuated in the full professorship?

Given the unique histories and experiences of black women in America, and in education specifically, a black feminist epistemology was appropriate for this study. Informed by Collins’ (2000) black feminist thought, a black feminist epistemology, recognizes the positionality of black women in the United States as outsiders-within, giving them a particular social location from which to observe, learn, and construct knowledge. Given the focus on understanding how the intersections of racism and sexism impact these women’s experiences, theoretical frameworks that acknowledged these realities were necessary. Thus, critical race theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (CRF) served as the theoretical perspectives for this study.

According to Solórzano (1998), “a critical race theory in education challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses, and insists on analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in both a historical and contemporary context” (p. 123). Some central tenets of CRT include the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2003), challenge to dominant ideology (i.e., meritocracy, equal opportunity, colorblindness) (Calmore, 1992; Sweeney, 2006), importance of experiential knowledge (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), and focus on praxis (Bell, 1987; Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Using critical race theory in this project helped to situate the experiences of these black female full professors in such a way that recognizes the centrality of race and racism throughout higher education.

Critical race feminism stems from CRT and uses race and racism, as well as gender and sexism (and other social categories of difference) as explanatory tools for persistent
inequities. In addition to the tenets of CRT, CRF contributes the concepts of intersectionality and anti-essentialism. The intersectionality thesis acknowledges that the experiences of black women, and other women of color, cannot be addressed solely as race or gender issues (Crenshaw, 1991). The anti-essentialism premise suggests that there is no singular monolithic, female or black voice and/or experience (Wing, 2003). As Wing (2003) stated, “Critical race feminists…call for a deeper understanding of the lives of women of color based on the multiple nature of their identities” (p. 7).

In addition to experiential knowledge, racism and sexism as endemic, and challenging liberal ideologies, the CRT and CRF analytical tools of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993) and intersectionality (Wing, 2003) were used to explore and understand the experiences of the women in this study within the particular context of higher education. The whiteness as property thesis is useful in understanding the benefits and privileges of whiteness. Specifically, Harris (1993) identified four rights embedded in whiteness: right to disposition, right to use and enjoyment, right to reputation and status, and the absolute right to exclude. Combined with an intersectionality premise, the idea that both racism and sexism intersect to contribute to oppressive systems, these analytical tools were used to understand and make sense of the women’s stories. Counterstorytelling served as an analytical tool in this study as well. Specifically, the experiences and stories shared by the participants were used to illuminate alternative realities of the women in this study.

Based on the epistemological and theoretical frameworks employed in this study, a congruent methodology was necessary, therefore a critical race feminist methodology was used. This methodology combined perspectives and methods from both critical race methodology and critical feminist methodology. Through building a more “interpersonal and
reciprocal relationship between researchers and those whose lives are the focus of the research” (Bloom, 1998, p. 1) in this study, a critical race feminist methodology was used to reveal the often in plain sight norms of both whiteness and maleness in the full professorship.

Participants were recruited using a professional network consisting of faculty, students, and administrators across the county to identify any women that met the criteria for participation in the study: black, female, full professors in higher education departments and/or programs. Data were primarily collected through three engaging, interactive, open-ended interviews with each of the participants. Each interview was dialogic in nature and involved not only the participant sharing but also the researcher sharing. This reciprocal sharing helped to provide a space from which to discuss issues, in addition to helping make known the positionality and experiences of the researcher. Interviews were conducted via telephone and Skype, lasted from thirty minutes to two hours, were digitally recorded, and later transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. Document data were also collected from the participants to include vitae, memos, and any other written materials the participants wished to share.

All interviews were read through carefully and open coding was used to find emergent themes in individual stories and across the participants’s respective stories. Convergent patterns were identified across the emergent themes. The convergent patterns were then organized into themes and those themes were subjected to a critical race theory and critical race feminism analysis.

Overview of the Themes

The data in this study were (re)presented in four themes in the previous chapter: *Defining the Full Professorship; Terminal Associates; The Freedom of Academics; and*
Purpose and Price. These themes represent the ways in which the women in this study (1) define the full professorship, (2) understand issues of access to the full rank, (3) interpret the systemic barriers that often preclude black women from attaining the highest rank, and (4) view their specific roles in empowering others to aspire and achieve despite the covert and overt roadblocks and adverse side effects. First, a brief summary of the themes, and their subsequent subthemes, are presented. Next, connections will be made across the themes and back to the literature and the frameworks used in this study.

The first major theme, *Defining the Full Professorship*, focused on how the women in this study defined and described the full professorship experience. Four distinct, yet interrelated, aspects emerged from the data. These aspects were highlighted through four subthemes: *Status and Merit*, *Leadership and Service*, *Opportunity and Access*, and *Power and Influence*. The first subtheme, focused on how merit, as well as collegial perception, influences status. Participants linked merit and collegial perception, advancing the notion that the status inherent in earning a full professorship is not solely based on merit, but rather on colleagues’ perceptions of one’s scholarly merits. This becomes an important assertion because one’s status as a scholar influences the other aspects (e.g., ability to lead committees and large initiatives, change curriculums) that define and describe the full professorship. The *Leadership and Service* subtheme relates to the increase in service and leadership from full professors. Given that full professors have proven themselves, or are perceived to have proven themselves, as scholars, the expectations around service shift to an expectation of leadership. Many of the women had held leadership positions prior to becoming full professors but upon promotion these experiences expanded beyond their departments, to their colleges, institutions, and fields broadly. For example, many of the women served as
coordinators for their academic programs or academic assistant and associate deans of their colleges before being promoted to full professor. After promotion to full, these women were able to both become members of and chair institutional governance committees and national funding agency boards, for example. The *Opportunity and Access* subtheme pertains to the increased opportunities to access different and more powerful people, spaces, and resources. For example, the women discussed their ability to meet with their deans, provosts, or presidents more readily than their junior or mid-level colleagues. Additionally, they talked about being able to serve on committees that were limited to full professor membership. Examples included departmental and institutional tenure and promotion committees.

Furthermore, the full professorship provided access for some into more informal spaces (i.e., presidential suites at division one football games) that have the potential to lead to tremendous opportunity given the status of the other guests (i.e., mayors, institutional presidents, congressmen and women). The last subtheme, *Power and Influence*, highlighted the ways in which the women felt they were able to enact power to influence decisions. For example, they discussed how being able to serve on certain committees and in particular leadership roles, once limited to them, gave them the opportunity to both voice their opinions and have some say in major decisions. Additionally, given their full professor rank, their sphere of influence expanded across their departments, institutions, and fields of study.

Furthermore, the women discussed observing power and influence being used for productive positive means, as well as in harmful and damaging ways.

The second major theme, *Terminal Associates*, highlighted the multiple barriers inhibiting black women from advancing past the associate professor rank to the full professorship. Four subthemes were identified in an effort to unravel the main hindrances:
Misconceptions of the Position, Mentoring, Beyond Expectations, and Interlopers. The first subtheme, Misconceptions, focused on the lack of information the women received about what it means to be a full professor and the benefits of advancing to this rank. Most of the women talked about benefits that they did not learn about until they were already full professors, such as increased earning potential, leadership and service on influential committees, opportunities to help others advance, ability to re-balance teaching, research, and service loads as you see fit, and freedoms to teach what you want, serve where you want, and do research on topics of your choosing without repercussion. The second subtheme, Mentoring, drew attention to the importance in mentoring with regards to the full professorship. The majority of the women indicated not having a formal mentor who could share the overt and covert rules and processes surrounding becoming and being full professors. What was most revealing was that many of the women were encouraged by their colleagues of color, who were often times at the associate rank, to go up for full. The third subtheme, Beyond Expectations, focused on the aspirations of the women in this study. More specifically, it was used to discuss the multiple ways in which their aspirations were either supported or neglected. Most of the women aspired to be full professors. However, they were met with resistance from their white colleagues, often times being reprimanded for attempting to prepare themselves for the full professorship instead of waiting to be tapped by department leadership. The fourth subtheme, Interlopers, emphasized how colleagues indicated that the full professorship space was not one in which black women were welcome. Whether it was through questioning their motivations for pursuing the full professorship, outright stating that they needed to wait their turn after men, insinuating sexual relationships to gain the position, lying about the benefits of the rank, or doubting their abilities and status
as scholars, these women faced many discouraging behaviors in their journey to the full professorship.

The third major theme, *Freedom of Academics*, addressed recurring common practices of faculty, and senior faculty in particular, that seemed to often go unchecked or unchallenged. Three subthemes were used to illustrate this phenomenon: *Policy, Procedure, and Practice*, *Micro- and Macro-aggressions*, and *Socialization vs. Hazing*. The first subtheme, *Policy, Procedure, and Practice*, dealt specifically with practices that the women in this study experienced that were counter to institutional policy and procedure as they went through the promotion process. Some of the women were required to write additional essays and provide evidence above and beyond normal practice in the process of promotion to full. Others were subjected to additional internal review by “special” committees, despite the policies and procedures in place for the process. Still others were given ever-changing information about how their work would meet the criteria for going up for full professor. The second subtheme, *Micro- and Macro-aggressions*, highlighted the common verbal and behavioral assaults on the women in this study. While students conducted some of these aggressions, others came from full professors. Specific examples included being mistaken for a custodial staff member in their department, having black jokes directed at them, being expected to handle all issues concerning black students, and having colleagues seem surprised by their knowledge of issues outside of race. The third subtheme, *Socialization vs. Hazing*, relates to how faculty, particularly senior faculty, use their power to abuse or harass these women and others around them that were members of minoritized groups. While the women recognized the importance and influence of positive socialization, some were also
able to point to examples of senior faculty behaving in a manner that caused these women to feel harassed and or humiliated at some point.

The fourth and final major theme was, *Purpose and Price*. Throughout our conversations it seemed to me that if these women had to do it all over again, they would in fact choose an academic career. Despite the many negative stories shared, each and every woman in this study was clear about their purpose both in the academy broadly and in the full professor position. However, their purpose comes with a cost. Two subthemes emerged: *Giving Back and Paying it Forward* and *At What Cost?*. The first subtheme, *Giving Back*, focused specifically on their desire and goals to give back to communities and to lift as they climb, as one woman in the study put it. They each recognized their responsibility to give back based on their access to information and resources. Further, they also recognized, having gone through it themselves, the need to serve as mentors and role models for students and future academicians coming behind them. Their reflections on their purpose in the academy was powerful, but equally powerful was the agency each of them exercised against the many barriers and roadblocks consciously and subconsciously put before them. Some of the women dealt with feelings of isolation, invisibility, and burden because they were, and in all cases but one, are, the only black female full professor in their department and/or program. Others deal with essentialism, having to battle racialized and gendered stereotypes of black women both in the classroom and from their colleagues. Some women talked about having to push to be twice as good as their colleagues just to earn the same respect, or collegial perception, of their other colleagues. More hazardous were the mental and physical health issues that these women battled, to include feelings of depression and having their spirits damaged. While all of the women characterized their job as the best in the world, it
was clear that reaching the pinnacle did not ensure them freedom from racism and sexism in the academy. While some of the women were not shocked by the racism and sexism, others expected that their earning of the top rank would garner them respect that would suppress racialized and gendered prejudice and discrimination.

**Discussion of Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how black women in various higher education programs perceive their promotion to full professor and promotions effects on their professional status and influence in their departments, institutions, and fields of study. Particular attention was paid to the ways both they and those around them enact power to influence their teaching, service, and research activities. Also of interest in this study was how racism and sexism intersect to create particularly unique experiences for black female full professors.

**How Black Women Perceive Their Promotion to Full Professor**

*Lifting as we climb.*

- Motto, National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC)

The longstanding motto of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC) in many ways sums up how the black women in this study perceive their promotion to full professor. The motto, *lifting as we climb*, suggests that as one black woman advances she simultaneously pulls another up behind her. Overwhelmingly, the women in this study perceived their promotion to full professor as a privilege and an opportunity to give back and bring other black women (and others) along behind them. As it relates to privilege, the women viewed their promotion as a responsibility to serve as mentors to both
students of color and black female faculty. As Patton and Harper (2003) noted, “Mentoring has been considered one of the salient factors in academic and career success” (p. 67). Several of the women reflected on their experiences as undergraduate and graduate students. Some of them were fortunate to have at least black administrators on campus to which they could look to as success stories. In other instances women felt isolated as students because there were so few black people at their institutions. Thus, many of them feel compelled now to mentor undergraduates and graduate students. Because most of them did not have formal senior faculty mentors to guide and support them in the promotion to full professor process, they understand how difficult the process can be with limited information and little support. Therefore, they also feel an obligation to mentor and guide black women in the academic career. Given that they have gone through the process they can share information about the position so there are no misconceptions and decipher and debunk the overt and covert messages that exist in the process of promotion to full professor. Collins (2009) wrote, “Knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate” (p. 276). The black women in this study recognize their lived experiences as valid forms of knowledge and wisdom and understand the importance of passing that knowledge and wisdom on to other black women in the professoriate.

The black women in this study also view their promotion as an opportunity to have a voice in spaces that have traditionally excluded them. To paraphrase Dawn, the full professorship provides access to all resources available to faculty. There are few restrictions once one gets promoted and no additional hurdles to jump. The women use these opportunities to join committees that make major decisions in their departments, colleges, and/or institutions. For example, many of the women indicated that tenure and promotion
committees are limited to full professors. Whereas without the rank they could not participate in these decision-making processes, the full professor rank gives them a seat at the table, a space to use their voice, and a vote. Additionally, some of the women see their promotion as an opportunity to hold their white colleagues accountable around issues of equity and equality. For example, Beverly shared that she was privy to a president’s cabinet meeting and noticed that she was the only person of color in the room. At the end of the meeting, she took the opportunity to make the president aware of this observation. This may have been the first time the president had ever considered the implications of not having any men or women of color in his cabinet. Some of these women also saw their full professor role as an opportunity to teach from non-dominant positions. As Turner, Gonzalez, and Wood (2008) found, teaching is one of the main reasons faculty of color persist in academe, despite research that indicates that faculty of color consistently receive low teaching evaluations. For junior faculty and those seeking promotion beyond tenure, those teaching evaluations can be used as a measure to determine promotion and tenure. For the women in this study, as full professors, there is little concern about teaching evaluations. As such they get to teach, privilege, and validate what they choose.

The women in this study also perceived their promotion to full professor as a threat to the status quo of the professoriate. Particularly, they view their presence in the full professorship as a threat to those who have traditionally occupied it, white men and women. Juanita used the word “interloper.” An interloper is a person who enters into a place or a situation where they are viewed as not belonging or wanted. They are likely perceived as interlopers because most of them, through their research and pedagogy, challenge the
Eurocentric, positivistic “traditional” paradigms of research and teaching in favor of more culturally relevant epistemologies and non-dominant theories and frameworks. Their understanding of others’ perceptions of them is likely accurate given the racialized and gendered micro- and macro-aggressions and assaults they faced in their processes of being promoted to full professor. However, these assaults are not new. Scholarship on the experiences of faculty of color and black faculty indicate that they face many challenges and constant roadblocks erected to discourage them from progressing in academe (Alfred, 2001; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008; Turner & Myers, 1999; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Despite the barriers, the women in this study recognize the importance of being full professors, that lifting as they climb is not an easy task, and that they will be met with challenge from those both in the dominant group (white men) and those who ascribe to dominant group thinking. But overall, they understand their promotion to full professors as opportunities to effect positive social change through their work in the academy with students and faculty and through their research, service, and teaching.

**How Research, Service, and Teaching are Affected by Promotion to Full Professor**

As the women in this study shared, service, teaching, and research are affected by promotion to full professor. Birnbaum (1989) wrote, “teaching, research, and service are interrelated and mutually reinforcing processes” (p. 12). As such it is no surprise that as one changes they all change in some way. To paraphrase Beverly in this study, those at the full professorship can shift the balance of teaching, research, and service. What is evident with these women is that a great deal of that shift occurs in the area of service. As Carol stated, full professors can expect more service. Service changes in four ways. First, as mentioned,
service generally increases. This is likely due to the expectation that full professors serve on the committees that are restricted to full professors (e.g., promotion, curriculum, special committees). Many of the women talked about their increase in service. However, none of them are new to heavy service loads. As many scholars have found, faculty of color are usually over-extended in the area of service (Brayboy, 2003; Thompson & Dey, 1998; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). For these women service has been an equally important part of their faculty experience.

The second change is a shift from service to leadership. According to these women’s experiences, upon promotion to full professor they began to not just serve on committees, but chair major departmental, college-level, and institution-wide committees. This shift is important because leading a committee requires more time and attention than simply serving on the committee. By taking on leadership responsibilities these women have opportunities to influence major decisions in the institution. To paraphrase one of the participants, the bar is high for full professors.

The third change is that these women took on major administrative roles upon being promoted to full professor. It is important to mention here, that many of the women had already been in administrative roles prior to becoming full professors, to include associate deans of graduate colleges and program coordinators. However, in most cases the women became department chairs, deans, and academic vice presidents. Again, the rank gives them access into spaces not commonly occupied by black women.

The last change is the increase in external service opportunities. As the women in this study indicated, they can be called on to be journal editors, serve on external review teams,
and join national and international consulting groups. Additional services might include holding a presidency in a major organization and leading major grant-supported research teams.

Overall, the increase in service does impact teaching and research. As it relates to teaching, many of the women indicated that they taught less as a result of their increased service load. However, many claimed their teaching, in terms of pedagogy and how they taught did not change. For some, the types of courses they teach change because as full professors they opted to teach the more challenging diversity courses. One participant said that she was intentional about taking on these classes as a full professor to protect junior faculty from receiving poor evaluations if it did not go well.

In the area of research, some of the women indicated that they were publishing slightly less as full professors than when they were assistant and associate professors. Additionally, they indicated that they published in different mediums. For example, given that they are perceived as expert scholars in the field, given their status as full professors, they are more likely to publish books than journal articles. They continue to collaborate with colleagues on books, book chapters, journal articles, and policy briefs, but not to the extent to which they had prior to tenure.

**How Power is Enacted in the Full Professorship**

In previous chapters the concept of power was discussed from various perspectives. The first definition of power was taken from Robert Birnbaum (1989). Birnbaum is considered a leading scholar on the organization of higher education, thus the
appropriateness of recognizing his definition. He defined power as “the ability to produce intended change in others, to influence them so that they will be more likely to act in accordance with one’s own preferences” (p.12). Although void of any direct indication of sociopolitical implications in the enactment of power, this definition could serve sufficient in understanding how power is enacted in a hierarchical structure such as the professoriate and a bureaucratic organization such as a college or university. As many of the women indicated in this study, power is constantly being enacted in the work of faculty and the business of an institution. In an effort to understand the different ways power is enacted by faculty members and full professors specifically, French and Raven’s (1959; 2001) taxonomy of social power was taken into consideration.

French and Raven articulated five types of power that faculty could exercise in their role – coercive, reward, legitimate, referent, and expert power. Coercive power refers to the ability to penalize others who do not accept attempts at one’s influence. Reward power refers to the ability to reward or decrease negative impact. The women in this study discussed some of the ways both coercive and reward power might be exercised in the full professorship. For example, there was a perception that there are consequences of not attending an event where the president of the institution extended the invitation, even if one is not interested in the particular event. Further, whether or not a consequence is actualized, the perception of a consequence is just as influential when there is a power differential. Additionally, many of the women talked about their opportunities to use their perceived power in a positive way to assist younger faculty by providing what could be considered as rewarding opportunities in their experiences. This could include supporting junior faculty members dossier in tenure and
promotion committees or writing with junior faculty as a way of lending the senior scholars credibility on a particular topic.

Legitimate power refers to one faculty member believing that another has a legitimate right to determine something over the other. Given the hierarchical nature of the professoriate, legitimate power can be assumed by many. As many of the women in this study indicated, by virtue of their rank as full professors, there is a perception that they have more power and thus junior faculty must “fall in line” as one participant described it. Additionally, as some of the participants advanced, the promotion to full professor suggests that one is prepared to take on higher-level leadership roles. Thus, the rank combined with the higher-level leadership positions afford the opportunities to be seen as having a legitimate right to have more influence than others of a lower rank and not in these top administrative positions.

Expert power relates to the perception that a full professor has a greater level of expertise and competence in their area of scholarship. While faculty at all levels can be perceived as experts at some level, as the women in this study posited, the promotion to full professor indicates the ultimate acknowledgement of one’s expertise by their peers. Thus, the rank of full professor gives faculty the ability to be perceived as a validated expert, thus perhaps having the ability to enact power and have greater influence than junior and mid-career faculty. The label of expert, according to some of the women in this study, is what dictates the level of influence and opportunities one has. For example, as some women indicated, their service on particular committees (i.e., curriculum, tenure and promotion, etc.), invitations to consult internally and externally, and choice of courses to teach is directly
related to their expertise.

While these takes on the enactment of power are quite relevant, the use of Birnbaum (1989) and French and Raven (2001) are not sufficient in understanding the complexity of power and articulating the multitude of ways power is enacted in the full professorship as shared by the black women in this study. Because the confluence of race and gender were salient in the experiences of the women in this study, Collins’ (2009) intersectionality and domains of power was appropriate as a lens to illuminate other ways power is/was enacted to shape oppressive experiences as well as to shape sites of empowerment and resistance. Specifically, the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power were relevant to understanding how power is enacted in the full professorship.

Through a structural domain, power is maintained in the ways social institutions are organized. Historically, colleges and universities were legally organized to exclude black female students and faculty. Today, black women are accorded the same legal rights as their white peers to exist in the professoriate; thus some black women have persisted in the faculty ranks and have earned the full professorship. However, the demographics indicate a drab picture of professional progression for black female faculty with only 1.26% holding the rank of full professor and most female faculty finding their faculty home in non-tenure track, part-time faculty positions. As such, as demonstrated by the women in this study, those who have earned the top rank use their power and influence to ensure that other black female faculty (as well as other faculty) have opportunities to advance into these influential positions as well. However, the rhetoric of colorblindness and anti-affirmative action are reminiscent of the past, insisting that race not be taken into consideration in social institutions, such as
public higher education. Although only a small number of states have had referendums pass anti-affirmative action legislation (e.g., California, Michigan, Washington), several other states have either held similar forums that have failed or may be in the midst of campaigning for similar initiatives. Power is enacted within the disciplinary domain via the surveillance practices of colleagues. The gatekeeping phenomenon that was discussed is associated with who gets promoted or not. Whether through creating “special committees,” fear mongering through the negative experiences of other black women (or other scholars of colors), changing the rules or practices, gatekeeping is a significant form of surveillance implemented in the process of promotion to full professor. Again, the women in this study recognize a need to resist from the inside to foster change. This occurs by serving on major decision-making committees and stepping in as sounding boards and advocates for their black female colleagues when necessary.

The interpersonal domain of power relates to how individuals operationalize oppression and resistance. As Collins (2009) notes in a matrix of domination there are no pure or true victims or oppressors. Rather individual thought is often guided by hegemonic ideology. As the women in this study indicated, some black female faculty could possibly find themselves reifying oppressive beliefs and values in the professoriate and particularly in the full professorship. For example, the belief that one should have a broader research agenda that includes “neutral” projects would reify the concepts of objectivity and neutrality in the research process, concepts often conflated with the dominant groups thinking about research. The hegemonic domain is quite powerful given that it deals with the influence of ideology, culture, and consciousness. These ideologies are created, manipulated, and maintained over
time to preserve power for the dominant group. Of primary concern in this study are the ways in which status is constructed, particularly the way intellectual capability informs status.

Mary’s words are quite summative on this point:

Here’s the other rub. In most instances when African-American women do make it to [the] full professorship there still is doubt that we were challenged. So when we do go up they make us go up more than once. They challenge our academic materials and our research. So when you have that type of doubt as you go up, the individuals in the profession continue that doubt. Therefore, you’re not a legacy. Your work, your research is not really research, it’s not valid. Your credentials…your writing, it’s not the type of writing that [they] want. [It’s not] considered to be scholarship and so we are not scholars…We are not smart enough…They don’t see us as people who are intellectuals.

As Collins (2009) noted through her explication of black feminist thought, self-definition as well as reflexive education are critical to deconstructing hegemony. Further, she stated, “Racist and sexist ideologies, if they are disbelieved, lose their impact” (Collins, 2000, p. 284). Thus, as the women in this study point out, they continue to enact agency and resilience to empower through crafting counter-hegemonic knowledge that fosters changed consciousness.

**How the Hegemony of Whiteness is Perpetuated in the Full Professorship**

The women in this study shared stories of struggle against cultural hegemony as means to create counter-hegemonic structures. However, this is no easy feat given how germane
racialized and gendered hegemony is in society, in higher education, and in the professoriate. To be certain the term hegemony is used throughout this study not to imply some sort of brutish enactment of power; rather, to emphasize how power and control is manifested through idealized beliefs that have been reified over time and affirmed through consensus. Counterstorytelling is a formidable way to disrupt hegemonic power through the vocalization of often untold stories.

The hegemony of whiteness is perpetuated in the full professorship in a number of ways. First, as discussed above, the maintenance of the belief in the intellectual inferiority of black women serves to keep them on the outskirts of achieving the highest status associated with the full professorship. Relatedly, viewing black female full professors as affirmative action promotions serves to negate their scholarship and contributions to their departments, institutions, and their fields. Further, expectations that black women deal with all things related to diversity, such as advising all the students of color, serving on all the diversity related committees, and teaching all the diversity classes, only reinforces the “othering” of black female scholars. Additionally, scorning black female faculty for aspiring to the full professorship and responding through withholding information and giving inaccurate information also serves to perpetuate whiteness and the belief that the full professorship is a space for white men. Lastly, the meritocracy ideology that pervades the promotion to full professor process also serves to perpetuate hegemony. Specifically, this ideology claims to be colorblind or race and gender-neutral. As the women in this study prove, the process is not colorblind and the subsequent experiences are still subject to racism and sexism.
Implications for Practice and Research

This work was aimed at broadening the empirical research and scholarship on faculty promotion with specific focus on the experiences of senior black female full professors. Implications for practice are presented below. Specifically, implications for institutions, the broader field of higher education, leading faculty organizations, and aspiring black female full professors are provided. Implications for research are also provided. Explicitly, implications for research using critical race (CRT & CRF) frameworks are provided, as well as, implications for understanding and further exploring power in this role.

Implications for Practice

Within the last year, institutions (e.g., The Ohio State University) have just begun to investigate their processes regarding promotion to full professor. However, there have been no empirical studies that explore this process. The findings of this research suggest that there are areas of current practice across institutions that warrant review. Specifically, as institutions begin to assess the current state of their full professorship body, they should be cognizant of how racism and sexism may be influencing their demographics, as well as their processes. The first step in this process would be to acknowledge that racism and sexism are still relevant, and as such still influence major decisions and practices. To ignore racism and sexism only feeds into a colorblind racism, which is subtle but often institutionally affirmed (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

Secondly, academic administrators should engage in conversations with black female faculty that have endured the process to full professor, both those who have successfully been promoted and those who have been unsuccessful in the process. Their experiential knowledge might prove informative to an institution trying to engage in equitable practices in
the promotion process. However, to be clear this is not a suggestion to “other” black female faculty; but these interactions might illuminate issues in the process that are difficult for white faculty to name as inequitable. Findings from these interactions should be addressed, particularly when issues arise that marginalize or adversely affect black female faculty.

As the women in this study posited, academic administrators should be held accountable for their beliefs and actions. When upper level academic administrators ignore problems they only reify the appropriateness of those problems. Therefore, when grievances are filed in these processes or broadly, every effort should be made to address them. However, as the findings of this study also indicate, changes to only the structural and disciplinary domains of power will not suffice. Particular attention must be paid to how the interpersonal and hegemonic domains of power engage to maintain beliefs about the efforts and merits of black female faculty. For example, faculty serving on promotion committees should be open to challenging their own assertions and assumptions about black women and non-dominant scholarship and pedagogy.

Another implication for practice stems from the experiences of women in this study with the issues of tapping and aspirations. The women in this study talked about the common practice of department chairs and senior faculty selecting associate professors to go up for full professor as oppose to faculty aspiring to go up and being nurtured in a way that renders them successful. While the practice of tapping, or selecting, might be the common practice that leads to a faculty member going up for full professor, institutions should be more intentional about examining whether or not that is the most equitable way to promote faculty to the top ranks. More specifically, senior faculty should be cognizant about how race and gender influence the process of tapping. Although the professoriate is predominately white
and male, more black female faculty, and other men and women scholars of color, are entering the professoriate. So whereas tapping may not have been an issue along the lines of race and gender previously, it is an issue now. Furthermore, their institutions and their colleagues, both internal and external to the institution, should support black female faculty who aspire to the full professorship. To be sure, not every faculty member aspires to the top rank, so those that do should be provided with the resources to understand the role of full professors in their intellectual communities and mentors who can assist them with their goals. Their aspirations should not be seen as arrogance.

Given the lack of information and misconceptions about the full professorship there are some programmatic implications also associated with this study. Institutions should be more intentional about providing opportunities to highlight the process and benefits related to the position. Recently, the researcher attended an event sponsored by ADVANCE at a large, predominately white, land-grant institution in the Midwest. ADVANCE is a National Science Foundation grant program dedicated to increasing the advancement and participation of women in science and engineering careers and awarded to institutions for five years. This particular program was related to the promotion to full professor process. ADVANCE administrators presented some demographic information regarding full professors, none of which included data disaggregated by race and gender, and testimonies by currently promoted individuals, two white women and one white man. While the session was somewhat informative, when asked about information regarding female faculty of color, the response was that since there are so few of them it was unnecessary to provide information on them or bring in any female faculty of color to share their stories in the process. Women of color cannot continue to be excluded from such programmatic efforts because their
numbers are small. Failing to invite them to these events is exclusionary. It is suggested here that events such as this be held but incorporate multiple perspectives on the process, to include the experiences and wisdom of black female faculty.

In his 2009 presidential address to the members of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Jeffrey Milem talked about his concern with tenure being viewed as the end goal for many scholars. This study confirms his assertions, as the women in this study indicated that many black women they have encountered are content with earning tenure and remaining a terminal associate professor. Although there is validity in the concerns these women may have (i.e., fear of the process), there is a need for a shift in how future faculty are trained to understand the professoriate. Programs such Preparing Future Faculty (PFF), that focuses on how aspiring faculty members prepare for their careers as faculty, and ADVANCE can be used to forward an agenda that views the faculty career more holistically and as one that extends beyond tenure. This may help to remove some of the enigma that exists regarding what lies beyond tenure. Additionally, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) sponsors Campus Action Projects (CAP) that are designed to improve career outcomes among other things. These projects can be used to implement effective programming around opening the pathways to the full professorship for black female faculty.

Given the focus on women in multiple areas of higher education, there are also implications for higher education as a field and organizations within it. Understanding status in the field was an important part of this study. Broadly, the field of higher education, in its many subfields (i.e., higher education administration, student affairs, community college, adult education), recognizes scholars in myriad ways, to include being called upon for
scholarly expertise and being recognized through awards. While many of the women have been called upon to work, that is to engage in service external to their home institutions, very few of them have received top scholarly honors from their primary professional organizations. While service is important, public acknowledgment of one’s merit, via awards, is also important. For example, review of the awards given by the Association for the Study of Higher Education shows that most of the recipients of the service award are men and women of color. However, most of the recipients of the scholarly and intellectual contributions award are white men and women. These associations and organizations should recognize the racialized and gendered dichotomies associated with service and scholarly awards. Further, major organizations, such as NASPA, ACPA, ASHE, AERA, and AACC, to name a few, should focus some attention on providing structured opportunities for black women and other women of color to interact with senior female scholars of color to discuss academic career advancement and the benefits of such a career. Given that these scholars have the ability to set the intellectual agenda of these fields, there should be some intentionality around supporting future and current female scholars of color.

This study also has implications for organizations such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and American Association of University Women (AAUW). While both groups have played significant roles in understanding tenure and academic freedom, there is little information available about their contributions to promotion processes. Given both groups involvement on the legal side of these issues, it seems appropriate that these groups might have some insights into the promotion process to the highest rank of the professoriate. Additionally, this study might inform some of their literature on institutional and faculty governance. For the AAUW specifically, studies such as
this one have major implications for the equity branch of the organization. They have engaged in studies and initiatives around tenure but also have not looked beyond tenure to understand the disparities occurring for black women and other women of color beyond tenure.

For aspiring black female faculty members, there are several things to consider. First, given the experiences shared in this study and one's own experiential knowledge, black female faculty who have experienced racism and sexism have to make intentional decisions about whether or not aspiring to and pursuing the full professorship is worth it for themselves. For this researcher, who aspires to the full professorship, in an effort to have opportunities to change situations, practices, and processes, and beliefs related to equity in the academy for those who have been historically marginalized it seems necessary to move forward and persist in the process. Engaging in this project and conversations with black female full professors only helped to solidify the belief in the need for more black female senior scholars. In an effort to help aspirings reach this level, the women in this study provided some pearls of wisdom for junior and mid-career black female faculty:

1. Stay true to yourself
2. Stay focused on your goals
3. Be consistent
4. Do your best work
5. Develop a social life so that you can maintain their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health
6. Do your own homework on different national professional opportunities (i.e., American Council on Education institutes, Fulbright Scholar Program) and connect with others who have participated

7. Engage in cross-disciplinary interactions (i.e., Sociology, Psychology, Women’s Studies, African American Studies)

8. Connect and collaborate with black female scholars with similar research agendas

9. Build a network of mentors and allies, to include other black women and scholars of other racial backgrounds

10. Seek out institutions with values that seem to align with your own

11. Don’t let large administrative opportunities detract from your focus on research, teaching, and service; wait if possible

12. Be aware of political situations

13. Write

14. Know expectations of your institution and for tenure and promotion

15. Challenge yourself

16. Give back through mentoring students and faculty and to the community

17. Don’t let anyone cap your dreams or tell you what you can or can’t do

18. Be confident when you’ve done good work

19. Be studious about learning the culture of a place

20. Maintain a sense of humor
Beverly, Mary, Carol, Christine, Dawn, Juanita, and LaVerne provided great advice ranging from intrinsic implications to external steps one can take to prepare themselves for the professoriate.

**Implications for Research**

As with most research, as more is learned, more questions arise. Few studies focus on the full professorship and the role of full professors in the academy. Further, the body of literature illuminating the experiences of female faculty of color in this role is scant at best. Using a critical race framework proved relevant in this study and findings supported the propositions that racism and sexism are not aberrational occurrences in the professoriate and are ever-present factors in their careers; meritocracy, race and gender neutrality, and colorblindness are in fact dominant ideologies to be challenged; and, experiential knowledge is necessary to illuminate the effects and influences of racism and sexism in the promotion processes. Further, combined, CRT, CRF, and black feminist thought serve to illuminate how power is enacted in multiple interrelated domains. Future studies employing critical race frameworks should focus on examining the legal and political implications associated with the full professor rank. This kind of research may help to reveal any legal rulings associated with how institutional policies and procedures have been crafted in such a way that privileges white men as the primary beneficiaries of the full professorship. Further, historical and document analyses can be employed to understand the roles organizations such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and American Association of University Women (AAUW) in constructing the promotion to full professor processes. Additionally, studies centering more aspects of social identity, such as race, gender, class,
and sexual orientation, would also prove informative in understanding how systems of oppressions converge in ways that influence access to the full professorship.

The findings in this study suggest that full professors have ample opportunities to exercise and enact power and influence. As indicated by the women in this study, power and influence can be used to empower and/or to oppress and no person, to include the women themselves, is purely empowerer, victim, or oppressor. These findings can be used as a launch pad to further explore how power and influence are enacted in the full professorship. Given the status associated with the position it is possible that full professors can play a major role in creating equitable practices and illuminating the hegemony that exists in the professoriate. Future studies should focus on using case study methodology and methods to further examine power in the full professorship. Given that institutions primarily govern the promotion to full professor process, case study methodology would allow for a more contextualized understanding of how power operates at a broader and localized level to influence the promotion process. Conducting several case studies would allow for cross-case analyses that might provide a better picture of any systemic issues occurring in the experiences of black female faculty. Given the women’s emphasis in bringing more black female faculty into the full professor rank, it is also necessary to ask whether increasing the number of black female faculty in this role will have an affect on equity at an institution. Additionally, more data-rich methodologies, such as portraiture, should be used to explore how those who serve in the full professorship do so without reproducing dominant values and beliefs. Further, given the exclusion of black women and their contributions from the mainstream history books associated with the development of higher education studies using
life history and other historical analyses are necessary to center and make visible their experiences and influences.

A more thorough analysis of promotion materials in faculty handbooks should also be conducted. Discourse analysis can be used to analyze how language revolving around describing the full professorship is constructed. Further, this type of research should focus on how both the written and unwritten discourses aid in conceptualizing how criteria for promotion to full professor are operationalized and measured.

Future studies should also focus on constructs such as salary, departmental and institutional resource allocation, and the likelihood of receiving additional titles (e.g., Distinguished, University Professor) upon promotion of black female faculty to full professor. Such analyses could indicate whether there are any disparities in these specific benefits. Additionally, questions related to socialization beyond tenure should be investigated. Specifically, how does socialization change upon promotion to associate professor and what influence does it have on aspirations to pursue the full professorship? Additionally, it would be intriguing to learn why some black women have chosen to be terminal associates. Lastly, while this research focused on the experiences of black female full professors, it should be extended to examine the experiences of Latinas, Asian, Native American, and multiracial women. As it relates to intersectionality, there other aspects that are relevant for some of these groups that may not be salient for black women and thus did not surface.

**Reflection & Conclusion**

As I reflect on this experience of participating in this project, it is quite an overwhelming feeling. Dialoguing with Beverly, LaVerne, Mary, Juanita, Carol, Dawn, and
Christine influenced me and my thinking about the professoriate in ways that I could not have imagined. Collectively, the stories of these women helped me to better understand my place in the academy. That is to say, I belong here, despite the racism and sexism I may have faced as an undergraduate, master’s student, full-time higher education professional, and doctoral student at predominately white institutions. Those experiences are building my armor, as Mary stated; an armor that will be needed to persist as a black female faculty member.

When I began this work I was excited and hungry to connect with senior black female faculty. I was eager to learn from their wisdom and knowledge about the professoriate. It was my pleasure to learn at the end, that this project did in fact serve as an opportunity for them to reflect on their journeys and current experiences. An important part of this study was constant self-reflection as a researcher, scholar, future black female faculty member, and new member of a very small group (black female faculty in full-time, tenure-track positions at predominately white, four-year very high research institutions). As a researcher, this process challenged me, as it should have. The constant feeling of incompetent-competence was excruciating. But the women in this study supported me through the process and offered feedback that was helpful to making the study stronger. As a scholar, I am pleased to use this project as a starting point to building a research agenda. Further, I am excited to continue working and collaborating with the women in this study as co-researchers. As a future black female faculty member, getting to know these women and their stories gives me a blueprint. Additionally, their stories affirm my own experiences in the academy. As a new member of a very small group of women, working with these women enforced a sense of purpose within me.
Recognizing that no research is ever completely finished, this project has served to provide some significant findings and implications for understanding the full professorship and specifically the experiences of black female full professors. Through listening to Beverly, LaVerne, Mary, Juanita, Carol, Dawn, and Christine’s counterstories the complexities of status and power were illuminated. What the narratives in this study indicated is that status is in fact deeply influenced by hegemony and that power is enacted in complex ways to maintain particular cultural hegemony. However, despite the reification of hegemonic beliefs, the women in this study understand their role as full professors as necessary and a privilege and opportunity to bring others along, fight to empower other black women, and resist the systemic practices and beliefs that continue to position them as outsiders-within.

When it rains, I look for the rainbow and get excited when I find it. Prior to this project, I must confess that a pessimistic feeling was growing inside of me as I thought about all the potential issues I would need to deal with as black female faculty member; issues I was already dealing with in other roles in the academy. I wondered to myself, how does one intentionally go into this work knowing what lies ahead. The women in this study were my rainbows in the clouds. I had to seek them out, but once I found them the experience was reaffirming, familial, and empowering.
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