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Experiences of African American Mid-Level Leaders in the Council for Christian College and Universities: A Phenomenological Approach to Diversity

Abstract

The racial demographics of the United States are changing dramatically in recent years. Despite what may be perceived as a window of opportunity for greater diversity in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) in the United States, there is an assortment of challenges that impede progress toward heightened diversity with African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU. The CCCU is a higher education association of conservative Christian colleges and universities in the United States whose pedagogical mission is Christ-centered and rooted in the historic value of Christian faith. Historically, African American administrators in Christian higher education have consistently encountered hindrances to employment and ultimate promotion to senior level positions at the dominantly White institutions (DWIs). In the CCCU, African American mid-level leaders continue to remain underrepresented at the administrative level. To posit that if true diversity leadership is to exist within the administrative levels at conservative Christian colleges and universities, a phenomenological hermeneutical method examining the lived experience of African American leaders at member institutions of the CCCU is imperative. Findings highlighted four potential sources of barriers for African American mid-level leaders within the CCCU: (a) the lack of meritocracy, (b) the burden of building political safety, (c) rules keep changing and, (d) the lack of a peer supportive community as obstacles facing mid-level African American leaders in the CCCU. Lastly, the conceptualization and inclusion of African American experiences must not only inform stakeholders but also frame the recruitment, retention, and assessment efforts of the African American experiences and representation at the Christian college level.

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College and Universities: A Phenomenological Approach to Diversity

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

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Dedication

For the past 10 years (with 3 years off), I have been on an academic quest hungry for new information about the social teachings of church and society. This dissertation journey is my second, and I must say the most challenging of two doctorates. I have always felt a special bond with church, community, and the academy. That spirit of connection more than anything else, has motivated me to deepen the probe for new meaning to discover the essence that distinguishes church, community, and diversity in the academy with fresh lenses.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who I thank first and mainly for being my helper and advocate has been a source of strength for me. As I learned more about the American life having served six congregations, this dissertation culminates the role of church, society, and the academy in black-white relations. I have learned so much from many people along this journey.

I could not have done this work without the support and measure of love from my wife Mira who walked with me every step of the way, and she did it twice! Mira is an incredible force in my life and I just can't live without her. My adult children, Brittany and Marlowe II who simply inquired, "How are you doing?" My parents, Frank and Lucille Washington, who are in heaven but nevertheless watch over me. My brother and sister, Michele and Faron Washington, and my sister and brother-in-law, Donna Coleman Gilmore and Barrett Coleman, from whom I gain strength, and I thank the four of them so much.

There are a few individuals who were integral members of the dissertation process that I want to mention. In addition to my family, I also dedicate this manuscript to Dr. Deana L. Porterfield, president of Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, NY who served as my executive mentor for 3 years. Deana, you are the best and thank you! Ruth A. Logan, vice president of Student Organization at Roberts Wesleyan College who has been by my side since day one, and the best broccoli salad preparer in the book! I have the best dissertation committee chairperson a candidate can asked for, thank you Dr. Shannon Cleverley-Thompson who instilled in me what it means to have an academic voice. To my committee member and friend, the Rev. Dr. James H. Evans, Jr., we almost “shouted and were filled with the Holy Spirit” with Shannon in several of our committee meetings, thank you for your leadership. My advisor, Dr. Marie Cianca who doesn’t miss a beat and became a great friend. And to Dr. Jeannine Dingus Eason, my program director and friend who birth me into this degree program. Dr. Dingus-Eason is a wonderful supporter, counselor, and great qualitative researcher. Betsy Christiansen, our operation director is by far my life saver! I swear Betsy is the founder of APA! You have been a blessing and roadmap for me during these past few years and I can’t thank you enough. Last but not least, I dedicate this dissertation to a woman who has no awareness of who I am now or can’t read this manuscript because she is stricken with advanced stage of Alzheimer, my 94 year old aunt, Eva Washington Campbell. Mira and I have been caring for “Aunt Eva” for 4 years by ourselves. Today, Aunt Eva is in hospice care. I dedicate this manuscript to my aunt and all Alzheimer patients who cannot do or say much for themselves, but their spirit is with us and with their loved ones. The Bible said of God, “as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.”

Biographical Sketch

The Reverend Marlowe V.N. Washington is currently the pastor of Seneca United Methodist Church in Rochester, New York and Diversity Consultant with the Brighton Central School District in Brighton (Rochester), New York. Rev. Washington attended St. Francis College in Brooklyn, New York from 1985-1989 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. He furthered his education at New York Theological Seminary in New York City and graduated with a Master of Divinity degree in 1997. In May 2016, Rev. Washington completed and graduated from Roberts Wesleyan College Northeastern Seminary in Rochester, New York having attained the Doctor of Ministry degree. He came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2016 and began his doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Rev. Washington pursued his research on the lived experiences of African American mid-level academic and professional leaders in Christian higher education under the direction of Dr. Shannon Cleverley-Thompson and received his Ed.D. degree in May 2019.

Abstract

The racial demographics of the United States are changing dramatically in recent years. Despite what may be perceived as a window of opportunity for greater diversity in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) in the United States, there is an assortment of challenges that impede progress toward heightened diversity with African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU. The CCCU is a higher education association of conservative Christian colleges and universities in the United States whose pedagogical mission is Christ-centered and rooted in the historic value of Christian faith. Historically, African American administrators in Christian higher education have consistently encountered hindrances to employment and ultimate promotion to senior-level positions at the dominantly White institutions (DWIs). In the CCCU, African American mid-level leaders continue to remain underrepresented at the administrative level. To posit that if true diversity leadership is to exist within the administrative levels at conservative Christian colleges and universities, a phenomenological hermeneutical method examining the lived experience of African American leaders at member institutions of the CCCU is imperative. Findings highlighted four potential sources of barriers for African American mid-level leaders within the CCCU: (a) the lack of meritocracy, (b) the burden of building political safety, (c) rules keep changing and, (d) the lack of a peer supportive community as obstacles facing mid-level African American leaders in the CCCU. Lastly, the conceptualization and inclusion of African American experiences must not only inform stakeholders but also frame the recruitment, retention,

and assessment efforts of the African American experiences and representation at the Christian college level.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Modern American higher education is distinguished by its ostensible commitment to diversity and inclusion (Strayhorn, 2013). Throughout history, however, diversity has not always been in the forefront of academic planning or campus initiatives (Chun & Evans, 2009). Ancis, Sedlacek, and Mohr (2000) suggested that African American students face more negative experiences on campuses, in the same manner that African American faculty and staff face racial stereotypes and feelings of loneliness, more than other minority groups. These factors could alter the motivation, morale, and success of both African American students and professionals in higher education (Love, 2009).

In addition to successful diversity as a general principle, another set of problems complicates this issue in conservative Christian higher education. The lack of African American administrators at conservative Christian institutions raises concern over the institution's lack of commitment to inclusive excellence and ethnic diversity (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Inclusive excellence encourages the recognition or promotion of differences as positive attitudes accepting, tolerating, and respecting others (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). The limited number of African American administrators in mid-level positions indicates that African Americans are not often hired for middle- to senior-executive careers in which they are responsible for developing and creating policies and making social changes (Love, 2009).

Higher Education and Diversity

Within the past decade, scholarship focusing on the professional standing of African Americans in management positions in higher education institutions in the United States has burgeoned (Lo, Smith, McCallum, McKnight, & Hughes, 2017). Despite this growing body of literature, the representation of African American scholars and professionals in mid-level and higher management positions in dominantly White institutions (DWI) in higher education has received little attention (Ash, Clark, & Jun, 2017; Paredes-Collins, 2013). In colleges and universities, mid-level leadership is defined as, but not limited to, positions not related to the president's executive team known as the president's cabinet (Paredes-Collins, 2013).

A college or university president's cabinet typically includes campus executives who are vice presidents and higher (Longman & Anderson, 2011). Mid-level campus leaders in higher education consist of administrators who are not members of the president's cabinet nor vice presidents, but report to them. Staff and faculty report to mid-level leaders (Longman & Anderson, 2011). Mid-level leaders are typically administrators who may include, but are not limited to, individuals with the following titles: (a) academic and associate deans; (b) department chairperson; (c) associate vice president; (d) program, unit, or executive director; and, (e) administrative, community or academic director (Thomas, 2008). Accordingly, this dissertation uses the term "DWI" for college and university settings, as opposed to the historical description, "predominantly White institutions" (PWIs). For the remainder of this study, the term DWI will be used to depict the majority racial group of individuals holding certain power and leadership in higher education. (Ash et al., 2017; Paredes-Collins, 2013; Wolfe &

Dilworth, 2015). Yet, while DWIs acknowledge that student diversity is increasing, many senior leaders at these institutions continue to reflect a majority White influence and presence (Ash et al., 2017).

In the United States, African American student enrollment is increasing at DWIs (Love, 2009). A report by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics revealed that African American student enrollment at DWIs grew from 10% in 2004 to 17% in 2014 (NCES, 2016). While it is important to increase African American student enrollment at DWIs, diversity among campus leadership in higher education institutions is also significant (Lo et al., 2017). Students' perceptions of the campus environment are likely to yield better retention for African American students when there are African American managers situated on those campuses (Strayhorn, 2013). According to Love (2009), faculty and staff relationships are key in assuring African American student success at DWIs. Guiffrida (2005) states without African American faculty and staff relationships, African American students' academic achievement and retention may be negatively affected. Although some African American students seek and find support in interactions with White faculty and staff, both inside and outside the classroom, the quality of these relationships seems to be cordial but not deep (Guiffrida, 2005). African American students have also noted the underrepresentation of African American scholars and campus leadership at DWIs (Chang, Longman, & Franco, 2014). Thus, African American students who do not see images of themselves in leadership at DWIs might experience isolation on campus rather than living as equal individuals among other learners, and this could lead to underachievement and retention problems (Love, 2009).

Research by the American Council on Education shows that while people of color make up 30% of the student population in U.S. higher education, only 13% of institutional presidents are people of color (ACE, 2017). These figures are an aggregation of people of color, not just Blacks or African Americans. People of color, or members of underrepresented communities, include African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, American Indians, and Pacific Islanders. The nation's largest demographic population, which is White, makes up more than 73% of students represented on campuses while African Americans students make up only 7% of campus student populations (ACE, 2017). In short, White students are overrepresented while African American students are underrepresented. Comparatively, in 2016, African Americans represented only 7% of managerial or mid-level leadership in American higher education, an increase from 6% in 2011 and 2006 (ACE, 2017), a number which is not representative of the distribution of this population nationally. Diversity has slightly increased in the student population but remains challenged in faculty and staff leadership in these institutions. This upward trend in student enrollment is not linked to the increase in the number of African American mid-level leaders working in higher education institutions. In short, while the United States is undergoing a significant racial and ethnic demographic shift, American higher education demographics are not shifting in tandem with these trends (Wanlund, 2012).

Religion, Society, and Race

Religion often provides a moral compass and guide for people determined to create social change in society (Paris, 1985). Religion also provides the moral component necessary for focused, sustained, and collective action toward desired outcomes (Healey & O'Brien, 2015; Rossano, 2007). Emerson and Smith (2000) suggest that conservative

Protestant faith as organized in America has not conferred positive impact on society regarding racial equality. If anything, religion has generally served to maintain racial barriers for personal privilege (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Paris (1985), as stated above, notes that religion in America is supposed to be seen as a moral agent freeing people from social and spiritual entrapments; rather, it has been a great dividing line that keeps people from moving across racial boundaries. The implications of religion as a racial barrier are that conservative Christian institutions should be active in promoting social unity, rather than isolated from these trends and shifts in society and social values (Daniels & Gustafson, 2016).

However, the history of race relations and religion in American society is marked by hostility, disorder, unequal treatment, misunderstanding, conflict, and violence (Carter, 2008). From the beginning of American history, Whites and African Americans lived together under hostile and disparate power relations (Carter, 2008; Paris, 1985). For example, early Christian support for chattel slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries led to the desegregation movement in the 20th century that, in turn, led to the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and 1960s. This contentious relationship between White and African American communities has been rooted in the viewpoint that Whites (i.e., Europeans) are morally, intellectually, and culturally superior to Blacks (i.e., Africans) (Paris, 1985). Paris (1985) defines racism as a phenomenon centering on and usually characterized by skin color and as an exclusionary/ inclusionary principle for denying rights and opportunities to other people who appear physically different from the dominant or hegemonic group. Historical race relations and religious values play key roles at Christian institutions in the loaded perceptions White academia may engage and leverage when regarding and

treating fellow African American professionals (Paredes-Collins, 2013). Historically, conservative Christian institutions have struggled to incorporate racial and ethnic diversity on their campuses, challenging racial climate and inclusivity, even while endeavoring to live out biblical principles (Paredes-Collins, 2013).

A Historical Overview of Christian Higher Education in America

Within Christian higher education, there is a subculture of conservative, Christian evangelicalism in the United States and Canada with a long tradition of establishing religious colleges and universities (Ringenberg, 2006). Evangelicalism in English-speaking North America is defined in *Merriam-Webster's* dictionary (1995) as being characterized by the doctrines of individual “salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ, and the importance of preaching as contrasted with ritual” (p. 401). Found within the greater family of Protestantism, evangelicals are part of the historic denominations of the Western churches (i.e., Baptist, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian) (Ringenberg, 2006). Protestant churches are religious communities holding to the confessional standards of the Reformation, which was a 16th-century religious movement marked by the rejection of the Roman Catholic Church and its hierarchy (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Conservative religious practice is one of many religious subsets with traditional beliefs, viewed sociologically, to give meaning and purpose of life as it is (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Even though the Reformation caused a radical break with the Roman Catholic Church, evangelical Christianity has always been conservative (Mardsen, 1994).

The earliest Christian institution of higher learning in the United States can be traced to the founding of Harvard College (now Harvard University) in 1636 by John

Harvard (Marsden, 1994). John Harvard was a Congregationalist minister and his Puritan/Congregationalist Church set the stage for Harvard College as the first evangelical school by charter (Marsden, 1994). Harvard and other institutions like the College of William and Mary (Anglican, 1693); Yale University (Congregationalist, 1701); Princeton University (New Light Presbyterian, 1746); Columbia University (Anglican, 1754); Rutgers University (Dutch Reformed, 1766); and Dartmouth College (New Light Presbyterian, 1769) were created to integrate religious instruction with intellectual development (Woodrow, 2004). While these colonial institutions of higher learning are no longer aligned to religious tenets as guiding principles, they were the originators of conservative intellectual history (Nieli, 2007). Historically, these institutions were led by White men. The American college president's office continues into the present moment with a notable lack of diversity (Absher, 2009; Dahlvig, 2013; Dahlvig & Longman, 2014; Daniel & Gustafson, 2016; Paredes-Collins & Collins, 2011; Taylor, 2013; Thomas, 2008).

Eurocentric values dominated religion and ethics in colonial America, often determining the existence of the early colleges, such as Harvard and Yale (Woodrow, 2004). In the 19th century, however, religion had been vigorously attacked by secular perspectives that yielded newer demands to create a society and institutions less, or not at all, influenced by the clergy (Nieli, 2007). The term "secular" refers to those areas of life no longer under the control of religious or Christian institutions, beliefs, or symbols. Secularism is the separation of the state from traditional religious beliefs (Sloan, 1994; Ward, 2013).

By 1850, the process of secularization was making a push on college campuses (Woodrow, 2004). Major controversies over Darwinian evolutionary theory and criticism of the Christian Bible became fierce debates that typically saw evangelical Protestants at the forefront of organizing new institutions of higher education to combat secular learning with spiritual and religious truths contained in the Christian Bible (Nieli, 2007). By the end of the 19th century, religion-centered learning inspired the founding of over 2,000 faith-based colleges and universities in the United States (Ringenberg, 2006; Woodrow, 2004).

As new colleges and universities were forming in 19th-century America, a new moral philosophy—liberal arts education—offered a variety of disciplines and contemporary worldviews no longer viewed as religious that would seem to have been in conflict with the original intents and purposes of colonial college education (Nieli, 2007; Ringenberg, 2006). Thus, the character of colonial college education was fading, further challenging the role of clergy with professional expertise from outside the theological disciplines to teach and lead American colleges and universities (Nieli, 2007). By the 20th century, the domination of a religious worldview had run its course in American higher education, no longer influencing American culture (Woodrow, 2004), and the 1950s saw a rapid expansion of secularism in America’s colleges and universities (Nieli, 2007; Woodrow, 2004).

By the 1960s, students were protesting the Vietnam War, urban race riots emerged, and new political influences passed to a newer and younger generation, “and revolutionary changes in mainstream attitudes toward hair, authority, sex, G.I. Bill, drugs, gender roles, and music” were taking place (Nieli, 2007, p. 326). The liberal arts

approach to higher education began incorporating dramatic changes to curricula to keep up with the pace of America's increasingly science- and technology-driven economy and communities (Ringenberg, 2006). Marsden (1994) states the "new colleges" (institutions of higher learning founded post- Civil War) became labeled as "liberal," which was a threat to conservative teachings. There was, from the mid-20th century, a strong effort to combine conservative theology, politics, and economics with general Christian principles of morality, which paved the way in the founding of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) (Marsden & Longfield, 1992).

Historically, the secularization of education led to the development of the CCCU as a response to the bombardment of socio-religious changes and an effort to preserve conservative Christian education (Ringenberg, 2006). According to Sloan (1994), the Civil Rights movement, feminist and homosexual rights, multiculturalism, and the New Left with its socialist trends in student political activism in the 1970s were all too much for Protestant conservatives to bear, and thus, the CCCU was established in 1976 through the efforts of evangelical educators and business leaders (Bruce, 2002; Dosen, 2012; Moser, 2014; Nieli, 2014; Sloan, 1994; Ward, 2013). In referring to these mid-century changes, conservative evangelicals conclude that colleges with strict conservative values won the favor of corporate and business leaders, making the case that the preservation of small, private, conservative Christian colleges was essential to the conservation of the American way of life (Hassman, 2010). Protestant conservatives wanted an organization in which they could connect their moral, religious, and political earnestness, and even the rhetoric and culture from which evangelicalism had sprung (Sloan, 1994). All of this

provided a safety net and allowed some in the evangelical community to isolate themselves from the nuances of a shifting culture and society.

According to the CCCU's website, the CCCU is part of the conservative Christian higher education arm that is self-described as having the distinction of being Christ-centered and professing faith in Jesus Christ in postsecondary settings (CCCU, 2019; Longman & Anderson, 2011). Member institutions in conservative Christian higher education integrate both faith and learning in the curricular and cocurricular programs (CCCU, 2019). Each conservative Christian higher education institution requires board-approved institutional mission and purpose statements that are Christ-centered, rooted in the historic Christian faith, and lived out on campus communities (CCCU, 2016; Longman & Anderson, 2011).

In many cases, White executive leaders in the conservative Christian higher education arena have likely been affected by intentional movements toward cultural and ethnic diversity in higher education (Anderson, 2008). In its formative years, the CCCU tended to avoid social issues at all costs, including a reluctance to challenge social structures (Carson, 1997; Marsden, 1994; Marsden & Longfield, 1992). Evangelical inclinations were to not address various social systems for the sake of justice, but only out of concern for mission and evangelism (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Today, new discussions and examinations of the journey of administrative leadership for African Americans, as well as people of color in general, are taking place in the CCCU (Ash, Clark, & Jun, 2017). Explicitly, the Bible advocates diversity and inclusion (Acts: 17:26-27; Colossians 3:11; Ezekiel 47:22; Galatians 3:28; Revelation 7:9-10; Romans 2:11), which could help to reconcile the conservative and liberal movements under claims from

a phenomenologically rich, theological, and historically based framing (Abadeer, 2009; Paredes-Collins, 2013).

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

According to the U.S. Department of Education’s statistics, there are approximately 4,724 degree-granting institutions in the United States. Of these, 1,600 are private, non-profit campuses, of which 900 colleges and universities have ties to religion (NCES, 2014). Figure 1.1 outlines the degree-granting institutions and how they are broken down into various sectors in higher education in the United States, including the CCCU.

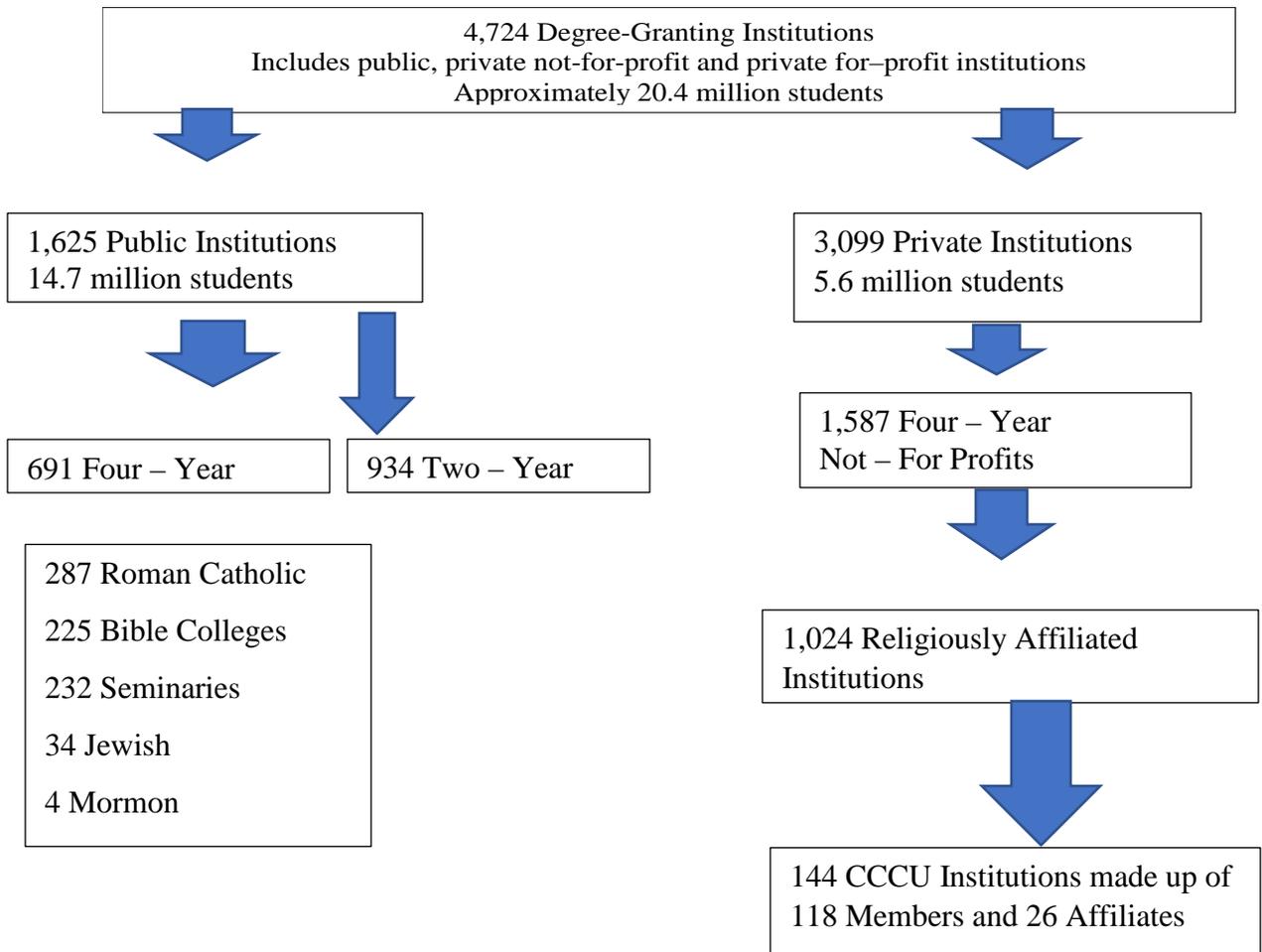


Figure 1.1. Degree-Granting Institutions and sectors in higher education (CCCU, 2016).

The CCCU is an association of like-minded institutions in the United States and Canada strongly representative of a conservative, evangelical tradition in Christian higher education. In the United States alone, there are 108 CCCU institutions; Canada has 10, though this study excludes these 10 Canadian institutions (CCCU, 2019). Founded in October 1976 and then reinvented into an international coalition in 1999, the 118-member campuses in North America are regionally accredited, comprehensive colleges and universities with curricula rooted in the arts and sciences (CCCU, 2019). According to the CCCU website, their institutional mission “is to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth” (CCCU, 2019 About Section). The 108 U.S. member institutions in the CCCU share similar collegiate characteristics as all other sectors of higher education in the United States, such as athletics, marching bands, college clubs, campus and residential life, programs, and curricula. Most CCCU institutions define themselves as part of the wider Protestant evangelical expression of American religious life, and they identify themselves in a unique way by supporting what they believe to be conservative American values and traditions (Marsden, 1994).

CCCU member colleges and universities are defined by the ideological markers of the evangelical traditions in both curricula and leadership, which are the infallibility of the Bible, salvation by faith in Jesus alone, the need to evangelize, rapture of the church in the end times, and being born again (Ringenberg, 2006). Regarding the culture of leadership in the CCCU, there is a distinctive racial uniformity among scholars and professionals who hold academic leadership positions (Absher, 2009; Dahlvig, 2013; Dahlvig & Longman, 2014; Fubara, Gardner, & Wolff, 2011; Henck, 2001; Longman,

2015; Longman & Anderson, 2011; Longman, Dahlvig, Wikkerink, Cunningham, & O'Connor, 2011; Nussbaum & Chang, 2013; Paredes-Collins, 2013; Paredes-Collins & Collins, 2001; Perez, 2013; Smith, Filkins, Schmeltekopf, & Bateman, 2005; Taylor, 2013; Thomas, 2008). The great majority of mid- to senior-level leaders at CCCU institutions are non-Hispanic Whites who achieved their positions through similarly traveled and defined career paths (Smith et al., 2005; Wilson, 2015). Smith et al. (2005) found that most Christian campus leaders were White males with earned doctorates or masters, married, and Protestant. Researchers also found that close to 80% of administrators leading Christian institutions come from within the CCCU network and are White (Taylor, Van Zandt, & Menjares, 2013). Race may help to explain why some African Americans who are not typically from the CCCU may feel inadequate in their academic roles and do not remain at these institutions (Smith et al., 2005). Yet Protestant African American mid-level leaders traveled similar career paths as their White counterparts, leading Christian higher education institutions with earned master's and doctoral degrees, and similar competence and visionary skillsets (Wilson, 2015). In short, the essential skills for higher education leadership are the same for African American and White mid-level leaders.

The CCCU has maintained a solid reputation with over 80% of CCCU member institutions representing the Protestant arm of the Christian church (Porterfield, 2013). There are over 30 Protestant denominations that make up the climate of the CCCU. Most of these Protestant-affiliated institutions represent both the reformed or conservative traditions of the church, such as Anglican, Lutheran, or Presbyterian, in which most African Americans do not participate (Porterfield, 2013). Despite an appeal to a diverse

student body, CCCU institutions reflect the racial makeup of the denomination that sponsors them (Ringenberg, 2006). It is not surprising that one of the apparent hindrances African American scholars and leaders face in the CCCU is the homogenous climate that already exists in academia and its sponsoring denominations (Dosen, 2012). Additionally, the CCCU climate is significant because to envision the future of the CCCU and its diversity initiatives requires that an honest portrait of the way many Christian college campuses institute policies, or not, shed light on how they regard and prioritize diversity and whether they are serious about diversifying their workforce (Paredes-Collins, 2013). As mainline denominations were influenced by liberal ideology and culture, conservative colleges and universities were determined to resist progressive forces, which is one reason the CCCU became an attractive establishment to conservatives with traditional values (Burtchaell, 1998). The CCCU is set apart from their public and nonsectarian private counterparts by a commitment to: (a) developing their students' spiritual lives (Paredes-Collins & Collins, 2011); (b) valuing a faith-based pedagogy (Taylor, 2013); (c) an awareness of God's calling for leadership (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014); and (d) instilling a combination of integrative reasoning and character formation (Mannoia, 2015). Additional differences that set the CCCU member institutions apart from non-religious institutions is that they must meet the criteria of "hiring as full-time faculty members and administrators only persons who profess faith in Jesus Christ," and conducting fundraising activities "in a manner consistent with the standards of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability" (CCCU, 2016; Longman & Anderson, 2011, p. 426). CCCU membership also requires mission and purpose statements that are "Christ-centered and rooted in the historic Christian faith" (CCCU, 2016; Longman &

Anderson, 2011, p. 426). Yet, the purpose of these criteria is to shape a clear religious and cultural trajectory essential to preserving conservative values in evangelical Christian higher education (Paredes-Collins, 2013).

Lack of Racial Diversity in Management Positions in the CCCU

The demographic profile of the typical university administrator at private, 4-year liberal arts and science institutions in the CCCU is a White male (Smith & Mamiseishvili, 2016). In 2007, 91.3% of full-time faculty employed at CCCU member institutions identified themselves as White; this percentage decreased to 88.5% in 2014 (Smith & Mamiseishvili, 2016). The data show that the percentage of African Americans employed at CCCU institutions in full-time management, which includes cabinet members, as well as, directors, deans, and associate vice presidents was 4.19% in 2016 (IPEDS, 2016; N. Stemmler, personal communication, February 9, 2018). Although some progress has been made in student diversity, efforts towards administrators' diversity continue to fall behind in the CCCU. Limited research has addressed mid-level administrators' diversity and the pathway towards ascension to higher offices. This study attempts to address the gap in the literature by examining institutional efforts to document and increase African American administrators at CCCU member institutions. For example, until 2005, there were no African American presidents in the CCCU, and per Smith et al. (2005), "minority" administrators serving as vice presidents and below made up only 1%. There are few, if any, empirical data on African American administrators in the CCCU (Absher, 2009; Dahlvig, 2013).

The percentage of African Americans administrators in higher education is 10% (NCES, 2016) and, as stated above, the percentage of African American mid-level

leaders employed in conservative Christian contexts is 4.19%. However, there are few, if any, empirical data available on total figures for African American leaders beyond mid-level rank in the CCCU. The available literature only concerns the route or pathway by which individuals ascend to administrative positions, especially to the presidency from senior-level positions in other sectors of higher education (Absher, 2009; Longman & Anderson, 2011; Smith et al., 2005). What is important to realize is that the demographics of African American academic and professional leaders in the CCCU do not reflect the demographic portrait in the United States or higher education in general (Paredes-Collins, 2009).

Problem Statement

Racial composition of administrators in the CCCU is not representative of the racial demographics of the U.S. population nor of non-CCCU institutions (Confer & Mamiseishvili, 2012). With African American students in CCCU schools making up 7% of the student population, African American mid-level leaders do not reach representation even of this demographic at less than 4% (Confer & Mamiseishvili, 2012; IPEDS, 2016). In 2006, only 3% of CCCU students were African American, while White students comprised 84% of the student population (Paredes-Collins, 2009; Washington, 2006). By 2016, African American enrollment at CCCU institutions had doubled to 7% while the average enrollment of African American students in public institutions grew to 19% (NCES, 2016). Those individuals holding full-time faculty status in 2000 were 88% White, not far off from the 1975 numbers when faculty were 96% White in the United States (Absher, 2009). For the 2001-02 academic year, 87% of all full-time professors were White, as compared to only 5% of full professors who were African American,

Hispanic, or Native American. The disparity in African American and Hispanic faculty participation in the CCCU continues to be a challenge and remains a wide gap in the limited research available. For example, there has not been one African American president in a CCCU school since the inception of the institution from 1976 to 2014 (ACE, 2012; Dahlvig, 2013; Dahlvig & Longman, 2014). Recent literature and data to describe existing pathways for African American administrators regarding career choices, teaching, research, and service do not exist in a CCCU context.

Some factors hindering the promotion of African American faculty and professionals in the CCCU include what several studies reported as a “chilly” campus climate (King & Gomez, 2008). African American that work in a “chilly” campus climate experience hostility through subtle mannerisms, microaggressions, and tokenism (Chang, et al., 2014, p. 374; King & Gomez, 2008; Lumby & Coleman, 2007; Strayhorn, 2013). Most of the literature focusing on African American scholars and administrators is not based in evangelical institutions. Indeed, these studies center their work at non-CCCU and public institutions (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). To begin with, the American Council on Education (ACE, 2017) report that 78.7% of college administrators (administrative officers with positions as department chairs, deanships and associate deanships, associate vice presidents, and program directors) from all sectors in higher education are White males. The limited number of African Americans holding these roles in CCCU contexts may indicate that they are not often hired or promoted for mid-to senior-level administrative positions in which they would be responsible for developing campus policies and strategic direction that would ultimately expand their numbers to representative levels. . African American people are underrepresented in all levels in the

CCCU if measured against non-CCCU institutions while CCCU students, staff, faculty, and senior leaders are overrepresented by White people (Absher, 2009; Washington, 2006). While African American students and faculty are slowly increasing in number in Christian higher education, there is still demographic underrepresentation in administrative leadership when compared to non-CCCU institutions (Chang et al., 2014). This study focuses on the experiences of administrative leaders in the CCCU and addresses both the obstacles and opportunities for African American professionals in conservative Christian institutions.

While other sectors of higher education such as public colleges and universities have attempted to address diversity for several decades, a commitment to inclusion at conservative Christian institutions is a recent phenomenon (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013; Taylor, 2013). Christian higher education institutions are facing various challenges more acute and vastly different than non-Christian institutions as they seek to protect their distinctive religious identity and mission, while responding to a rapidly changing society (CCCU, 2012; Nussbaum & Chang, 2013). In addition, according to Nussbaum & Chang (2013), tensions and oftentimes conflicts between academic institutions and the sponsoring church or religious body require careful discernment and loyalty to central religious tenets. Comparing Christian higher education to public higher education, Carson (1997) historically observed that public institutions are more open-minded in their sense of identity and mission than conservative Christian higher education institutions. Absher (2009) shows a decade later that a lack of research influencing the attraction, recruitment, and retention of mid-level African American leaders in the CCCU has persisted. This

study offers a description of how the CCCU contributes to or challenges the lived experiences of African American academic and professional leaders.

Abadeer's (2009) study on conservative Christian academics found that they view God's purpose for humanity as inviting people from all racial and ethnic groups into a relationship with him (Isaiah 2:2-4; Luke 13:28-29; Revelation 5:9-10). The Christian Bible continuously reminds readers that human beings should stand against oppression and promote peace (Amos 5:24; Luke 10:36-37; Mark 11:15-17; Micah 6:6-8; Zechariah 7:9). The Christian Bible also suggests diversity and inclusion should be intentional and deliberate (Acts 15:23, 26; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Ephesians 2:14-16). Christian Scripture underscores the breaking down of the partialities dividing communities. Despite clear emphases on justice, racial reconciliation, and inclusion, many evangelicals do not examine Scripture through a racial or cultural lens (Conde-Frazier, Kang & Parrett, 2004; Perez, 2013). Consequently, many evangelicals hold a belief that stresses rigid individualism; They often have difficulty recognizing the impact of race and diversity on social structures (Emerson & Smith, 2000; Taylor, 2013). Also, many White evangelical administrators in the CCCU minimize the troubled history of race relations and adopt the stance of a "colorblind" vantage (Emerson & Smith, 2000). According to Emerson and Smith (2000), "colorblind" is the absence or ignoring of one's own, or others', racial or ethnic identity in the aim of avoiding racial prejudice. Indeed, one possible reason for the exclusion of African American professionals, especially mid-level leadership in the CCCU, may have nothing to do with skin color or race. Rather, this exclusion could be related to the biblical construct of rigid individualism via different sociological backgrounds and Christological perspectives (Sloan, 1994). For example, the political

worldviews, due in large part to radically different histories, of Black and White Christians may be functionally dissimilar, and thus dynamics of advantage/disadvantage would follow racial lines in the CCCU (Absher, 2009; Sloan, 1994). As an example of this, Americans have been disturbed by the killings of unarmed African American men and youth by law enforcement officers. As citizens grapple, usually along racial lines, with the implications of these events, deep and significant divisions become entrenched between both individuals and communities where advantages are bestowed and disadvantages befallen (Longman et al, 2017).

The racial demographics of the United States have been changing dramatically in recent decades (Lichter, 2013). Wanlund (2012) demonstrates the U.S. population trajectory, showing in 2043 that non-Whites will outnumber Whites. Despite what may be perceived as a window of opportunity for greater diversity in the CCCU (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013), there is an assortment of challenges that impede progress toward greater diversity in mid-level leaders in the CCCU, namely, these institutions seek to protect their distinctive religious features against a change in culture (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013). With this reactionary position, the CCCU retention and enrollment efforts could be hindered, thus inadvertently impacting institutional growth because of the lack of diversity that may discourage students and professional leaders from joining this community, affecting the institution's bottom line (Fubara et al., 2011).

Throughout the entire history of the nation, African Americans campus leaders have consistently encountered hindrances to employment in higher education via various failures in institutional recruitment and retention efforts (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). In the CCCU, African Americans continue to remain underrepresented at the administrative

levels (Absher, 2009; Nussbaum & Chang, 2013). In fact, the term “African American” or “Black” in DWI spaces are relegated into groupings of yet another disenfranchised otherness (Chang et al., 2014). Most glaring, little is known about African American mid-level leader experiences in CCCU contexts (Absher, 2009). Much of the qualitative diversity and mid-level leadership research to date has failed to examine the experiences of African American administrators in the CCCU. The intent of this dissertation study was to learn more about the challenges and opportunities available for African American leaders and their experience in diversity leadership at conservative Christian institutions. According to Absher (2009), to better recruit and retain African American employees and administrators demands a better understanding of the motivations that encourage them to stay at conservative Christian institutions. Some faculty members and practitioners are joining faith-based institutions not just because of their passion for the teaching profession, but also from a sense of a calling to serve Jesus Christ (Chang et al., 2014; Paredes-Collins, 2013). The concern for some conservative Christian institutions is that, while student diversity is increasing, the same cannot be said for the administration (Chang et al., 2014).

Theoretical Framework

This study applies the critical race theory (CRT) as a frame in exploring the intersections of race and culture, leadership, and privilege that are integral in understanding historically marginalized communities in Christian higher education (Hughes & Giles, 2010; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Critical race theory was proposed by Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate, IV (1995) as introductory work in the field of education that provided a significant spotlight on the areas of race, school, and

educational outcomes in the mid-1990s, intersections hitherto unacknowledged. It should be noted the work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) was built on the previous efforts of several scholars, especially in the legal field, who called for greater analyses of race, culture, teaching, and learning in diverse communities (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Critical race theory has served as a framework for revealing and analyzing race and racism in higher education over the last 20 years (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Morfin, Perez, Parker, Lynn & Arrona, 2006; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Critical race theory places attention on studying and transforming the relations between race, racism, privilege, and power (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Critical race theory can illuminate the effects of race and racism on people of color and their experiences in higher education (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015).

According to Confer and Mamiseishvili (2012), CRT provides a lens by which to analyze the racial barriers experienced by students, faculty, and administrators of color. Thus, research examining the lived experience of mid-level leaders in the CCCU view both obstacles and opportunities for African Americans as a tool to reveal how African American scholars and professionals both share similar experiences and may have substantially different ones than most White scholars and professionals (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). In addition to the African American experience in Christian higher education, CRT has branched out, focusing on the African American community and addressing issues such as language, culture, identity, and, sexuality, among others (Howard & Navarro, 2016).

Delgado and Stefanic (2001) and Soloranzo and Yosso (2002) have developed the following five defining CRT elements to guide research on educational equity and racial

justice: (a) centrality of race and racism in identifying the structures, practices, and discourses that are perpetuating racism in higher education; (b) challenge to dominant ideology and the traditional claims of objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity in higher education; (c) commitment to social justice and praxis throughout all segments of the academy to eliminate all forms of racial, gender, language, and class subordination; (d) importance of experiential knowledge to legitimize all experiences of African American professionals; and (e) historical context and interdisciplinary perspective through which to analyze race and racism in the higher education setting (Howard & Navarro, 2016). These five defining lenses provide a critical voice for the oppressed where it can serve as a resource to reduce discrimination.

Diversity in Christian higher education requires further investigation into the theological base and social justice dedication of Christian higher education establishments (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013). From the basis of Christian higher education, CRT provides the necessary lenses for a strong moral reasoning to address diversity-related social justice issues. As mentioned previously in the problem statement, racial minority composition within member institutions of the CCCU is not reflective of the racial demographics in the country nor of non-CCCU institutions (Confer & Mamiseishvili, 2012). Absher (2009) explained that racially diverse students and administrators who attend and work at conservative Christian institutions are almost always excluded from the curricular, learning opportunities and workforce practices leading to “social isolation, chilly environment, bias, and hostilities” (p. 162). Various examples of some of the biggest obstacles to achieve diversity were limited opportunities

to participate in departmental and institutional decision-making and being the token representative of all diversity committee efforts (Absher, 2009).

Statement of Purpose

Christian scriptures repeatedly underscore the significance of breaking down the partiality and hostility often viewed as dividing communities (Conde-Frazier, Kang, & Parrett, 2004). The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership experiences of African American academic and professional leaders in the CCCU in the context of diversity and inclusion (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013). To help frame the lived experiences of African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU, this phenomenological research sought to identify barriers to and opportunities for African American scholars and practitioners advancing from mid-to senior-leadership roles in the CCCU, among other experiences.

Research Question

There are measurable barriers that hinder inclusion for African American scholars and practitioners in the CCCU. After at least a decade of diversity awareness efforts in the CCCU (2006-2016), African Americans are still underrepresented in mid-level administrative roles (ACE, 2017; Paredes-Collins, 2009; Washington, 2006). The central research question undergirding this study is: What are the experiences of African American mid-level academic and administrative leaders in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities that influence their career paths?

Significance of the Study

Since Washington's (2006) study on African American administrators and their advancement in the CCCU a dozen years ago, an important question emerges: Has much

changed? Are there gains in diverse leadership in the CCCU? The CCCU can no longer ignore the changing demographics around them while maintaining a competitive edge against public and nonsectarian private institutions (Paredes-Collins & Collins, 2011; Perez, 2013). Since colleges are heavily tuition dependent, newer approaches to leadership are needed to stay vibrant and relevant, with racial diversity one of the most salient. Older White male-normed organizational culture is the leading contributor to the dearth of both African Americans and women in administrative leadership positions (Kezar, 2008; Porterfield, 2013; Smith et al., 2005; Wilson, 2015). A growing body of literature is advocating for college and university presidents to include more African Americans in leadership positions in higher education (Dahlvig, 2013; Longman & Anderson, 2011; Smith et al., 2005; Wilson, 2015). The scant research available on Christian higher education confirms African Americans are underrepresented in all administrative positions in the CCCU (Longman & Lafreniere, 2011). This study addresses the gap in the research devoted to the experiences of African American leaders in the CCCU. Indeed, the shortage of African American professionals in administrative and managerial capacities in the CCCU deserves more attention and critical analysis to help both the CCCU achieve their goal of diversifying both their student bodies and their cadres of administrators, as well as to contribute to the broader body of knowledge about how changes in social values (e.g., diversity) are implemented in practice in institutional settings, the site where most hegemonic power is concentrated.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are intended to acknowledge readers' understanding of various terms used throughout this proposed study:

- **Church-sponsored Institution-** Houses of worship or religious denominations that organize and fund educational enterprises, but constituents are not avowed to religious practice or beliefs (Absher, 2009).
- **Christian Higher Education-** An education arm that is self-described as having the distinction of being Christ-centered, conservative, and professing faith in Jesus Christ in postsecondary settings (Longman & Anderson, 2011).
- **Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU)-** An association of 118-member institutions of Christian higher education in the United States and Canada rooted in conservative evangelical traditions representing 30 different Christian denominations and ranging in enrollments from 300 to more than 20,000 students (CCCU, 2016).
- **Dominantly White Institution (DWI)-** A characteristic describing campuses where the dominant racial representation of those holding positions of power and authority are White (Ash et al., 2017).
- **Evangelicalism-** Characterized by the doctrine of individual salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ, and the importance of preaching as contrasted with ritual (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 1995, p. 401).
- **Faith-based (or Christian) Institution-** Houses of worship or religious denominations whose pedagogical mission is to advance the work of Jesus Christ in a theological-centric foundation. Constituents are avowed to religious practice and belief. These institutions transform lives by persistently relating scholarship and service to biblical truth (Longman & Anderson, 2011).

- **Mid-level Leadership-** Confined to officers in higher education institutions not considered members of the president's cabinet or executive (senior) leadership team. The mid-level officers of interest include associate-vice presidents, deans, department heads, and program/unit directors (Absher, 2009).
- **People of Color-** A person who is not White or of European heritage. The term encompasses all non-White people, including African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders (Healey & O'Brien, 2015).
- **Protestant-** Religious communities holding to the confessional standards of the Reformation, which was a 16th century religious movement marked by the rejection of the Roman Catholic Church and its hierarchy (Emerson & Smith, 2000).
- **Race-** Socially (and economically) constructed criteria to categorize people based on skin color or other physical characteristics.
- **Racial Diversity-** The positive embracing of groups and communities of cultural distinctions (Herring & Henderson, 2015).
- **Racism-** A form of prejudice often grounded in skin color, and which serves as a criteria to justify exclusionary/inclusionary principles and policies for denying rights and opportunities to people who appear physically different from the dominant racial group (Paris, 1985).
- **Religion-** The belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods, through which life experiences of groups

and individuals are given meaning and direction (Bruce, 2011; Kohrsen, 2012; Rossano, 2007).

Chapter Summary

White males dominate the presidential, senior, and mid-level landscape in conservative Christian institution leadership (Dahlvig, 2013; Longman & Anderson, 2011; Porterfield, 2013). Founded in 1976, and later reinvented into an international coalition in 1999, the CCCU is a higher education association of 108 Christian institutions of higher learning in the United States (CCCU Profile, 2016). Its primary purpose “is to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to the biblical truth” (CCCU Profile, 2016). Despite professional and social challenges, African American academic and professional leaders have contributed to the educational success of students in a unique fashion (Chang et al., 2014).

Critical race theory (CRT) was introduced as a tool for exploring the intersections between race and culture, leadership, and privilege when addressing historically marginalized individuals. From this vantage, there is a significant lack of research influencing the attraction, recruitment, and retention of mid-level African American leaders in the CCCU who can optimize the academy with multiculturalism (Absher, 2009). Furthermore, this research endeavors to offer insight into how Christian colleges and universities can contribute to the positive experiences of African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU. Christian scriptures repeatedly underscore the significance of breaking down the partiality and hostility often viewed as dividing communities (Conde-Frazier, Kang, & Parrett, 2004). Chapter 2 offers a review of the literature, analyzing,

comparing, and synthesizing relevant research. Chapter 3 describes the research method and organization of data collection for this study. Chapter 4 depicts the career journey of African American mid-level administrators and provides a context for constructive dialogue among African American professionals in conservative Christian colleges and universities. Based on the experiences of participants in this study, Chapter 5 discusses African American mid-level academic and professional leaders in some CCCU institutions across the United States facing unique set of challenges such as a sense of not belonging or fitting into a predominantly White evangelical Protestant culture. Four themes provided insight into the phenomenological–hermeneutical lens of each participant’s experiences.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Few studies have examined African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU in the United States and their experiences (Dahlvig, 2013). This literature review presents what little research is available on the topic of professional and diversity experiences of African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU. This limited body of literature raises questions warranting further research on the issues associated with workforce diversity in homogeneous venues (Love, 2009).

The first section in this chapter provides an overview of leadership approaches in diversity. The second section examines diversity leadership in the CCCU. The third section examines the institutional experience of diversity in the CCCU, and the role mid-level leaders in Christian higher education serve. The fourth section reviews the individual experience of African American administrators in the CCCU. The chapter concludes with a methodological review of the studies and outlines gaps in the literature.

Leadership Approaches to Diversity

The nation is undergoing a profound population makeover. Ethnic and racial diversity are the results of new immigration from increased minority birth rates and the reduction of White births in the United States (Lichter, 2013; Longman et al., 2017; Wanlund, 2012). With one of the CCCU's main core values and purpose being faith, the religious identity of conservative Christian higher education is especially salient. Consequently, one of the perceived barriers for African Americans in mid-level

leadership and their scant presence on CCCU's campuses might be the CCCUs' sponsoring denominations and their institutional cultures (Porterfield, 2013).

Kezar (2008) conducted a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach to investigate the role of presidents and institutional leaders in private and public colleges. The focus was on college presidents and other campus leaders because they are usually at the center of institutional life and best able to focus attention on diversity issues (Kezar, 2008). The purpose of the study was to explore diversity initiatives and political theories of change, and whether or not the politics of diversity underutilizes perspectives of understanding change related to inclusion within higher education institutions. Kezar's (2008) work is included in the body of literature because the role of the president and campus leadership are paramount in "creating greater equity and parity in the experiences and outcomes" of African Americans and other leaders from diverse backgrounds at all professional levels (p. 407).

Kezar (2008) conducted *elite interviews* with 27 college presidents. An elite interview assumes that access to elite individuals, such as presidents, is often difficult, and therefore, key people who participate in the process are often not interviewed (Kezar, 2008). In the interview process, presidents were given an opportunity to define diversity and a diversity agenda. Results from the study suggest that most leaders embrace a broad definition of diversity that includes gender, race, religion, politics, disability, and sexuality. Furthermore, findings revealed that every president acknowledges the politics, since they are an inevitable part of their work and campus life (Kezar, 2008). Based on the research questions, six themes on how presidents develop a diversity agenda emerged from the analysis of Kezar's study: (a) develop coalitions and advocates, (b) take the

political pulse regularly, (c) anticipate resistance, (d) use data to neutralize politics and rationalize the process, (e) create public relations campaigns and showcase success; and, (f) capitalize on controversy for learning and unearth interest groups (Kezar, 2008). To advance the diversity agenda would suggest that traditionally underrepresented groups such as African American mid-level leaders may hold values that the dominant culture sees differently. For example, traditionally underrepresented groups are often not the power base on campus and would need the assistance of the senior leadership to solicit coalition building, alliances, and other informal-influence processes (Kezar, 2008). Interestingly, the interests of most mid-level leaders, especially African Americans, are not fully represented, and not enough resources are allocated for successful experiences (Kezar, 2008). In sum, furthering a diversity agenda needs senior leadership (Kezar, 2008). Without the support and assistance from senior leadership, diversity initiatives and the experiences of African American leaders may be compromised. Consequently, more in-depth studies related to diversity and the approaches of African American leaders emphasizing interpersonal professional relationships between White and African American colleagues is necessary.

In another study, Nixon (2017) conducted a qualitative research using 5 women of color chief diversity officers (CDOs) and their experiences addressing commonalities and distinctions in organizational, professional, and leadership approaches in public and private colleges. Nixon's study drew on critical race theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (CRF) to build on existing literature that further impacts the interstices of race, power, and gender for female CDOs and their professional experiences in higher education. The Nixon study is included in this literature review because it sheds light on

the ways that minority CDOs experience their roles as campus leaders in the context of being among the newest generation of institutional leaders in mid-to-senior level leadership, even as they encounter marginalization themselves.

As critical as it is to learn about these CDOs' experiences, their descriptions of their day-to-day goals, activities, challenges, opportunities, and leadership approaches and styles provides a picture of their experiences in situations marked by race, gender, and marginalization (Nixon, 2017). Interviews were the primary means to collect and interpret data. The findings of Nixon's study suggest that social identity plays a large role for each woman of color CDO in the study and her experiences in the way they lead and execute decisions for their respective institution. Four themes emerged from Nixon's work: (a) professional as personal; (b) isolation; (c) negotiating microaggression and stereotypes; and, (d) competing expectations and an outsider perspective. The women of color CDOs described their work and approach to leadership in a "circular" style, describing how they would go around a problem initially to build buy-in and relationships before circling around to address the matter in conflict with institutional support. Most of these CDOs used this leadership approach to diversity as a coping mechanism adapted to marginalizing environments and learning how to survive in dominantly White institutions that may have covert hostilities and distrust of minorities (Nixon, 2017).

Diversity Leadership in the CCCU

Three studies investigated commitments in higher education regarding mid-level African American leaders and the concept of diversity leadership in Christian colleges and universities (Fubara, Gardner, & Wolff, 2011; Perez, 2013; and, Wolf & Dilworth,

2015). To understand the disparities of African American mid-level leaders in higher education, Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) conducted a study on diversity leadership in higher education examining the cultural context as it pertains to African American administrators at dominantly White institutions (DWIs). Wolfe and Dilworth's (2015) study used critical race theory (CRT) to understand that leadership in higher education aims to change values and preferences to promote an inclusive organizational culture for heterogeneous communities. The purpose of their study was to posit that systematic oppression must first acknowledge the marginalization of African American leaders by examining the role critical race theory (CRT) can play to eliminate continued oppression.

Wolfe and Dilworth's (2015) research method were guided by a qualitative meta-synthesis methodology, an intentional and coherent approach to analyzing data. More than 500 articles, papers, books, and research reports from 1965-2014 on African American administrators in higher education were included. The literature was surveyed to provide a historical and contextual starting point for African American administrators in higher education. The starting point for African American administrators aided in building a conceptual framework. The conceptual framework was organized by thematic keywords such as: African American administrators, diversity leadership, and organizational culture. Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) found several common themes. First, African Americans struggle to accomplish equitable participation in education. Second, higher education institutions in the United States hold the distinction of being organizations that are closer to mirroring the racial demographics of the larger society. Third, higher education has given significant attention to diversity policies, systems, and processes when examining the underrepresentation of African American administrators

and their career experiences (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Since CRT was foundational to the analysis of the findings, power struggles, confusion of roles, and group interactions were shown to promote normalizations of “whiteness” when giving voice to the traditionally marginalized African American members on campus was emphasized (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). A call to include formerly marginalized voices and experiences instigated resistance to this broadening of what was considered the center. However, through this struggle, the emphasis on diversity and inclusion came to be on building interpersonal relationships as opposed to research and policy, a focus which ultimately would transform higher education in general (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015).

Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) suggest that the salient leadership experiences of African American mid-level academic and administrative leaders lie in their commitment to diversify the workforce by committing to the recruitment, hiring, mentoring, training, promotion, and career success of administrators and academic personnel from races outside the dominant group. In short, Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) provided an external perspective on the challenges facing people of color and that institutions should not be content to just “hire minority people” for the sake of meeting quotas. Rather, the implications suggested by Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) foster better understanding of African American issues and lead to the development of methods to increase representation that will, in turn, aid in informing best practices, policy, and inclusion in the academy. Wolfe and Dilworth’s (2015) study showed that the best means to resolve group interactions between Blacks and Whites in higher education in the United States is to illustrate what is known about the presence of African American mid-level leaders at DWIs and their lived experiences for success. These findings show that leadership in

higher education tends to revolve around interpersonal relations between Whites and Blacks.

The challenge for most CCCU institutions, in contrast with Wolfe and Dilworth's (2015) study, is the call for more inclusive and diverse leadership in Christian higher education. An emphasis on cultural transformation by adopting the values of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism to represent and respect the population demographics of campus communities is needed (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Indeed, Wolfe and Dilworth's (2015) study poses the idea that diversity leadership in higher education may be a hindrance for African American mid-level leaders in higher education incompatible with organizational culture, because diversity challenges homogeneity in leadership rankings. Wolfe and Dilworth's (2015) study did not address various circumstances that have prohibited African American access and equity in certain higher education contexts. A central motive in conducting the dissertation study was to contribute to the rectification of the disparities in representation of African American mid-level leaders at DWIs.

In another study, Fubara et al. (2011) surveyed 444 students, faculty, and staff at a small, Southern college to assess attitudes about and perceptions of diversity and multiculturalism. The researchers began making the case for basic diversity/diversity management principles, including an examination of the heritage of people of color and the business imperative for embracing diversity and inclusion in Christian higher education. The purpose of Fubara et al.'s (2011) was to inquire whether diversity management might be approached with a business sense that will increase the institution's revenue even as it embraces and supports an increasingly diverse community. Of the population surveyed, the largest cohort to respond was undergraduate

students with a 68% response rate, with other responses from faculty, graduate students, and administrators. Results from the survey showed that an overwhelming majority of participants (75%) believed the university is a place where people are welcomed and treated fairly, regardless of background (Fubara et al., 2011). A lower number of respondents 63% revealed that relationships among students are good across ethnic and gender landscapes (Fubara et al., 2011). However, only 45% of participants agreed the institution does a good job of managing multiculturalism, while 57% said the university promotes peace, unity, and respect among diverse communities (Fubara et al., 2011). Only 11% of respondents claimed the school has gone too far in diversity efforts (Fubara et al., 2011).

A factor analysis of the results showed that the multiple choice on the survey questions were loaded onto one of two factors. One factor was the “overall diversity perception.” Respondents who described themselves as African American generally reported having significantly more negative experiences on campus than fellow White respondents (Fubara et al., 2011). The other factor was religious subgroups, which were correlated with similar reports of negative experiences on campus. Respondents who saw themselves as practicing “other” religions were significantly less positive about the school’s diversity program than members of the majority group’s denomination (Fubara et al., 2011).

While the results of Fubara et al.’s (2011) study reveals there are significant differences in perception between the “majority” and “minority” groups on campus, the study did not specifically address the value of diverse cultures. The college went so far as to tolerate diversity but did not value full inclusion of people of color. Fubara et al.’s

(2011) research instead indicated that campus constituents were more negatively disposed toward diversity and diversity management efforts; insinuating that efforts towards diversity and inclusion meant preferential treatment for said minorities (Fubara et al., 2011). Despite recent trends important to this study on diversity and minority representation in higher education, that is, the continued growth in racial and ethnic minority populations that have contributed slowly to the browning of academic institutions (Fubara et al., 2011), the rapidly changing demographics in American society do not appear to be the same in conservative Christian institutions.

Perez (2013) conducted a study to determine what drives CCCU institutions to become diverse communities and what role, if any, did the mission of these institutions play. Perez (2013) sought out to ascertain what drives Christian colleges and universities to become more ethnically diverse and delved into whether an institution's denomination helped or hindered diversity endeavors. Perez (2013) believed by focusing on Scripture that speaks to both the diversity of the body of Christ and the individual, unity between cultures and traditions will manifest. Reconciliation was viewed by Perez (2013) as an important step toward self-identity and the significance of diversity in the kingdom of God, which should begin with mid-level leadership and higher as the initial agents who spearhead, support, and drives campus diversity.

Based on the interviews with college presidents, faculty, administrators, and students at four Christian colleges, institutional documents were collected and analyzed to determine the ethnic diversity of the faculty, staff, and student populations at four CCCU institutions (Perez, 2013). Based on data analysis of the interviews, Perez (2013) spent time analyzing institutional documents and found all four institutions demonstrated

progress within ethnic diversity. At one institution alone, the ethnic minority group make up 25% of the undergraduate student population. He noted that what is key in sustaining diversity efforts is a strong diversity plan that begins in the mission statement and is carried out by its academic leaders. Another suggestion is that the institution authors an official theological position paper on diversity. By the same token, what appears missing from the inquiry is how African American administrators place time, effort, and priority on the institutional mission, and their involvement in the design or implementation of the institutional mission, as well as their involvement in its design or implementation. Effectively integrating diversity in the institutional mission of member institutions of the CCCU requires further study.

Leadership and Diversity in Academic Institutions

Seven studies in total have investigated commitments in academic institutions regarding mid-level leaders and their experiences in higher education. One study under review will examine the literature from non-sectarian institutions (Perna, Gerald, Baum, & Milem, 2007); meanwhile, six studies will review conservative Christian institutions in higher education (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009; Absher, 2009; Chang et al., 2014; Nussbaum & Chang, 2013; Obenchain, Johnson, & Dion, 2004; Paredes-Collins, 2009). In the review of the literature, lessons can be learned from understanding the narrative of African American mid-level leaders in higher education in general, and Christian colleges and universities specifically.

Non-sectarian institutions. Perna et al. (2007) conducted a qualitative study to examine, from a descriptive analysis perspective, the job status of African American faculty and administrators at public institutions in 19 Southern U.S. states, which

included: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. The analyses focused on the Academic Equity Index used by Perna et al. (2007). The purpose of the study was to examine the job status of African American faculty and administrators at public higher education institutions in the South where “status” is defined as representation in employment from a bachelor’s degree and higher. The Equity Index defines equity as the representation of a specific group with a particular outcome in relationship to the representation of that group in a larger sample of that population (Perna et al., 2007). For example, does the representation of African Americans within a certain institutional context, such as a college, represent the proportional of African Americans in the overall population, or even in the surrounding community? For the purposes of Perna et al. study, equity is reached when the index is equal to one while an index less than one is considered below equity (Perna et al., 2007). Findings from the study revealed African American staff are below equity among full-time faculty employed at 4-year public institutions in 18 of the 19 Southern states. Furthermore, African Americans at 4-year public institutions in Southern states experience significant inequity among full-time faculty and staff (Perna et al., 2007). For example, African Americans generally experience significant inequity among tenured faculty and academic rank, where the equity index is lower for full professors than for assistant professors, at all types of 4-year public institutions in the sample Southern states (Perna et al., 2007).

Following this trend, the equity status for African Americans administrators was more than 10% points below equity for those employed at 4-year public institutions in

most Southern states (Perna et al., 2007). African American executives, mid-level leaders and managers experience substantial inequities in leadership positions at many 4-year public institutions in the southern United States (Perna et al., 2007). Despite African American academic leadership experiencing greater equity at many public 4-year colleges and universities in general, the same cannot be said for full-time African American faculty of many public 4-year colleges and universities in the South (Perna et al., 2007). Like most CCCU institutions, which are noted for a conservative, White, Christian ethos, race continues to define higher education employment in some public institutions in Southern states, which also have a long history of conservative, White Christianity in policy and practice (Perna et al., 2007).

Christian institutions in higher education. Abelman and Dalessandro (2009) analyzed institutional vision and mission statements in Christian colleges and universities as a means for establishing religious identity and defining values and principles. The purpose of Abelman & Dalessandro's (2009) study was "to embed a declaration of religious identity and its defining values and guiding principles into their (colleges and universities) institutional vision" (p. 84). The participating institutions represented three major religious sectors in higher education: (a) The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU); (b) the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA); and, (c) the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). Researchers provided a comparative base-line measurement of the inspirational and sensible expressions in declarations of institutional vision at Catholic, Lutheran, and evangelical colleges and universities, as well as secular 4-year private and public institutions.

Based on the Abelman and Dalessandro's (2009) quantitative study, a content analysis was performed, and key linguistic components identified to parse institutional identity and mission statements. Using the Carnegie Foundation's Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as a guide, a random sample of approximately 30 institutions each from public and private doctoral granting, master's-granting, and baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities were sampled from across the United States. The text from each institution was processed through the use of DICTION (5.0), a text-dissection software program that codes and compares content using social-scientific methods for determining linguistic components in oral messaging.

Results from this investigation addressed the arrangement of expressions of institutional vision at Catholic/ACCU, Lutheran/ELCA, and "Christ-centered"/CCCU colleges and universities. Within the 21 Catholic/ACCU institutions in the sample, every institution (100%) presented a mission statement as part of the institution's identity and vision and 10 institutions (47%) presented a vision statement. The 28 Lutheran/ELCA institutions all presented a mission statement with four (14%) also presenting a vision statement. All 28 of the "Christ-centered"/CCCU institutions presented a mission statement as part of their institutional identity and eight (28%) also had a vision statement. There were also 133 secular colleges and universities in the sample, with 126 (94%) presenting a mission statement and 47 (35%) also presenting a vision statement. No significant differences were discovered based on institution size or degrees earned at any level (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009).

Abelman and Dalessandro's (2009) inquiry looked for linguistic elements from participating colleges and universities that expressed institutional visions corresponding

with their source religion. The DICTION scored differences between the expressions of institutional vision across the Catholic/ACCU, Lutheran/ELCA, “Christ-centered CCCU, and secular-based 4-year institutions with a series of one way analyses of variance from ANOVAs (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009). Findings showed that Christian colleges and universities scored statistically significant differences ($p \leq .05$) in the linguistic category of the institutional vision statements across institutions (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009). The institutional visions proffered by all religious colleges and universities were substantially clearer, and more shared between them, at least between institutions of the same foundation, but less complex than the institutional visions offered by secular colleges and universities. No significant differences were found based on institutions size, region or degrees conferred. For example, Catholic colleges and universities/ACCU are inclined to be more vision-focused, clear, compelling, least shared, and show the least amount of “relative advantage” and “observability” in comparison to secular-based counterparts (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009, p. 97).

Conservative Christian colleges and universities (CCCU), while offering strong, persuasive vision statements that are shared, clear, and highly practical, “their mission and vision statements may lack complexity and perhaps are the least compelling of all types of academic institutions examined in the literature” (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009, p. 106). Member institutions of the Lutheran/ ELCA offer the most effective and well-conceived institutional vision to date (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009). The ELCA institutions offer a shared, clear, and highly compelling case that employs language to identify practical features of a Lutheran education. The institutional vision of ELCA colleges and universities focuses on the realities of their institution’s surroundings

(Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009). While Abelman and Dalessandro's (2009) study suggests member institutions of the CCCU offer mission and vision statements as part of the institutional identity, the study does not include the suggestion for exclusive planning around racial and cultural diversity. Abelman and Dalessandro (2009) suggest that because the CCCU continues to have a very high level of orthodoxy regarding the historic Christian faith, and not the environment these schools serve, the CCCU may have difficulties helping others outside conservative beliefs and structures to successfully advance the experiences of African Americans mid-level leaders on CCCU campuses. Abelman and Dalessandro's (2009) study suggests further treatment on the historic Christian faith as it relates to the mission and vision statements of some colleges and universities.

Diversity has been identified as a contributing factor to the organizational strength and goals of various educational institutions, and thus encouraging openness to creative thinking (Chang et al., 2014). Chang et al.'s (2014) research explored mentoring, which can be defined as a relationship between an experienced adult who helps the less experienced adult learn to navigate the world of work and experiences, as a useful strategy in developing African American leaders.

The purpose of the Chang et al. (2014) study was to investigate an emerging mentoring research agenda focusing on the academic and administrative leaders of color in the CCCU. Their qualitative research project employed collaborative autoethnography (CAE) as its research method. CAE is a methodological study in which the researcher uses his/her autobiographical data as a pathway into the understanding of their own lived experiences (Chang et al., 2014). Autoethnography is autobiographical in the sense that

researchers collect data about their personal and social experiences and surrounding environments and interpret them through social and ethnographic analyze to gain understanding and ascribe meaning to their personal experiences (Chang et al., 2014).

There were 16 member institutions of the CCCU involved in a leadership development institute designed to serve faith-based colleges and universities who participated in the study (Chang, et al. (2014). Included in the leadership development institute were 19 emerging leaders from the 16 participating member institutions. Data were collected throughout the four day leadership development institute and included: (a) responses to monthly writing prompts for online discussions, (b) monthly virtual focus groups, and (c) document collection. Data analysis revealed three themes: (a) leaders of color relied on a constellation of developmental relationships, not merely a few traditional mentors, for professional and leadership development; (b) individual factors, such as participants' practical knowledge of mentoring, career aspirations, and perspectives on self-reliance and power in relationships; and (c) institutional factors in higher education (e.g., tenure and promotion policies) facilitated and inhibited professional mentoring for leaders of color.

The benefits of mentoring, as outlined by Chang et al. (2014), are identified in three primary areas: personal growth, career development, and psychosocial support. The results of their study revealed participants exhibited different levels of understanding of mentoring. Most participants did not think much about mentoring benefits since most who receive mentoring were somewhere in the highest position in their field and felt they could not go any higher in Christian higher education (Chang et al., 2014). When these leaders desire to move up, they are likely to be at a disadvantage because of the lack of

broader support and professional mentoring from senior leadership within the institution (Chang et al., 2014). Their study identified a wide range of developmental relationships that had contributed to their leadership development in Christian higher education.

In short, according to Chang's (2014) study, if diversity administrators desire to promote, they may face difficulties due to a lack of broader campus experience and professional mentors advocating for them within the institution. However, institutions must take responsibility to encourage and affirm leadership of color with informal and formal mentoring and relationship strategies (Chang et al., 2014).

A mixed method study by Paredes-Collins (2009) asked how students of color enrollment and staff diversity at CCCU colleges and universities compare to the minority population of the neighboring community. Paredes-Collins (2009) examined the relationship between institutional priorities and minority enrollment and involvement at four CCCU colleges and universities. Paredes-Collins (2009) provided each university or college with a classification of terms of "high institutional commitment," "moderate institutional commitment," or "low institutional commitment" in diversity and inclusion efforts. A descriptive institutional evaluation using a quantitative method was employed based on public resources and data while qualitative methods were used to supply texture and analysis in response to Paredes-Collins's research question (Paredes-Collins, 2009). When colleges and universities decide to use various forms of multicultural and multiracial activities to achieve a diverse campus agenda, institutions must be willing to embrace and be institutionally committed to a diverse learning environment (Paredes-Collins, 2009).

Data were collected through the observation and analysis of university-specific events, activities, courses, websites, mission statements, and public policies committed to campus diversity, themes of intentionality, environment, and demographics (Paredes-Collins, 2009). These variables were evaluated on the basis of institutional priority to diversity and each college or university then given a certain classification in terms of its commitment to diversity.

Paredes-Collins' (2009) study intended to investigate institutional commitment to diversity within member institutions of the CCCU, and found that the schools sampled, which represented CCCU institutions, showed a weak commitment to institutional diversity, doing little to promote racial inclusion on its campuses, including the hiring of African American mid-level leaders as part of its institutional commitment. Paredes-Collins (2009) then asked how students of color's enrollment and staff diversity at CCCU colleges and universities compare to the minority population of the neighboring community? According to Paredes-Collins' (2009), the schools in the CCCU network generally do not consider campus diversity as a vital priority to improve diverse learning communities. Paredes-Collins (2009) found weak commitments to diversifying mid-level management, student enrollment, and faculty recruitment. These results suggest that the institutions were doing little to promote racial inclusion leading to significant gaps and barriers for to expand the diversity in the learning community and workforce. The current study sought to learn more about how African American mid-level leaders perceive institutional priority and commitment for racial diversity and if the pace to diversify CCCU campuses has changed since 2009.

At the time of this study, Absher (2009) is the only study in the literature that examined African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU. The purpose of Absher's (2009) study was to identify the variables that have the greatest influence on the recruitment and retention of faculty members, especially minorities and females in Christian higher education institutions. According to Absher (2009), the goal of colleges and universities in Christian higher education is to focus on the effective recruitment and retention of high quality and diverse faculty and leadership teams.

Absher's (2009) study identified a population of 1,212 faculty members employed by faith-based institutions in North America that are members of the CCCU. In this quantitative study, respondents were asked to complete an online survey to determine their attitudes and opinions about issues affecting their employment and the current higher education environment. The sample represented 1,212 faculty members who described their employment as full-time and permanent with the CCCU. Approximately 94% ($n = 1,017$) of the 1,212 survey respondents were full-time and permanent faculty member, with 121 temporary or part-time faculty members. Of the total permanent full-time faculty, 33% were White male, and less than 8% were people of color. Most of the respondents were White females at 67 percent. Results from this study indicated people of color employed by the CCCU were more than likely appointed to part-time positions, permanent or temporary, as compared to their White faculty counterparts serving full-time (Absher, 2009). The findings from the study suggest faculty of color are harder to find in the pool of job applicants because they are not members of the sponsoring denominations or congregations. A second finding is that rigid internal policies and procedures can serve as barriers instead of support, such as the environment of the

campus (Absher, 2009). A third finding Absher (2009) shared is that females differed significantly from males on the importance of environment, work, and career factors important to attract and retain new female and faculty of color members and leaders. This is particular the case when addressing “family time and personal needs” where these factors were very important by at least 44% for females and racial/ethnic groups in comparison to White males (Absher, 2009).

These findings indicated that there are three areas most important in determining female and faculty of color job satisfaction in comparison to White males: (a) flexibility, (b) security, and (c) environment. Indeed, Absher’s study also indicated that some faculty of color employed at CCCU institutions were not satisfied with their current employment due to factors related to work and career. For starters, faculty of color teaching loads and opportunities for promotion and career advancement are limited because faculty of color in Absher’s study spent more time mentoring students as faculty of color are the “go to” for diversity causes, limiting their time commitment to research and other scholarly endeavors. For example, female professionals differ from males relative to work and career factors. A significant difference between male and female professionals is due to women placing more emphasis on flexible work schedules, job security, and meaningful and satisfying work than males, who tend to prioritize income or job status. Additionally, the need for a sense of belonging is another important factor for female professionals in the CCCU when addressing job satisfaction and security (Absher, 2009).

Absher (2009) proposed sense of belonging in students and faculty of color warranted facilitating cross-racial interactions and improving overall climate of the campuses. A major area of concern is African American leaders in mid-level leadership

in the CCCU. Since data are limited in this area, a triangulation was necessary, utilizing female leaders as the next minority group in the CCCU. While the great majority of CCCU mid-level leaders are White males who have come from roles in other positions or faculty appointments within higher education, there are gaps as to where many of them came from (e.g., research, private, public, Catholic). While an increasing proportion of college administrators are females and minorities, this tends to be more the reality in other sectors in higher education, rather than in the CCCU (Absher, 2009).

In sum, faculty of color were significantly less satisfied than White respondents in Absher's (2009) study regarding work and career factors especially when attracting and retaining people of color and females to attend Christian institutions to teach. The gap between high importance and low satisfaction for people of color is mostly revealed when related to "work schedule," "salary competitiveness," "meaningful and satisfying work," and support scholarly activities (Absher, 2009). As indicated in Absher's (2009) study, it appears what will go a long way is to increase job security, tenure, and meaningful and satisfying work condition and environment in attaining and attracting females and faculty of color.

Nussbaum and Chang (2013) conducted a study about board governance capacity regarding diversity and social justice as a foundation for inclusion and leadership recruitment and retention in Christian higher education. The purpose of their study was to examine the intersection of diversity, social justice, and governance in Christian higher education from a senior level position. The term *governance* refers to the process of decision-making from individuals and groups of individuals which enables the institution to carry out its objectives and goals by an organized society (e.g., board of trustees,

president's cabinet) (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013). Drawing on the work of college presidents, trustees, and the president's cabinet is worth mentioning because stories may highlight the challenges and opportunities mid-level leaders may face through their lived experiences with senior level leadership and trustees (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013).

Nussbaum and Chang's (2013) qualitative study provides a detailed account of the demographic characteristics, roles, and duties of the trustees' leadership in Christian higher education institutions in the United States. The study methods included interviewing trustees as part of the board governance capacity. The study found, despite some gains in a few senior leadership positions for African American leaders, but none for presidents or trustees, that racial, ethnic, and gender disparities continue to exist at conservative Christian institutions. Nussbaum & Chang (2013) stated that at the time of their research no study had been conducted relative to institutional-level inclusive work examining the relationship between board governance, inclusion and its outcome (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013).

Nussbaum and Chang's (2013) findings related to diversity in conservative Christian institutions yielded several important themes. First, the complex nature of diversity was identified. Diversity is difficult to define and depends on the social context of the institution and varying levels of support, research interest, and institutional personality (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013). Second, there is limited amount of empirical research on governance specific to Christian higher education. Third, there is a growing interest in faith and spirituality that holds significant influence as it relates to diversity, social justice, and governance. Finally, building a racially diverse board capacity must become a priority for Christian higher education to effectively embrace diversity as an

integral part of the institutional mission, values, and ethos to racial justice (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013).

While Nussbaum and Chang (2013) raised issues concerning diversity and the often divisive and sensitive reactions the broaching of diversity brings, as yet, limited empirical scholarship on board governance in Christian higher education exists. Other important aspects of building board governance are whether or not the board helps or hinders African American leaders from attaining mid-level to senior-level positions in conservative Christian higher education, and what the experience is like for African Americans in conservative Christian White spaces? Nussbaum and Chang (2013) do not mention leadership differences, such as senior or mid-level leadership.

For Christian higher education, the distinctive mission and biblical mandate of justice is to promote diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence as part of God's dynamic community (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013). The challenge for some conservative Christian higher education in the United States is to provide ways that will honor the institutional mission and biblical mandate to promote diversity and inclusion in senior and mid-level management positions. Nussbaum and Chang's (2013) study is crucial to this line of inquiry because institutional culture determines the organizational treatment of diversity in the workforce in conservative Christian higher education. In conservative Christian higher education, diversity in African American administrators is barely addressed in any empirically based studies (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013). To be sure, a growing body of literature exists concerning diversity in non-CCCU institutions, but still little that address the unique concerns and challenges of the CCCU (Nussbaum & Chang, 2013).

Obenchain, et al. (2004) conducted a study on the relationship between institutional types, organizational culture, and innovation within Christian higher education. Though Christian higher education is rooted in spirituality, organizational culture impacts organizational behaviors and activities (Obenchain et al., 2004). The culture of doing new things, or innovation, suggests that institutions of conservative Christian higher learning are under demand to envision new programs and initiatives to meet the demands of a global society (Obenchain et al., 2004). Their study included chief academic officers (the provost) and directors of institutional research because these officers influence major institutional policy, direction, and performance. The purpose for using chief academic officers and institutional research directors as participants was that these groups represent key members of the campus community who hold certain administrative power and authority and are always addressing changing demographics.

Obenchain et al. (2004) collected data through a questionnaire sent to administrators of not-for-profit colleges and universities listed in the *2001 Higher Education Directory*. Additionally, dominant culture institutions appeared to assess organizational culture type reflecting the founding affiliation of the institution, such as private-independent, public, and Christian, and to classify institutions by these criteria (Obenchain et al., 2004). The majority of institutions represented were private/independent ($n=334$, 36.2%). However, 303 (32.9%) were private/Christian institutions while 265 (30.9%) were public institutions or under state/local control suggesting that there was a diverse types and sizes of institutions.

Several suggestions support the need for institutions to innovate within Christian higher education. First, public institutions reported a higher rate of innovation than

nonsectarian private or Christian institutions. Second, the substantial difference in the rate of innovation occurred between the institutional types of private/independent and public institutions. Private institutions and public institutions vary in size and operating values. For example, conservative Christian institutions are small and tend to focus more on group and denominational values (Obenchain et al., 2004). In the same fashion, a possible explanation for conservative Christian institution operating values could be institutional perimeter, owing that public universities are bigger in size and scope compared to Christian colleges (Obenchain et al., 2004). By the same token, Christian institutions have distinctive institutional operating values and procedures and respond differently to innovation, with diversity being one example of current efforts in innovation (Obenchain et al., 2004). In sum, the way innovation and change is addressed and policies are implemented in Christian institutions ties directly to the research undertaken for this dissertation in that the mere physical presence of African American mid-level leaders on campus attests to a form of innovation and change compared to even the recent past when these campuses were nearly homogenous ethnically and culturally. This translates, in turn, to the lived experiences of African American faculty and professional leaders who are literally embodying the diversity and innovation the CCCU are beginning to seek to enact.

Obenchain et al., (2004) contends that Christian institutions enact policy and practice differently than other private, independent, and public institutions of higher learning which suggests that some conservative Christian institutions describe themselves as having values of a “clan” culture. Although Obenchain et al. (2004) may be correct in reporting that organizational types influence innovation frequency, conservative Christian

institutions struggle to process innovation. Be that as it may, what Obenchain et al. (2004) failed to convey is how administrators of Christian higher education are identified as a source of influence on innovation. In the Obenchain et al. study, they never factored the dual commitment of academic rigor and religion as part of Christian higher education's role in facilitating innovation, both as a catalyst or recipient. Though the very essence of innovation means to synthesize new ideas and practices into conventional norms, conservative Christian higher education struggles to implement new modes of diversifying because conservative Christian institutions may be unyielding to external situations and outside cultures (Obenchain et al., 2004).

Individual Experience in Diversity Leadership

The role of faith can influence individual Christian's engagement in advocacy work (Ash, Clark, & Jun, 2017). Individual White administrators in Christian higher education cited their personal faith journey as motivators in antiracism activities on CCCU campuses (Ash et al., 2017). Although Christian colleges and universities are involved in increasing racial diversity as an institutional priority, much of this work is facilitated and supported by individual White administrators and allies who are not necessarily part of the decision-making body creating systemic changes at Christian institutions but have a personal passion and desire for antiracism and justice work (Ash et al., 2017).

Ash et al. (2017) examine the experiences, awareness, and engagement of White administrators in Christian DWIs in the United States who were active in antiracism advocacy work as their main purpose. Ash et al.'s (2017) study used narrative inquiry and interviewed eight White administrators from four CCCU member institutions in the

Midwest region of the United States. Data analysis revealed that those interviewed for this study spoke about their faith as it either hindered or helped their antiracism advocacy.

Based on the data analysis, Ash et al. (2017) presented one extensive theme—the paradox of faith—and have described it in two categories: faith that hinders and faith that helps (Ash et al., 2017). White administrators in the study described their faith communities and educational institutions as sometimes hindering or doing little to assist in their understanding of antiracism work. In fact, many Christian evangelicals are suspicious of the term social justice (Emerson & Smith, 2000). From an evangelical point of view, social justice is viewed as a Democratic Party or politically motivated liberal agenda (Ash et al., 2017). Yet, seeking justice is not as political as it is biblical and Christian. From the perspective of faith, such beliefs help serve as a venue of support for racial, indeed, human reconciliation work. Participants in Ash et al.'s (2017) study, described faith that helps as a theme, understanding their faith as a foundational aspect to their antiracism work, but administrators also understand what it means to engage and include others in educating campus constituents about antiracism work and their faith (Ash et al., 2017). Faith that helps involves people in their communities to become actively engaged in the important work of justice. For example, “racial justice is God’s heart. It is not about me, but it’s in line with the heart of God and our invitation to be part of what God is doing in our world today” (Ash et al., 2017, p. 11). Additional results show that White administrators’ experiences with antiracism advocacy work has led them to discover their Christian faith “that helped” played a major role in advocacy in White spaces and as a place of belonging for diverse ethnic groups (Ash et al., 2017). On the

other hand, the last theme, faith that hinders, was described by White administrators in the CCCU who felt that their institutions or other individuals at times hinder their work of antiracism advocacy (Ash et al., 2017). In fact, White administrators explained they received little encouragement from their faith communities for their role and engagement in antiracism advocacy. An example of discouragement some White administrators received were from people from their faith traditions who responded to the White administrators with saying, “this is your work, but this is not our work.”

These findings revealed that the role of faith plays a significant part inside each White participants’ antiracism involvement and are consistent with the literature that showcases a paradoxical relationship between the Christian faith and race. The Ash et al. (2017) study lacked practical ideas to help White administrators work as anti-racists on conservative Christian colleges. To understand faith that helps/faith that hinders paradox is to consider racial justice as a mean for board of trustees leaders, as well as the president and president’s cabinet to reconsider the way they understand and respond to issues of race and racism as an institution and community rather than merely an individual concern (Ash et al., 2017). Faith that helps means that governance officials (i.e., senior campus leadership) namely trustees, presidents, and the president’s cabinet must serve as a source of support and direction for racial justice efforts, bringing people together, and the advancing of African American mid-level leadership to equitable levels. In sum, Ash et al.’s study of White mid-level leaders involved in anti-racism efforts in the CCCU contributes to the impetus to find collaborative ways to achieve the goal of diversifying Christian campuses, as well as combatting institutional racism and

professional barriers, in the name of faith and community, rather than in opposition to it (Ash et al., 2017).

Methodological Review

Of the 13 studies included in the literature review, 10 were qualitative inquiries (Ash, et al., 2017; Chang,et al., 2014; Fubara, et al., 2011; Kezar, 2008; Nixon, 2017; Nussbaum & Chang, 2013; Obenchain, et al., 2004; Perez, 2013; Perna, et al., 2007; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015), two were quantitative studies (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009; Absher, 2009;), and there was one mixed method study (Paredes-Collins, 2009).

Based on the literature review, most senior campus leaders in the CCCU did not create a definition of diversity or have a diversity statement or theological position within their institutions (Absher, 2009; Nussbaum & Chang, 2013; Paredes-Collins, 2009; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). As a result, it was difficult to operationalize an appropriate shared definition of diversity as none has been proposed. One reason supposes diversity as so complex in scope that attempts to integrate standard definitions on diversity are left up to individual CCCU campuses, based on institutional compositions and preferences (Dahlvig, 2013).

Significant limitations were evident in the research process because studies used key terms such as, “people of color” or “minority” as opposed to “African American.” Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) chose to narrow the focus to race using the term “African American” as a construct. Initially, the search for “African American” as a term used in Wolfe and Dilworth’s study is limited to finding literature since “African American” is normally not correlated with the intersection of leadership, organizational culture, racial diversity, and higher education (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Although some studies added

to the understanding of African American mid-level leaders and their diversity experiences, the studies lacked institutional commitment to diversity leadership in higher education (Perez, 2013; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015).

Furthermore, because there is no standard definition of diversity offered, many of the reviewed qualitative studies limit their discussion to other racial communities except White evangelicals (Absher, 2009; Fubara, et al., 2011). If multiculturalism is the best antidote to resolve racial diversity tensions, its analytical perspectives and prescriptions are needed in the literature to understand other racial communities. Chang et al. (2014) came close to providing a definition of diversity and referred to a variety of ways how participants in this study view different cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, the Chang et al. (2014) study did not operationalize the word “diversity” or various cultural backgrounds and therefore cut short hopes for a consensus moving forward.

Significant Gaps in the Literature

Several of the qualitative studies centered on defining values and guiding principles into an operational vision (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009; Paredes-Collins, 2009). Despite their strengths, a few limitations are noted: (a) researchers have been unable to provide complete exhaustive listings of key words; (b) a lack of operationalized definition of diversity; (c) the inability to define the cultural characteristics of the African American community (statistically, the second-largest racial constituents in the CCCU) (Washington, 2006); and (d) some of the studies in the body of literature are more than 10 years old and need to be updated.

The literature review revealed several gaps. First, African Americans were not exclusively part of the 12 studies reviewed here because they were grouped with other

racial factions as an aggregated “minority” or “people of color” group. Second, there are significant differences within the Black community as compared with, for example, the Hispanic populace. Research on those of African or Black descent has noted the unique history of oppression since 1619, the year African slaves arrived in North America, and endured centuries of hostilities from their oppressors (Stanley, 2006). This history contextualizes, and affects, African Americans in American society differently from almost every other ethnic minority in the country.

Chapter Summary

Little research has been conducted on the experiences of African American mid-level leaders within CCCU colleges and universities (Absher, 2009; Nussbaum & Chang, 2013). Additionally, Christian colleges and universities are pressed to be faithful to their religious mission, called to preserve and honor traditional theological values and practices relating scholarship and service to biblical truth (CCCU, 2016). As a result, some institutional leaders may struggle to make diversity and inclusion a priority for intentional stewardship, with the mere fact institutional leaders move very slowly to effect diversity change (Perez, 2013). The empirical literature reviewed offered few guarantees that growing ethnic diversity will lead to Whites and Blacks sharing the same physical and social spaces or interacting as co-equals (Perez, 2013).

The review of the literature provided a limited understanding of the narratives and experiences of African American mid-level leaders in conservative Christian higher education. Chapter 3 describes the research method and organization of data collection for this study.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

After at least a decade of diversity awareness efforts in the CCCU (2006-2016), African Americans are still underrepresented in mid-level administrative roles (ACE, 2017; Paredes-Collins, 2009; Washington, 2006). The central research question undergirding this study is: What are the experiences of African American mid-level academic and administrative leaders in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities that influence their career paths? The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of African American academic and professional mid-level leaders within member institutions of the CCCU. The research question guiding the study was: What are the experiences of African American mid-level academic and professional leaders in the CCCU that influence their career paths? This study used a phenomenological hermeneutical research approach to collect, analyze, and interpret the lived experience of African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU.

The phenomenological-hermeneutical approach combined both an interpretive method interpreting how one orients to lived experiences and a descriptive method outlining the essence of the human experience and then integrated both in the analysis of the data (Clegg & Slife, 2009; Van Manen, 1990). There may be structural obstacles to the advancement of African American mid-level leaders due to the lack of diversity in the CCCU, and in this context, a phenomenological approach was used to bring into relief what African American mid-level leaders face in their career trajectories (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

Lindseth and Norberg (2004) described hermeneutics as the study of text interpretation, which was first introduced in Protestant theological circles to interpret the Christian Scripture. Sometime later, hermeneutics emerged within philosophy and human studies through the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur and others. Yet, the tradition of phenomenology, as it was developed by its founder Edmund Husserl over 100 years ago, was established as a method to interpret the meaning of lived experiences through narrative interviews (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). Hermeneutics as text interpretation is important, it allows for unique voices in diversity to be taken seriously and permits participants of phenomenological studies to contribute to the social discourse of the present and future ages (Clegg & Slife, 2009). Using both hermeneutical analysis and a phenomenological framework, this study analyzed the experiences of middle level leaders in the CCCU to contextualize and establish patterns of continued help or hindrance in African Americans' pathway from mid-to-senior-level leadership in Christian higher education contexts.

The Research Context

The research context for this study is the CCCU. Most CCCU member institutions define themselves as part of the wider conservative White Evangelical Protestant expression in the United States (Marsden, 1994). The institutions that make up the CCCU are faith-based and grounded in conservative evangelical tradition politically aligned to a socially conservative ideology associated with a Republican ethos, White, and middle-class (Fubara, et al., 2011). The official website of the CCCU (2019) revealed a total of 118 member institutions in the United States.

Most CCCU member institutions are classified as accredited coeducational learning academies that confers associate, baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral degrees. Member institutions belonging to the CCCU are fully recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and are Title IV financial aid programs (CCCU, 2019). The CCCU, in accordance with its 2019 statistics, enrolled more than 450,000 students annually, with over 1.8 million alumni. The CCCU employs more than 30,000 faculty, have over 350 undergraduate majors and 150 graduate programs (CCCU, 2019). The average annual cost, according to the College Board, which includes fees, for private non-CCCU not-for-profit 4-year institutions, was \$31, 231 per year. In contrast, the average annual tuition and fee costs at CCCU institutions was \$25, 524 (CCCU, 2019).

Current demographics suggest that, member institutions of the CCCU are dominantly White institutions (DWIs) where faculty ethnic diversity in 2007 was 91% White, compared to 2014 at 89% White faculty (Longman, 2017). The CCCU member colleges and universities are situated in urban, suburban, and rural communities in the United States. These institutions vary in enrollment from several hundred to 20,000 students in attendance (Longman, 2017). With regard to academic programs, the CCCU member institutions span traditional liberal arts undergraduate residential campuses to graduate programs, on-line learning, and adult student programs (Longman, 2017).

Research Participants

The population for this study consisted of African American mid-level leaders in Christian higher education institutions. Mid-level leaders for this study were defined as administrative or academic middle management representatives who are not members of the president's cabinet but report to a vice president or higher and are employed at a

CCCU member institution in the United States (Thomas, 2008). For this study, maximum variation suggest sampling to differentiate differences or different perspectives from each participant (Creswell, 2014). Participants were therefore defined as African American academic and administrative mid-level leaders working a minimum of 30 hours per week or more in managerial responsibilities at a 4-year CCCU member institution.

The population for this research study came from a purposeful (maximum variation) sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and e-mailing 1,410 mid-level leaders in the CCCU from all races. The research sampling informed the researcher and determined in advance the criteria needed to select study participants. The Qualtrics online survey tool was used to collect information to ascertain the ethnicity of the targeted population (Qualtrics, Provo, UT, USA).

To locate African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU, this investigation used the 2017-18 Online Higher Education Directory (OHED) to provide specific information for African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU. The OHED is an aid used for finding academic and administrative leaders at degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States that are accredited by national educational agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and/or the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (OHED, 2018). The information is verified and updated with a 99.9% response rate from colleges and universities. Based on the 2018 Online Higher Education Directory there were 1,410 mid-level leaders in faith-based institutions, but not necessarily representing only conservative Christian institutions.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

The researcher was the primary instrument for this study. The researcher as instrument is one of the key tools for a qualitative research study that strategizes an approach to problem-finding or problem-solving as part of a comprehensive strategy related to anticipated outcomes (Creswell, 2014; Silverman, 2011). In this study, the researcher was an appropriate instrument because the researcher was investigating a social phenomenon to discover possible outcomes of prominent topics (Creswell, 2014). By using the researcher as an instrument to articulate the steps of data collection and its interpretation, the researcher can explore relationship patterns unique to the participants and collegiate setting (Durdella, 2019).

The researcher's positionality relative to the study was that of an African American ordained minister who has served two major mainline denominations in America for 26 years. In 1989, the researcher earned a bachelor's degree in political science that informed his social justice praxis in Christian ministry, and a Master of Divinity (M. Div.) degree all in the New York City area. Additionally, in 2016, the researcher earned a Doctor of Ministry (D. Min.) degree in upstate New York. The researcher is not affiliated with the participants in the study professionally or personally. The researcher also anticipated that there would be no professional affiliations or associations given that the CCCU is a DWI and the researcher is a member of the minority community and not previously governed by the tenets of the CCCU nor its affiliates.

A demographic data survey, using Qualtrics, was the second instrument in the study. The data survey was important for demographic questions and potential participants to determine the factors that may influence their participation (Creswell,

2014). Hatch (2002) noted that researchers want to see a clear sketch of who the participants are in a study. Creswell (2014) suggested there is no minimum sample size when conducting to phenomenological research. Age range, race, gender, years of service at the college/university, rank/title, highest degree earned, and to whom the participants reported professionally was part of the inclusion process and demographic data questions asked participants in the study. There were twelve questions total (See Appendix D).

Sample questions included:

- How do you describe yourself regarding race/ethnicity?
- What is your current employment title and responsibility at the institution?

The survey also served as exclusion criteria for participants.

The researcher utilized the interview protocol refinement (IPR) framework—a four-phase process to develop and cultivate an interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The IPR four-phase process ensured interview questions were aligned with the research question of the study, sought to develop an inquiry-based conversation, received quality feedback from interview sessions, and piloted the interview protocol before the actual interview convenes (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The IPR framework helped the researcher obtain robust and detailed data during an interview session. Guided by Castillo-Montoya's (2016) work, sample questions are listed (See Appendix A):

- Based on the information that you provided in the survey regarding your professional path, can you describe some of the opportunities you have had to work in diverse, multiethnic and cultural settings?

- How will you describe the religious culture of your institution? How does that fit in with your own understanding of faith? How does that fit to your present role as a leader in this institution?

In-person and video-conferencing interviews were another method and instrument of qualitative data collection. All interviews were digitally audio-recorded, which served as a primary instrument within the interview protocol as the researcher also engaged in taking field notes to ensure that the discussion is captured from multiple points. To stretch the imagination further, this data has taken the form of a secondary recording device using an iPhone to ensure salient points were captured during live interview sessions with participants. The purpose of the recordings was to seize the mood and physical phenomena under the gathering of sounds, comments, behavior norms, and sentiments (Creswell, 2014) that might have escaped the recorded field notes. The interviews included creative narrative discussions incorporating living narratives and stories (Creswell, 2014).

Field notes for in-person interviews and observations were ideal for this study because researcher was able to observe the natural happenings or institutional cultures and give a thick description of each institution (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Descriptive notes from the interviewer can note on what was witnessed, as well as capture interpretations, ideas, and perspectives important to the research question (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A sample of field notes are provided as an example to describe participants' interaction with the interviewer:

- I noticed when Participant A is answering questions during the interview, they made eye contact with the interviewer; however, when Participant A answered

questions regarding promotion, they did not make eye contact with the interviewer and they looked the other way. This requires follow-up.

- It became apparent after interviewing Participant B, they became uneasy about promotion and advancement. This seems to be a trigger question that underline concerns regarding politics at their school and the position they hold. They kept saying they must be very careful throughout the entire interview.

Data Collection

An invitation letter (see Appendix A) was sent to African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU using Qualtrics. The letter explained the purpose of the study and included a request to conduct either an in-person interview, videoconferencing, or telephone interview depending on the number of participants. In addition to the invitation letter, a website link to Qualtrics where participants can consent to participate were emailed (Appendix B) as well as a demographic data survey to determine eligibility (Appendix C). The use of a digital audio device, field notes, and an interview outline (see Appendix A,B) was also presented. During the interviews, the researcher captured thoughts and impressions of the participants. To ensure accuracy and validity of the interviewees' comments, member checking was provided (Creswell, 2014). Each research participant was given a copy of his or her interview and given an opportunity to correct the transcribed session with added feedback, which also assisted the researcher to carefully review all relevant information discreetly. To corroborate for credibility and accuracy, the researcher ensured each participant was given the opportunity to review key findings from his or her perspective and experience and to provide any clarity for further

annotation (Hatch, 2002). As part of the researcher's lens, the reviewing of field notes served as corroborating evidence to shed light on recurring themes, perspectives, and ensured validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To guide data collection, the researcher organized the interview protocol for recording the information and needs for gathering the data through interviews and observational accounts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher met with each participant at their comfort and convenience within their natural setting. The researcher's preference was to conduct in-person interviews. However, due to limited financial resources and depending on where interviews took place, three interviews were conducted via Skype and four interviews were conducted face-to-face. There were no financial incentives offered to potential interviewees. An important step in the data collection phase was locating people willing to be involved in the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). To ensure increased participation rates and to lessen the threat of internal liability, the following steps occurred:

1. Obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from St. John Fisher College.
2. Sent e-mails to potential participants, began connecting with all potential participants who met the inclusion criteria to inform them of the study and sought their voluntary participation in phone calls, letters, actual visits.
3. Emailed letter and consent for participation (Appendixes B, C, and D).
4. Scheduled interviews within two weeks of the agreement to participate.

5. Called participants 2 days before required interview to remind them and confirm time and location of interview and provide interview questions in advance (Appendix A).
6. Conducted and completed all interviews within 30 days following IRB approval and required CITI Seminar Training and certification
7. Bracketed and set aside personal experiences to keep participants' responses first and foremost (Creswell, 2014).
8. Completed transcription of interviews within 24 hours following interviews using an online transcription company, Rev.com. To ensure the development of cogent themes and patterns, the researcher continued to use the research question as a guide (Creswell, 2014).

First, a well-defined and clearly written demographic data survey (Appendix D) from the researcher outlining participants' basic information was shared. Second, to harness the support of the interviewees, the described survey featured participants' confirmation to be included in the study, which also included safeguarding one's identity and a brief overview of the topic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Demographic data questions included gender, ethnicity, title, years of employment at institution, degrees earned, college name, and department names.

Third, to protect the confidentiality of participants, they were asked to provide an assigned biblical character name as a pseudonym, along with basic demographic information before and during the interview visit, such as position. To protect the anonymity of the participants' institutions, each campuses were also provided pseudonyms. Each participant was asked 12 open-ended questions during a 1-hour

interview session, with follow-up questions and probes when necessary. The interviews were recorded with an iPhone and a digital audio recording device and subsequently transcribed through Rev.com.

Confidentiality was maintained in the strictest form during the interviews, such as shielding participants from public exposure during the interview and analysis process. Research study materials, including transcripts, notes, paper files, and recording devices were stored securely in unmarked boxes and locked inside a file cabinet in the private home of the researcher. Once the information is no longer needed by the researcher, all records will be destroyed in 5 years.

Data Analysis

The process of communication, because of the phenomenological hermeneutical approach, was to evaluate the findings to develop themes and patterns that interpret the data in two distinct forms (Silverman, 2011; Van Manen, 1990). The first (descriptive) phase included transcription, data organization, and color-coordinated coding. The second (interpretative) phase involved the examination of patterns in the data and identification of cogent themes in the text (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). This process informed how the data analysis looked for recurring regularities in the data set (Silverman, 2011). Both descriptive and interpretative analyses were conducted in each interview case, one at a time that began in the late summer/fall 2018. To ensure that an accurate record and account was created, the data was analyzed by clustering units, words, and meanings to form common and sub-common themes related to the research question (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). Van Manen (2014) recommended against using

software for phenomenology because coding, abstracting, and generalization do not create phenomenological discoveries.

The procedure for data analysis involved a phenomenological hermeneutical approach using a step-by-step process (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004), described as follows:

1. As an analytical strategy, once all data were collected, initiate immersion process that organized data sets into texts, followed by iterative reading and interpreting of texts (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).
2. While reviewing the data, identified predetermine codes and wrote additional notes in the margin or space provided of the transcription texts to identify phrases and key concepts (Creswell, 2014; Saldana, 2016).
3. Understood participants' constructs and continued coding for data (Durdella, 2019).
4. Following the organization of cogent themes and codes, the researcher abstracted the text and meaning, and reflected on and interpreted the meaning of the information collected before grouping participants' constructs into sub-themes (Hatch, 2002).
5. Participants were asked to member check, review, make modifications, and add any additional information as needed, in the course following the interviewing process regarding their transcripts to ensure validity and true contextual accuracy of their interview responses (Saldana, 2016).
6. All digital copies of interviews and formal responses were stored in a password protected folder and will be deleted 5 years after the completion of the dissertation.

7. Linked the literature to the themes identified above before reconstructing interpretations into stories (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).
8. Critiqued themes by the researcher and externally report final interpretation of the research findings (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

Bracketing was necessary in the research process rooted in the experiences of the participants and the research question as key words and phrases were identified (Creswell, 2014). To understand the participants' experience, required the suspension of the researcher's personal experiences by separating impressions, feelings, and other interpretations from earlier descriptions described in the data collection (Hatch, 2002). Notes were taken in the margins of the transcription to further assist in the discoveries of key words and phrases (Creswell, 2014). To ensure the development of certain coding and themes throughout the data analysis, the research question was referred to often.

Summary

The purpose of the qualitative study conducted for this dissertation was to explore the lived experiences of African American academic and professional mid-level leaders within member institutions of the CCCU. This study focused on a phenomenological hermeneutical research approach to collect, analyze, and interpret the lived experiences of African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). This study examined the career journey of African American mid-level administrators and provided a context for constructive dialogue among African American professionals in conservative Christian institutions (Jones et al., 2012). At the end of each interview, data were analyzed through coding and collated (Creswell, 2014). These findings are described in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of African American academic and professional mid-level leaders in the CCCU. To help frame the lived experiences of African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU, this phenomenological research sought to identify barriers to and opportunities for African American scholars and practitioners advancing from mid-to senior-level leadership roles at member institutions of the CCCU. The intent of the study was to discover possible reasons for the disparities between African American and White mid-level leaders employed at CCCU campuses. This chapter presents the findings of the research, which was guided by the question: What are the leadership experiences of African American mid-level academic and professional leaders in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities that influence their career paths?

The research question posed in this study is to further understand the lived experiences of individuals who are employed in middle management capacity at CCCU institutions. Diversity in conservative Christian institutions requires further investigation into the theological base and social justice dedication of Christian higher education given the changing demographics in the United States, and the increased efforts of conservative Christian colleges and universities to become more inclusive and diverse (Berrey, 2011; Nussbaum & Chang, 2013). From the perspective of Christian higher education, critical race theory (CRT) provided the necessary lens needed for a strong moral reasoning for addressing diversity-related social justice issues in this study (Hughes & Giles, 2010).

This chapter presents a portrait of the racial minority composition of African American administrators at member institutions of the CCCU and their experiences.

Participant Demographics

Demographic data was collected from participants through a survey examining characteristics such as (a) gender, (b) age, (c) highest educational level attained, and (d) years employed at current position. Of the 24 participants who started the demographic survey, seven participants completed the survey and agreed to participate in the study. These seven participants represented: four male and three female mid-level administrators at CCCU institutions across the United States. The participants in this study had from one to over 35 years of work experience in the CCCU. The average age of participants at the time of the interview was 45 years. Job titles of the participants included full-time student administrative leaders, financial services, adjunct professoriate, full-time tenured professoriate, and full-time administrative leaders. The average tenure of the participants at their institution was 5 years. Demographic data is displayed in Table 4.1.

Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and the institutions they represented in order to protect their anonymity. The three females are Ruth from Middle Passage University (MPU) located in the Northeast, Miriam from Harmony University (HU) located in the Northwest, and Deborah from Prophet University (PU) located in the Northeast. The four males are Joseph from Lincoln Christian College (LCC) located in the Midwest, Nehemiah from Jerusalem College (JUC) located in the South, Nathaniel from Ebenezer University (EU) located in the South, and Jeremiah from Jericho College (JC) located in the Northeast.

Table 4.1

Characteristics of Participants (N=7)

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	Percent
Gender		
Female	3	43
Male	4	57
Total	7	100
Age		
20-39	3	43
40+	4	57
Total	7	100
Highest Education Level Attained		
Master's	4	57
Doctorate	3	43
Total	7	100
Years at current employment as a mid-level leader		
Less than a year – 2 years	2	29
3 – 4 years	2	29
5 – 10 years	1	13
10+	2	29
Total	7	100

Findings

The study included seven interviews highlighting the experiences of African American academic and professional mid-level leaders in the CCCU in the United States. The researcher became the primary instrument for data collection and interpretation (Creswell, 2014). Pursuant to interpretation, the method used for analysis is hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation of the Bible or literary texts, and which was first introduced in Protestant theological circles to interpret the Christian scripture. The results of this study are organized into four themes that emerged from the participant interviews. The four themes focus on the

relationship between African American mid-level leaders and their White colleagues regarding lived experiences on CCCU campuses and their professional paths. The themes are: (a) the lack of meritocracy, (b) the burden of building political safety, (c) the rules keep changing, and (d) lack of a supportive peer community.

Theme 1: the lack of meritocracy. Meritocracy is defined as the rewarding of power, status, and influence, such as tenure and promotion, selected on the basis of ability (Stanley, 2006). A common message that arose from most participants in this study was the hope that member institutions of the CCCU would be structured to reward the most talented and determined individuals on the basis of merit, talents, and a sense of fairness regardless of race or ethnicity. When asked how they would describe their career path in higher education to date, participants reported that the idea of rewarding African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU on the basis of skills and talents is based on the presumption that the playing field is level for everyone.

The seven participants wield a charismatic intensity that demands they work above and beyond normal requirements so as to not appear lazy or slothful before their White peers. In other words, participants reported that to appear legitimate in the academy and before their White colleagues African American mid-level leaders had to expend more energy conscientiously navigating within and presenting themselves to the campus system to operate within and adapt to the culture of the CCCU campus. Deborah is a prime example as an African American mid-level leader who had to create new leadership approaches to chart a private course while working harder and staying longer than most just to be noticed for advancement at her institution. Deborah said: "I'm close to publishing my dissertation as an article. So, I figure maybe if I do that, that will give

me more credibility in the academic world.” What stood out most strikingly about Deborah’s experience was that it is a normal process for faculty-scholars to publish their work. However, Deborah is not full-time faculty. She is a full-time staff member whose goal is to become a full-time tenured professor. Deborah has watched as new faculty members arrive on campus and begin their careers as tenured professors while Deborah is denied opportunities to advance. Deborah reported she must work longer, harder, and accomplish more just to be considered, and perhaps taken more seriously. Deborah and other participants expressed that all sense of meritocracy is ruled out because the assumption of the most qualified and best-suited candidate for the program or unit is often a person who resembles the dominant image or group of the program or unit in the first place.

Ruth explained that just to be recognized, she had to design a personal conscientious method regarding her leadership approaches to working harder on campus so as to not appear lazy and indifferent before her White colleagues. When asked to describe her career path and experiences, Ruth shared her experience with White colleagues during her time as the first African American administrator on campus, “I love proving people wrong, so watch me work. I knew I had to be better. I knew I had to stay longer, I had to do more, but it is nothing out of my norm. I’ve always had to do that.” Ruth and other participants described how they had to adopt leadership approaches as strategies for survival and advancement in the CCCU. Ruth and other participants also disclosed how they were to navigate their higher education career with a set of experiences that required African American mid-level leaders to overachieve to combat the negative stereotypes.

Jeremiah described his experience with designing a leadership approach to be recognized on campus that involved meritocracy when he said, “I had to show and design that I had the ability to assimilate [to the CCCU White culture].” Jeremiah’s strategy required him to assume that the onus was on him to be like his White colleagues in order to be accepted into the CCCU culture. Participants developed leadership approaches that included high personal and professional standards, individual work ethics, and going above and beyond the norm to prove themselves worthy of trust amongst White colleagues in hopes of achieving a semblance of meritocracy.

Miriam from Harmony University (HU) described her experience with: “do your own work.” Miriam said, “If you want to fix problems [of the academy and society], I think the first thing is to do your own work.” Miriam suggested that there is a balancing act between being a good employee and knowing how and when to be strategic for promotion and advancement based on merit. Jeremiah also described his overall outlook of doing your own work, saying, “As a young African American male, you really need both credibility and that you can do your own work. People will validate you only if they see you can do your job and you’ve done it well.” Jeremiah stated the diminished value placed on Black men in America exposes the struggles that these men confront daily, often alone and unsupported, systematically overlooked because of entrenched negative stereotypes. Jeremiah attempts to succeed in his role as an overachiever in the CCCU. Jeremiah claims he has to work twice as hard compared to his White colleagues for the same opportunities White administrators seek.

When participants were asked how they would describe their career path in higher education, Nathaniel reflected on the idea of doing your own work. Nathaniel said

poignantly, “I let my work speak for me.” Nathaniel shared how the lack of meritocracy meant that African American professionals in the CCCU had to spend a considerable amount of time crafting a unique assimilation plan in the workplace in order to be seen as having the same, if not better, qualities and credentials, as their White colleagues. Participants who were interviewed in this study shared efforts they took in order to create a leadership approach to increase their visibility in their workplace based on merit.

The lived experiences and aims of CCCU African American mid-level leaders in this study regarding their career trajectories, as Nehemiah said succinctly, “is to produce results.” Ruth and Jeremiah explained this mindset at different points during separate interviews, both sharing the same sentiments when they stated, “If I don’t do my best in this role, I will be the last [Black]person in this role.” Ruth went further by pointing her finger to the interviewer and then to her chest: “Other people [White people] can be mediocre, but I can’t.” While Ruth realized White staff members can work at minimal or mediocre standards, Ruth emphasized the need to rise to a higher level. Ruth reported that administrators of color are held to a different standard than White colleagues and often time burdened with additional demands and obligations just because of skin color. Notably, some participants indicated working harder, staying longer, and expressing strong motivation to produce results, but they did so above and beyond the normal job requirements where the lack of meritocracy existed.

The life experiences of participants revealed the notion that to work harder would produce results and therefore meritocracy. In a meritocracy, several participants reflected that a Christian environment is the first place where everyone should be treated and

judged the same with equal chance of succeeding. Ruth suggested her idealism of Christian higher education and working harder when she said:

If this was really a Christian environment, I would work myself out of a job. If you think about it, should we really even have to have diversity initiatives? If you were really doing what you were instructed to do in the Bible, we wouldn't have to have diversity initiatives? There would not have to be Black, Hispanic, or Asian faculty or mid-level manager initiatives; you would just do it and produce results. Fortunately, the challenge is getting them [senior leaders] to think outside the box and remove the blinder that they have on while thinking White males can do this type of job. The call for providing resources or services to African American men and women come from senior leaders not acknowledging that African American are qualified and can make things happen.

Ruth and other participants in this study suggested that if the playing field was the same for every CCCU employee, the lack of meritocracy would not exist.

Participants in this study shared that part of their mission is to serve Christ and His people. For that reason, some participants adopted a stronger faith context in the workplace as a basis to serve as a support mechanism. All participants in this study expressed considerable amount of faith and understood their Christian faith to be a fundamental framework that guided their work efforts as a tool to counteract the work culture of the CCCU. Some participants' faith became actual leadership approaches at their institutions. Jeremiah described and defended his identity despite the lack of meritocracy when he shared, "I proved myself to be able to produce results, and that I had the skills to be a leader on campus."

Joseph described challenges of tenure and promotion often encountered by African American faculty in the CCCU. Joseph said:

One of the things initially is when you're in education no matter what your discipline or area of expertise, is it's usually tenure that is going to be a challenge that you're going to face because there's not a lot of tenured African American professors, men or women in almost any field. In my field there are even less.

Joseph continued, "So you have to navigate your way, and you have to develop relationships with other people in order to succeed." Joseph recognized the effects of prejudice and institutional discrimination surrounding faculty of color promotion and tenure opportunities in conservative Christian institutions. The concepts of prejudice and institutional discrimination is to attach negative emotions or feelings towards a community of people and prejudice individuals on the basis of their membership in that community (e.g., the Black community) (Healey & O'Brien, 2015). For Joseph, he might be suggesting that the way to overcome the lack of meritocracy is to have more relationships with White peers and build social capital.

Nehemiah described his prior experience in the CCCU when he was first hired many years ago, saying, "I came to this institution with eyes wide open. I chose this institution for what it was. It was a Christian institution." Fortunately for Nehemiah, he came to the CCCU with significant history having served in prior roles at the same institution. Miriam, in contrast, did not have prior experiences with the CCCU, and before leaving and returning again to the CCCU, she said, "I quit after two academic years and decided I think I'd rather go to a non-faith based institution." Miriam continued,

My first year was a year of just adapting and trying to understand what the expectations and cultural norms within Christian higher education were, adapting to the different standards and professional norms, and then also ethical norms and just trying to personally figure out what does this mean for me as a Black woman of faith.

Miriam defined her leadership approach as “you do your job, I’ll do mine, do not complain and be a team player.” Miriam believed that African American academic and professional leaders in the CCCU will almost never gain full equality in the CCCU, and that both faith and meritocracy are reduced to politics.

Participants in this study all shared they had to adopt a unique leadership approach in order to be considered at the same level with their White colleagues in most CCCU institutions. The leadership approach included having a strategy for career advancement and personal development while employed in the CCCU. All seven participants presented models of unique personal strategies for professional growth and advancement that involved working harder, extended work stays, producing exceptional work all the time, and not being boastful to allow the work to speak for itself. For example, Nehemiah’s strategy: “produce results;” Nathaniel’s: “let the work speak for itself;” Miriam’s, “do your own work; Ruth’s “prove them wrong;” Jeremiah’s: show them I can assimilate;” Deborah, “work harder, longer, and do more;” and, Joseph’s, “navigate the system,” were the leadership strategies they employed to help to create a positive learning environment. Several participants suggested if the CCCU had a culture of meritocracy then there would not be a need to develop unique leadership approaches because the playing field would be leveled for all people.

Theme 2: the burden of building political safety. The burden of building political safety is the idea that African American individuals must ensure they are viewed as “safe” and can be entrusted to interface with White campus constituents in the CCCU. An example of building political safety is designing survival strategies as a method to protect oneself from a series of “isms” (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Participants reported that they bear a social and professional responsibility to prove to the institution that their presence will not expose the institution to danger or risk as a member of the campus community. For the purposes of this theme and reflective of the experiences of participants, political safety can be viewed as a two-lane street. The first lane of “feeling safe” is that African American professionals personally feel protected. However, the second lane and focus of this study, reflects how African American participants reported bearing the responsibility to help the White CCCU faculty and staff feel safe from African American professionals in the CCCU. Deborah verbalized this two-lane street of political safety when describing the relationship she has with her institution and finding her unique voice in appearing “safe” before her White peers. Deborah said,

I am a professional and I am outspoken. I know the politically correct way so to speak. There is a way you have to have those sorts of conversations and move to operate on campus without appearing like the angry Black woman.

Deborah’s sense of political safety suggests the words she uses must be politically correct. Deborah sees being politically correct as avoiding language or behavior that supports the stereotype of African American women as overly emotional, irrational, and aggressive. As an example, Deborah had to change her language to assimilate to the dominant culture and not appear threatening.

The duty of African American mid-level leaders to build political safety does not rest in the institution, but rather that duty to prove oneself safe falls on the administrator of color who must go the extra mile to earn institutional trust. Jeremiah posits that African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU would have to make sure they do not appear to be a threat or harmful to their White colleagues. Jeremiah described the notion of “being safe” in more detail:

Another thing I think is huge, is that I had to show I had the ability to assimilate. I think a lot of people, especially African American males working in places that are predominantly White, which are most of the CCCU institutions, you have to prove that you are safe, which is unfortunate. But it is a skill set you almost need to have in order to make it to mid-level leadership. People must be comfortable with you.

Jeremiah admitted that making efforts to, “look safe” is to admit that young Black men are still profiled as dangerous people against a larger White culture even if Jeremiah comes to work wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and tie every day. After Deborah and Jeremiah made descriptive observations about stereotypical images of African Americans, the symbolic event of Deborah as the angry Black woman and Jeremiah as the dangerous Black man are the nihilistic threats African Americans are perceived to be in White American culture.

Some participants have fostered a sense of safety in White colleagues by expressions of faith helps. Nathaniel confirmed that another part of political safety is to talk about his faith openly so others may know his position, as when he says, “to be employed in a CCCU, you have to talk about your faith on the application.” To put it

more bluntly, Nathaniel expressed his assertion in a more vernacular manner, raising his voice and hands in the air, saying, “You ain’t gonna get hired if you don’t believe in Jesus Christ!” Joseph characterized political safety with the Holy Spirit. With his hands clasped as if he was going to pray, Joseph said,

In academia a lot of times we are led by the intellect than by the Holy Spirit.

Being led by God is more important than being led by the intellect. Intellect is important, but God loves people first and if you don’t love people, you’re in the wrong business.

Joseph contends that the love of people, and his idea of forming personal relationships with the campus community and with God will make people feel safe and comfortable when is around White colleagues. Nehemiah was enculturated into the environment of the CCCU very early, as he said:

My experience is probably a little different than the norm, in that I was very familiar with the institution because Jerusalem College is where I did all my undergraduate work. So, probably some of the normal progressions that one would anticipate with that first job didn’t happen with me, because of my familiarity with the university and already being indoctrinated into the culture and all. It was really a smooth transition for me.

What is most significant about Nehemiah’s sense of history is the fact there is historical identity (Carter, 2008). For Nehemiah, history plays a large part in his identity formation due in part the many years at his institution.

Nathaniel suggests another form of political safety by African American leaders in the CCCU to feel that they have an ally in them to appear safe. Nathaniel said,

“African American leaders need to hear from their White colleagues, I’m with you to support you, to be there for you, and to help you succeed.” Nathaniel seems to suggest that African Americans professionals in the CCCU can build political safety by developing allies across the institution. Ruth pointed out that God’s imperfect reality in the CCCU where political safety is more a concern, given its more homogenous and conservative ethos, as she said, “How imperfect we are on purpose. It’s God’s perfect imperfection.” Ruth views the CCCU and her institution specifically as a beautiful place filled with God’s imperfect people. Ruth continues,

I think it’s [the CCCU] as representation of Christianity. This is what Christianity looks like. We don’t have to all be the same. We don’t have to all think the same. But the one thing we all have in common is that we all love the Lord, and that’s why places like Middle Passage University (MPU) is a beautiful imperfect place.

Ruth described her way of creating political safety as accepting that she works in a culture of imperfect people and to focus on the commonality of loving the Lord.

In summary, several participants interviewed affirmed the theme--the burden of building political safety-- regarding how safe and trustworthy administrators of color must appear before their White colleagues at CCCU institutions. Participants in this study shared their experiences to raise awareness of their presence with White colleagues. Some of the participants revealed the value of spending time creating social and professional relationships with their White peers, but also reflected that the burden is on African American mid-level leaders to seek these relationships in an attempt to appear safe and build social capital along the way.

Theme 3: the rules keep changing. Participants in this study spoke to the existence of unspoken rules and unfair advancement practices in their Christian institutions when being considered for promotion. To try to understand African American career trajectory experiences, the researcher examined how participants viewed themselves and their experiences towards the advancement process. Ruth described her experience regarding the lack of equitable environment practices at her institution when she said bluntly, “Don’t keep changing the rules of the game when you see us catching up.” In practice, policies were written and put into use, but actions were not consistent with policy developments. Jeremiah, noted, that racism seems to always change and rules keep changing. Jeremiah was asked to join a search committee at his institution when he shared:

We had an individual who applied for a position. He was, from my viewpoint and others, a stellar candidate. We had a phone interview, and this person had a strong Brooklyn accent. And immediately, I saw the responses of people instantly becoming disinterested despite the fact this candidate had an excellent resume. So, when I asked how come this person did not advance, because this candidate had more experiences than the other candidates, one of the responses stood out to me. I will never forget the response when this person said, “he just didn’t seem like he would fit the bill here.

Jeremiah’s story supports what other participants shared when in describing how system gatekeepers were more comfortable with maintaining a predominantly White campus culture by purposefully not hiring African Americans faculty and staff. In another case, Deborah discussed the idea that White administrators who act as system gatekeepers for

the CCCU attempt to manipulate the selection process, which provides a sense of false hope and has the potential to disadvantage mid-level leaders of color. Deborah also described her concern about administrators not hiring African American leaders at her campus, when she said:

I have known some really dynamic leaders who are being overlooked and/or used for particular skill set, but not being promoted, not being paid for their talents and somehow it's okay. And I just don't think especially in a Christian university it's okay. It is not the heart of God.

Deborah shared the challenges she and other minority leaders face in the CCCU when they are overlooked. Nehemiah spoke to the idea that the rules keep changing, which presented a challenge for advancing African American professionals and narrowed the pool of prospects in most CCCU institutions. He said, "There are so few African American leaders on this campus. In fact, as I looked, I started thinking, okay, how many African Americans leaders are there on this campus? There are only two of us!" Nehemiah came to understand that African American or "blackness" represented a community only of himself and one other individual on campus.

According to Deborah, she has attempted to secure a tenure-- track professorship for several years. Deborah went far as to pursue a doctorate in her field, successfully turned around a major department, brought student satisfaction up, and made major changes in her department. After many attempts with senior leaders whom she knows well to advance her, Deborah revealed she was only good "for diversity committees and nothing else." Deborah shared her experience prior to completing her doctorate, when senior leaders wanted to advance her:

The senior leaders said to me when I complete my doctorate, even though I will stay in my present role, they will make me a full-time professor so that I will be able to do both. And when that time came and I finished there were crickets, like there were no conversation. So, I reach out to the dean of the school and the chair of the department—that I have over 20 years of experience in higher education administration and to be told, “We don’t need any faculty,” yeah, that hindered my career.

In this particular case, Deborah discussed the idea that White administrators who act as gatekeepers for the CCCU attempt to manipulate the selection process, which provides a sense of false hope which has the potential to disadvantage mid-level leaders of color.

Deborah’s narrative is a story of how one person applied her personal leadership approach to work harder, longer, and better to be seen as equal to her White peers, only to be used for tokenism in diversity committees. Deborah was also told that once she gets her doctorate, “they were going to do this and this. And that didn’t happen.” As a whole, Deborah also shared how she felt, saying, “I was not good enough.” Like Deborah, other participants reported “the rules keep changing” barrier as discriminatory, validating the experiences of mid-level leaders like Deborah as systematically marginalized. Some participants reported that the racial caste system in the CCCU has not changed, just been redesigned by the dominant group.

Joseph provides a similar representation of a clandestine atmosphere regarding advancement practices when the rules are changed. He said:

I have had campus leaders and theologians say we don't need diversity. Diversity divides rather than connect. And I've had a person say, Brother, I don't see you as an African American—I don't see your color, I see the child of God.

Joseph suggested his CCCU institution expected him to assimilate to White conservative Christian culture. Therefore, rules keep changing when some senior campus leaders ignore the ethnic heritage of staff members. Part of changing the rules is that some African American mid-level leaders cannot assimilate enough if these leaders cannot get hired or promoted.

Ruth described the disadvantage associated with changing the rules at mid-point during an advancement period when she said, “ If Donald Trump didn't do anything else for them [White CCCU senior campus leaders], he sent a bunch of Black kids back to HBCUs [Historically Black Colleges and Universities].” Ruth represents several participants as they described that partisan politics and President Trump have baited racial tension where policies in conservative Christian institutions have perpetuated racial and ethnic subordination. Likewise, some participants in this study suggest that the struggle continues for African American professionals being constantly overlooked due to racial subordination where the rules seem to change. Participants reported that the limited presence of African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU makes it difficult to mobilize for social change because the rules keep changing when they are the minority members on campus. The reoccurring message from participants in this study was how rules or promises from some employers in the CCCU keep changing whenever African American professionals are seeking advancement for themselves.

Theme 4: lack of a supportive peer community. In contrast to isolation, there is the notion of fellowship as a major value for gathering together in the African American community. Fellowship is viewed as a positive community between parties who have built connections, a sense of belonging, and meaningful relationships with others (Stanley, 2006). For purposes of the theme, fellowship is defined as a friendly association, especially with individuals who share interests or something in common, such as race. According to the researcher, isolation is defined as an individual being, living, or going alone or without companionship.

All seven participants indicated that there are no support initiatives in place at their institutions specific to African Americans. This theme highlights how African American mid-level leaders in this study create community even when they feel isolated. When asked about her feeling of being isolated and ways to combat this reality on her campus, Deborah shared her hopes and dreams of a supportive peer community when she said, “It would probably be good for African American leaders of the CCCU to meet regularly and talk about submitting ideas and proposals, or even publish work together.” As mid-level leaders of color, participants glean from their experiences and that of others to learn from each other in the workplace.

A resounding message from most participants was, “Do I fit in?” Deborah spoke to the existence of her experience of isolation when she attends meetings or events on campus when she said, “It’s difficult to go into a room and be the only one. I am personally tired of being the only one.” Jeremiah expressed similar frustration in his experience of isolation as the only member of color in his department. Jeremiah said:

There's nobody in my department who is Black. There's probably, I can count on two hands, how many people who work here who are African American. And so not being able to relate to people who share some of the same experiences has been a huge challenge, because a lot of times you feel like you're on an island. I mean, it feels like it's just only you.

Jeremiah and Deborah described how being alone often times led to being alienated from their White colleagues.

Joseph shared similar expression where racism is always changing and it comes in many disguises, to Joseph's chagrin. After the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States, Joseph reported,

I had a number of White colleagues who would always go to lunch together. We collaborate together on different things. But when Obama became president there was a difference that came across this campus. There was a sadness from some of my colleagues that you could feel in the air, so I saw the separation. At our next lunch meeting, the complaints about Obama being elected president were bad and I had had it. And this is among clearly Christians. Hearing my colleagues say, this country is going down. I looked at my colleagues and said, "You don't realize I'm African American, do you?"

Joseph elaborated on the brazen side of his White colleagues and mentioned two things.

First, Joseph was surprised that his White colleagues, whom he viewed as friends for many years, had hidden racism, which also seemed to suggest the second notion that Joseph may not have been recognized by his White peers as an African American all

along. Joseph suggested that his White colleagues may have had difficulty seeing him as one of them as a desirable colleague.

Prior to resigning from her post at one point, Miriam expressed frustration at being isolated at her institution. Miriam said at her going-away party on campus:

The room was packed with people from everywhere on campus, and random people like the archive person in the library, just random, because I had talked to her about wanting to know the history of people of color on this campus. So, we built a relationship. And for me that was a meaningful experience to see that even though I felt isolated.

Something was still missing for Miriam, even as she valued the support and friendship of the archive person in the library. Communal and cultural connections are distinctive features for Miriam and also necessary qualities to be truly inclusive.

Ruth's challenge as the first African American woman administrator at MPU was the idea of confronting the "good old boys" network which was alive and well. Despite being alone in this role, Ruth had to contend with fabricated tales from campus officials she did not know:

Challenges? Yes. It came from a particular White male who actually lied on me, and I called him out in a polite way, because he said he had a conversation with me. Or he heard that I said or did something, and I didn't even know who he was, so he did not have a conversation with me. So, when I politely called him out, he hazed over it and said, nevertheless. But I have to be careful not to let that edge [challenges and isolation] come across, because then it will be misinterpreted. So yeah, I've had them [challenges and isolation]. It felt like, here we go again. It's

not something that I'm used to, that I haven't experienced before, but I will say I believe that my experiences prior to coming here and my faith prepared me for this [her job].

Repeatedly when Ruth discussed her experience of being alone and isolated, Ruth discussed the need for God and to create fellowship. Joseph observed the same efforts. Joseph acknowledged the isolation on his campus and that there are no support initiatives in place for people of color on a formal basis. Joseph used academia, community, and church life as a remedy of encouragement and a tool to create community when he suggested,

So, I would encourage you [people of color] to continue to do community work, and pastors to do community work like as well, not to be isolated from the academic world, and not to be isolated from what's happening in society, and I know the tendency is to do that.

Rather than seeing diversity and inclusion as a threat, Joseph explains the idea of fellowship as a welcome mat and place seeking to build relationships among people from diverse experiences and backgrounds.

The one common voice that served all of the participants in their quest for fellowship is their faith in God. Their religious beliefs guided their desire to develop a personal community and wholeness in order to keep strong. Several participants reported that the use of fellowship was put into practice as a strategy for inclusive engagement identified through collaborative companionship, relationships, and ally partnerships. Nathaniel identified fellowship in an unusual way for which he calls it, "ally-ship." Nathaniel simply said, "African Americans have to feel that they have an ally in them,

that there's some ally-ship there. That I'm with you, I'm not standing against you.”

Nathaniel's idea for ally-ship may be the genesis for fellowship as a communal value.

This was also a way for most of the participants to create their idea of fellowship as a coping mechanism against feeling isolated in many cases. Faith, as virtue, then played a large part in the creation of fellowship and is often a positive component to replace the lack of a supportive peer community for most of the participants.

Ruth summarized the concept of faith and fellowship when she said, “When I wake up in the morning, I tap into my faith. Before I go to sleep at night, all day long, I am tapping into my faith, because my goal is to be a servant.” The point was reiterated by Nathaniel when he shared one of the great things about being in a CCCU school, “You're able to live out your faith, you're able to talk about Jesus, you're able to work in your giftings, goals, and fellowship.” Both Nathaniel and Ruth suggest implementing faith through influential relationships that structure stories of the personal and communal values and experiences of African American people in the CCCU. The theme, lack of a supportive peer community seems to be more about how faith is a resource and replacement for a peer community when none exists for African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU.

Summary of Results

Seven African American mid-level academic and professional leaders employed at CCCU institutions participated in semi-structured interviews to share their experiences as middle managers in faith-based academic institutions across the United States. The interviews and subsequent analysis of the transcripts generated themes that describe the

experiences of African American mid-level academic and professional leaders in the CCCU.

As a result of the data collected from participants and their leadership experiences as administrators in Christian higher education, four themes emerged from the research question: (a) the lack of meritocracy, (b) the burden of building political safety, (c) the rules keep changing, and (d) lack of supportive peer community. Based on the experiences of participants in this study, African American mid-level academic and professional leaders in some CCCU institutions across the United States face a unique set of challenges such as a sense of not belonging or fitting into a predominantly White evangelical Protestant culture. These four themes also provided further insight into the phenomenological--hermeneutical lens of each participant's experiences. Chapter 5 will discuss the findings from this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

It can be argued that diversity should be a priority in Christian higher education. Indeed, foundational to a Christian ethos is the notion of acceptance and love for all. However, despite their Christian mission, many of the 118 member institutions of the CCCU in the United States struggle with diversity and inclusion efforts (Abadeer, 2009; Fubara, Gardner, & Wolff, 2011; Paredes-Collins, 2013). This study examined the lived leadership experiences of seven African American mid-level academic and professional leaders in the CCCU. Critical race theory (CRT) was used as a framework in this study to emphasize the intersections of race and culture, leadership, and privilege as bases for examining historically marginalized communities in Christian higher education.

The focus of inquiry for this study was on the challenges and opportunities available to African American mid-level academic and professional leaders in order to gain further understanding of their leadership experiences and professional involvements within CCCU institutions. In order to gain an understanding of the experiences of African American leaders in the CCCU, a qualitative phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2014) was employed. One fundamental question guided the research: What are the leadership experiences of African American mid-level academic and professional leaders in the CCCU that influence their career paths? As a result, four themes emerged from the data: (a) a lack of meritocracy, (b) the burden of building political safety, (c) rules keep changing, and (d) a lack of supportive peer community.

The research question framed the understanding of the career trajectory of African American mid-level leaders and their experiences in CCCU institutions. To understand some of the leadership disparities experienced by African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU, this dissertation study posits that systematic oppression must first be examined (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Chapter 5 provides (a) implications of the findings from these interviews, (b) limitations of the study, (c) recommendations for future research and organizational effectiveness, and (d) a conclusion of the study.

Implications of Findings

There are several implications of the findings of this study that will help to advance scholarly and empirical research, theory, and professional policy and practice in these institutions. These implications may lead to a more positive experience for African American mid-level leaders and their colleagues at Christian colleges and universities. Implications of the findings from this study allude to some potential sources of barriers for African American leaders.

Scholarly and empirical research. Researchers indicate that there continue to be challenges to diversity and inclusion efforts in Christian higher education institutions (Dahlvig, 2013; Fubara et al., 2011; Paredes-Collins, 2013). The experience of CCCU African American administrators described by Woodrow (2004) and Washington (2006) suggested that the progression of diversity at some CCCU institutions is moving at a slow pace (Washington, 2006; Woodrow, 2004). However, more recently Chang et al. (2014) found that despite professional and workplace challenges, some African American mid-level leaders serving CCCU institutions have made positive contributions to the advancement and success of the institution.

Washington (2006) and Woodrow (2004) found the lack of advocacy and mentorship were some of the barriers to the advancement and success of African American mid-level leaders. The participants in this study experienced institutional racism, tokenism, and carrying the burden of being perceived as the sole representative for the African American community. The findings in this study seem to indicate that while some CCCU institutions have made some progress with diversity efforts, the pace is still moving slowly in comparison with non-sectarian higher education institutions.

This study's findings also inform and support the results of Fubara et al (2011) who found that faculty and administrators adopted a unique leadership approach to be recognized on their campuses that involved a semblance of meritocracy. As an important contribution to the existing body of literature, Fubara's findings were that African American mid-level leaders had to adopt unique leadership approaches just to be recognized on their campus that involved semblance of meritocracy. The results of this study support the findings from Fubara (2011) in that participants also reported having to adopt a unique leadership approach in order to achieve a level of meritocracy. Mid-level leaders in this study shared their leadership approach could be described as a strategy for survival that included working harder, working longer hours, and doing more work all while producing exceptional work. This study also expanded upon the results of Fubara (2011) by extending the population to include faculty and mid-level administrative leaders.

Wolfe and Dilworth's (2015) work describes leadership in higher education that tends to emphasize interpersonal professional relationships between White and Black colleagues. In this dissertation, the theme of "the burden of building political safety"

suggests that some African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU must develop survival strategies in order to resist and defy what is already a preponderance of prejudices against African American people in White conservative Christian institutions. The findings of this study support the findings of Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) regarding the burden of building political safety, and also expands the body of knowledge by applying it to organizational culture. Several participants in this study sought to establish the notion of “burden of building political safety” as a thematic framework to rethink the idea of “fitting-in” without appearing to be a threat or danger at member institutions of the CCCU.

Absher (2009) indicated that there are workforce practices in some CCCU institutions where faculty and administrators of color are feeling the weight of loneliness, isolation, and possible detachment from the institution and its personnel, not to mention from the community at large. African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU who participated in the interviews for this study described the concept of companionship as the principle of living together and sharing possessions and responsibilities with one another (Paris, 1985). Fellowship and solidarity were additional strategies for leadership development and ways to combat threats of social isolation. The practical implication for continuous fellowship is the realization that social networking is not based on individualism, but a sense of collectiveness.

This dissertation study adds to the body of knowledge of the African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU by identifying the theme, “rules keep changing” as a dynamic to impede progress and advancement for diverse members of the CCCU (Ash et al., 2017; Nussbaum & Chang, 2013; Obenchain, Johnson & Dion, 2004). According to

Nussbaum & Chang (2013), the injustice of racial hegemony where the goalpost for advancement is always moving occurs when the power of the institution serves to manipulate or misuse others by denying individuals what they rightfully deserve. This injustice is, in part, because some of the cultural climate at CCCU institutions do not see value-diversity strategies as important. Relatively newly incorporated into the diversification efforts in the CCCU, African American mid-level leaders encounter the pattern of changing rules that preserves the advantages of those who are members of the dominate group, even going so far as positioning themselves as duty bound to be gatekeepers of that group. Fubara et al. (2011) indicate that it is not the existence of written hiring policies that matter, but it is how the hiring and advancement process is executed. Several participants in this study described their experiences regarding the hiring and promotion process as some institutions were not as vigilant about diversifying the workforce. However, this study supports Fubara et al. (2011) recommendation to improve the hiring and promotion process for African American mid-level leaders which fundamentally means there must be a commitment to nondiscrimination and limited preferential treatment from senior-level executives in the CCCU.

This study also expands the body of research on African American mid-level leadership in the CCCU by examining the characteristics of isolation and fellowship for African American mid-level leaders (Paredes-Collins, 2009; Perez, 2013; Thomas, 2008). Unfortunately, there are limited studies providing focus on the desire and need of fellowship experiences and peer supportive community of African Americans in the CCCU. The results for this study suggest that some African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU are isolated from the activities of the larger Black community in their separate

racial existence. The results from this study also suggest that various White senior leaders in the CCCU are in a position of authority and power to protect their status and influence by subtly fighting back against African Americans and their rights to opportunities in order to ensure that some member institutions within the CCCU remain true to the institution's conservative founding principles.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Findings from this study elucidate CRT in several ways. CRT elements guide the research on educational equity and racial justice. Through the use of CRT, diversity leadership must be considered within its cultural context and through the intersection of group relationships in the following manner: (a) centrality of race and racism to identify the structures, practices, and discourses that are perpetrating racism in higher education; (b) challenges to dominant ideology and the traditional claims of objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity in higher education; (c) commitment to social justice and praxis throughout all segments of the academy to eliminate all forms of racial, gender, language, and class subordination; (d) importance of experiential knowledge to legitimize all experiences of African American professionals; and, (e) historical context and interdisciplinary perspective through which to analyze race and racism in higher education settings (Howard & Navarro, 2016; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015).

The four themes that emerged from the data analysis align with CRT and provide a deeper analysis of race, culture, and learning for diverse communities (Howard & Navarro, 2016). Ladson-Billings and Tate's CRT (1995) generally categorized CRT as the recognition of social forces (e.g., racism, privilege, power) where the central focus is

to uncover how racism and other forms of oppression are perpetuated in higher education (Howard & Navarro, 2016). One of the themes of this study, the burden of building political safety, acknowledges race, racism, and the roles in which some African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU are viewed safe from their White peers. The lack of meritocracy is another theme that uncovered how some African American mid-level leaders experienced racism within their CCCU institution. These experiences suggest that African American mid-level leaders may have to expend more energy navigating the campus as a conscientious approach to perform and appear at the same level as their White colleagues.

The lack of meritocracy was a barrier for participants in this study. This result suggests that some African American academic and professional leaders in the CCCU have to spend a considerable amount of time crafting a leadership approach in the workplace just to be recognized and considered equals with White professional staff at CCCU institutions. Meritocracy is an American myth that everyone competes and is evaluated on a level playing field when the time for advancement and promotions occurs, although copious evidence, including this study, attest to the fallacy of that belief (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). All seven participants in this study described models of unique personal leadership strategies that involved working harder, extending workday, producing exceptional work all the time, and not being boastful in order for the work to speak for itself.

Another theme, the burden of building political safety, suggests that some African Americans administrators may pose a threat to various White colleagues in the CCCU. Similar to leadership strategies regarding a lack of meritocracy, survival strategies are

employed concerning the burden of building political safety. African American mid-level leaders in this study use possible survival strategies as a response to make White personnel feel safe from them and to ensure that African American administrators do not appear to be threats and “fit into” the CCCU culture.

Developing a survival strategy is predicated on the notion that the goal is to become politically correct as to not appear aggressive, hostile, or threatening. Indeed, in this view, racial equality can only be achieved if African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU are able to prove to White people in the CCCU that African American people are worthy of equal treatment, dignity, and respect. Findings from this study, as viewed through a CRT lens implies that African American mid-level leaders must overcompensate in being politically correct to White CCCU professionals who ostensibly will forego racist or discriminatory practices only if African American mid-level leaders are not “inferior” by their standards (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015).

Expanding CRT, researchers show that one need not be formally convicted in a court of law to be subjected to the shame and stigma of being dubbed, a priori, a Black aggressor, a prejudice that falls disproportionately on young Black males, even though most Black men have never spent a day in prison (Hughes & Giles, 2010; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). The idea that some African American people are unsafe or appear angry suggests that there is persistent prejudice against African American people on the part of some, often conservative, White individuals. The use of CRT when examining African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU entails situating race as a continuing and fundamental factor in inequitable outcomes in the nation (Howard & Navarro, 2016).

As a result of being cautious in new spaces, this study found participants creating additional strategies for survival to reassure colleagues that African American individuals are safe for others and can be trusted to interface with White campus constituents in the CCCU. Participants reported that they bear a social and professional responsibility to prove to the institution that their presence will not expose the institution to danger or risk as a member of the campus community. The findings of this study suggest that African Americans create leadership strategies in professional spaces as the result of the unique character and history of Black and White race relations (Carter, 2008). Findings in this study show that such is the case with Christian higher education because, and drawing from CRT, diversity challenges the notion of homogenous climates (Hughes & Giles, 2010). While discrimination may differ by member institutions of the CCCU, inequality remains widespread.

Third theme that can be analyzed from a CRT framework is the “rules keep changing.” While African American mid-level leaders are told they are extremely competent (Howard & Navarro, 2016), the prevailing message of the theme was how rules and promises from some employers in the CCCU changed whenever African American professionals sought advancement. The theme, rules keep changing imply that racism can be unstable, look different, and interchange often depending who is orchestrating changing the rules. This study suggests that racism is fluid because prejudice is most times invisible (Howard & Navarro, 2016). For example, while a member of a search committee at his institution, Jeremiah noticed that a leading candidate for a position at his institution, an African American applicant, was denied an opportunity to visit the campus for the final round simply because of his east coast accent

and that “he just didn’t seem like he would fit the bill here” over a less perceived qualified applicant.

From a theoretical perspective, covert discriminatory practices attempt to manipulate the hiring or advancement process by changing the rules to determine who would be the “best fit,” limiting African American leaders, particularly in historically White and conservative environment (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Consistent with CRT is the commitment to social justice when examining the changing of the goal post. Most of the participants were not content with staying in the same place. Participants also reported that they must work harder to prove they are worthy of trust before further institutional investments are made on their behalf.

The final theme discussed is the lack of a supportive peer community, where all seven participants expressed that there were no support initiatives for people of color at their college or university. In fact, there is a compelling sense of feeling isolated, exacerbated by a lack of concrete efforts to increase diversity in faculty and staff ranks. As Deborah said, “I am tired of being the only one.” Several participants described the idea of being a “loner” in such places like conservative Christian institutions, which suggest there is no easy access to formal or informal networking and support on these campuses, and thus the experience of being a loner manifests easily for African Americans. Paris (1985) have encouraged the historical understanding of communal power for racial justice, which is the capacity to unite people as a fellowshiping community with justice and love as distinctive functions of being human and thriving together. Thus, communal power is the art of fellowship which combats isolation and loneliness in an environment of community that strives continuously for viable

relationships. An inclusive conceptualization of diversity can be seen through the lens of CRT to create the benefit of diversity and fellowship. Examining diversity through CRT would mean taking a comprehensive approach to the meaning of diversity and then shifting the emphasis of diversity from underrepresented individuals to institutions on a whole (Hughes & Giles, 2010; Nussbaum & Chang, 2013).

Professional Practices for African American Mid-Level Leaders in the CCCU

Perna, Gerald, Baum, and Milem (2007) assert that race plays a major role and define higher education employment. However, according to Absher (2009) report that there has been a 67% increase in student of color enrollment at evangelical colleges from 1992-2002. In addition, Absher's (2009) study found that despite an enrollment surge at member institutions within the CCCU, the same cannot be said of recruitment and retention for African American academic and professional faculty and administrators. According to research by Absher (2009), this study supports the notion for professional practices that in environments with little diverse workforce, the underrepresented group are viewed as symbols, or at best, "tokens," instead of individuals.

There is evidence in the literature of tokenism, lack of mentors, or research that might warrant caution when bringing together historically and racially based ideologies of prejudice and higher education access to career mobility, equal opportunity, and advancement for people of color (Absher, 2009). The findings from Perna et al. (2007) raise serious concerns about the extent to which Christian higher education is best understood as shaping faith through scripture and character development instead of defining higher education through race. Thus, Christian higher education institutions must commit to create among their constituents a worldview that honors God by faith—

"shaping perceptions, consciousness, faith and character" (Conde-Frazier et al., 2004, p. 87). African American mid-level leaders who use survival strategies in their workplaces, as mentioned above, are engaging in effort that has, at its core, the effort to rework and refine historically loaded Black and White race relations to something more akin to mutual regard and equity (Carter, 2008).

Structural racism is ingrained in American culture and society (Longman et al., 2017) and its institutions and participants in this study agreed that both individuals and social systems can be racist. The implication in this regard suggest that for the sake of professional practice for African American mid-level leaders in conservative Christian institutions, it is warranted to determine who is privileged to set the rules for the entire organization. For example, in Christian colleges and universities, rules cannot change if the rulers of the system are also part of the problem. To further support this notion, participant Jeremiah states, regarding diversity and Christian worldviews that diverge from prevailing conservative Christian norms, "If somebody doesn't have your worldview, it's easy to dismiss your concerns or challenges because they can't see [them]."

Limitations

There are three limitations to this study. First, this investigation sought information from African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU who are presumed to be believers in Christ, faith-driven, and Protestant. However, one of the participants in this study revealed his identity of faith to be a "pluralist Christian." A pluralist Christian is an individual who believes in and follows God and asserts that there are multiple ways and experiences to arrive at His Presence. Consequently, more information could have

been sought on Christian Protestant African American subcultures, as there are many, as part of the interview protocol and asking participants more details about their religious affiliation that could have elaborated the findings of this study further.

Second, this research focused on the lived experiences of African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU and information received regarding participants' demographics came from an online database in higher education. The data collection method might have prevented some individuals from participating in the study as some African American mid-level leaders may have decided not to submit their personal information online.

Finally, this research was conducted with African American mid-level leaders who are members of a small racial population within the CCCU. The generalizations made from the small sample of participants in this study may not reflect the entire population of African American faculty and professional staff employed at CCCU institutions.

Recommendations

The results of this study yielded several recommendations for future research, organizational effectiveness and policy, and professional development that supports inclusive excellence.

Future research. Future researchers might expand upon this qualitative study of faith and spirituality. For example, a study might examine the social and psychological resiliency of African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU, as themes pointed to particular challenges facing the African Americans in CCCU institutions and which were shown to suffer in a frustrating environment. The focus of this dissertation study was

deficit-based in that it examined what might be lacking in conservative Christian environments insofar as equitable opportunities for promotion and how African American leaders in these institutions encounter barriers to promotion. Future research might examine this topic from an equity-based perspective, that is, what is in place to facilitate fair practices and equal opportunities for career advancement.

Because of the challenges faced by African American mid-level leaders in this study, future researchers could demonstrate that in order to attract and retain African American mid-level academic and professional leaders, institutions must be committed to diversity as a whole (Smith & Mamiseishvili, 2016), and address some of the institutional and structural barriers minorities encounter in White-dominant, particularly conservative organizations. Future researchers might examine the implications of race within the professoriate at member institutions of the CCCU (Smith & Mamiseishvili, 2016), in the hopes of learning more about how some CCCU institutions are committing toward achieving a more representative faculty population that reflects the national and student population. Third, further research is needed to address the significant lack of diversity among the senior leaders in the president's cabinet at CCCU institutions. A study exploring the leadership experiences of senior executive leaders of color in the CCCU could add to the body of knowledge on their role in removing the institutional barriers that prevent African Americans from achieving meritocracy. Finally, future research should explore institutional policies and practices that advance retention and promotion of African American mid-level leader and further point out the developing role of mid-level African American leaders in the CCCU.

Organizational effectiveness. Colleges and universities that envisioned a comprehensive diversity approach appears to be more effective at making excellence inclusive (Nixon, 2017). Contemporary models of organizational effectiveness when operationalizing diversity on college campuses focus on the overall educational mission of the institution in ways that maximizes diversity for all. Diversity and inclusion efforts are critical and important issues for the CCCU and without a clear campus-based definition on diversity, leaders in CCCU institutions may not become receptive to more diversity. In Christian colleges and universities, the initial purpose of incorporating diversity into the mission of the institution is to bring glory and honor to God (Fubara et al., 2011) by celebrating, honoring, and embracing all variations of humanity. Based on the findings of this study, some Christian colleges and universities belonging to the CCCU in the United States lack a clear definition of institutional diversity on their respective campus. Therefore, possible recommendations for definitions on diversity can include race, ethnicity, class, socioeconomic, cognitive, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, and other demographic data.

In addition to a clear description of institutional diversity, each member institution of the CCCU should include a comprehensive theology of diversity and include this important aspect as part of inclusive excellence to organizational effectiveness on campuses of the CCCU. Since CCCU institutions are faith-based and Christ-focused, creating a theological statement using inclusive excellence as a framework can guide exegetical biblical passages and bring about bold insights honoring a multicultural kingdom of God in classrooms and campuses. Inclusive excellence are concerted efforts involving students' intellectual and social development, organizational resources,

attention to differences (e.g., race and ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, physical and learning abilities) and being a welcoming community (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). Many CCCU institutions seem to grapple with diversity in terms of race and ethnicity more than other iterations of diversity (e.g., socioeconomic class, sexual orientation) and a comprehensive theology of diversity will open the door to make a clear reference to different social statuses and relationships. To strengthen this point further, in Galatians 3:28, Paul addressed more than racial and ethnic diversity when he stated, “neither slave nor free,” to mean more than human skin pigmentation, but to include other disparate power relationships.

A third recommendation related to improving organizational effectiveness is that CCCU institutions must develop a comprehensive diversity and accountability strategy plan that will incorporate a strong business, enrollment management, and retention arm for the campus. Providing a comprehensive diversity and accountability strategy plan that embrace diversity will achieve greater inclusion in the institution and thus signaling the critical delay in addressing the issues of sociocultural communities around the Christian colleges and universities. Future growth of the CCCU will come from members of the present minority communities as the nation moves to a majority-minority culture by 2043 (Lichter, 2013; Wanlund, 2012). For example, current senior campus leaders in the CCCU could utilize and advance both current and future African American mid-level leaders in assessing and evaluating diversity efforts and campus climates as a way to increase diversity efforts on CCCU campuses. The comprehensive diversity and accountability need to include a detailed recruitment and retention strategy for diverse faculty and administrative leaders. Creating a recruitment and retention strategy for the

institution creates a culturally competent workforce that can influence campus culture. Likewise, a safety plan needs to be incorporated because people of color need to feel safe in environments where they are not well represented and/or may encounter both overt and covert racism.

Executive leadership. A fourth recommendation related to organizational effectiveness is that the president of CCCU institutions must first be the *de facto* chief diversity officer as a symbol of collective unity representing the entire institution (Bolman & Deal, 2013). This is an important step for the following reasons: (a) The president is the standard-bearer of God's human story at the institution. The president affirms, from the top down and not bottom up, that all human beings, whether male or female, Black or White, rich or poor were created to bear God's image (Conde-Frazier et al., 2004); (b) The president sets the tone of the culture. Culture is a Latin word, *colere* meaning to *cultivate*. The office and role of the president is to cultivate positive synergy and culture that becomes a small representation of what the kingdom of God looks like; (c) The president is called to minister to a cultural context other than one's own (Conde-Frazier et al., 2004) and therefore, sets the stage for inviting institutional diversity and inclusion on campus. The fourth theme in this study, the lack of a peer supportive community, encourages the formation of social networking utilizing small groups on CCCU campuses and fully recognized by the senior leadership. These small groups could provide spaces in which diverse members of the institution feel safe sharing differences from the dominant group.

As the CCCU represents biblical tenets that enculturate kingdom citizens, hiring and retaining a permanent chief diversity officer (CDO) as a senior member of the

president's cabinet is another recommendation. A CDO's role is to lead and support all diversity initiatives on campus and partner with the president to ensure the theology of diversity is represented in the institution. However, in order for a CDO to be effective they must be provided with the financial resources and staffing needed to support initiatives and recommendations to improve diversity work on the campus. To demonstrate an organizational commitment to improving diversity efforts the final recommendation would be for the CCCU headquarters in Washington D.C. to create an international CDO to support diversity and inclusion efforts at all their institutions.

Professional development. In order to foster an equitable and healthy campus environment, one recommendation is to develop a recruitment and retention strategy for diverse faculty and professionals as part of the comprehensive diversity and accountability plan program. To ensure prevailing and positive attitudes and behaviors of the workforce, develop diversity hiring policies and practices that will ensure every search and selection process will intentionally have at least several qualified persons of color on the search committee as well as in the applicant pool. In addition, stating that an institution has persons of color in the applicant pool is a start, but it is not enough; the institution must develop guidelines and intentional practices to ensure that diverse members are hired each year. Formal search process guidelines including a strategic recruitment action plan would bring balance to the hiring process. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) <https://www.aacu.org/resources/diversity-equity-and-inclusive-excellence> would be a great place for CCCU institutions to start if really interested in making changes related to diversity efforts.

The CCCU's climate need to adopt an atmosphere where all levels of the campus can personally support the need for diversity not just in words but in attitude. A commitment from campus administration to build an environment for recruitment and retention of African American professionals, as well as other persons of color, would greatly benefit the institution and so establishing such a commitment serves as a further recommendation. The institutional climate must show that all minority communities are welcome and valued and that the standards were not adjusted to exclude or eliminate diverse populations.

Conclusion

According to Conde-Frazier, Kang & Parrett (2004), the role of the teacher serves as a broker between the power and powerlessness in the classroom. The classroom is more than just the physical lectern or laboratory space where exchanges of knowledge and information occur. The campus is the classroom. In the classroom, the inherent worth and dignity, respect, voices, and diversity of all are expressed and displayed. Conversely, discrimination, alienation, isolation, and racist activities are signs that diversity and inclusion are not fully realized on Christian colleges and university campuses. This study reveals what is possible to learn both from other cultures and the participants in this study.

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of African American academic and professional mid-level leaders in the CCCU. To help frame the phenomenological experiences of African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU, this research sought to identify barriers to and opportunities for African American scholars and practitioners advancing from mid-to senior-level leadership roles at member

institutions of the CCCU. The results of this study supported previous research findings while adding to the body of literature on lived experiences of African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU (Ash et al., 2017; Fubara, Gardner & Wolff, 2011; Nussbaum & Chang, 2013).

This study analyzed African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU and their lived experiences that led each participant to create either survival and/or leadership approaches as models for management in Christian colleges and universities. The findings suggest that African American mid-level academic and professional leaders in CCCU institutions across the United States face a unique set of challenges, such as a sense of not belonging or fitting into a predominantly White evangelical Protestant culture. Additionally, four themes emerged from the research question: (a) the lack of meritocracy, (b) the burden of building political safety, (c) the rules keep changing, and (d) lack of supportive peer community.

To elaborate, the lack of meritocracy and the American myth that everyone competes and is evaluated on a level playing field when the time for advancement and promotions occurs that posed a significant frustration and barrier to participants. All participants in this study created models of unique personal strategies for survival in such an environment that involved working harder, longer hours, unfailingly exceptional work and humility about these Herculean efforts so that the work might speak for itself. Second, participants described being tasked with the burden of building political safety. African Americans administrators in this study repeated being viewed threatening to White staff members in the CCCU. Additional strategies were employed and crafted by African American mid-level leaders as possible responses to make White personnel feel

safe from them and to ensure that African American administrators appear unthreatening and as “fitting into” the CCCU culture. Third, participants perceived the rules to keep changing. Though many African American mid-level leaders are told they are extremely competent, some common messaging received was how rules or promises from some employers in the CCCU changed whenever African American professionals sought advancement. Finally, participants perceived a lack of a supportive peer community and, that there were no support initiatives for people of color at their college or university. In fact, there is a compelling sense of feeling isolated, characterized by a lack of concrete effort to increase diversity in faculty and staff ranks.

The benefit of belonging to the CCCU is participation in an accepting culture in which one can express one’s faith and live out spiritual convictions openly and authentically, an opportunity unique within CCCU institutions compared to other higher education institutions. The findings of this study suggest some African American mid-level leaders relied upon their faith while grappling with some of their experiences as employees in CCCU institutions. Using faith as a key approach to not only surviving but thriving in a challenging environment, offers possibility of transforming the conversation on race and race relations in conservative Christian institutions from one of institutional survival to a call for advocacy and justice, indeed, fundamental tenets of the Christian ethos. Although the institutional faith of the CCCU has utmost regard for the authority of the Bible and believes in the essential importance of sharing one’s faith regardless of cultural limitations and structures, ultimately, in the spirit of staying true to the original imperative of the Gospels—love one another--faith is best used for the betterment of ourselves, others, and all of humanity.

The results from previous research and this study suggests that the quality of African American mid-level leaders' work has suffered more than that of White leaders in the CCCU because diversity work challenges the traditional ideologies of meritocracy and equal opportunity in higher education (Hughes & Giles, 2010). Many times, diversity in higher education revolves around interpersonal relationships between White (i.e., the dominant group) and non-White (i.e., the inferior group) communities (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). At its core, diversity is about humanity and this study aim to resituate the notion of diversity in a place that transcends the politics of the day and that understands diversity to be a representation of God's creation, and thus holy.

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Appendix A
Interview Protocol

Date:

Pseudonym:

Start Time:

End Time:

Location:

Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for being willing to speak with me today. Before beginning our interview, let's review the informed consent form you signed. (Review the description of the research project, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality and privacy, participants' rights, and conditions of participation). This interview should take no longer than 60 minutes.

I will be asking you questions related to your experiences and perceptions which influence or have influenced your career path and experience(s) as an African American mid-level leader in the CCCU. I appreciate your willingness and candor to share your unique and personal thoughts, feeling, events, and situations with me. The information gained from this interview will be included in my dissertation as requirement for earning my doctorate degree from Saint John Fisher College. In my study, I will use pseudonyms from the Bible or fictitious name for you rather than your given name.

If you are uncomfortable with any question and prefer not to answer, please let me know. I will move on to the next question. I will be recording our interview today,

however, if at any point you do not want to be recorded, just let me know, and I will stop the recording and take detailed notes. I will resume the recording when you indicate that you are ready. The interview will be transcribed within three weeks, and I will send you a copy of the transcript to review, make modifications, and add any additional information as needed. The purpose is to verify that the transcript reflects an accurate depiction of your interview responses. The recording device is used to capture your responses as precisely as possible. Do you have any questions or concerns at this time? (Pause for response).

If you have any questions at any time during the interview, please ask. I will do my best to answer them. Also, please let me know if you need a short break, and we will take one. Are you comfortable and ready to begin?

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your career path in higher education to date?
2. If I can have you go back to your first year of employment in the CCCU, what experiences or words would best describe this period in your career path?
3. As an academic professional, have you had others advocate on your behalf during your career in higher education?

Follow-up question:

- a. If yes, how did this experience help or hinder your career? Please elaborate and provide examples.
 - b. If no, can you describe a time when you had to advocate for yourself or a time you wish you had someone advocate for you in your career path?
4. Have you had a mentor or academic hero for whom you turned to for advice and counsel about your career path?

Follow-up question:

- a. If yes, tell me about a time when this person made an impact on your career path?
- b. If no, what other sources of advice and counsel have you found helpful in your career path?

5. What, if any, challenges have you faced as you progressed in your leadership path in higher education?

Follow-up questions:

- a. How did you overcome the challenge(s)? What worked? What didn't?
- b. If you haven't experienced any challenges, have you supported a colleague that has experienced a challenge in their career path?

6. What, if any, initiatives are in place to help African American mid-level leaders advance into leadership roles in your institution?

7. The CCCU is unique in that it has a mission that is based in religion. How would you describe the religious culture of your institution?

Follow-up question:

- a. Can you share a story when the religious culture impacted your career path? How was this experience helpful or not helpful to you?
- b. How did the religious culture of the CCCU influence your decision to apply and continue to stay?

8. Based on your experience working in a CCCU institution, can you share an example when senior leaders were supportive of advancing career paths of African American mid-level leaders?

Follow-up question:

- a. If no, what do you believe could be helpful or could help to advance African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU?

9. According to the literature, many African Americans working in higher education have experienced microaggression. Microaggression is a term used for the casual degradation

of individuals belonging to or any marginalized group by persons outside a dominant group. In your experience, have microaggressions of others ever impacted your perceived opportunity or ability to move forward in your career path?

Follow-up question:

- a. If yes, can you describe what happened and how the microaggression influenced your career path or job opportunities?
- b. If no, can you describe a time when you observed microaggressions impacting another African American's career path?

10. What can senior leaders in the CCCU do to support African Americans in obtaining their academic career goals?

11. What advice would you give to presidents and trustee members of the CCCU institutions on how best to support the advancement of African American leaders?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the career paths of African American middle leaders in the CCCU?

Closing

Thank you for your time. Please contact me by email or calling my cell phone if you think of anything further or if you have any questions. I will be in touch when it is time to review your transcript and to share my findings. Thank you once again^[JS1].

Appendix B

LETTER OF INVITATION

July 2, 2018

Dr. John Doe
Name of Institution
Address of Institution

Re: African American Mid-Level Leadership in the Council for Christian College and Universities: A Phenomenological Approach to Diversity by Marlowe V.N. Washington

Dear Dr. Doe,

My name is Rev. Marlowe V.N. Washington and I am contacting you today on the approval of _____ . I am a doctoral candidate at the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. As part of my proposed doctoral dissertation, I am conducting a study to explore the lived experiences of African American mid-level leaders serving in academic and administrative leadership positions within member institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). The purpose of the study is to learn more about the career paths of African American in mid-level leadership in the CCCU.

If you are willing to be considered as a participant in this study, you need to consent to participate and respond to a brief demographic survey to determine your eligibility to participate. The survey should take about 5 minutes to complete. If you are eligible, you will be contacted to arrange a one-on-one 60-minute interview. The researcher will meet with you at your comfort and convenience within your natural setting either in person or video conferencing. The researcher preference is to conduct in-person interviews, however due to limited financial resources and depending where interviews will take place, such interviews may be limited via technology. If in person, the interview will be conducted on location on your campus or nearby venue that is comfortable and private for both the interviewee and the interviewer. To complete the consent form and demographic survey, please open the link here:

_____.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration of my request to participate in an interview. Please contact me _____ if you have any questions.

Yours truly,

The Rev. Marlowe V.N. Washington,
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

St. John Fisher College
Education Doctorate in Executive Leadership
3690 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14618

Title of Study: African American Mid-Level Leaders in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities: A Phenomenological Approach to Diversity.

Name of Interviewer: Marlowe V.N. Washington

Name of Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Shannon Cleverley-Thompson

Description of the Project: The purpose of this proposed study is to explore the lived experiences of African American academic and administrative mid-level leaders within member institutions of the CCCU. The research question that this study will attempt to answer is: What is helping or hindering African American mid-level leaders from advancing from mid to senior-level leadership positions in the CCCU? The proposed study will focus on a phenomenological hermeneutical research approach to collect, analyze, and interpret the lived experience of African American mid-level leaders in the CCCU. The aim is to examine the journey of African American mid-level administrators and to provide a context for constructive dialogue of African American professionals in conservative Christian higher education.

Place of Study: The interview will be conducted at the home campus or nearby venue of the interviewee in a location that is comfortable and private for the interviewee and the interviewer.

Potential Risks or Discomforts: As a participant, there is minimal risk to you. It is possible that participants will feel awkward speaking with the researcher, whom the participant has never met before, about their personal work experiences or issues of racism. In addition, there is a one-hour time commitment for the interview. The interview will be scheduled at a convenient time for participants to reduce the interruption to their

schedules. At any time during the interview or immediately after, the participant may choose to withdraw from the study and all recordings will be erased.

Potential Benefits: Participation in this study will add the opportunity to discuss feelings, perceptions, and concerns related to the lived experiences of African American mid-level leaders serving in academic and administrative leadership positions in the CCCU and their advancement to higher offices. Learning about the experiences may help current mid-level leaders/administrators to (1) transform conservative Christian institutions with a commitment to racial and ethnic diversity, (2) with the demographics of the nation changing rapidly every year, assist both the church and the Christian institution of higher learning to keep pace with this changing reality, (3) finding your theological and social voices to speak for yourself and others in lessons of resiliency and leadership, (4) make better decisions to enhance diversity awareness and action.

Protecting Confidentiality and Privacy: *This research is confidential.* The information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow participants to be identified. All audio, video, and text-based files collected for the proposed study will be secured under lock and key during the research study and for five years after the study. All participant information will be stored in a password-protected external hard drive. The researcher will not request any participant information that is not germane to the focus and purpose of this study. Identification numbers will be assigned to each interviewed participant. Only the researcher will have access to the anonymized recorded and transcribed data. The storage of the digital demographic survey data will remain in Qualtrics, an online questionnaire software and the Interview Protocol will be stored separately in printed text.

Your Rights: As a research participant, you have the right to: (1) Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate, (2) withdraw from participation at any time without penalty, (3) refuse to answer a particular question without penalty, (4) be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you, (5) be informed of the results of the study.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding confidentiality, please call _____.
He/She will direct your call to a member of the IRB at St. John Fisher College.

Appendix D

Demographic Data Survey for the Participants

Name:

College/University Name:

Department:

E-mail Address:

Please mark your responses below and respond in text when appropriate.

Gender: Male ___ Female ___ Other ___ Prefer not to disclose ___

Race/Ethnicity: _____

1. What is your current administrative status?

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Per Diem/Contract

2. What is your current administrative title or rank and who do you report to?

3. How many years have you been employed as a mid-level leader at your current university?

- More than 10 years
- 5 – 10 years
- 3 – 4 years
- 1 – 2 years
- Less than 1 year

4. What postsecondary, graduate, and/or professional degrees (certifications) have you obtained? (Check all that apply)

- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)
- Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)
- Juris Doctor (J.D.)
- Doctor of Medicine (M.D.)
- Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.)
- Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)
- Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.)
- Master of Science or Master of Arts (M.S. or M.A.)
- Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts (B.S. or B.A.)
- Bachelor of Applied Arts and Science (B.A.A.S.)
- Other _____

5. What prior position(s) in higher education you held? _____

If you are eligible to participate in this study, you will be contacted to arrange a one-to-one interview.

Thank you,

Marlowe V.N. Washington
St. John Fisher College
Educational Doctoral Program in Executive Leadership