The Intersective Influence of Race and Gender on the Career Advancement of Black Women Faculty at Predominantly White Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examined the intersective influence of race and gender on the career pathways of Black women faculty at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Using a qualitative research design, this study examined the unique challenges and barriers encountered by the study participants, as well as the opportunities within the academic landscape. Eighteen Black female faculty members participated in the study, providing rich narratives that highlight the intersective influence of race and gender on their career advancement. The findings revealed widespread systemic inequalities that hindered their career advancement, in addition to personal stories that showcase resilience and resistance in the face of adversity. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on intersectionality by highlighting the need for transformative reforms to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education. The results show that systemic obstacles, such as microaggressions and cultural taxation, significantly impacted the professional experiences of Black female faculty. However, through resilience, community support, and strategic navigation, the participants demonstrated remarkable strength and resourcefulness. The study discusses implications for institutional policies and practices, calling for a reevaluation of existing frameworks used in faculty evaluation and promotion. Ultimately, this research offered practical recommendations for creating an inclusive academic environment that values diversity and provides equitable opportunities for all faculty members.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Black women faculty, career advancement, systemic barriers, higher education.

INTRODUCTION

The underrepresentation of Black women in academic leadership roles remains a major concern in higher education. Despite their growing presence in the faculty space, deep-rooted barriers of racism and sexism still impede their career progression (Pittman, 2020). This study highlighted the intersective influence of race and gender on the career advancement of Black women faculty at PWIs.

Research shows that Black women faculty often face a double bind, dealing with both racial and gender discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989a). The overlap of these identities creates unique

challenges that are frequently overlooked in broader discussions of diversity and inclusion. Additionally, existing research usually examines race and gender separately, ignoring the combined impact of their intersection. By examining the stories of Black women faculty, this study illuminates a deeper understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion in academia by offering a nuanced perspective that highlights the unique challenges this group faces at PWI.

The objectives of this study are threefold: to identify the systemic barriers that hinder the career advancement of Black women faculty; explore the strategies they use to overcome these barriers, and to understand how their resilience and identity influence their experiences.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK / LITERATURE REVIEW

This study employed an intersectional framework, as articulated by Crenshaw (1989a), to investigate the distinctive challenges faced by Black women faculty members. Intersectionality offers a critical lens for understanding how social identities intersect and how these interconnections shape experiences of oppression. Initially proposed by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality served as a foundational framework for comprehending the multifaceted experiences of marginalized groups, particularly Black women faculty at PWIs (Crenshaw, 1989a). Crenshaw's pioneering work stemmed from her recognition that the experiences of Black women were often overlooked in both feminist and anti-racist discourses. This theory posits that various forms of social stratification—encompassing class, race, sexual orientation, age, disability, and gender—do not exist independently but are interwoven (Crenshaw, 1991b).

Crenshaw's (1989a) theory emerged from her analysis of legal cases involving Black women who faced discrimination. She noticed that courts often failed to recognize the unique position of Black women who experienced discrimination both as women and as people of color. As Crenshaw argues, this single-axis framework doesn't fully capture the complexity of their experiences (Crenshaw, 1989a). In the context of Black women faculty at PWIs, this theory explains how the intersection of race and gender creates unique challenges in their career progress.

Bell Hooks (1984a) emphasizes the importance of intersectionality in understanding the experiences of Black women through her critique of mainstream feminist theory, which mainly focuses on the experiences of white, middle-class women. Hooks states that this focus ignores the unique challenges faced by women of color (Hooks, 1984a), a perspective especially important when studying the experiences of Black women faculty in predominantly white academic settings.

Collins (1990) built on Crenshaw's work by introducing the idea of the "matrix of domination" (Matthews, 2016; Collins, 1990). This concept shows how intersecting oppressions—such as race, gender, class, and sexuality—are organized through institutional, cultural, and interpersonal power systems. Collins argues that the experiences of Black women cannot be fully understood through single-axis views of gender or race; instead, they must be seen as a complex interplay of overlapping systems that influence professional opportunities and barriers (Collins, 1990). In academia, this matrix manifests as unfair promotion practices, exclusion from leadership circles, and the expectation of unpaid diversity work (Joseph & Hirshfield, 2019).

Audre Lorde's contributions, especially in Sister Outsider (1984), deepen and broaden this framework by emphasizing the emotional, psychological, and spiritual aspects of navigating intersecting oppressions. Lorde's idea of identity as layered and rooted in lived experiences aligns with Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality. However, it enhances this understanding by highlighting the importance of emotion, anger, and self-definition as tools of resistance. Her statement, "your silence will not protect you" (Lorde, 1984), directly relates to the epistemological framework established by Collins, which values voice, visibility, and the perspective of the outsider-within. Likewise, Lorde's focus on turning silence into language and action lines up with hooks' call to elevate marginalized voices and break down dominant knowledge structures.

Baker-Bell et al. (2020) utilized Collins' matrix to demonstrate how Black women's linguistic and cultural strengths are often policed in academic settings, thereby reinforcing Eurocentric standards of professionalism. Stewart (2022) reports that Black women faculty are disproportionately assigned "diversity work" such as mentoring students of color or serving on equity committees, while their scholarly contributions are often undervalued in tenure decisions. These studies highlight Collins' claim that oppression functions through interconnected systems, where institutional policies and everyday interactions add barriers to advancement (Collins & Bilge, 2020; Stewart, 2022).

Emerging research critiques the limitations of institutional diversity initiatives that ignore structural inequities. López and Jean-Marie (2021) argue that without intersectional audits of hiring, promotion, and workload distribution, PWIs sustain the very hierarchies they claim to challenge. Toliver (2024) introduced the concept of rest as a form of resistance capital, framing it as a strategic act by Black women to protect their mental, emotional, and physical well-being amidst ongoing misogynoir and systemic oppression. This resistance is active; it is a radical reclaiming of autonomy and humanity in a society that demands constant labor and emotional resilience from Black women. By viewing rest as a rejection of being consumed by oppressive structures, Toliver demonstrates how Black women subvert the system through intentional self-care and communal support, transforming exhaustion into a source of political strength. These studies reinforce Collins' call to center the agency of Black women while pushing for systemic change (Collins, 1990; Williams & Clark, 2023).

Applying Intersectionality Theory to the study of Black women faculty at PWIs reveals how these overlapping identities create specific barriers and challenges. For example, Black women faculty often face "double jeopardy"—discrimination based on both race and gender (Beale, 1979). This dual bias can manifest in various ways, such as being passed over for promotions and facing increased scrutiny in their work, while their scholarly contributions are undervalued.

Furthermore, Intersectionality Theory explains the phenomenon of "tokenism," which Black women faculty often encounter at PWIs. As Crenshaw explains, being the only or one of few Black women in a department can increase visibility and pressure to represent both their gender and race, while also experiencing feelings of isolation and marginalization (Crenshaw, 1991b). The theory also clarifies the idea of "intersectional invisibility," a term introduced by Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008, p. 1). This idea describes how individuals with multiple subordinate identities, such as being both Black and female are often made invisible in ways

that those with only one subordinate identity are not. In the context of PWIs, this can lead to the unique challenges faced by Black women faculty being ignored or misunderstood.

In addition, Intersectionality Theory highlights the resilience and resistance strategies used by Black women faculty. As Hooks (1984a) explains, margins can serve as sites of radical possibility, where oppressed individuals develop critical perspectives on dominant power structures (Hooks, 1990b). This understanding highlights how Black women faculty members often become agents of change within their institutions, challenging traditional practices and advocating for more inclusive policies and practices. The theory also highlights the importance of exploring how other identities, such as class, sexuality, and disability, intersect with race and gender to influence the experiences of Black women faculty. This multidimensional approach fosters a more nuanced understanding of individual experiences and challenges within the broader context of systemic oppression (Collins, 1990). Tefera et al. (2018) highlight the importance of applying intersectionality to policy analysis and development in higher education. They argue that an intersectional perspective can reveal how policies seen as neutral may disproportionately impact faculty with multiple marginalized identities. This approach is especially relevant when assessing career advancement policies and practices at PWIs, which may unintentionally create obstacles for Black women faculty because of their overlapping racial and gender identities (Tefera et al., 2018).

Haynes et al. (2020) emphasize that intersectionality is crucial for creating inclusive and fair academic environments. Their research indicates that incorporating an intersectional perspective into institutional practices can lead to more effective support systems, such as customized mentoring programs and professional development opportunities that directly address the challenges faced by Black women faculty. This strategy not only benefits individual faculty members but also enhances the overall diversity and richness of the academic community by promoting systemic change and fair practices.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews to collect detailed data from Black women faculty across various disciplines at PWIs. A phenomenological approach was adopted to capture the core of their lived experiences, providing a nuanced understanding of their challenges and successes. The semi-structured interview format offered flexibility, allowing participants to share their experiences in their own words while covering essential topics. Interviews were conducted either in person or via video conferencing, depending on participants' preferences and availability. The research team developed an interview guide comprising open-ended questions designed to stimulate discussions about career advancement, obstacles encountered, support systems, and personal resilience.

Rationale for Methodology

The choice of a qualitative design was based on the need to explore participants' subjective experiences in their own words. This approach enabled themes and insights to emerge that might be overlooked by quantitative methods, leading to a deeper understanding of intersectional dynamics. Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for studying complex social phenomena, as it emphasizes participants' perspectives and facilitates the exploration of nuanced experiences. Using a qualitative approach, this study captured the lived experiences of Black women faculty, highlighting their unique challenges and successes within the academic

environment. This method not only deepened an understanding of the subject matter complexity but also empowered the participants by validating their experiences and providing them a platform to share their voices.

Assumptions
The study was based on several key assumptions: that participants would provide honest and thoughtful accounts of their experiences; that their stories would reveal patterns related to race and gender; and that the findings would contribute to the body of knowledge on diversity and inclusion in higher education. These assumptions were crucial for establishing a foundation for the research and informing the analysis of the collected data.

Biases
Potential bias stemmed from the researchers' positionality as outsiders to the participants' lived experiences. Efforts were made to mitigate bias through reflexivity and by fostering an open and trusting environment during interviews. The researchers engaged in self-reflection to acknowledge their background and potential biases, aiming to approach the research with an open mind and a genuine desire to understand the participants' perspectives. Additionally, the research team employed strategies such as member checking, which allowed participants to review their transcripts for accuracy and authenticity. This process not only help validate the findings but also empowered participants by giving them an active role in the research.

Site Selection
Research sites were chosen based on geographic diversity, institutional size, and their dedication (or lack thereof) to diversity initiatives. Two PWIs in the Southern part of the United States of America were included to reflect a range of experiences. The selection process involved identifying institutions with different levels of student and faculty diversity, as well as various reputations regarding their commitment to equity and inclusion. The research sites included both a large research university and a small liberal arts college, offering a comprehensive view of the experiences faced by Black women faculty in different academic settings. This diverse site selection aimed to strengthen the study's generalizability and provide insights relevant to a broader range of institutions.

Sample Selection
Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, focusing on Black women faculty with at least three years of experience at their respective institutions. This requirement ensured a level of expertise that enriched the data collection. The sample included faculty from various academic disciplines, including STEM, humanities, and social sciences, to gather a broad range of experiences and perspectives. In total, 18 Black women faculty members took part in the study, providing rich narratives that highlighted the intersectional challenges they face in academia.

Data Collection Procedures
Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately 60 -90 minutes. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via video conferencing, depending on participants' preferences and availability. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, how their data would be used, and their right to withdraw at any time, ensuring that ethical standards

were maintained throughout the research process. The interview guide included questions designed to stimulate discussion on participants' experiences related to career advancement, the obstacles they faced, the strategies they employed, and their resilience.

Data Analysis Procedures
Thematic analysis was employed to identify and examine patterns within the interview data. Transcripts were coded using an open coding method, followed by axial coding to link themes. The analysis involved multiple rounds of coding to refine themes and identify primary patterns in the data. The research team collaborated to ensure consistency in coding and interpretation, which enhanced the trustworthiness and accuracy of the results.

Trustworthiness.
Building trustworthiness is essential in the research process, as emphasized by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This study used four main techniques to maintain trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility was enhanced through member-checking, which allowed participants to review and confirm the findings. Purposeful sampling of Black women faculty at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) was employed to gather diverse perspectives, while extended engagement during interviews helped build trust and openness.

Dependability was maintained through detailed documentation of the research process, including the methods used for data collection and analysis. A comprehensive research protocol ensured consistent procedures, minimizing bias. Regular peer debriefing and an audit trail further improved reliability.

Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participant characteristics, and methods, thereby enhancing the applicability of the findings to other settings. The study aimed to represent diverse experiences of Black women faculty across various departments and backgrounds.

Confirmability involved keeping an audit trail to document the research process and ensure fairness. Reflexivity practices were used to recognize and address biases, with transparent documentation of the research process.

Ethical considerations were central throughout the study, with approval obtained in advance from the Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). Participants provided informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality, with privacy protected through the use of pseudonyms and secured data storage. Overall, the research followed ethical standards and presented results anonymously.

Description of Participants
The study involved 18 Black women faculty members from various academic fields, including STEM, humanities, and social sciences. Participants ranged in age from 30 to 55 years and held positions from assistant professor to full professor. A demographic profile of the participants was created, highlighting their academic backgrounds, years of experience, and institutional

affiliations. This profile helped to contextualize the findings and showcase the diversity of experiences among the study participants.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

	Name	Age	Gender	Race	Institution	Title	Discipline
1	Lisa	45	Female	Black	University A	Assistant Professor	DNP/Nursing
2	Margaret	49	Female	Black	University A	Associate Professor	Cytopathology
3	Georgia	41	Female	Black	University B	Associate Professor	Nursing
4	Beaulah	61	Female	Black	University A	Associate Professor/Dean	Obstetrics & Gynecology
5	Corine	53	Female	Black	University A	Vice Chancellor	Human Resources/STEM
6	Floretta	36	Female	Black	University B	Assistant Professor	Counselor Education
7	Debra	66	Female	Black	University A	Professor/Dept Chair	Health Promotion & Disease Prevention
8	Emma	32	Female	Black	University B	Assistant Professor	Business Administration
9	Mollie	72	Female	Black	University A	Full Professor	General Dentistry
10	Frances	53	Female	Black	University B	Assistant Dean	African American Studies
11	Ruthie	46	Female	Black	University A	Assistant Dean	Business and Economics
12	Josie	78	Female	Black	University B	Full Professor	African American History
13	Betty	72	Female	Black	University A	Sr. Associate Dean	Psychiatry
14	Dorothy	69	Female	Black	University A	Full Professor	Health Disparities
15	Eddie Mae	42	Female	Black	University B	Assistant Dean	Finance/Pharmacy
16	Cherlyn	50	Female	Black	University A	Associate Professor	Cytopathology
17	Nikki G	75	Female	Black	University B	Full Professor	Counseling Educational Psychology
18	Camella	52	Female	Black	University A	Associate Professor	Nursing

FINDINGS

This research examined the intersective influence of race and gender on the career advancement of Black women faculty at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) across two Mid-Southern universities. Guided by Kimberlé Crenshaw's Intersectionality Theory, the study was guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do Black women faculty at PWIs perceive gender to influence their career development?
- RQ2: How do Black women faculty at PWIs perceive race to influence their career development?

- RQ3: How do Black women faculty at PWIs perceive the intersection of race and gender to influence their career development?

The study identified eight main themes in response to these questions. Concerning research question 1 (gender), participants emphasized themes of gender expectations, negative stereotypes, and communication challenges, including code-switching. For research question 2 (race), the key themes included the double bind, systemic barriers, and effects on mental health and well-being. Lastly, for research question 3, themes of resilience, empowerment, mentorship, and self-advocacy emerged.

While each theme was linked to a specific research question, notable overlaps were evident, highlighting the interconnectedness of race and gender in the participants' experiences. Resilience and empowerment emerged not just as responses to systemic barriers but also as strategies for managing gendered and racialized expectations. Likewise, self-advocacy and mentorship were seen as crucial in addressing challenges caused by racial and gender discrimination. These overlapping themes highlighted the complexity of Black women faculty members' career advancement at PWIs and underscored the need for comprehensive institutional support and policy changes.

The following sections offer a detailed analysis of each theme, supported by direct quotes from participants and relevant data analysis. These findings enhanced the understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and dynamics that influenced the career experiences of Black women faculty at PWIs.

Research Question 1: How do Black Women Faculty at PWIs Perceive Gender to Influences their Career Development?
Theme 1: Gender Influence on Career Development:
The findings show that gender expectations significantly influenced the experiences of Black women faculty at PWIs. Participants described how societal norms and institutional structures often define acceptable roles for women, thereby limiting career opportunities and adding barriers to advancement. Mollie poignantly reflected, stating, "It's quite difficult for me to separate being a woman from being a Black woman—to determine which aspect influenced specific experiences." This summary of intersectional reality raised methodological concerns during data collection, as participants often mixed their racial and gender identities.

Mollie shared her upbringing in the 1950s and 1960s, recalling, "The expectations for women were clear: you could be a teacher, a nurse, or a secretary." This shows the limited opportunities women of her era faced. She also described a key moment when a teacher told her, "You would make a good secretary," highlighting the narrow view placed on young girls. Even though her mother encouraged her to dream bigger, Mollie absorbed these gender norms and initially geared up for a career in secretarial work.

Corine's narrative highlighted the complexities of navigating her identity in academia: "With hard skills like Excel and Word, there's no room for ambiguity, so I haven't been perceived as lacking knowledge. Instead, I've been viewed as an expert." However, she lamented the persistence of gender expectations manifesting in pay disparities, stating, "I am the only Black

female Vice Chancellor, and while I handle complex responsibilities, my compensation does not always reflect that.

Frances highlighted the importance of strong female role models, saying, "I thought, this is what I want to do," while recognizing the complexities of gender dynamics. Georgia shared her experiences in nursing, noting, "You see majority Caucasian men in those positions," which underscores the persistent influence of gender expectations even in mostly female fields.

Emma shared her mission to showcase the abilities of Black women in business academia: "Growing up, I didn't see many Black women professors; most of my professors were male." Her dedication to representation highlights her awareness of the challenges of underrepresentation, as she said, "I want to show them that they can excel in business."

Nikki G expressed similar feelings, stating, "I think it's been challenging for a woman to hold some of the roles I've held," highlighting societal perceptions that complicate women's professional interactions. Dorothy recognized that while gender expectations are present, race often takes precedence, sharing instances where her authority was questioned and emphasizing the need for cultural changes in academic institutions.

Theme 2: Negative Stereotyping:
Negative stereotyping has become a widespread obstacle for Black women faculty at PWIs, influencing perceptions of their competence and restricting their professional opportunities. Participants explained how racial and gender biases appeared in teaching evaluations, service expectations, and interactions with peers. Mollie observed, "Black women receive the lowest teaching assessments," highlighting the systemic issues they confront. Frances mentioned the intersectional bias, saying, "Black male colleagues get tenured alongside us, but our experiences differ."

Emma noticed fewer direct instances of bias, yet most participants still faced blatant devaluation. Georgia recalled, "My suggestion was ignored until a white male colleague repeated it," emphasizing the invisibility of their input. Floretta said, "Students do not see me as competent as white faculty," while Camella added, "They assume male colleagues know more." Ruthie criticized the expectation that Black women should coddle rather than lead, stating, "The assumption is that Black women must coddle, not lead."

The "angry Black woman" stereotype was also discussed, with Corine sharing her strategy for addressing it: "I wouldn't say I'm labeled as the 'angry Black woman,' but I am the vocal Black woman. I won't sit in a room and ignore the elephant in it." This demonstrates her proactive approach to handling stereotypes while ensuring her voice was heard.

Participants shared that internalized stereotypes made their experiences more complicated. Mollie said, "Some who look like me think, 'You're not supposed to be here,'" which led some to work incredibly hard to prove their worth, as Nikki G pointed out: "I know some young faculty who worked themselves to exhaustion, but they made sure they nailed every single thing. It's what's necessary to succeed." The narratives showed that negative stereotyping happens at PWIs through three main patterns. First, the ongoing credibility penalty creates an unfair professional environment, where their expertise is often questioned. Mollie's comment about

consistently lower teaching evaluations illustrated this weakening of professional authority. Participants' stories revealed the emotional strain linked to dealing with these stereotypes, highlighting the need for institutional reforms to create equal opportunities for all faculty members.

Theme 3: Mental Health and Well-Being:
The impact of systemic racism and gender bias on mental health and well-being emerged as a key theme for Black women faculty at PWIs. Participants' stories revealed how profoundly mental health affected their professional lives, highlighting the importance of self-care in handling the challenges of academia. Mollie powerfully shared her struggles, saying, "I was ill for ten years and did not even realize it." Her reflection relates to allostatic load, stressing the physical effects of chronic stress. She warned, "If you do not take care of yourself first, you will not be able to take care of anything else."

Frances echoed this sentiment, stating, "I have learned to manage it by caring for myself." Her acknowledgment of self-care showed her understanding of the emotional and psychological toll of her experiences. She shared a meaningful moment with her daughter that highlighted her struggle to balance personal and professional responsibilities, emphasizing the connection between mental health and professional success.

Georgia spoke about the emotional challenge of balancing work and personal life, saying, "I try to find a way to balance having a life outside of work." This dedication to mental health shows her awareness of the need for self-care amid the pressures of academia. Floretta shared similar thoughts, highlighting the importance of not internalizing the pressures faced by women of color.

Debra conveyed the emotional difficulty of balancing work and personal life, saying, "It is one of the most difficult things you are going to ever do in your life." This highlights the challenge of balancing job duties with family responsibilities. She emphasized the importance of prioritizing mental health, mentioning, "If I cannot get it done today, there is always tomorrow." In summary, participants' stories highlighted the systemic barriers faced by Black women faculty at PWIs, emphasizing the need for institutional reforms that focus on equity and inclusion. Their shared experiences shed light on key themes of resilience, mentorship, and self-advocacy, highlighting the importance of supportive networks and proactive strategies in navigating the challenges of academia. These findings provided a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the career advancement of Black women in faculty roles. They highlighted the need for transformative changes to create a more equitable academic environment.

Findings for Research Question 2: Perceptions of Race Influence on Career Development
The exploration of the influence of race on the career development of Black women faculty at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) uncovered several key themes. Participants described race as a widespread and core factor that shaped their academic experiences, with racial bias showing up in many contexts, including hiring practices, classroom interactions, and evaluations of their scholarship. These biases often led to microaggressions, tokenism, and a lack of institutional support, which contributed to feelings of isolation and invisibility in their academic environments.

Theme 1: Double Bind in Intersectionality of Race and Gender:

Participants described the "double bind" they face as both racial and gender minorities in academia, emphasizing the unique challenges caused by this intersectionality. In leadership settings, this double marginalization often hindered their career growth, as they were frequently passed over for leadership roles in favor of white or male colleagues. Lisa explained this hierarchy, saying, "At my current institution, I haven't felt the intersection of race and gender holding back my career… However, I have noticed disparities at my previous institution where conversations suggested favoritism toward Caucasian women over their Black peers." This acknowledgment highlights the added challenges Black women encounter, having to navigate both racial bias and gender discrimination.

The narratives showed a deep understanding of how race and gender intersect to create a complex landscape of marginalization. Corine, the only Black female Vice Chancellor at her institution, noted significant disparities in pay and opportunities compared to her white male colleagues, highlighting the scrutiny she faces due to her overlapping identities. This recognition demonstrates the need for institutions to acknowledge and address these unique challenges.

Theme 2: Systemic Barriers in Academia:

Participants consistently highlighted systemic barriers as significant obstacles to their career advancement. Emma noted, "Although I have not faced direct systematic barriers, I am aware they exist, especially for Black women," pointing to a broader problem of limited representation of Black faculty. Mollie recounted a pivotal experience where her evaluations prompted intervention from the Chancellor, illustrating how institutional biases created significant challenges for Black women.

Frances highlighted the exclusionary nature of institutional policies, stating, "Policies were not written for us," which shows how frameworks often ignore the unique challenges faced by Black women faculty. Georgia echoed this, expressing frustration with promotion processes that seem biased against her advancement, while Floretta described feeling outnumbered despite her qualifications, pointing to the arbitrary standards imposed on Black women.

Lisa commented on resource allocation gaps, noting preferential treatment for Caucasian faculty in professional development chances. This highlights the gap between the efforts of Black faculty and the standards used for promotion.

Findings for Research Question 3: Perceptions of the Intersection of Race and Gender on Career Development

The exploration of how Black women faculty at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) perceive the intersection of race and gender revealed essential insights into the unique challenges they face in their academic careers. Participants described their experiences using the term "double jeopardy," indicating that being both Black and female intensified the difficulties they encountered, resulting in distinctive forms of marginalization.

Theme 1: Resilience and Empowerment:

Resilience and empowerment emerged as key themes in participants' stories, highlighting their ability to overcome systemic barriers and assert their identities in leadership roles. Many

participants demonstrated strong resilience, actively seeking opportunities for personal and professional growth despite facing discrimination. Corine emphasized the importance of resilience in her journey, saying, "My journey has been defined by resilience. I have learned to lead with value and build relationships based on trust." This proactive mindset is crucial not only for personal success but also for promoting wider equity and inclusion within academic institutions.

Participants demonstrated their empowerment through their dedication to personal growth and support for their community. For example, Mollie highlighted the significance of adaptability, saying, "I had to learn to communicate across cultural divides," which shows her effort to overcome feelings of isolation and being undervalued. Emma's claim that taking initiative promotes empowerment was supported by Frances, who saw her role as a nurturing mentor, emphasizing the connection between resilience, empowerment, and community support.

Theme 2: Mentorship and Self-Advocacy:
The narratives emphasized the vital role of mentorship and self-advocacy in tackling the challenges at the intersection of race and gender. Participants emphasized the importance of forming supportive networks and actively advocating for themselves in a competitive academic environment. Frances pointed out the differences between mentorship and sponsorship, saying, "A mentor guides you, but a sponsor tells your story," which underscores the need for advocates who can elevate one's career.

Corine reflected on the value of mentorship in her career, stating, "I have been fortunate to have mentors who recognized my potential early on," while also recognizing the need to advocate for herself. This proactive approach was echoed by Georgia, who shared the lack of mentorship opportunities for faculty of color, emphasizing the importance of creating supportive networks. Further emphasizing the need for self-advocacy, participants recognized that they must clearly articulate their ambitions and contributions to ensure their voices are heard in predominantly white environments. For example, Eddie Mae highlighted the importance of demonstrating capability, stating, "If you're doing your part, then you can see more clearly if it is a race issue or a gender issue." This perspective shows the dual responsibility of Black women faculty to advocate for themselves while also seeking mentorship to navigate their unique challenges.

Summary of Findings
Overall, the findings show that the intersection of race and gender greatly influenced the career development of Black women faculty at PWIs, presenting unique challenges that require resilience, empowerment, mentorship, and self-advocacy. These interconnected themes highlighted the urgent need for institutional reforms that promote equal opportunities and create a supportive academic environment that recognizes and values the contributions of Black women faculty. The study revealed a striking disconnect between qualifications and leadership representation. While 77.8% (n=14) of participants had accumulated 15+ years of academic experience and 66.7% (n=12) had served in intermediate leadership roles (e.g., program directors, committee chairs), only 38.9% (n=7) had attained upper-level administrative positions.

Table 2: Participant Leadership Background and Career Progression

Leadership Representation	Count	Percentage
Total Participants	18	100%
15+ years' experience	14	77.8%
Held intermediate leadership roles	12	66.7%
Achieved upper-level positions	7	38.9%

DISCUSSION

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

This study adds to the growing body of knowledge on the intersectional challenges faced by Black women faculty at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), focusing on how race-gender biases affect their professional career advancement. While previous research has identified these barriers, this study offers a deeper understanding of how such biases manifest in the real-life experiences of Black women faculty, highlighting the cumulative impact of systemic exclusion and the strategic resilience required to overcome these obstacles. The results support the idea that, although solutions such as fair workload distribution and structured mentorship programs exist, there is an urgent need to implement them rather than study them further. The results show that Black women faculty face unique challenges because of their race and gender intersectionality. Gender expectations often limited their chances for leadership growth, while widespread negative stereotypes damaged how their competence and authority are perceived (Turner et al., 2011). Systemic obstacles rooted in institutional policies and cultural norms have exacerbated these issues (Harris et al., 2021), underscoring the emotional impact on mental health and well-being, and underscoring the need for comprehensive support systems (Haynes, 2020).

Significant Results

The concept of intersectionality, as explained by Crenshaw (1989a), highlights the overlapping forms of discrimination that Black women experience, which reinforce stereotypes about their leadership potential. Participants in the study reported that deeply ingrained gender expectations significantly impacted their academic experiences, limiting their roles to traditional societal norms. For example, one participant recalled being socialized into limited career paths, emphasizing how such strict expectations limit opportunities for leadership growth. Additionally, negative stereotypes about gender further slowed career advancement. Participants shared feelings of being seen as less capable than their male colleagues, a sentiment supported by existing research that highlights the phenomenon of "competency questioning" faced by Black women in academia (Griffin, 2019).

The study identified systemic barriers deeply rooted in institutional policies and cultural norms. Participants explained that existing frameworks often overlook their unique experiences, with one mentioning that institutional policies were not created with their needs in mind. The lack of representation and biased evaluation processes lead to their professional stagnation, reinforcing the systemic inequities present in academia (Matthew, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991b).

Mental Health and Well-Being

The emotional toll of systemic racism and gender bias appeared as a recurring theme throughout the study. Participants emphasized how navigating academia affected their mental

health, with one participant sharing significant health struggles related to prolonged stress. The idea of allostatic load—chronic stress causing physiological damage—highlights the urgent need to make mental health a key part of professional success (Jackson et al., 2020).

Resilience and Empowerment
Despite these challenges, study participants demonstrated remarkable resilience and empowerment. The narratives show that self-advocacy was crucial for navigating systemic barriers and that mentorship played a key role in their professional growth. Participants emphasized the importance of having advocates who can amplify their voices and support their career advancement, confirming existing research that highlighted the need for mentorship and sponsorship to overcome institutional barriers (Stanley & Lincoln, 2005).

Analysis and Recommendations
The findings highlighted the urgent need for institutional reforms to dismantle the systemic barriers blocking the career growth of Black women faculty. Institutions should adopt transparent evaluation processes, inclusive hiring practices, and structured mentorship programs to promote a more equitable academic environment that recognizes and values the contributions of Black women faculty. Furthermore, prioritizing mental health and well-being is essential for building resilience and empowerment within this group.

In conclusion, this study highlighted the pressing need for institutional reforms that promote equity and inclusion for Black women faculty at PWIs. By addressing the unique challenges that arise from the intersection of race and gender, institutions can foster a more supportive and equitable academic environment that promotes the career advancement of Black women faculty. Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies of institutional efforts and aim to quantify diversity-related labor to understand better the systemic barriers faced by this group, thereby guiding the development of more effective policies and practices.

Table 3: Themes and Categories

Research Questions	Superordinate Themes	Subthemes	Theoretical Framework Construct
RQ1: How do Black women faculty at PWIs perceive gender to influence their career development?	Gender Expectations	• Societal norms • Traditional gender roles	Constructs: • Societal norms • Traditional gender roles • Assertiveness and ambition Constraints: • Limited leadership opportunities • Perception of competence • Emotional and psychological toll
	Negative Stereotyping	• Perception of competence	

		• Gendered assumptions about authority	
	Challenges of Communication and Code-Switching	• Navigating professional norms • Managing tone and expression	
RQ2: How do Black women faculty at PWIs perceive race to influence their career development?	Double-Bind in Intersectionality of Race and Gender	• Navigating dual marginalization • Identity conflict	Constructs: • Racial hierarchy • Institutional policies • Cultural norms Constraints: • Discrimination and bias • Limited access to resources • Psychological distress
	Systemic Barriers in Academia	• Structural racism • Lack of institutional support	
	Mental Health and Well-Being	• Coping mechanisms • Work-life balance	
RQ3: How do Black women faculty at PWIs perceive the intersection of race and gender to influence their career development?	Resilience and Empowerment	• Overcoming obstacles Identity affirmation	Constructs: • Personal growth • Community support • Advocacy Constraints: • Systemic barriers • Lack of representation • Need for proactive measures
	Mentorship and Self-Advocacy	• Seeking guidance • Building networks	

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON STUDY RESULTS

The following recommendations are offered as a result of the study. First, it is essential to implement formal mentorship programs specifically designed for this demographic, facilitating connections between junior faculty and experienced mentors who can provide valuable insights into navigating academia and advancing their careers. Second, a thorough review of promotion and tenure criteria is crucial to ensure fairness and equity in the evaluation process; institutions should consider adopting blind review methods and enhancing diversity on tenure

committees to mitigate biases. Finally, institutions must develop and enforce inclusive policies that promote diversity at all levels, which include providing training for faculty and staff on equity issues and establishing accountability measures to assess the effectiveness of diversity initiatives.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

This study highlighted the need for institutional transformation to foster an inclusive academic environment. Policies that promote diversity and equity must be prioritized to enable Black women faculty to succeed in their careers. Institutional leaders must recognize the unique challenges faced by Black women faculty and commit to implementing strategies to overcome these barriers. This involves cultivating a culture of inclusion that values diverse perspectives and experiences while establishing pathways for professional growth and advancement.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the intersectional challenges faced by Black women faculty at PWIs, along with their resilience and strategies for success. Addressing these issues is essential for creating an inclusive academic environment that values diversity and promotes equity. The findings underscore the importance of institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion, as well as the need for ongoing dialogue and actions to support the careers of Black women faculty. This research contributed to the growing body of knowledge on intersectionality in academia and advocated for transformative changes that support marginalized faculty members in advancing their careers.

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