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Black women's leadership, persistence, and personal power

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Abstract. Black women are marginally represented in leadership positions at institutions of higher education in the United States. Black women in higher education leadership are confronted with microaggressions, stereotype threats, isolation, marginalization, and assumed incompetence, challenging their ability to persist in postsecondary service. The purpose of this research was to explore how Black women administrators at public colleges and universities in Florida have sustained their administrative roles and to evaluate whether their leadership persistence is upheld by personal power. The study is significant because the voices of a marginalized population are amplified, and insights into how Black women develop and leverage personal power to overcome internal and systemic barriers are provided. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was adopted for the research. Spearman's rho correlational coefficient was used to test the hypothesis. The Diamond Power Index® (DPI) survey collected quantitative data and semi-structured interviews captured qualitative data. The sample included 68 Black female administrators in public colleges and universities in Florida.

Keywords: Leadership persistence, personal power, Black women, higher education

Introduction

Black women are marginally represented in leadership positions at institutions of higher education in the United States. Literature aptly details steadfast adversities that challenge Black women seeking to ascend beyond traditional faculty and middle management roles in higher education (Chance, 2020; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Townsend, 2019; Verrier, 2021). Black women have admitted to experiencing limited mentorship and promotion opportunities, tokenism, invisibility, and race fatigue syndrome while attempting to advance their careers (Chance, 2022; Coker et al., 2018; Davis & Brown, 2017; Hinton, 2010). Scholars recount contemporary experiences of Black women professionals in institutions of higher education often highlighting the overt and covert injustices that have been funneled from generations of oppression and marginalization (Evans, 2007). For example, although segregation and the exclusion of Black people from institutions of higher education have been legislatively diminished, Black women continue to suffer ostracization and backlash manifested through racism, genderism, ageism, colorism, and the more recently acknowledged texturism which is discrimination resulting from the texture of one's hair (Asare, 2023; Chance, 2022; Hinton, 2010; Mayo, 2019; Williams, 2018). Notable scholars like Kimberlé Crenshaw and Black feminist thought pioneer Patricia Hill Collins acknowledged the attribution of social identities to the ongoing oppression of Black women

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in American society (Collins, 2009; Davis & Brown, 2017; Townsend, 2021). Black women are acquainted with the pangs of discrimination and adversity because they are categorized under two historically oppressed social identities-- "woman" and "Black." Scholars describe this conundrum as the "double jeopardy," wherein gender and race biases collide to create simultaneous oppression (Chance, 2022; Gause, 2021; Townsend, 2021).

Gender disparity in the U.S. is a longstanding issue in many professional industries. In business, there are notably fewer women in leadership and senior executive positions than men (Ballenger, 2010; Mayo, 2019). Women occupy only 15 percent of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) occupations (Chandler, 2020). Although women's presence in these industries has increased dramatically since the mid-20th century, and the female population now makes up 51 percent of the college-educated U.S. workforce, the advancement of women professionals into managerial and senior leadership roles has been glacial (Bibbs, 2019; NASA, 2023; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023).

The overlapping complexities of being Black and female, intermingled with the historical racial relegation of African Americans, create a double bind of negative experiences to be navigated by Black women in social and professional spaces (Townsend, 2021). Nevertheless, many Black women have adopted mechanisms for negotiating the harsh realities of their workplaces. Coping measures that congeal to form social support, mentorship, leadership development programs, resilience, purpose, and balance have helped women endure in times of trouble (Anderson, 2022; Coker et al., 2018; Jernigan, 2019; Nickerson, 2020; Roberts et al., 2018; Sales et al., 2020). Although several intrinsic and extrinsic factors are associated with Black women's leadership perseverance, their perceptions, development, and uses of personal power as a tool to combat adverse professional experiences and persist in executive roles are missing from contemporary scholarship.

Over the years, some Black women took on academic leadership roles through their relentless persistence and eventual career advancement within historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), while others proceeded with more entrepreneurial endeavors to establish schools specifically for African American students (Coker et al., 2018). In 1904, trailblazer Mary McLeod Bethune became the founding president of the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls, later named Bethune-Cookman University (Coker et al., 2018; Evans, 2007; Nickerson, 2020; Richardson, 2009). Some 50 years after Bethune's accomplishment, Willa Beatrice Player was selected as the first president of Bennett College, a four-year liberal arts college for women at the time of her appointment (Nickerson, 2020). Although Bethune and Player are celebrated and praised for their remarkable accomplishments, Black women have faced barriers and adversities since their early days as students and professionals within the academy that overtly and covertly perpetuated their oppression (Evans, 2007; Webster & Brown, 2019).

Racism, sexism, tokenism, favoritism, and invisibility are recognized barriers in literature specific to the experiences of Black women educators and administrators (Chance, 2022; Corneille et al., 2019; Sinclair-Chapman, 2019; Webster & Brown, 2019). Black women frequently find it difficult to circumvent these obstacles while enduring promotional denials, lack of trust, race fatigue, overworked, inequitable compensation, and disproportionate workloads (Loveless-Morris & Reid, 2018; Tevis et al., 2020). Furthermore, a lack of mentorship, strong social support, and inner stability make it difficult for Black women to trod the rocky grounds of administration in academia (Bibbs, 2019; Chance, 2022; Nickerson, 2020).

Understanding the causes of underrepresentation among Black women leaders in the academy warrants an examination of the impact of identity politics on the retention of Black women administrators. In Townsend's (2021) phenomenological study of the experiences of five African American female administrators in higher education, the term "identity politics" was used to generalize issues with Black women's difficulty showing up as their authentic selves, their dealings with microaggressions, and the added work responsibilities Black women assume to ensure minorities are represented in various campus

activities, also known as Black Tax. Townsend found identity politics to be a strong deterrent to Black women's continuation in academic leadership roles and recommended that higher education institutions implement retention practices, acknowledge the experiences of Black women faculty and administrators, and dedicate time to developing a campus culture that attracts and retains Black women faculty.

The leadership development of Black women is impeded by factors that supersede their control. Through auto-ethnographic accounts, Logan and Dudley (2019) recalled the experiences of two Black women leaders in higher education as they navigated the path to leadership and the maintenance of those leadership roles. Logan and Dudley pay particular attention to the gap in literature addressing the intersection of race and gender and how these factors impact the leadership development of Black women. Findings revealed that many Black women leaders are motivated by a desire to achieve social justice. Additionally, Black women leaders reported that the support they received from spirituality, emotional intelligence, self-care, and interpersonal relationships enabled them to persist in their roles. Moreover, Black women leaders were often hindered by discriminatory hiring practices and limited access to professional networks. Logan and Dudley recommended that institutions recognize the leadership potential of their Black female employees, support their efforts in leadership, promote inclusive environments, review hiring practices, and dismantle White male hegemonic structures that stymie Black women's succession in the academy.

Methodology

A mixed methods research design with an explanatory sequential approach was employed for the study. Explanatory sequential is a mixed methods design called a qualitative follow-up approach (Morgan, 2014) in which a researcher begins with a quantitative phase and proceeds to a qualitative phase based on the explicit results of the quantitative phase in order to explain the initial results based on mechanical "what" question and its numerical results in more depth based on humanistic "how" and "why" questions. The aim of the quantitative approach based on positivism is to test pre-determined hypotheses and produce generalizable results. These studies are useful for answering more mechanistic 'what?' questions. Qualitative studies based on post-modernism seek to provide illumination and understanding of complex psychosocial issues and are most useful for answering humanistic 'why?' and 'how?' questions. According to Creswell (2015), mixed method approaches to conducting research are gaining popularity and credibility in the sphere of scholarship and provide a means of responding to a research problem in a more robust way than could be accomplished using a single method. Furthermore, in addressing inquiries related to Black women leaders in the academy, Richardson (2009) promoted mixed method studies that analyze data from interviews and surveys, while Bean (2021) suggested that mixed method research be conducted in varied academic settings, such as private and public institutions, as the outcomes could contribute to more comprehensive views of women's leadership. The interpretive paradigm based on post-modernism is compatible with qualitative strand of mixed method research because according to hermeneutic assumption, it utilizes social science methods to study subject areas: face to face interview, participatory observations, real-life documents, focus group interviews based on knowledge nature of individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus (Guba & Lincoln, 2004; Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018; Wilson, 2002). The positivist paradigm leads inevitably to objective, quantifiable methods, the interpretivist paradigm points to methods that involve a qualitative inquiry-researcher and participant talking together, constructing a new reality together (Gunbayi, 2020).

Quantitative data was collected through the Diamond Power Index® (DPI), an 80-item self-assessment. Qualitative data was captured through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. The functionalist paradigm based on post-positivism is very compatible with the quantitative strand of mixed methods research because according to the realistic assumption, it utilizes natural science methods to study its subject areas: questionnaire, statistical analysis, test, measurement based on knowledge nature of nonfalsified hypothesis that are facts of law (Guba & Lincoln, 2004, Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018). When an objective approach based on knowledge nature of verified hypothesis that are established as facts of law

is used in the quantitative strand of mixed methods research, it can be stated that radical structuralist paradigm or functionalist paradigm and technical interest guide the quantitative aspect of the research which becomes realist, post-positivist, determinist and nomothetic.

Control for Researcher Bias

A key approach to controlling researcher bias during this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to engage in bracketing. Bracketing requires the researcher to set aside personal experiences and preconceptions to permit fresh knowledge about the phenomenon to enter the consciousness (Bibbs, 2019). In other words, the researcher approaches the phenomenon with an open, impressionable mind. As described by Moustakas (1994) and Creswell and Poth (2018), the process of epoche, or bracketing, requires the investigator to describe their own experiences with the phenomenon and eliminate their views from consideration before engaging the experiences of the study participants.

To understand the phenomenon of personal power from the perspectives of the research participants, the investigator will engage in ongoing reflection throughout the study and document experiences with personal power as a Black woman serving in the capacity of faculty and administrative manager at a predominantly white public college. During the data collection and analysis processes, a separate journal was used to document reflection, maintain objectivity, and capture any emotions, thoughts, and attitudes that could otherwise influence the data. Therefore, engaging in epoche before, during and after data collection averted assumptions and biases from influencing the study (Bibbs, 2019).

Anticipated Ethical Problems

It was anticipated that there could be some concern about confidentiality among study participants. Considering the target population will be relegated to 40 public colleges and universities within the state of Florida, some participants could be uneasy about being identified. Confidentiality concerns could also serve as potential deterrents from participating in the study. However, respect for participants is of utmost importance when conducting research that involves human subjects (Creswell, 2015). To ensure the benevolence, respect, and justice (Creswell, 2015; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979) of the research participants, standards and practices of the Florida A&M University (FAMU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) were followed. Additionally, participation was voluntary, and participants were provided a description of the research process before data collection began. Furthermore, no personally identifiable information were reported, and pseudonyms were used in the findings to protect the identity of each participant.

Hypothesis

One hypothesis, null and alternative was formulated for testing.
Ho1: There is no statistically significant relationship between the length of time in leadership and the personal power of Black women administrators in higher education.
H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between the length of time in leadership and the personal power of Black women administrators in higher education.

Research Questions

Three research questions were developed to extract the essence of leadership persistence and personal power among Black women administrators at institutions of higher education.

RQ1: How do Black women administrators in higher education develop their personal power? Particularly, what factors (i.e., social, cultural, professional, political) influence their development of personal power?

RQ2: How do Black women administrators in higher education use their personal power? Particularly, what factors (i.e., social, cultural, professional, political) influence their use of personal power?

RQ3: How do Black women administrators perceive personal power contributing to their leadership persistence? Particularly, what factors (i.e., social, cultural, professional, political) contribute to their leadership persistence?

Data Collection

This research was conducted with Black females in higher education institutions within the Florida College System and the State University System of Florida. The Florida College System is comprised of 28 public community and state colleges that serve nearly 650,000 students annually (Florida Department of Education, n.d.b). The State University System of Florida consists of 12 public universities and serves more than 430,000 students (Florida Board of Governors, n.d.). Collectively, these systems are comprised of member institutions that total 40 public colleges and universities. Among the 40 Florida public colleges and universities that were considered for the recruitment of participants, only one of those institutions was classified as a historically Black college and university (HBCU). The remaining institutions are predominantly white. Targeting a population of Black women leaders who serve in public, predominantly white institutions (PWIs) as opposed to HBCUs was not problematic because research has demonstrated that the experiences of Black women at PWIs and HBCUs are vastly different (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021). Particularly, Black women's experiences with gendered racism and racially derived institutional and structural barriers have been largely observed at PWIs (Chance, 2022; Logan & Dudley, 2019; Sinclair-Chapman, 2019; Tevis et al., 2020; Townsend, 2019; Webster & Brown, 2019). Though Black women encounter career adversity at HBCUs (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021), such barriers are more frequently associated with gender and are less likely to be racially centered. The saliency of Black women's experiences is more apparent at PWIs where their intersecting identities create a multiple minority status.

Target Population

The target population was comprised of Black women leaders who serve in public institutions of higher education within the Florida College System and the State University System of Florida. These positions of leadership included "top executive officers; senior institutional officers; academic deans; institutional administrators; heads of divisions, departments, and centers; and academic associate and assistant deans" (American Council on Education, 2019, p. 262). Fall 2021 data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) revealed that there were 445 Black women postsecondary managers within the 12-member institutions of the State University System of Florida. Additionally, the Florida College System reported a total of 152 Black female executives, administrators, and managers during the 2021-2022 academic year (Florida Department of Education, n.d.a). A total of 597 Black women were potentially eligible for the study.

Ethical Statement

It was anticipated that there could be some concern about confidentiality among study participants. Considering the target population will be relegated to 40 public colleges and universities within the state of Florida, some participants may be uneasy about being identified. Confidentiality concerns could also serve as potential deterrents from participating in the study. However, respect for participants is of utmost importance when conducting research that involves human subjects (Creswell, 2015). To ensure the benevolence, respect, and justice (Creswell, 2015; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979) of the research participants, standards and practices of the Florida A&M University (FAMU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) were followed. Additionally, participation was voluntary, and

participants were provided with a description of the research process before data collection began. Furthermore, no personally identifiable information was reported, and pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of each participant.

Limitations

Several limitations outside of the researcher's control are acknowledged. First, the specificity of the research setting and target population limits the potential generalizability of the results. Participants were drawn from the Florida College System and the State University System of Florida; therefore, the views expressed do not apply to all Black women administrators at postsecondary institutions across the United States. Secondly, researcher's bias, or the tendency of a researcher's personal opinions to influence the results (Creswell, 2015) was a potential limitation. However, to mitigate biased analysis and interpretation of the findings, the investigator journaled personal reflections throughout the research process to suspend judgment (Bibbs, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Delimitations

This research included Black women serving in administrative leadership roles – such as top executive officers, senior institutional officers, academic deans, institutional administrators, heads of divisions, departments, and centers, and academic associate and assistant deans (American Council on Education, 2019) at public institutions of higher education within Florida. Women who did not self-identify as Black or African American were excluded. Black women administrators who are not currently employed at a public college or university in Florida were also excluded.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was adopted for the quantitative data collection phase. Purposive sampling required the non-random, intentional selection of participants based on their ability to yield the most relevant data in accordance with direct knowledge of the phenomenon, theme, or concept, and their willingness to engage in the study (Yin, 2016). Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) affirmed the common practice of applying purposive sampling to mixed methods studies to maximize understanding of an underlying phenomenon.

Participants for the administration of the Diamond Power Index® (DPI) self-assessment were selected from a minimum of 10 percent of the target population. At least 60 completed DPI self-assessments were deemed adequate for the quantitative phase of this study. Individuals were invited to participate through the use of social media platforms (i.e., LinkedIn), available contact information listed on the websites of Florida colleges and universities, and professional state associations such as the American Council on Education (ACE) Women's Network of Florida, Florida Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (FLAGEP), Florida Health Information Management Association, and Sisters of the Academy (SOTA). To be eligible, participants had to self-identify as (a) Black or African American, (b) a woman, (c) a current postsecondary administrator (i.e., Director, Assistant Dean, Executive Director, Vice President, or President), and (d) a current administrator at a public college or university within the Florida College System or the State University System of Florida.

Maximum variation sampling is a purposeful approach that yields multiple perspectives of the phenomenon to represent the diversity of the world (Creswell, 2015). The intent was to select participants who held roles from each administrative category defined by the American Council on Education (2019). The sample included "top executive officers; senior institutional officers; academic deans; institutional administrators; heads of divisions, departments, and centers; and academic associate and assistant deans" (American Council on Education, p. 262) as well as those with varying years of leadership experience to capture multiple perspectives of the development and uses of personal power in higher education administration.

The Diamond Power Index® (DPI) was administered using Qualtrics, an online survey platform. Participants received invitations to complete the survey via email. At the initiation of the survey, participants were informed of confidentiality and the protection of survey data. Participants were also required to review and agree to a privacy policy before beginning the questionnaire. Qualitative data was collected from 11 participants in a one-on-one interview. Interviews were conducted to provide insight into Black women's perceptions of personal power and their development, application, and contribution to their leadership persistence in higher education. Participants were issued an Informed Consent for Adult Participation in the Interview. All interviews were recorded and transcribed using Zoom, an online video conferencing platform. The average interview length was 35 minutes. The interviews consisted of 13 open-ended questions. Each interview transcript was reviewed for accuracy by the researcher, and participants were given the option to review a copy of their interview transcript before data analysis.

Data were collected from Black women leaders at institutions of higher education within the Florida College System and the State University System of Florida (SUSF). A total of 102 survey responses were collected in Qualtrics. During the cleaning process, 34 cases were deleted because they did not meet the eligibility criteria or were not fully completed. Cleaning the data ensured that only valid and complete responses were included in the research. As a result, analyses were based on 68 respondents who completed the Diamond Power Index®.Participants were asked 10 demographic questions to capture their institutional type, administrative position title, years worked in higher education, years worked in their current leadership position, educational level, age, gender, marital status, race, and ethnicity. Thirty respondents worked at Community or Technical Colleges, 21 served at Predominantly White Institutions, nine served at Historically Black Colleges or Universities, and eight identified their institutional type as 'Other.' Most of the women administrators held titles as Executive Director or Director. Furthermore, 51.5% of respondents worked in higher education for 16 or more years, while 69% reported being in their current leadership position for zero to five years. Master's degrees were held by 48.53% of the respondents; 36.76% possessed terminal degrees; and 14.7% indicated a bachelor's, education specialist, or unspecified educational level. Most women leaders were between the ages of 45–54, and 100% identified as a woman/female. For the survey items regarding marital status, 50% indicated married, 27.94% were single/never married, 20.59% were divorced, and 1.47% preferred not to answer. More than 95% of the participants identified as Black/African American, and 4.41% as multiracial, 97.06% indicated they were not of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 1.47% were Hispanic, and 1.47% preferred not to answer. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

Demographic Items	Response Options	% (*n*)
The type of institution in which I work is:	Predominantly White Institution	30.88% (21)
	Historically Black College or University	13.24% (9)
	Community or Technical College	44.12% (30)
	Other	11.76% (8)
The current administrative leadership position I hold is:	Executive Director/Director	33.82% (23)
	Other	10.29% (7)
	Assistant Vice President/Chancellor/Provost	10.29% (7)
	Academic Dean	
	Associate Director	10.29% (7)
	Associate Vice President/Chancellor/Provost	7.35% (5)
	Associate Dean	7.35% (5)
	Assistant Dean	
	Assistant Director	5.88% (4)
	Vice President/Chancellor/Provost	4.41% (3)

Demographic Items	Response Options	% (*n*)
	Academic Department Chair	4.41% (3)
	President/Chancellor/Provost	2.94% (2)
		1.47% (1)
		1.47% (1)
The number of years I have worked in higher education are:	16+ years	51.47% (35)
	11-15 years	23.53% (16)
	6-10 years	14.71% (10)
	0-5 years	10.29% (7)
The number of years I have worked in my current position are:	0-5 years	69.12% (47)
	6-10 years	19.12% (13)
	11-15 years	7.35% (5)
	16+ years	4.41% (3)
The highest degree that I hold is:	MA/MS	48.53% (33)
	Ph.D./Ed.D.	36.76% (25)
	Other	10.29% (7)
	BA/BS	2.94% (2)
	Ed.S.	1.47% (1)
What is your age?	45-54	36.76% (25)
	35-44	32.35% (22)
	55-64	19.12% (13)
	25-34	8.82% (6)
	65+	2.94% (2)
What is your gender identity?	Woman / Female	100% (68)
What is your marital status?	Married	50.00% (34)
	Single/Never Married	27.94% (19)
	Divorced	20.59% (14)
	Prefer not to answer	1.47% (1)
What is your race?	Black or African American	95.59% (65)
	Multiracial	4.41% (3)
What is your ethnicity?	Not Hispanic or Latino	97.06% (66)
	Prefer not to answer	1.47% (1)
	Hispanic or Latino	1.47% (1)

Quantitative Results

To determine if a relationship existed between length of time in leadership and the personal power of Black women administrators in higher education, participants evaluated their personal power by responding to items on the Diamond Power Index® (DPI). All items related to five DPI scales: Capable Self, Aware Self, Purposeful Self, Self Improvement, and Self Protection. Responses from the DPI were originally computed as percentiles; however, since percentiles do not follow a normal distribution, a central assumption of the correlation would be violated. Therefore, the percentiles were converted to z-scores so the data could be standardized, compared directly, and used to determine how many standard deviations a score is from the mean (Andrade, 2021). Categorical data was gathered to preserve anonymity and represent the timeframes in which participants worked in their current positions. There were 47 (69.12%) respondents who reported being in their current leadership role for zero to five years, 13 (19.12%) who selected six to 10 years, five (7.35%) were in their leadership role for 11–15 years, and three (4.41%) respondents had been in their positions for more than 16 years (See Table 1). For each scale of the Diamond Power Index® (DPI), responses were grouped categorically by years of experience. Table 2 shows the z-score averages for the Capable Self, Aware Self, Purposeful Self, Self Improvement, and Self Protection scales by the years worked in the current leadership position. Category 11–15 years had the highest z-score averages for Capable Self, Aware Self, Purposeful Self, and Self Improvement (1.23, 0.57, 1.41, and 0.62, respectively). However, for the Self Protection scale, those

with 11–15 years of leadership experience had an average z-score of -0.42, which was lower than all the other groups.

Table 2.

Average of Z-scores By the Number of Years Worked in Current Leadership Position

Years Worked in Current Leadership Position	Capable Self (z-score)	Aware Self (z-score)	Purposeful Self (z-score)	Self Improvement (z-score)	Self Protection (z-score)
0-5 years (n = 47)	0.40	0.32	0.59	-0.03	.96
6-10 years (n = 13)	0.65	0.30	0.90	0.31	0.38
11-15 years (n = 5)	1.23	0.57	1.41	0.62	-0.42
16 or more (n = 3)	0.80	0.30	0.88	-0.99	0.97

Capable Self

Diamond Leadership (2018b) uses the Capable Self scale to measure one's self-efficacy, confidence, and perseverance to make an impact and achieve individual goals. The average woman with 11–15 years of leadership experience evaluated their Capable Self higher than those at other stages of leadership. The average woman with 11–15 years of leadership experience was more likely to show confidence in their capacity to achieve their goals, quickly find multiple solutions to problems, and rely on self-discipline and strong determination to persist in their roles.

Aware Self

Diamond Leadership (2018b) utilizes the Aware Self scale to evaluate a person's ability to engage in introspection, direct their attention, identify emotions and thoughts, and gain insight into how internal experiences shape behavior and actions. The average woman with 11–15 years of experience assessed their Aware Self higher than those in the other experience categories. These results indicate that those with 11–15 years of experience in leadership are more communicative about their emotions and thoughts and perceive themselves as independent and distinct from others and the tasks in which they are involved. Furthermore, ranking higher on the Aware Self scale implies that the women are more likely to consciously separate their identities from the work they do to live balanced lives.

Purposeful Self

The Purposeful Self scale reflects one's ability to handle and recover from challenges. One's Purposeful Self score generally signifies a positive worldview that is buoyed by the belief that life holds meaning and purpose. The participants with 11–15 years of leadership experience measured their Purposeful Self

higher than those in the other experience categories. This ranking implies that the average woman with 11–15 years of leadership experience is more resilient in the face of setbacks, maintains an optimistic attitude during tough times and draws meaning from the adversities, and experiences a greater sense of satisfaction in their personal and professional roles (Diamond Leadership, 2018b).

Self-Improvement

The Self Improvement scale is used to evaluate one's attitude toward personal growth. The average woman with 11–15 years of leadership experience evaluated their Self-Improvement higher than those in the other experience categories. These results indicate that the average woman with 11–15 years of leadership experience is more likely to value learning and feedback, possess a strong drive to improve, and put forth the efforts that produce change in themselves and the world around them (Diamond Leadership, 2018b).

Self-Protection

The Self Protection scale is used to measure the extent to which individuals guard their sense of identity against the judgments and feedback of others. The women with 16 or more years of leadership experience evaluated their Self Protection higher than those in the other experience categories. These results imply that the average woman with 16 or more years of leadership experience carries cautious and reluctant attitudes toward suggestions for improvement, is more skeptical about feedback and evaluations, and tends to resist change at higher levels than their counterparts in the study. Interestingly, the two groups that held the highest Self-Protection averages were those with zero to five years of leadership experience and those with 16 or more years. Meanwhile, those with six to 10 and 11–15 years of experience had significantly lower z-score averages (.38 and -.42, respectively). Low scores on the Self Protections scale indicate a high receptivity to feedback, readily embracing suggestions for change and viewing feedback as an opportunity to grow (Diamond Leadership, 2018b).

Hypothesis Testing

Spearman's rho was used to determine if a relationship existed between the length of time in leadership and the personal power of Black women administrators in higher education. Creswell (2015) encouraged the use of Spearman's rho for testing relationships between multiple categorical variables that assume a nonnormal distribution. The multivariate nature of personal power aligns with Spearman's rho measurement criteria. To conduct Spearman's rho, data were entered that included the number of years in the current leadership position and the z-scores of the five personal power scales: Capable Self, Aware Self, Purposeful Self, Self Improvement, and Self Protection. Additionally, data from "the number of years I have worked in my current role" was recoded from categorical ranges to a numeric variable as shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

SPSS Numerical Assignment of Years in Current Leadership Position

Categorical Data	Numerical Assignment
0-5 years	1
11-15 years	2
16+ years	3
6-10 years	4

The Spearman's rho test revealed a correlational coefficient of .145 for Capable Self, .010 for Aware Self, .206 for Purposeful Self, .134 for Self Improvement, and -.290 for Self Protection. Analysis of the *p* values for Capable Self (*p* = .238), Aware Self (*p* = .936), Purposeful Self (*p* = .092), Self Improvement (*p* = .277), and Self Protection (*p* = .016) were all greater than the 0.05 alpha. Creswell (2015) suggested that the best practice is to fail to reject the null hypothesis when the *p* value is greater than the alpha. Table 4 contains the Spearman's rho correlations, which display the strength and direction of association between each variable.

Table 4.

Spearman's rho Correlations

		The number of years I have worked in my current position are:	**Capable Self (z-score)**	**Aware Self (z-score)**	**Purposeful Self (z-score)**	**Self-Improvement (z-score)**	**Self-Protection (z-score)**
The number of years I have worked in my current position are:	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.145	.010	.206	.134	-.290*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.238	.936	.092	.277	.016
	N	68	68	68	68	68	68
Capable Self (z-score)	Correlation Coefficient	.145	1.000	.526**	.718**	.604**	-.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.238	.	<.001	<.001	<.001	.690
	N	68	68	68	68	68	68
Aware Self (z-score)	Correlation Coefficient	.010	.526**	1.000	.667**	.319**	-.184
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.936	<.001	.	<.001	.008	.133
	N	68	68	68	68	68	68
Purposeful Self (z-score)	Correlation Coefficient	.206	.718**	.667**	1.000	.467**	-.179
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.092	<.001	<.001	.	<.001	.145
	N	68	68	68	68	68	68
Self-Improvement (z-score)	Correlation Coefficient	.134	.604**	.319**	.467**	1.000	-.088

		The number of years I have worked in my current position are:	Capable Self (z-score)	Aware Self (z-score)	Purposeful Self (z-score)	Self-Improvement (z-score)	Self-Protection (z-score)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.277	<.001	.008	<.001	.	.476
	N	68	68	68	68	68	68

A multi-phase explication process was considered for investigating the qualitative data derived from one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Inspired by Hycner's (1985) phenomenological analysis process, the explication entailed: (a) transcribing the interview data, (b) phenomenological reduction and bracketing, (c) delineating units of meaning, (d) clustering units of meaning to generate themes, (e) summarizing, validating, and modifying each interview, (f) identifying general and unique themes, and (g) writing a composite summary that reflects the context from which the themes emerged (Groenewald, 2004).

Descriptive Findings

Qualitative data was gathered from 11 participants who self-identified as Black or African American women currently serving as higher education administrators. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym using the Greek alphabet to preserve anonymity. The names selected were Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon, Zeta, Eta, Theta, Iota, Kappa, and Lambda. The most prevalent age range among the participants was 35–44 years old. Approximately 73% of the women held master's degrees. Although maximum variation sampling was adopted to select cases that varied from each other as much as possible in terms of years of experience, the majority (82%) of the participants had been in their current leadership role for zero to five years (See Table 5).

Table 5.

Demographics of Qualitative Sample

Pseudonym	Age Range	Degree Level	Number of Years Worked in Current Position	Number of Years Worked in Higher Education
Alpha	35-44	MA/MS	6-10 years	6-10 years
Beta	35-44	MA/MS	0-5 years	16 or more years
Gamma	55-64	Ph.D./Ed.D.	0-5 years	16 or more years
Delta	35-44	MA/MS	6-10 years	11-15 years
Epsilon	25-34	MA/MS	0-5 years	0-5 years
Zeta	45-54	Ph.D/Ed.D.	0-5 years	16 or more years
Eta	25-34	MA/MS	0-5 years	0-5 years
Theta	45-54	MA/MS	0-5 years	16 or more years
Iota	45-54	Other	0-5 years	11-15 years
Kappa	25-34	MA/MS	0-5 years	6-10 years
Lambda	35-44	MA/MS	0-5 years	11-15 years

The participants served in a variety of administrative leadership positions, with nearly half of them holding the title of Executive Director/Director. Other positions included Assistant Director, Associate Vice President/Chancellor/Provost, and Academic Dean. Two participants selected "Other" as their administrative role was not listed in the demographic questionnaire. Tables 6 and 7 show additional demographics of the participants with respect to their various leadership positions and institution types.

Table 6.

Administrative Leadership Positions of Qualitative Sample

Administrative Leadership Position	% (*n*)
Academic Dean	9.09% (1)
Assistant Director	18.18% (2)
Associate Vice President/Chancellor/Provost	9.09% (1)
Executive Director/Director	45.45% (5)
Other	18.18% (2)

Table 7.

Institutional Type of Qualitative Sample

Institutional Type	% (*n*)
Community or Technical College	36.36% (4)
Historically Black College or University	27.27% (3)
Predominantly White Institution	18.18% (2)
Other	18.18% (2)

Explication of the Qualitative Data

The qualitative portion of the research was guided by three questions: RQ1: How do Black women administrators in higher education develop their personal power? RQ2: How do Black women administrators in higher education use their personal power? and RQ3: How do Black women administrators perceive personal power contributing to their leadership persistence? Data from the qualitative interviews were explicated using a reflexive thematic approach as described by Braun (2021). Braun's recommended six-phased analytical process included familiarization with the data through multiple readings, generating initial codes for statements in the interviews, generating themes by aggregating meaning and meaningfulness across the dataset, reviewing the themes to determine functionality in the research, defining and naming the themes, and generating a report. Themes emerged for each research question and surfaced throughout the interviews are presented next.

Introductory Questions

Interviews began with four introductory questions which allowed the participants to reflect on their experiences in higher education and share their perspectives about the research problem. When asked about their initial attraction to higher education, most of the participants shared that invitations to work in higher education were extended to them through job offers. Others commented that they fell into higher education, while some stated they were inspired by their families and community to give back.

The second introductory question was: What path did you take to get to your current position? While responses to this question varied, most participants indicated they sought advancement opportunities. Others shared that although they started in lower-level positions in higher education, they left their roles to explore opportunities in other industries and then desired to return to academia. Responses to this question varied, too, with each participant indicating career advancement led to their current role in higher education.

The third question asked participants: Have there been any barriers or obstacles that have hindered your career advancement? The responses to this question varied but were distinctively related to the barriers identified throughout the literature. Participants identified age and lack of experience, health, workplace culture, social identities, parenting, being the only, and self as hindrances to their career advancement (Bibbs, 2019; Chance, 2022; Gabriel et al., 2020; Griffin, 2016; Nickerson, 2020).

The final question was: Do you believe there is an underrepresentation of Black women in higher education leadership? There was unanimity among the participants as all believed an underrepresentation of Black women in higher education leadership exists; however, their explanations as to why varied. Most indicated that underrepresentation existed because Black women are excluded from senior leadership roles. Others suggested that the history and culture of institutions of higher education, lack of mentorship, the nature of the job, being a member of the sandwich generation, and social perceptions of Black women contribute to the dearth of Black women in higher education leadership, all of which correspond with previous findings in the literature.

Research Question 1: How do Black women administrators in higher education develop their personal power? Particularly, what factors (i.e., social, cultural, professional, political) influenced the development of their personal power?

Research Question 1 was designed to identify the factors that influence the development of personal power among Black women administrators. Three interview questions were posed: 1a) What does personal power mean to you? 1b) When did you first become aware of your personal power? and 1c) Who or what has influenced the development of your personal power? Three themes were derived from the interview questions: Ownership of one's strength, Empowerment as a youth, and Grown at home.

Interview Question 1a: What does personal power mean to you?

The theme for Interview Question 1a was Ownership of one's strength. This theme is evident in that most of the women administrators described their personal power as being an inner resource of strength that no one could take away. Participants explained that their ability to control how they are represented in the workplace, wield their control, and govern their affairs characterizes their personal power. Several participants also stated that personal power is inner confidence that constitutes their ability to influence change, thus enforcing the belief that it is self-governed.

Comparative Definitions of Personal Power

Diamond's (2016) definition of personal power as "one's inner self-sourced sense of authority that remains stable and durable regardless of the outer situation" (p. 222) served as the literary basis for this research. Throughout the interview process, eleven participants were asked to self-define personal power in Interview Question 1a without being provided with a formal definition. Although each interviewee used different language to express their meaning of personal power, all the definitions captured the essence of what was described in the literature. Particularly, interviewee Theta's definition aligned with Diamond's (2016) as both sources describe personal power as self-derived confidence. Theta stated that personal power means ownership of one's strength. Ownership of one's trajectory. Ownership of one's attitude . . . . "It's the belief that the thing that you want to accomplish you can. You can because you believe so. You can because we are willing to do whatever it takes to reach that goal, to obtain that thing . . . You believe in yourself . . . . Personal power is that that thing that somebody can't take from you . . . It is yours to do with it, to win with it as you as you see fit.

Interviewee Epsilon's description also agreed with the literature. Epsilon said that I feel like personal power is power that no one can take away. It's empowering yourself and not looking for validation from others and looking deep inside yourself for that validation and reassurance that you got this, that you're that girl.

Other interviewees described personal power as confidence (Eta), control (Delta), personal being (Beta), wielding self-control (Iota), motivation (Lambda), achievement (Kappa), influence (Alpha), self-belief (Zeta), and autonomy (Gamma). All the definitions align with Diamond's (2016) and depict personal power as a deep internal source of strength that is rooted in self-awareness, resilience, and inner

authority. Moreover, the definitions provided by the interviewees also align with the researcher's individual interpretation of personal power: The spirit within that serves as one's inner cheerleader and fuels endurance, perseverance, and stability.

Interview Question 1b: When did you first become aware of your personal power?

The theme for Interview Question 1b was Empowerment as a youth. This theme surfaced as dominant among the responses because most respondents shared narratives from their childhood. Gamma and Epsilon learned about their personal power through the encouraging words of their families. When answering Interview Question 1b, participant Gamma stated, "I'm a well-loved, spoiled rotten child of God who came into the world knowing just what the people that loved me said, 'You're amazing.' And I believed them." Epsilon supported the theme by stating: So, my mom, every day before school, would get us dressed and get us ready for school, and she would always speak to us about she's also an evangelist, so she always goes to God – and talks about how I'm a princess, and you know, hold your head high and do your best."

Other participants related personal power to early signs of leadership. Alpha stated, "So even when I was a kid, I would be like, I see a problem and I want to solve it." Theta remarked, "I think it has always been in me since I was a kid. I've been on my own since I was 15, so you have to have a little bit of personal power in order to have survived." Overall, the participants expressed awareness of their personal power at varying stages of their youth.

Interview Question 1c: Who or what has influenced the development of your personal power?

The theme for Interview Question 1c was Grown at home. Eight of the 11 women administrators described aspects of their upbringing that aided in the development of their personal power. Participants credited certain characteristics of their parents as factors that influenced their personal power. Parental characteristics such as hard work, civic leadership, being a "go-getter," and the ability to instill purpose and identity into their children were noted. Participants were inspired to develop their personal power by seeing it modeled before them and by being affirmed by their parents, thus supporting the theme that personal power is grown at home.

Research Question 2: How do Black women administrators in higher education use their personal power? Particularly, what factors (i.e., social, cultural, professional, political) influence the use of their personal power?

Research Question 2 sought understanding into the ways Black women administrators use their personal power in higher education careers while gaining perspective into the factors that influence or impede its usage. Two interview questions were asked that related to the research question, 2a) How have you used your personal power in your leadership career? and 2b) Are there any factors that have impeded your use of personal power? Two themes surfaced from the interview questions: Speaking up and speaking out, and I don't always agree, but I still get results.

Interview Question 2a: How have you used your personal power in your leadership career?

The theme for Interview Question 2a was Speaking up and speaking out. This theme represented most of the respondents who expressed that they use personal power in their leadership role to advocate for change and vocalize their suggestions for process improvement within their institutions. To support this, Zeta said, "I have used it to lead changes. I didn't wait for other people to tell me what we needed." Respondents expressed that they were powerful when advocating for themselves and their colleagues instead of waiting for others' approval or permission.

Descriptive Uses of Personal Power

As demonstrated by the responses of the eleven interviewees, personal power is used in a myriad of ways. The interviewees reported using personal power to advocate for innovation within departments (Alpha), advocating change (Delta), speaking up about processes and avoiding compromise (Eta), leading change and teaching (Zeta), becoming more receptive to others and navigating tough times (Beta), empowering others (Iota), being a role model (Theta), influencing others to tap into their personal power (Gamma), creating spaces for communication (Lambda), and relationship building (Kappa). As demonstrated, when actively applied, personal power is a highly versatile and dynamic force teeming with the potential to create transformative impact across various contexts.

Interview Question 2b: Are there any factors that have impeded your use of personal power?

The theme that arose from interview Question 2b is I don't always agree, but I still get results. When asked to identify and describe any factors that have hindered the use of personal power, situations involving institutional policies, supervisors, and senior leadership were discussed. It was common among the respondents that some rules and regulations made it difficult for them to fully exercise their personal power. For example, Theta said, well, obviously, you know, you work in a place where there are rules and regulations and things that you certainly can't do. That's what I would say. We don't always agree with all the rules and with all the regulations that are the frameworks of any institution, college, or otherwise. So, that's what I would say. Just rules and regulations that I don't necessarily agree with, you know. Still stay within the boundaries, but I'm known to bend things a little bit, if they are impediments, to kind of move them out of the way a little bit to get done what we need to get done. Furthermore, respondents noted that those with authority over them often had the final say. Participant Eta shared: I think . . . . the only factor is like not being the top dog. So, not being the person that's making all the rules. As much as I want to say . . . . I advocate for these things, and I fight for whatever, but like, if I'm not the final say so, there's somebody I need to advocate for.

Similarly, Beta remarked, "I can steer the ship, but if he tells me. . . . get up. I gotta get up."

While professional factors like institutional policies and regulations, organizational culture, and limited authority and decision-making power served as impediments to their use of personal power in leadership, the participants found creative ways to navigate obstacles. They often discovered alternative routes, drew on their organizational relationships, or allowed others to take credit for decisions when it was necessary. Beta stated assuredly that you don't have to put my name in lights. You don't have to put me on nothing. No marquee . . . . I know what I do, and I'm confident in the numbers that I give . . . . I don't have to have the pomp and circumstance. Regardless of the barriers they faced, the Black women administrators used their personal power to overcome challenges and move forward progressively for the greater good of the institution, often at the sacrifice of their own recognition.

Research Question 3: How do Black women administrators in higher education perceive personal power contributing to their leadership persistence? Particularly, what factors (i.e., social, cultural, professional, political) contribute to their leadership persistence?

The aim of Research Question 3 was to determine to what degree Black women administrators perceived personal power contributing to their leadership persistence in higher education and to obtain descriptions of other influential factors. This question was addressed using two interview questions: 3a) What do you attribute to your ability to persist in higher education leadership? And 3b) Do you believe your personal power has contributed to your persistence in leadership? Two themes resulted from the interview questions: Being clear of my why and the fire to keep going and growing.

Interview Question 3a: What do you attribute to your ability to persist in higher education leadership?

Responses to Interview Question 3a were shared among the women leaders. The participants each expressed a clear sense of purpose in their roles and attributed their commitment, passion, love for the work, and satisfaction with the outcomes they achieved to their persistence in leadership. The magnitude

of their purpose was reinforced by strong relationships and supportive networks that served as anchors during challenging times. Social factors, such as faith (Lewis, 2022; Richardson, 2009) and the encouragement they received from friends, family, and mentors, also played a crucial role in sustaining their leadership persistence. Alpha remarked, "I have to go back to that book, Start with Why. You really have to remember your cause every single day," and explained how being clear about her purpose has helped her overcome challenging times. Respondents also spoke about the impact relationships have on their ability to persist in higher education. Lambda shared: I think I'm very lucky that I have really great relationships. Like I said people capital is important, but I think relationships with those people that you met, and . . . . actually like building that relationship with people goes a long way. And what I leverage is, when I'm weak, I can tap into someone who's strong and vice versa. That certainly helps . . . motivationally. The responses give insight into the ways in which meaningful relationships not only provide emotional support for women in leadership but also serve as a significant source of resilience and motivation, giving leaders the push they need when facing difficult and trying times in their careers.

Interview Question 3b: Do you believe your personal power has contributed to your persistence in leadership?

Interviewees were asked if they believed personal power had contributed to their leadership persistence, the response was with a unanimous "Yes!" The women provided several explanations that gave insight into their perceptions of how personal power has aided them in continuing in leadership. Personal power was seen to serve as a catalyst that empowered them to overcome obstacles, remain steadfast in their leadership, and leverage their experiences to fuel personal and professional growth. By tapping into their inner strength, they were equipped to excel in their careers and evolve into more capable, impactful leaders who committed themselves to their communities and fulfilling the missions of their respective institutions of higher education. Regarding personal power contributing to growth, Kappa said: But truly the ability or the things that I have been through with this institution. How I've excelled here. What I've learned in the kid . . . . the 20-something-year-old kid . . . . that walked in these doors five years ago is not who you see today. It's an amazing transformation . . . . that has helped me to continue to move forward and to continue to give to this institution; to give to our students and continue in higher education because I know that I've come this far, and I know I can go even further.

Beta also reflected on using personal power as a tool to help her remain persistent in her personal and professional growth: My persistence in continuing to want to change and increase my professional acumen, and the growth in . . . . me being that professional . . . . I'm navigating through that every day. Now I'm more reserved . . . because I know that I'm just continuing to grow. So . . . . if I want to continue to be in this seat . . . . it's personal and professional, and I get it. But it's still who you are as a person, and I feel like I'm going to continue to grow.

Lambda described personal power as being an inner fire that drives her to persist through systemic opposition: Leveraging those relationships is helpful, but you still have to have the fire to keep going, especially when you work for a public institution. You have . . . . budget constraints, you have legislation you have to be mindful of, you have political climates you have to navigate through, and then you have the institution of this higher ed in general that has issues with classism, elitism, you know, wrapped up in it. And so that's difficult. You have to be really motivated to be like, 'I want to . . . . keep going up in this. I have a place or I have a mission . . . . a calling to serve. And so I'm gonna still, you know, attempt to grow in the leadership way . . . . But your personal power . . . . it's really what's gonna get you through to keep trying, keep applying, keep interviewing, and keep doing professional development for growth."

Qualitative Summary

Themes that emerged from the qualitative phase were: (a) Ownership of one's strength, (b) Empowerment as a youth, (c) Grown at home, (d) Speaking up and speaking out, I don't always agree, but I still get results, (f) Being clear of my why, and (g) The fire to keep going and growing. The

perspectives of the administrators support findings in the literature that there is an underrepresentation of Black women in higher education leadership roles. However, the causative factors varied among the respondents. Additionally, for those who were in leadership, their ability to persist in their roles can be attributed to the development and ownership of personal power. Personal power acts as a source of confidence, strength, and drive that enables women to overcome challenges, break barriers, and lead with purpose.

Conclusion

Overall, the personal power of Black women administrators in higher education is deeply rooted in their upbringing and life experiences. Rather than relying solely on the power that comes with traditional job titles (Tevis et al., 2020), the social and cultural foundation laid by their families and communities early in life played a pivotal role in shaping their confidence, resilience, and sense of worth. Their professional successes and leadership abilities are reflections of the strong, supportive environments that helped shape their identities and capabilities long before they filled formal leadership roles (Coker, 2018).

Although Black women face significant challenges in exercising their authority while in leadership (Niemann et al., 2020; Tevis et al., 2020), they utilize their personal power as a transformative force to overcome obstacles they experience. Particularly, Black women leverage advocacy, initiative, strategic adaptability, and relational power to navigate systemic barriers and create opportunities for advancement and change.

Moreover, Black women draw significant strength from their sense of purpose, support networks, and personal power, all of which contribute to their leadership persistence. Their ability to navigate challenges and grow as leaders is profoundly tied to these internal and external resources (Anderson, 2022; Coker et al., 2018; Jernigan, 2019; Nickerson, 2020; Roberts et al., 2018; Sales et al., 2020). This interplay of resilience, purpose, and support underscores the enduring impact of these factors on their leadership journey.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Recommendations for future practice are provided to guide institutions and leadership development programs in recognizing the importance of fostering purposeful leadership, creating supportive networks, and empowering individuals to tap into their personal power for sustained growth and impact. Institutions can better support the ongoing growth of Black women administrators, prevent burnout, and ensure they continue to thrive in leadership roles by addressing the unique challenges that Black women leaders face at different stages of leadership. For example, actions like career renewal programs, resilience training, mentorship, and nontraditional leadership pathways can help Black women leaders stay confident, purposeful, and committed to their work while contributing to the institution in new ways.

Additionally, when designing leadership programs, consideration should be given to the awareness that Black women administrators cultivate personal power largely through cultural and familial influences. Institutions should take a more holistic approach to leadership development by integrating personal history, cultural factors, and community support to create empowering environments that nurture Black women leaders at every stage of their careers. By embracing a more comprehensive measure of leadership development, institutions can cultivate an atmosphere where Black women are empowered by their narratives, surrounded by supportive communities, and thrive as administrators.

By understanding that Black women rely on advocacy, internal drive, and relational power throughout their professional careers, institutions should empower them to succeed while dismantling institutional opposition that could hinder the growth and development of human capital in the process. Creating forums where current and aspirant Black women leaders can have a space to express their ideas and experiences can help create an environment where Black women leaders thrive and have their contributions valued (Pillay, 2020; Webster & Brown, 2019).

Recommendations for Future Research

Three opportunities for future research emerged from this study. The first recommendation is to use an explanatory mixed methods research design and expand the qualitative phase by increasing the sample size to a broader range of participants. The study can be achieved by conducting interviews with Black women leaders at various stages of their leadership careers, including those with more than five years of experience, to gain a deeper understanding of the leadership dynamics and challenges faced by Black women in higher education.

A second recommendation is to explore the psychological and emotional toll of long-standing leadership spans, which should be accomplished using a longitudinal research design that follows women leaders throughout their leadership journeys. The study marked a decline in leadership self-confidence, self-awareness, purpose drive, and growth-willingness after 15 years in leadership. This decline warrants further exploration into the psychological and emotional effects an extensive leadership tenure can have on an individual and the identification of factors that may contribute.

A final recommendation is to include women from colleges and universities in other states, using a replicated mixed methods research design. By broadening the scope, researchers could identify variations in the challenges faced and the strategies used by Black women administrators, as well as discover commonalities that unite their leadership journeys. This outlook could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape the personal power and leadership persistence of Black women administrators in higher education.

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Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest has been declared by the author.

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Japera K. Barnes, Paul D. Collins, Warren C. Hope contributed equally to the completion of this manuscript: Conceptualization, data curation, investigation, methodology, writing original draft, review & editing.

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Ethics Approval

In the writing process of the study titled "**Black women's leadership, persistence, and personal power**", the rules of scientific, ethical and citation were followed; it was undertaken by the author of this study that no falsification was made on the collected data. "Journal of Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research and Editor" had no responsibility for all ethical violations to be encountered, and all responsibility belongs to the author and that the study was not submitted for evaluation to any other academic publishing environment.

Institutional review board (IRB) approval

This research project was approved on January 10, 2024, by Angela Thornton, IRB Chair, Florida A&M University. Reference number 114-23.

Data Availability Statement

Anonymized data from this study can be made available on request from paul.collins@famu.edu.