ADMINISTRATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON DESIGNING PROGRAMMATIC SUPPORT FOR BLACK COLLEGIATE WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Sosanya Jones
Howard University

Ayana Tyler Hardaway
University of California, San Diego

Abstract

This descriptive qualitative study provides a greater understanding about the approaches, challenges, and strategies associated with developing and sustaining affinity programs for Black collegiate women in higher education. Using a conceptual framework based on the theories of program planning and intersectionality, this paper offers in-depth insight from four student affairs administrators who have developed and currently manage affinity programs designed to improve the social and academic development of Black collegiate women. Contextual forces and strategies that affect the sustainability of these affinity programs are explored. Implications for adopting these affinity programs and recommendations for future study are provided, with an emphasis on institutional responsibility to support Black collegiate women.

Keywords: affinity programs, Black women, program administration

Black women are participating in higher education at much higher rates than previously, with their enrollment rates rising three-fold since 1970 (Black Women's Roundtable Public Policy Network, 2015; Blalock & Sharpe, 2012).). With higher participation rates, it is important that institutions strengthen and broaden support for these women. Affinity programs for Black women have been shown to be an effective way of increasing engagement and feelings of belonging, which are important towards supporting retention and matriculation (Rosales, et al., 2003). However, there is little information available for student affairs administrators who wish to design and manage this type of programmatic support. To fill this gap, we designed a descriptive qualitative study with the following objectives: (1) glean what program administrators identify as the most pressing needs for Black collegiate women; (2) identify what programmatic approaches these administrators use to address these identified needs; (3) highlight the contextual and institutional challenges that arise when facilitating affinity programs for this population; and (4) identify what strategies program administrators use to mitigate these challenges and sustain their programs.

Literature Review

A college student's interpersonal environment can have a significant impact on a sense of belonging, safety, support, and development (Museus et al., 2018). Discrimination, microaggressions, alienation, and social isolation can negatively impact a student's academic performance and ability to participate in a campus community fully (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Hussain & Jones, 2021). Black women often experience these types of negative stressors related to both their racial and gendered identities as well as invisibility resulting in a lack of support systems and a lack networks, which limits their mentoring and research opportunities (Walkington, 2017). When thoughtfully designed, affinity programs can serve as a buffer against negative environmental challenges while nurturing valuable skills that can help Black women successfully navigate college and beyond.

Affinity Programs for Black Women

Black women 's identity development and social integration are often strongly influenced by both their race and gender (Henry et al., 2011; Mims & Williams, 2020). Tailored programming designed to support their development and address the challenges they face can help them connect to others who share their experiences and equip them to better navigate future challenges. Empirical studies on affinity programs for Black women is sparse but have demonstrated that these programs have a positive impact on the well-being and adjustment of Black collegiate women. For example, Covington (2010) and Seawell et al. (2012) found that tailored support for Black women had a buffering effect on depressive symptoms, increased their self-esteem, and helped prepare them for future academic and career goals.

Affinity programs for Black women should be designed and implemented in ways that carefully consider the intersectionality of race and gender, are culturally relevant, and are responsive to students' needs (Lindsay-Dennis, et al., 2011). Institutional support for these programs is also vital. Allen's (2019) and Croom's et. al. (2017) studies on "Sister Circle" meetings among collegiate Black women highlight the role of institutional agents in disrupting oppressive forces permeating within educational systems and practices by creating climates that support the persistence and success of Black women attending PWIs. Allen (2019) describes six institutional attributes that played a critical role in creating a more inclusive campus climate: 1) moving in the right direction toward inclusion, 2) intentional programs/initiatives for collegiate Black women; 3) intentional programs/initiatives with diversity as a priority, 4) crafted spaces for collegiate Black women, 5) intentional funding, and 6) moving beyond sympathy to empathy.

While recent studies are helpful, there are still very few guides for student affairs administrators about how to design and facilitate affinity spaces and programs for Black collegiate women. In particular, there is a lack of information about what approaches administrators should use to address particular needs Black collegiate women have, what challenges administrators can expect to face as they design and implement these programs, and what strategies they can use to overcome these challenges to sustain their efforts.

Researcher Positionality

As Black women who have participated extensively in higher education, we have personally experienced, observed, and been consulted about racial microaggressions, exclusion from academic groups, and outright name-calling of Black women (Hardaway, et. al., 2019). Therefore, we held a few assumptions before designing this study: 1) Black women in college experience isolation as a result of their racial and gendered identities; and 2) student affairs administrators that support Black collegiate women may also face unique challenges directly related to serving this population. With these assumptions in mind, we sought to create a conceptual framework that would help us frame this study from the perspective of student affairs administrators who design and manage affinity programs for Black collegiate women.

Conceptual Framework

Social support theories have been applied to education and marginalized students to theorize how stressors such as racial discrimination and feelings of isolation caused by racial exclusion weaken the academic and social vitality of a student (Awais & Yali, 2013; McLaughlin, & Randolph, 2012). We chose a social support theory that addresses the intentions of providers of support who engage in program planning for Black collegiate women. The principles of educational program

planning have a general five-step structure: (a) assess learners' needs, (b) define objectives based on these needs, (c) identify learning experiences to meet the objectives, (d) organize the learning experiences, and (e) evaluate the program in terms of the stated objectives (Cervero & Wilson, 1994). Additionally, we used intersectionality as a lens to 1) help make sense of how social support theory can be used specifically to understand the specific approaches, challenges, and responses for administrators who lead these kinds of affinity programs and 2) to advocate for an approach toward institutional transformation that centers Black women's experiences (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Patton & Njoku, 2019).

Intersectionality was conceptualized by Black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991). Crenshaw posits that because of the intersections of race, gender, and class, within a historically patriarchal and racist society, Black women are exposed to exponential forms of oppression and marginalization that often renders them invisible (Bernal, 2002; Crenshaw, 1991). More recently, scholars such as Harris & Patton (2019) have advocated that intersectionality theory should be used more broadly to advance transformative social justice.

Applying the social support theory framework and an intersectionality lens, we constructed a descriptive qualitative study to explore the steps taken by student affairs administrators to develop and manage these programs.

Methodology

Descriptive qualitative studies seek to provide a detailed description and summary of what participants say about a particular issue (Thorne, et al., 2002). For our descriptive qualitative study, we used purposeful sample with the following criteria: (1) participants had to be student affairs administrators; (2) lead an affinity group in higher education that served at least 50% Black undergraduate women; and (3) have at least two years

of experience as a program leader. The criterion of at least two years of experience established a baseline of experience and ensured that all affinity programs included in this study demonstrated some promise of sustainability. It also allowed seasoned and fairly new student affairs administrators to participate in this program.

Using semi-structured protocols, we interviewed four program student affairs administrators who lead affinity programs for supporting Black collegiate women. According to Crouch (2006) small sample sizes in qualitative research allows the researcher to probe deeper and provide a rich description of experiences, perspectives, and phenomenon. In order to establish trustworthiness, rigor, and credibility, we paid particular attention to (1) our theoretical position; (2) the congruence between our methodology and methods; (3) the analytic lens we chose for analysis; and (4) used member-checking of transcripts for all interviews (Caelli, et al., 2008).

The program administrators in this study all work within student affairs ad represent four-year predominantly White institutions, varying in institutional type. All participants were women, three out of four self-identified as Black, and the fourth identified as Afro-Latina. Each participant, their program, institutional type, geographic context, and self-reported racial identity can be found in Table 1. Each administrator was interviewed twice, for 30-45 minutes each time.

Analysis

It was important that we conducted data analysis that honored the voices of those interviewed while using our conceptual framework. Therefore, in order to check against our assumptions and biases and to guard against any inclination to make the data "fit", we conducted a multi-layered analysis that included using the qualitative software program Dedoose to code the data and analyze the result's outputs, looking at individual interviews before comparing interviews. As we began to code the data in Dedoose, it informed our analytical questions for examining the data, which in turn informed the codes we developed. We identified aspects of commonality and difference, informing our analysis. A priori and open coding techniques were used to analyze the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This consisted of looking across transcripts for patterns related to our research questions, social support theory, and emergent themes. We also searched within the data for verbal illustrations of the codes and took note of the frequency with which particular codes were applied.

For example, using our conceptual framework, we create a priori codes based on principles of educational program planning's five-step structure and intersectionality theory, such as assessment of learner needs, defining objectives; organizing learning experiences, program evaluation, as well as student challenges and needs that were both raced *and* gendered. Using open coding, we captured emergent strategies employed by administrators to address student needs and other outcomes we had not anticipated. In total, we initially created 34 codes that were reduced using axial coding to decrease redundancy. Using our new refined coding scheme, we were able to look across data to develop emergent themes related to our objectives.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

We used triangulation in data collection by drawing upon interviews, document reviews, and post-interview memos while bearing in mind that some differences were data in themselves. This evolved into a natural interrater reliability check between researchers, where we identified gaps in perspectives in our coding. To increase trustworthiness and rigor, we conducted a formal interrater reliability check using a representative sample of interviews. Discrepancies between coders were discussed, and a second round of interrater reliability was calculated using two different interview transcripts. During this stage, there was a remarkably high agreement rate for all coding. Finally, we conducted member checks, sharing the transcript

with all participants to address any discrepancies. To increase the transferability, we have provided a detailed and "thick" description of the experiences of these administrators as well as themes that can be applied and examined for future research on this topic.

Findings

Data collection revealed that program administrators both informally and formally assess the needs of their population using surveys, questionnaires, and conversations. The vast majority of assessment, however, is informal and formative and used to establish program objectives and activities.

Assessing Needs

All of the program administrators conveyed a clear understanding of what their target population needed and how their program's goals and services could meet those needs. Three major needs were identified: (a) social support, (b) mentoring, and (c) empowerment.

Social support. Social support was the most prominent need identified and was described in terms of providing more positive interactions between Black women for the purpose of improving the individual and the community of Black women as a whole. Some higher education program administrators expressed that social support was needed to repair broken communication between Black women. As Alicia from Sisterhood explained:

> The biggest one is the need for support. It's that need for a safe space, [it's] that need for connection among Black women. I think in all three places, the thing that's the hardest to do but the most necessary is to get Black women to sort of create relationships with each other—to create positive relationships with each other. So I saw that as kind of a problem everywhere I've been, actually. And I think what really prompted my colleague and I to create the group…was that a lot of our Black

women didn't seem connected to each other at all.

The program administrators expressed the need for social support as a way of addressing the isolation and alienation experienced by their participants. Additionally, all program administrators reported that their programs were designed to provide social support for the purpose of building community among Black women who were largely socially marginalized from their mostly White peers on campus. In fact, some program administrators explicitly stated that social support could mitigate the negative impact of external racism and sexism as well as internalized racism. Gayle from the Black Women's Wellness Group stated:

> We are a predominately White institution. We have a culture that is heavy on tradition. A part of that tradition is White and privileged in some ways. And very much–I mean this in a positive and a negative sense–individualistic. . . . I think it sometimes plays on that whole invincible . . . A lot of our students are not just Black or African American, but they are still first generation [college] students. There's a pressure to prove yourself, do it all, make your family proud, give back. So I think the need that I've noticed because of that culture is a need to be human. Like, to have your frustrations and your difficulties and your insecurities at times acknowledged and affirmed and not judged as like you being weak or linked to your intellect.

Deborah echoed this sentiment when she said:

> I was just talking to one of the black women on campus here…who has a leadership position. And we both were talking about this – how Black women are perceived, about how you know you are perceived to be not as smart, not as bright, not as whatever. And then all of the racial issues come at you, and you always have to prove yourself. And you're denied – people will just tell you no much quicker than they would tell a man – a Black man no. And then you would have to like just kind of weave your way in and out of that whole discus-

sion so that you can make some headway in what you started out to

make.

Mentoring. The second most frequently identified need was mentoring. Mentoring was exclusively described a relationship in which faculty and staff provided students counsel in regards to social adjustments as well as how to navigate the academic hurdles of college. Gayle from the Black Women's Wellness Group described this view of mentorship:

> I use the word mentor very broadly. I mean, I think when you think of mentorship you think of very direct one-on-one guidance or advice, and I think the mission of the initiative that I coordinate – we support the retention of these students through social adjustment and mentorship. So my mentorship, I do sometimes that hallway type mentorship, where you just – I am visible. So I'll just go to stuff to be a presence.

Program administrators stated that Black women benefitted from having role models to offer them advice, guidance, and moral support.

Empowerment. The third most frequently and *implicitly* described need was empowerment. Alicia from Sisterhood described empowerment implicitly when she said:

> I would have them take some magazines and cut all the pictures of the things that they saw in the future. And so creating a vision board. So one part of the exercise is [to] take some images, make a collage of who you think you are now. And then create another collage of who you hope to be. A lot of times they didn't have a real sense of who they were now, but they always had a sense of who they wanted to be. And I always thought – because it's easier to think ahead and to think about who you want to be.

Although the word empowerment was actually said only once, all of the program administrators said that Black collegiate women needed mechanisms that provided "tools to be successful," "higher self-esteem," and "confidence in their ability to succeed." We coded these types of statements as empowerment because they convey a need to equip Black women with knowledge, skills, and/or confidence that will strengthen their self-efficacy and ability to navigate and thrive.

Defining Objectives

All of the affinity program objectives were similar. The three most prominent objectives were: (1) social support and building community, (2) knowledge and awareness raising, and (3) empowerment. Of these three objectives, the most significant were social support and building community. Program administrators described using these objectives as guides for identifying and organizing program activities.

Identifying and Organizing Learning Experiences

All of the program administrators identified and organized learning experiences according to the needs of the participants and based on available opportunities. The identification of the organization of learning experiences was not necessarily linear but instead was strongly tied to their learning objectives. Program administrators were more concerned with identifying learning experiences around participants' immediate emotional and social needs. The program administrators identified programmatic experiences that would facilitate intimate disclosure and bonding. All program administrators described holding group sessions where participants were encouraged to just talk about their challenges and offer moral support to their fellow group members. Programmatic, social support took different forms, depending on the larger purpose and intensity of the program. For example, since the Black Women's Wellness Group is primarily therapeutic in nature and meets more frequently, social support involved engaging participants in group discussions about

very personal challenges and goals. The Nyambe Circle, where the program meets only once a month, social support was discussed in the form of mentoring and group discussions. As Deborah from Nyambe Circle describes below:

> A lot of times we spend time looking at themselves, looking at the messages they receive from home, from the community about what it means to be a Black woman. I think the first part of it is – what we really try to do in the first six weeks is create some connections between them that is likely to create some unity. Unity seems to be that big piece. And then the second piece is awareness. And we spend a lot of time talking about what does it mean to be a Black woman, what does it mean to have relationships with other Black women, and where did you get your information about being a Black woman.

Candace from the Leza group had this to say:

> Our students are varying degrees of consciousness and awareness of what they're talking   a b o u t . So sometimes students are at maybe say an earlier stage of identity development,   and have different background experience to where they don't necessarily need to talk   explicitly about as a Black person. But then you have others who are at a different stage   of identity development where it's becoming more and more of a salient part of their   existence. And then you have students that are developmentally in a place where they're   just coming into awareness and are upset, noticing they're being treated in ways that they   can't understand or describe. And that has been a really interesting part of facilitating a group. Trying to respond in ways that meet people in their different spaces.

Program administrators also described organizing activities aimed at improving self-esteem, self-efficacy, and agency. All of the program administrators said that social support could mitigate and, in some instances, eradicate the negative impact of environmental stressors for Black women. Program administrators identified three ways their program's efforts to provide social support ameliorated environmental stress: 1) building community and networks, 2) knowledge and awareness raising, and 3) empowerment.

Building community and networks. Program administrators said that social support was crucial towards learning more about self, networks, and how to manage environmental stressors such as racism and isolation. Social support was also mentioned as a tool to building communication between Black women, and disseminating information about being healthy, including practicing safe sex. Other program directors expressed that building community was a necessary component of their program, particularly because sometimes Black women were alienated even from each other, which can limit their ability to draw upon support from other Black women. Gayle expressed this when she said:

> There's an emotional and social need here. Probably mostly an emotional need for support. It's easy to get lost here and many of them feel alone until they find the group. This group provides exposure and access to other young Black women who are in spaces similar to them that can say: oh, I've been through that too, and this is how I dealt with it, and you can get through just like I got through.

Connecting with others who share similar racial and sexual identity related experiences is important towards affirming that these are not isolated incidences that can be attributed to personal deficient.

Knowledge and awareness raising. The programs administrators said that knowledge and awareness-raising was important towards helping their participants successfully navigate the challenges they faced as Black women. Deborah of the Nyambe group explained:

[We] seek to improve the holistic development for the African American women students here. Five core principles provide the framework for development of all activities, events and workshops. They are health and wellness, professional development, educational attainment, financial awareness and retention.

As displayed in this quote, program administrators often discussed knowledge and awareness raising as a tool for empowerment.

Empowerment. All of higher education program administrators made implicit connections between empowerment and social support and knowledge and awareness raising, and some (Alicia and Candace) were very vocal about empowering participants to embrace healthier ways of viewing themselves and interacting with each other. Alicia of Sisterhood stated:

A lot of times we spend time looking – we spend the first part of each semester looking at themselves, looking at the messages they receive from home, from the community about what it means to be a Black woman. I think the first part of it is – what we really try to do in the first six weeks is create some connections between them that is likely to create some unity. Unity seems to be that big piece. And then the second piece is awareness. And I don't know if that's the particular order, but we spend a lot of time talking about what does it mean to be a Black woman, what does it mean to have relationships with other Black women, and where did you get your information about being a Black woman.

While our interviews revealed common challenges faced by Black collegiate women and the various ways in which program administrators identified and organized programmatic activities to address their participants' needs, they also revealed some common challenges they encounter as administrators of affinity programs.

Challenges for Program Administrators

Program administrators identified two major challenges to the implementation and sustainability of their affinity programs - funding and support. These challenges were attributed to three contextual and structural factors: 1) societal lack of empathy and interest in Black women; 2) lack of understanding of the unique needs of Black women; and 3) organizational resistance and internal politics.

Funding. Administrators described their budgets as very small and said it was a major indicator of how supportive their institutions were of the program. One felt that her institution could be more supportive in terms of funding. As Gayle of the Black Women's Wellness Group explained:

Like, we really value this, but then when time gets crunched, or when money gets tight, it's the first thing that, that kind of gets pushed to the side. . . But our group requires a lot more time and energy on the front end for recruitment, as opposed to other groups. So if I don't have the institutional support, the departmental support to engage in that kind of stuff, then it's gonna negatively impact the group.

The higher education program administrators believed that their institutions understood that their programs addressed a contextual gap in support and provided a needed service to Black women. However, when funding was limited, their programs were among the first to feel the pinch. As Deborah of the Nyambe Circle explained:

Institutionally, I do think there's friction. And I think the friction becomes an incongruent, if you will, between what people are experiencing, and what the institution says that they do. I'm sure in some pockets that's intentional and kind of shady, but in some pockets, I think, it's just unconscious. I think it's indicative of privilege and...I don't think it's intentional or malicious. I think it just is what it is. And I feel like to some degree when it comes down to the day to day operations of what this kind of work entails, we only support it to a point. Because if it takes away from a certain bottom line.

As exemplified in this quote, program administrators seemed very aware of their precarious position and the way they were viewed and supported by their institutions.

Support. Another concern expressed was the lack of support their programs received, especially in comparison to other affinity groups. This lack of support was a consistent and significant theme. One program leader believed her institution could spend more time learning about the program and the issues facing Black women on its campus. This lack of visibility within the university may also influence recruitment, both in terms of program participants and mentors. There was a frequent sentiment that the programs all could benefit from more mentors, especially women of color in faculty and administrator roles. As Alicia of the Sisterhood explained:

> Another challenge is with so many students wanting to be involved, and we're finding a short supply of mentors. Because there is a short supply of women of color here working, working at the university. And so we've actually had to, had to bring in White allies, I would say, who, who, who are in connection with the women's center we have and who understand the work that we're doing, and who are really, you know, I would say have had experiences or . . . has worked with them, they really understand that feminist lens but also you're culturally competent in that sense.

There was also strong indication that student participation in the programs varied year to year and that program administrators had to make special efforts to recruit new students. Visibility and support for the program were viewed as the main causes for recruitment difficulties, but program administrators also identified reluctance and waning interest on the part of students as a major factor affecting recruitment.

Strategies for Navigating Challenges and Program Sustainability

In spite of the challenges described above, or perhaps because of them, program administrators averaged five years of experience with running their programs. They described similar strategies for managing program challenges and sustaining the program over time. Some strategies that emerged were recruiting and identifying allies, cost sharing, delegation, and program evaluation. The most frequent and consistent strategy program administrators stressed for the success and sustainability of their programs was collaboration. Program administrators used collaboration for many things, including programming, fundraising, cost saving, and identifying educators and mentors.

Collaboration. All of the program administrators described the importance of collaborating with other outreach and support groups and/or community organizations and businesses. They had a trusted list of partners who frequently supported the group's goals and activities as well as partners. Collaboration and shared programming between these affinity groups commonly took place. Program administrators worked with other affinity groups and resource offices on campus to cut down on costs and to bring needed information to their participants.

Program Evaluation

There was no discussion of formal evaluation by any of the program administrators; however, administrators measured success by year-to-year participation and retention. For example, Gayle of the Black Women's Wellness Group monitored the success of her program by the number of members. As she explained:

> Case in point for our group, our group is a very successful group. Generally we range from six to nine, which is actually a really solid group. But I will tell you for the first time ever, because of a little bit more intentional-

ity around outreach, we had to make an exception this year and we had 13 in our group, which is actually kind of big.

This method for measuring effectiveness appears to be driven by institutional norms for assessing program success based on attendance.

Discussion

The results of this study provide compelling evidence that programs for Black women can integrate social support into program activities in ways that build community and networks with other Black women, raise knowledge and awareness, and empower participants. The use of social support towards these aims can help mitigate the negative impact of toxic institutional environments and contribute to the successful acclimation and retention of Black college women (Commodore et al., 2018). These findings echo the work of previous scholars who have pointed out the need for affinity groups for Black women that provide a community of support that is culturally relevant, responsive, and focused on their intersectionality of being Black and a woman (Croom et al., 2017; Lindsay-Dennis et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2013). The data also highlights the importance of setting specific goals which address the challenges and needs of Black collegiate women who attend predominantly White institutions.

Based on the experiences and assessment from the program administrators in this study, Black collegiate women need social support, mentoring, and empowerment. This echoes what the literature says about mentoring and social support for Black collegiate women. Most of the program administrators reported that mentoring was crucial for the support and development of Black women (Belgrave et al., 2004; Hoff et al., 2001; Leadbeater et al., 2007; Rhodes et al., 2007). Affinity programs for Black collegiate women can address these needs by identifying and organizing activities that focus on building community and

networks, raising knowledge and awareness, and empowerment.

The implications of this study point to a continued need for thoughtful and strategic programmatic interventions designed specifically for the particular experiences of Black women. We agree with Black women scholars Patton and Haynes (2018), who argue that by moving the marginalized to the center, institutional leaders can engage in the act of "looking to the bottom" by learning from the experiences of Black collegiate women as well as affinity program administrators of color who serve the needs of these women. Black collegians and administrators alike should be considered in policy and program evaluation, and services to ensure that the unique needs of Black collegiate women are addressed. When program administrators are intentional and create objectives specifically to address the needs of Black women, they can mitigate the emotional, psychological, and social effects of a toxic campus environment by fostering community. We recommend that institutional leaders and student affairs administrators move Black women from the periphery of policy and center them in their strategic plans and appropriations for institutional support. For scholars who care about the academic and psychosocial development and outcomes for Black collegiate women, we recommend looking past the outcomes and even the interventions to the persons designing these interventions and supports. Centering the women who design, facilitate, and manage these efforts will illuminate more insight into helping Black collegiate women.

For program administrators, we recommended using the program planning model discussed here with careful consideration of intersectionality and how it can be addressed in the goals, objectives, activities, and assessment of programmatic outreach. It is also recommended that program administrators partner with others for expanded program participation, resources, and long-term sustainability. For student affairs administrators who seek to design and manage programs designed for Black women, the findings of this study

are a reminder that while stories of success are encouraging, when placed within the patriarchal and racist social context of the United States, they can also be misused to justify the dearth of programmatic support available for minoritized populations—in this case Black women. The invisibility and isolation that continues to pervade the experience of Black collegiate women signal an urgent need for interventions designed especially for this population. It is important that organizations and their administrators continue to support those who take the time to provide this type of outreach.

The data revealed in this study offer new insight into the contextual challenges to the implementation and sustainability of their affinity programs, funding, and support from their institution. Study findings also attribute such challenges to the lack of empathy in Black women, disinterest and ignorance regarding the needs of Black women, and organizational resistance. Study findings suggest that institutions must be intentional in their effort to provide funding and support in order for programs to sustain. These findings support those found in Allen's (2019) study examining how institutions create climates that nurture sister circles for Black women collegiate to succeed and persist at PWI. Specifically, intentional programs and initiatives, including funding, for Black women colligates were woven into the fabric of the institutional site. One participant in this study who was an administrator confirmed "that sister circle will always have a budget line because it's a priority and the program helps students to thrive" (Allen, 2019, p. 136). The data also revealed some strategies and resources program administrators could employ to sustain their programs. In particular, the findings show how program administrators use collaborative partnerships as both a resource and a teaching tool for support. Finally, while we did not explore how race may have affected the way the program administrators designed and engaged in this work, we recommend future studies investigate the role race plays in how administrators approach their work.

References

Allen, C. (2019). *Calling all the sisters: The impact of sister circles on the retention and experiences of Black womyn collegians at Predominately White Institutions.* [Doctoral dissertation, Clemson University]. Clemson University Digital Archive. https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations/2374/

Awais, Y. J., & Yali, A. M. (2013). A call for diversity: The need to recruit and retain ethnic minority students in art therapy. *Art Therapy, 30*(3), 130-134. https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2013.819284

Black Women's Roundtable Public Policy Network (BWR). (2015). *Black women in the United States.* http://ncbcp.org/news/releases/BWRReport.BlackWomeninU.S.2015.3.26.15FINAL.pdf

Blalock, S. D., & Sharpe, R. V. (2012). You go girl!: Trends in educational attainment of Black women. In Chambers, C.R. & Sharpe, R.V. (Eds), B*lack female undergraduates on campus: Successes and challenges* (pp. 1-41). Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.

Caelli, K., Ray, L., & Mill, J. (2008). 'Clear as Mud': Toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 2*(2), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200201

Collins, P. H., & Bilge, S. (2016). *Intersectionality.* Cambridge: Polity.

Commodore, F., Baker, D. J., & Arroyo, A. T. (2018). *Black women college students: A guide to student success in higher education.* Routledge.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review,* 1241-1299.

Crenshaw, K., Ocen, P., & Nanda, J. (2015). *Black girls matter: Pushed out, overpoliced, and underprotected.* Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies, Columbia University.

Croom, N. N., Beatty, C. C., Acker, L. D., & Butler, M. (2017). Exploring undergraduate Black womyn's motivations for engaging in "Sister Circle" organizations. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education, 10*(2), 216-228. https://doi.org/10.1080/19407882.2017.1328694

Crouch, M., & McKenzie, H. (2006). The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research. *Social Science Information, 45*(4), 483-499. https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018406069584

Hardaway, A. T., Ward, L. W., & Howell, D. (2019). Black girls and womyn matter: Using Black feminist thought to examine violence and erasure in education. *Urban Education Research & Policy Annuals, 6*(1).

Harris, J. C., & Patton, L. D. (2019). Un/doing intersectionality through higher education research.

The Journal of Higher Education, 90(3), 347-372. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2018.1536936

Henry, W. J., Butler, D. M., & West, N. M. (2011). Things are not as rosy as they seem: Psychosocial issues of contemporary Black college women. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice, 13*(2), 137-153. https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.13.2.a

Hussain, M., & Jones, J. M. (2021). Discrimination, diversity, and sense of belonging: Experiences of students of color. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 14*(1), 63.

Lindsay-Dennis, L., Cummings, L., & McClendon, S. C. (2011). Mentors' reflections on developing a culturally responsive mentoring initiative for urban African American girls. *Black Women, Gender & Families, 5*(2).

McLaughlin, A. N., & Randolph, K. A. (2012). Development of the school support scale for low-income mothers in college. *Research on Social Work Practice, 22*(1), 68-76.

Mims, L. C., & Williams, J. L. (2020). "They told me what I was before I could tell them what I was": Black girls' ethnic-racial identity development within multiple worlds. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 35*(6), 754-779.

Museus, S. D., Yi, V., & Saelua, N. (2018). How culturally engaging campus environments influence sense of belonging in college: An examination of differences between White students and students of color. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 11*(4), 467.

Patton, L.D., & Haynes, C. (2018). Hidden in plain sight: The Black women's blueprint for institutional transformation in higher education. *Teachers College Record, 120*(4), 1-18.

Patton, L. & Njoku, N. (2019) Theorizing Black women's experiences with institution-sanctioned violence: a #BlackLivesMatter imperative toward Black liberation on campus, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 32*:9, 1162-1182

Rosales, A. M., & Person, D. R. (2003). Programming needs and student services for African American women. *New Directions for Student Services, 2003*(104), 53-65. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.107

Seawell, A. H., Cutrona, C. E., & Russell, D. W. (2012). The effects of general social support and social support for racial discrimination on African American women's well-being. *Journal of Black Psychology*, Vol. 40, Iss. 1, pp. 3-26. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798412469227

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). Open coding. Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques, 2, 101-121.

Thorne, S., Joachim, G., Paterson, B., & Canam, C. (2002). Influence of the research frame on qualitatively derived health science knowledge. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*(1), Article 1. Retrieved from: http://www.ualberta.ca/~ijqm/.

Walkington, L. (2017). How far have we really come? Black women faculty and graduate students' experiences in higher education. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations, 39*, 51-65.

Table 1 Participating Administrators and Programs

Pseudonym	Context	Program Leader	Racial Identity
Program 1 (Nyambe's Circle)	State university in the Mid-West	Deborah	Black
Program 2 (The Leza Group)	State university in the Mid-West	Candace	Afro-Latina
Program 3 (Sisterhood)	Private religiously affiliated university in the South	Alicia	Black
Program 4 (Black Women Wellness Group)	Large research university in the south	Gayle	Black