"AND STILL I RISE": EXPLORING BLACK WOMEN'S JOY WHILE ASPIRING TO THE
COLLEGE PRESIDENCY

by

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

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Despite the expansion of literature on Black women college presidents, there is an oversaturation of the struggles Black women experience once in the role that is rooted within the role of racism and sexism. This study focuses on understanding how Black joy influences Black women's aspirations to pursue university or college presidencies at historically white institutions (HWIs). The legacy of Black joy in Black communities is one of healing, resistance, and restoration. Yet, little is understood about how Black joy impacts Black women's experience in higher education. Black women's journeys to the presidency are a unique exploration of their present-day experiences. Thus, this study examined how the Black women co-portraitists connected with joy in a manner that either affirmed or altered their aspirations to become a president. There were six co-portraitists for this study with a total of 12 interviews, two interviews per co-portraitist. There were three findings from the study: 1) Black joy as spiritual guidance, 2) Black joy centers purpose, and 3) Black joy as self-preservation. The findings aligned with current literature regarding Black women's exploration of emotions, spirituality, and need for self-care as higher education administrators. Ultimately, this study was designed for

Black women to reflect on their journeys as administrators aspiring to the college presidency and how joy reaffirmed or redirected their aspirations.

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"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." –Proverbs 3:5-6.

Lord, I humbly thank you for carrying me through this process. You showed me where I needed to heal in my mind, soul, and body; and trust you for all things. Thank you for comforting me on my darkest days and ordering my steps toward a larger purpose. My spirit will be forever strengthened to assist future generations overcome as you helped me.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Black women whose aspirations are colored with stories of joy, restoration, and healing. You deserve to be celebrated. It is my greatest hope that you can resonate with the stories of fellow Black women and view yourself as a co-portraitist of your own story.

I would like to also dedicate this dissertation to my amazing support system who heard my cries, invited me to laugh, and encouraged me throughout this entire process. To my mother, Faye, thank you for being the first Black woman to help me understand the power in how I show up in the world. There are not enough words to express my gratitude for your wisdom and the faith you have in me as your daughter, as a scholar, as a sister, as a woman. I pray that you connect with my research in a spiritual way because you were the first person I ever studied. To my brother, Solomon, thank you for being my best friend. Your unwavering care challenges me to step out on faith even when it feels the scariest. To my love, Jordan, I cannot begin to describe how grateful I am that God sent such a tender and attentive partner my way. You keep me grounded in my beliefs while also lifting me up in celebration and adoration.

Additionally, I would like to dedicate my work to my extended family and friends for the late-night phone calls, spiritual guidance, prayers, and reminding me of my purpose even when I felt as though I was losing my way. Your presence in my life was essential to my success in this program. To Mandonesia and Andrew, your friendships mean the world to me. Our conversations about life and our passions inspire me to be creative and release my wildest dreams of combining education, art, and plants.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this joyous work to my growth and take this moment to honor the mental and emotional energy required of me to pursue this dream of becoming Dr.

Courtney Matthews. I faced much trauma, doubted myself in the process, but rose above all negativity by expressing my moments of joy through painting, nurturing my plants, and affirming my humanity. My existence is enough, and I will remind myself of that every day. As this chapter closes, I welcome the opportunities to come as I prepare for the next one.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"You may shoot me with your words,

You may cut me with your eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness,

But still, like air, I'll rise."

–Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou's (1978) acclaimed "And Still I Rise" poem was frequently referenced in the co-portraitist interviews as a guide for navigating Black womanhood when faced with racism and sexism in their pursuits of the college presidency. Rising above the hate embedded within systemic structures of interlocking oppressions calls on the power of joy and the spirit to persist despite discriminatory circumstances. Black women's joy is a spiritual connection to African and African American traditions, culture, and ways of being that seep into the innate purpose of their presence (Dillard, 2022). Many Black women identify destinies connected to service, leadership, and community, which have historically influenced our presence in education (Alston 2005; Jean-Marie, 2006; Seo & Hinton, 2009). The ability to resist forms of bigotry by counter-weaponing joy establishes an impenetrable force field (Lu & Steele, 2019). The expression of Black joy is a way of emerging out of the fires of hate untouched by leaning into the strength of their aspirations. Robinson (2020) proclaimed that "Black joy is not the absence of pain, but it's the presence of aspiration. It's not just what we are fighting against but what we are fighting for" (18:07). Black women have been fighting for their place in higher education leadership for centuries while relying on joy to sustain them in achieving their life's purpose. Holmes (2017) once wrote "Joy Unspeakable is not silent; it moans, hums, and bends to the rhythm of a dancing

universe" (p. 22). Black joy is not for the white gaze that places Black women's existence for the consumption, entertainment, enlightenment of whiteness, and saving of oppressive institutions. Yet, the voices of Black women reverberate as steady beats of a drum, causing movement toward liberation and social change. How Black women speak of their joy, express their joy, and receive their joy is not a monolithic path but rather a well-lit labyrinth that collectively guides them in their aspirations.

Black women's joyousness establishes a set of political tactics that extends beyond the duty to act happy and offers a strategy that redirects in/visibility and in/audibility as an agency against white supremacy (Ahmed, 2010; Baker, 2020; Hunter, 1997). Joy is where Black women can imagine, dream, create, heal, resist, and take up space (Dunn & Love, 2000). The embodiment of Black women's joy is a call to action within the marginalizing systems that attempt to stifle their presence. One of these systems is higher education institutions (Perna et al., 2007). Black women are steadily rising in the ranks of postsecondary administration and identifying platforms that offer counter-narratives to stereotypical images and perceptions of their humanity (Dunn & Love, 2020; Harley, 2008). However, Black women lead the charge as college presidents (ACE, 2017). As Black women battle intersecting oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism in their pursuit of the college presidency, their practice of Black joy provides a platform for resistance (Johnson, 2015; Lu & Steele, 2019; Packnett, 2017). To fully understand how Black women can aspire to the presidency, a brief background on the role and expectations is necessary.

Background

The college presidency position originated as a figurehead who reported to the institution's governing board (Thelin, 2011, p. 11). Ultimately, presidents were expected to build

relationships in the community, engage in philanthropic efforts, and drive an institution's mission (ACE, 2000, 2017; Nelson, 2007; Travis & Price, 2013). The day-to-day roles and responsibilities shifted, as did the economic, political, and demographic needs for American education (ACE, 2000). According to Nelson (2007), college presidents now must "balance being politicians both on and off the campus, managing public relations, administering academic bureaucracies, and spending inordinate amounts of time fund-raising" (p. xv). American Council on Education's (ACE) 2016 study on college presidents indicated that over 60% of the position is dedicated to budgetary and financial management. Though most presidential efforts regard finances and fundraising, the most significant part of succeeding with those endeavors is relationships (Langbert, 2012) which trickles down into varying aspects (e.g., length of tenure, rapport with the board of trustees, and ability to build community).

College presidents are expected to engage in work that secures institutional resources (Tekniepe, 2014), upholds an institution's mission and vision (Jean-Marie, 2006), and acquires a social and cultural awareness (Cole & Harper, 2017). Eddy (2003) further stated that presidents play an integral role in shaping staff members' perspectives as campus functions shift or become uncertain. Though presidents have their unique experiences, some general expectations must be met. According to Wallin (2002), college presidents should possess high-level skills such as 1) managing institution budgets, 2) developing sustainable relationships with local political leaders, and 3) establishing connections with state political leaders. Institutions may suffer if their president is incapable of framing the school's vision and assessing the operations to achieve that goal.

Ensuring a college president's success in their role requires examining their educational and professional pathways. According to ACE's (2017) study, nearly 80% of all college

presidents earned a doctorate. The top three fields of study were education, social sciences, and humanities. Among pursuing terminal degrees, college presidents secured similar positions to develop their repertoire as a leader. Over 80% of college presidents gained some level of faculty and senior executive role within higher education. In 2016, approximately 35% of ACE's (2017) presidential respondents were chief academic officers or provosts before assuming their current presidency. The data indicates that the most significant percentage of respondents were first-time presidents. About 15% of college presidents worked outside of higher education before their appointment. Professions included business, K-12 administration, religious orders, government officials, legal or military personnel, medicine, non-profit sector, etc. (ACE, 2017).

Although search consultants assist in identifying presidential candidates, a leadership disparity remains in the demographic profiles of college presidents with racial and gender diversity. However, more than 70% of presidencies are held by men, and over 85% identify as white and non-minority (ACE, 2017). The percentages of minority presidents are low: Black (8%), Hispanic (4%), and Asian (2%). 1n 2016, public institutions hired double the percentage of minority presidents (22%) than private institutions (11%). Presidents of color served schools at greater rates at historically white institutions, but the percentage remains under 40% compared to their white counterparts (ACE, 2017). Student populations' racial and gender makeup is becoming more diverse within higher education (Taylor et al., 2020). Therefore, college presidents must understand diverse student populations' growing needs and nuances. The call for more racial and gender representation of presidents will be an even greater expectation in the upcoming years (ACE, 2017; Commodore, 2020).

Scholars are reviewing how women fare in the college presidency as the percentage of presidents of color remains low. Identifying women's professional pathways to pursue higher

education becomes relevant. Women are more likely to serve as first-time presidents (78%) and have shorter tenures than men—less than 13% serve more than 10 years (ACE, 2017). In 2016, public institutions had the highest percentage of women presidents (33%) compared to private institutions (27%). Before assuming the presidency role, 35% of women were from within postsecondary positions either as a chief academic officer or provost, 16% as a president/chief executive officer/chancellor, 14% were hired from external professional fields, 8% as deans, and 6% were senior executives in student affairs (ACE, 2017). Being aware of the "path to promotion" is a pressing matter for women when choosing the next career step and gaining the skills needed to become a competitive candidate (Reis & Grady, 2018, p. 103). Women are forced to navigate a labyrinth of social politics that often determine salary, additional unpaid workloads, and persistence.

Women's struggle to flow into the presidential pipeline only focuses on gender, but race dramatically increases the challenge for Black women. Racism and sexism symbolize two subjective gates that historically impeded Black women's ability to ascend in higher education (Gause, 2021; Linnaberry et al., 2014). However, scholars identified strategies Black women use to manage their experiences that involve the influence of sponsors and mentors (Holder et al., 2015) and personal networks (Linnabery et al., 2014), which are beneficial to their success as leaders. Jean-Marie (2006) stated that Black women presidents are responsible for transforming inequitable and discriminatory campus cultures. Black women can address layers of oppression as leaders because they must overcome the inequities in their settings (Jean-Marie, 2006; Livingston et al., 2012; Waring, 2003). The expectations of Black women as college presidents and chancellors are more demanding and highly scrutinized; therefore, strong-arming them to possess elite relationship-building skills to navigate challenges (Commodore et al., 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the scholarship on the experiences of Black women in the college presidency increasing, there is little understanding of how Black women sustain their aspirations in leading postsecondary institutions at HWIs (Holmes, 2004; Oikelome, 2017). Literature on Black women college presidents exists but primarily on those employed at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) (Commodore, 2019, 2020; Commodore et al., 2016; Jackson & Harris, 2005). Most scholars focus on the trauma Black women experience in the journey to, through, and out of the college presidency (Jean-Marie, 2006; Thomas et al., 2008; Waring, 2003; Wilder et al., 2013). For example, Black women's encounters with "spirit-murder" (Williams, 1987, p. 129), the cynicism and destruction that racism perpetuates as a crime against one's humanity, serve as barriers to career advancement within higher education (Garcia & Davíla, 2021).

Spirit murdering is a critical concept to understand. Still, the density of scholarship dedicated to the pain of Black women college presidents and their pathways is detrimental to illuminating the impact of Black joy. Agosto and Karanxha (2011) studied the importance spirituality has for a Black woman who worked in the higher education academy. A key finding detailed spirituality as a power source that guided her purpose of serving communities of color. Despite hardships, Black women aspiring to the college presidency shared kindred sentiments about being led by the spirit to express joy through community empowerment, education, and leadership (Dillard, 2022). However, Black women's embodiment of Black joy as a spiritual calling is overshadowed by the disadvantages of their intersecting oppressions (Dillard, 2022; Harley, 2008; Oikelome, 2017). Harley (2008) declared that denying Black women's full humanity forces them to remain "maids" of the academy (p. 20).

The single focus on the oppressions Black women face in the journey to college presidency impacts the number of Black women in the pipeline to the presidency and limits institutional progression. I am not suggesting that Black women who experienced trauma should not be studied to uncover institutional barriers, but there is an oversaturation of the struggles of Black women presidents. Though Black women experience "othering" conditions that are dehumanizing, Black joy is a spiritual calling that attracts Black women to leadership roles to cultivate creativity and change for all communities. However, I argue that the healing from trauma warrants further exploration and how joys within these spaces serve as a sustainable practice. If scholars continue excluding joy from the presidential process, then aspiring Black women will only have a one-sided view of research and what is to be expected as presidents.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand how Black joy influences Black women's aspirations to pursue university or college presidencies at historically white institutions (HWIs). The goal was to uncover how Black women apply and exude an asset-based mindset despite knowing how racism and sexism impede their professional journeys. This study centered on Black women without comparing them to whiteness or other women of color as a way to justify their existence. By capitalizing on the "B" in Black, I seized a moment to affirm the status of Black women and disrupt the political and oppressive systems attempting to devalue Black women's positionality as leaders (Collins, 2009). The following research questions guided this study:

1) How do Black women define Black joy about their aspirations for the college presidency?

2) In what ways do Black women describe the practice of Black joy in the pursuit of the presidency?

It is important to note that this dissertation is meant for Black women in and outside of higher education. I hope they find comfort in reading the experiences of fellow Black women and find themselves within the pages. This study was not designed to educate white people on Black joy or persuade them to understand the complexities of our experience. There is no escape for Black women to avoid the effects of racism, sexism, and other intersecting forms of oppression. Thus, I conducted this study to honor the presence and stories of Black women aspirants who continue in their journeys.

Rationale and Significance for the Study

There is an urgent need to explore Black women's joy as a form of liberation and resistance as campus environments become more racially and gender charged from national movements such as Black Lives Matter and #MeToo (Baker, 2020; Burke, 2021; Dancy et al., 2018; Johnson, 2015; Lu & Steele, 2019). Martin and Cooney (2020) examined Black college president aspirants and noted that different institutions require diverse presidential skills, yet Black women are understudied as aspirants (Oikelome, 2017). Scholars highlighted Black women presidents' experiences with discrimination, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression (Commodore, 2019; Oikelome, 20217; Townsend, 2021). Researchers emphasize the trauma Black women experience rather than presenting Black women's political and social power of joy. Separately, Black women presidents and Black joy are examined, but there is a place for exploring both. Without understanding how a joyous mindset influences Black women's ability to thrive toward the college presidency, we will continue minimizing Black women's experiences as they ascend to the position. Extending the literature on Black women

aspirants offers additional resources for Black women considering the college presidency by highlighting the emotional and social support needed to persist. If we do not provide space for Black women's agency as aspirants to share their truth, then scholars cannot explore leadership in its fullness. Further, Black women will continue not to see themselves represented as whole beings who can express joy in their aspirations or as college presidents.

This study adds to the educational psychology literature on Black women in higher education leadership. The rich narratives of Black women aspirants illuminated the path of exploring Black women's wholeness—joys and despairs. The focus on Black joy contributed significantly to the new wave of research that counter-narrates the struggles of Black women by emphasizing the power of joyous expressions. This study also highlighted practice recommendations for Black women and supporters of Black women by addressing strategies that suggested the power in-racial group community, spirituality, and purpose as emotional expressions. The results further indicated that Black women's relationships are critical to self-interpretation and self-preservation. Thus, the research is significant for Black women aspirants seeking to understand the joys of pursuing the college presidency and sustainable practices.

<div align="center">**Research Positionality**</div>

In 2016, I worked towards a graduate degree in higher education at the University of Florida (UF). I worked in sorority and fraternity affairs, where I walked into a completely different world. My initial thoughts were, "wow, this is such a common and accepted form of segregation" on this campus. The social organizations were not as racially integrated as I pictured them on such a large campus. Black students joined traditionally Black organizations. White students joined predominantly white organizations. Multicultural students joined organizations that were suitable to their racial or ethnic identities. Everyone remained in their

silos and knew little about the other. It was a culture shock. I enrolled at UF and accepted my graduate assistantship because I wanted to pursue a career in student affairs administration. Becoming a vice president of student affairs was my biggest aspiration.

Although I enjoyed learning in the academic program and job, I felt socially isolated because I was one of three Black women in my vastly white cohort and one of two Black women in a large student activities department. I did not see myself represented and felt as though I was a speck of pepper in a jar of salt. Throughout my academic experiences, I was accustomed to seeing Black women administrators or educators who welcomed and reminded me of home. Those pieces were missing at the University of Florida, which were the smiles and joys of a Black woman, including my own.

One day, Dr. Zina Evans walked into my American higher education administration class to discuss her experiences at the university and her professional trajectory. She was the Vice President of Enrollment Management and the only Black woman in leadership. Though I do not remember what she said, I can recall how her body language, excitement, and nonverbal expressions were captivating as she shared her story. Dr. Evans stood in front of the class near the chalkboard while wearing a gray two-piece suit with relaxed shiny, black hair. In a room of about 30 people, majority white, she possessed a commanding presence that was warm yet firm, knowledgeable, and empathetic. Witnessing a Black woman unapologetically exude confidence and wield her smile as a statement was eye-opening. Her hand movements and body expressions were like subtle dances rooted in empowerment, wisdom, and encouragement.

The way she moved and spoke brought me a sense of joy. My emotional connectivity to career aspirations had stage fright and was afraid to step into the limelight, but Dr. Evans began teaching a masterclass about how to move through administration. Dr. Evans possessed the

exciting spunk that Debbie Allen had when dancing in the hit TV series *Fame*, and the imagination as vast as Pearl Primus' famous leaps across a stage. Her joyous expressions were full of passion and determination about her position. As I developed as a professional, I kept her persona as a vivid image in my mind that encouraged me to remain lighthearted, intentional, introspective, and graceful about the decisions I made when choosing my career path in higher education. Dr. Evans affirmed my ability to move through my personal and professional spaces by not tiptoeing around an issue but tapping into my abilities.

My positionality as a Black woman pursuing my doctoral degree and desiring to enter postsecondary administration positions me to explore the complexities of finding and sustaining Black joy on a deeper level. Though the Black-woman experience is not a monolith, my perspective and the application of portraiture established an intimate form of credibility when collecting and analyzing data. Self-reflection on my encounters with moments of liberation, joy, and fulfillment also added to my capacity to connect with this research and participants. This aided me in painting the colorful portraits of participants and describing Black women's upward movement to their success. I surrendered my stock of knowledge while listening to participants' stories in hopes of crafting a bigger picture of Black women's joy in aspiring leadership.

However, I came to this study assuming that I shared some similar experiences as the participants which positions me as both disheartened and invigorated to learn about Black women's journeys. Regardless of my connection with this topic, I intentionally asked follow-up questions for clarification rather than assuming the meaning of a word or phrase based on my own biases. As the artist, I was determined to illustrate a portrait (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) that highlighted Black women's intuitive nature while shading in my experiences which assembled a masterpiece.

Assumptions

Due to my lived experiences as a Black woman in higher education, I bring several assumptions to this study. First, I understand the interlocking oppressions that Black women encounter and believe that I was able to connect with study participants primarily based on my racial identity, gender identity, and my experiences with combating racism and sexism. Secondly, I believe that Black joy is the greatest form of resistance to discrimination, oppression, and marginalization. Consequently, I center Black joy throughout this study on the traditions and practices of Black women. Third, the aspiring stage in the ascendancy to the presidency is a critical component to highlight. This determines the opportunities one pursues to establish credentials and a qualified skillset. Lastly, Black women can serve as president at all institution types, including historically white institutions (HWI). By identifying Black women's expression of joy at HWIs, there can be more guidance for higher education practices.

Writing With and For Black Women

My writing does not categorize me as the sole author of this dissertation. With the co-portraitists, we collectively narrated the stories through oral, written, and symbolic (artifacts) forms. Austin's (1989) distinguished "write us" research centers on Black women's perspectives that connect us, personally and politically, to our scholarship. As Black women, we have the agency to write ourselves into existence. My opportunity as the portraitist granted me the position of listening to the histories of the Black women co-portraitists and discussing the ways they developed from girlhood to womanhood. This research is unapologetic and maximizes the attention both co-portraitists, and I deemed necessary for our community in higher education.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions are provided to clarify the key terms used in this study.

Aspirants: Women who are encouraged to actively pursue opportunities for leadership or administrative advancement through employment at various institution types, campus or community service, and professional development (Oikelome, 2017).

Black Joy: An emotional state of being that extends beyond white supremacy and establishes a space for creativity, liberation, and fulfillment (Johnson, 2015).

Black Women: Someone who, racially, identifies within the Afro Diaspora, a native of Africa or has origins from Africa, and identifies as a woman or with womanhood for their gender identity.

College Presidency: The highest-level leadership position at a higher education institution responsible for academic, administrative, and budgetary operations (Resilient Educator, 2021). College presidents are expected to lead with values when advocating for the institution, fundraising, and networking (ACE, 2017). Additionally, a path traditionally followed by those aspiring to serve as a president—journey, journey in, and journey out.

Embodiment: An emotion that is visible through bodily movement or sounds (e.g., breathing) as a method of sensorimotor processing (Köner et al., 2015; O'Connor, 2017).

Gendered Racism: A Black woman's encounter of racist expectations of gender roles as a dual form of oppression for their Blackness and womanness (Essed, 1991; Thomas et al., 2008).

Historically Black Institutions (HBCU): Institutions of higher learning formed before 1964 to provide a quality education for Black students during the longstanding period of legal segregation and rejection of Black students at historically white institutions (Johnson et al., 2017; NCES, n.d.).

Historically white Institutions (HWI): Institutions of higher learning were initially established for white men to prepare them for leadership roles, which excluded people of color and women (ASHE, 2015). Though these institutions were integrated in the 20th century, there remains an

undercurrent of racist and sexist ideologies regarding campus and administrative culture (Dancy et al., 2018; Townsend, 2021).

Journey in the Presidency: This next phase presents the tenure regarding the successes and challenges of being president and the expectations of oneself and others that must be met. The impact of Black women's presence and leadership once in the role is further considered, including capital campaigns, re-envisioning academic programs, and establishing co-curricular opportunities for students.

Journey out of the Presidency: This final phase depicts reasons for attrition or retirement. The end of a pathway as president may introduce another opportunity but exploring the stories of "why" Black women leave the presidency can provide rich information.

Journey to the Presidency: This phase of the experience details the professional advancement and opportunities Black women seized to be recognized as a candidate for the role of president. Education background is also included in the "journey to," as this may or may not have influenced a president to serve at a particular institution type.

Racialized Emotions: The emotions specific to certain racial communities and experiences are central in understanding and appreciating the collective and individual experiences of those emoting racial subjects (Bonilla-Silva, 2019).

Spirituality: An inherent sense of knowing "the order, power, and unity that flows through all of life and encompasses an energy and responsibility greater than ourselves" (Dillard, 2022, p. 3).

Conceptual Framework

The concept of Black joy is garnering more attention since the rise of police violence with the Black Lives Matter Movement, and scholars are publishing how joyous expressions impact activism and advocacy. When searching for "Black joy," I found the phrase joy and

resistance coupled together as part of a political strategy for Black people to seize back their power. Black joy is not accessible to the white gaze nor should access be granted, being that much of what is felt by Black people is not relatable for non-Black individuals (Lewis-Giggetts, 2022). Johnson (2015) wrote a piece on discovering joy amid America's anti-Blackness and atrocities like the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson that became too common to hear about in Black communities. Similarly, Lu and Steele (2019) theorized Black joy as a platform for resistance in online communities such as Twitter and Vine to leverage dominant narratives about Black culture. Black joy is rooted in Black people's ability to access inner freedom regardless of external oppression as a method of self-care (Cromer, 2021; Tichavakunda, 2021). When African nations were colonized and enslaved Africans were brought to America for capital gain, Black people sought refuge in their strength, hope, and faith in relational and communal practices. Their despair was rooted in physical and emotional trauma, yet they found collective praise and joyous moments for being alive. There is a spiritual, healing movement among Black communities that revel in what joy can bring, meaning the choice to celebrate Black culture and excellence is intentional despite the violence against them (Johnson, 2015; Lu & Steele, 2019). Some Black people's first encounters with joy were within the confines of the Black church. As a spiritual center, Black people sought out the church for support, overcoming burdens, and teachings about resiliency cultivated an access point for releasing joyous exclamations as a collective (Colón, 2020; Linnaberry et al., 2014).

Dunn and Love (2020) stated that joy is a form of healing and justice to oppression in a racist society. Dunn and Love studied the foundations for anti-racist art pedagogy, and I used the principles of viewing one's full humanity and taking space for forms of expression for my study on Black women. Exploring Black women's full humanity requires scholars to affirm their

expressions of joy and pain as a direct statement that Black women matter (Love, 2019). Gendered Black joy opens larger channels to discuss how Black women encounter and practice joy (Collins, 2009; Evans-Winter, 2019; hooks, 1994, 1998). For Black women, gendered Black joy addresses the political and social forms of oppression while providing an avenue for love, community, and wholeness (Collins, 2000; Dunn & Love, 2020; Evans-Winter, 2019; hooks, 1994).

Black women continue paving new ways to redefine joy when confronted with racism and sexism. Brittany Packnett (2017), a Black woman social justice activist, once stated that her "joy is not indulgent. Joy is defiant" (para. 16). Historically, Black women suffer misuse and abuse by other racial communities, families, and work entities. A way to disrupt the suffering was through joy, and the contemporary concept of "Black Girl Magic" is a collective expression of celebratory milestones and community. Baker (2020) expressed how joy must be a non-negotiable for Black women despite the many years of falling into the "strong Black woman" trope. Black women's joy is a radical imagination of collective memories of resistance, trauma, survival, love, and cultural modes of expression, pushing and expanding antiracist pedagogies (Love, 2019). Joy is being unbothered by the perceptions of others. Hirsch (2021) posed that Black joy is the ability to make sense of one's reality without geographical bounds. Further, Black joy is connected to the spiritual embodiment of Black cultural and cultural expression (Dillard et al., 2000, Pham, 2021). Entering this spiritual space of Black joy voids fear of judgment and invites the power of experiencing freedom (Dillard et al., 2000).

This conceptual framework acknowledges the dual experiences of racism and sexism among Black women while simultaneously discussing ways to self-regulate through the embodiment of joy. Therefore, the application of Black joy is appropriate for my study on how

Black women access and express joyousness at HWIs while pursuing the presidency. I intend to use the framework to analyze how participants from the study actively choose to exude Black joy throughout different periods of their journey as aspiring college presidents.

Forthcoming Chapters of Dissertation

Although scholars are studying Black women's experiences in the college presidency, there is not a body of research dedicated explicitly to how Black women express joy while pursuing the coveted role. The following chapters of my dissertation introduce ways to center Black women through their professional journeys, descriptions of Black joy, and connections to fulfillment in their positions. Chapter Two provides a timeline of Black women college administrators who were pioneers of their era leading up to their presidencies, discusses the elements of pursuing, achieving, and leaving the college presidency, and situates the ways Black women embody positive emotions through verbal and nonverbal expression. In Chapter Three, the application of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) portraiture qualitative methodology and other aspects of data collection are addressed. The following chapter then focuses on data analysis and participant responses, both individually and collectively. Finally, Chapter Five concludes the dissertation by offering recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Black women's experiences in the academy have been undergirded by gendered racism and a lack of representation at historically white institutions (HWI) and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) (Commodore, 2019, 2020; Oikelome, 2017). Although there is more literature on Black women students, faculty, and administrators, there remains limited research on the experiences of Black women college presidents (Townsend, 2021; Winkle-Wagner, 2015). This literature review aims to understand the scholarship about Black women college presidents and Black women aspirants.

To conduct the literature review, peer-reviewed articles are identified through electronic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and ProQuest. I used the following search terms: Black women administrators, Black women presidents, Black college presidents, female presidents, women presidents, emotional expression, Black women and joy, Black women and body movement/image, Black women's president pathway, president pathways, mentoring and Black women, and president and mentorship. Although I do not use "female" throughout the literature review, including the word in the search increased the scope of articles for retrieval. I also excluded articles on Black women students, faculty, and administrators to focus the review further. I omitted articles focused on women of color because I am solely focusing on Black women instead of generalizing the experience for all women of color. Additionally, I included articles on women presidents and Black women presidents of various institutional types. There was a total of 120 articles used to organize the review of the literature within the following sections: (a) historical context, (b) path to the presidency, (c) Black women's experiences moving in and out of the presidency, (d) Black women and emotions.

I begin with a historical review of Black women college presidents. Then, I examine the literature on the journey of Black women to the presidency. Next, I explore how scholars detail the experiences of Black women as leaders of colleges and universities by studying institutional and organizational culture, leadership approaches, social politics, and sense of belonging. In the final section, I focus on how these women are retained throughout their tenure and the reasons for attrition by highlighting concepts of emotional expression. I conclude the literature review by summarizing the literature gaps within the scholarship on Black women college presidents.

Historical Context

The social status of Black women in the U.S. is predominantly viewed through a white supremacist lens as a political commodity through labor, subjugation, and silencing (Collins, 2009; Dillard, 2022). Understanding the historical context of Black women's standing in society crafts a unique slate, painting a larger picture of the structural marginalization and the victorious celebrations within Black women's experiences. To appropriately highlight the aspiring stage, examining the progression of Black women in the presidency is necessary. There is a history of prominent Black women college presidents whose focus was racial uplift in the Black community by developing educational opportunities (Gasman, 2011; Jackson & Harris, 2005). Jackson and Harris (2005) produced a five-wave descriptor that anchors periods in time where Black women were appointed as college presidents at degree-granting institutions. Within each wave, the journeys of one to two highly influential Black women presidents are offered, and a description of their leadership impacts while in the roles. A short biography of each woman, their introduction into education, their journeys into higher education leadership, and their influence is summarized per wave. According to Jackson and Harris, the wave descriptor was grouped from 1903 to 2002. Although these authors highlight many Black women presidents, I expanded the

years to include other Black women of that time that Jackson and Harris did not identify, specifically in waves four and five. All women acknowledged in this literature review left a legacy for Black education communities that had long-standing effects on racial and gender progression.

Wave One

Black women's lineage in the college presidency dates to the genesis of Dr. Mary McCleod Bethune's work as a social activist and leader in education and politics (Johnson-Miller, 2006; Ruffin, 2007). As the daughter of formerly enslaved people, Dr. Bethune declared that her purpose was to advocate for Black, civil, and women's rights. She was introduced to education at the age of 10 when a Presbyterian church opened a school for negro education, and Dr. Bethune felt that her God-ordained purpose was to become her family's first school-educated person (Johnson-Miller, 2006). Her trek to school was riddled with racist acts of harassment and assaults by white children. However, those incidents struck a chord within Dr. Bethune to redirect focus on Black education, specifically for Black girls, and find joy in creating equal opportunities for the Black community by applying Christian values and beliefs. The work of Dr. Bethune was rooted in the church and served a higher purpose through spirituality and the pursuit of a better life. Growing up impoverished was somewhat discouraging to her as she considered what educational opportunities were available despite having graduated from a Presbyterian school. However, she was offered enrollment at Scotia Seminary, an institution designed to rectify the social status of Black women by teaching a holistic approach that emphasized mind, body, and spirit connectivity. This act of leadership would then be the foundation for Dr. Bethune's work as a pioneer in postsecondary learning. After completing her work at Scotia, she further developed her spiritual and religious life at Moody Bible Institute,

where she gained a reputation as an influential evangelist. Founding Sunday schools in rural areas to spread the Gospel, Dr. Bethune went on to join various schools for Black girls and missionary work to minister to Black people throughout America as a form of moral uplift in the Black community through activism and instruction.

Bethune's affinity for Christian education piloted her professional and political paths, which led to her founding a boarding school for Black girls, Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls, in 1904 with an endowment of $1.50 (Johnson-Miller, 2006; Ruffin, 2007). The Daytona Educational and Industrial school was rooted in Christian principles and its mission was to cultivate the knowledge of young girls that they may be of sound heart, head, and hand (McCluskey, 1994). The curriculum at Scotia taught Dr. Bethune the significance of serving others, but she was made to work in domestic capacities for white families (Mccluskey, 1994). She later left Scotia and Moody's church-based foundation and reshaped her consciousness to uplift Black homes, believing that the liberation of Black women happened through education. The initial curriculum for the Daytona Education and Industrial school taught Black women that they needed to be economically independent to earn a living regardless of the racial climate and inaccessibility during that period. Students were educated on academic subjects, creative arts, religion, and domestic skills such as sewing, weaving, and cooking. By 1923, the popularity of Dr. Bethune's work of offering college-level teachings and training for teachers and nurses attracted attention. She then crafted a merger with the Methodist-run Cookman Institute for men to secure funding for the school, which resulted in the now coeducation Bethune-Cookman University (Mccluskey, 1994; O'Connor, 2009). In 1923, post-merger, Dr. Bethune served as the first president of the institution and one of America's first women presidents until her retirement in 1942 (O'Connor, 2009). Her labor as an administration

secured state accreditation as a junior college, which was then approved as a four-year liberal arts and education school in 1941 before her tenure. She would later return from 1946 to 1947 as president, but there is little research on why she returned for one year or chose to retire. However, Dr. Bethune's wealth of knowledge and advocacy created a lineage for Black women to follow in future years.

The next president highlighted was the catalyst in transforming an entire college by cleaning up the mess of her predecessors. Dr. Mary Elizabeth Branch began her journey into education in elementary school while receiving homeschooling from her parents, who were born enslaved but later became part of the Black middle class (Brown & Heintze, 2020). Upon completing her high school training at the Virginia State College normal school, Dr. Branch found an appreciation for education as an English teacher and later joined Virginia State as faculty for nearly 20 years. Her reputation as a thought-provoking instructor gained her popularity around campus as she was also the institution's housing director. Teaching seemed to be Dr. Branch's first love, as she would then teach social students at Sumner Junior College. Still, she eventually found her way into administration in 1928 as the dean of women at Vashon High School, which was known as the largest school for Black girl education in the U.S. (Jones, 2021; Brown & Heintze, 2020). To supplement her academic development, Dr. Branch attended the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, and the University of Chicago throughout her summers. In 1922, the University of Chicago conferred her bachelor's degree and a master's degree in English in 1925.

In 1930, the American Missionary Association appointed Dr. Branch as president of Tillotson College in Austin, Texas, a struggling institution with low enrollment during the Great Depression and a degraded status from a four-year to a junior college for women (Howard,

2018). The school was initially created for Black women and men but transitioned to a women's college in 1925 (Brown & Heintze, 2020). During her tenure, she restored the institution from the years of dilapidated buildings, insufficient books for students and educators, and infamously low enrollment numbers (Howard, 2018). Dr. Branch made many improvements at Tillotson College, including increased student enrollment, more jobs for new faculty, and restoration of key buildings on campus, such as the library (Howard, 2018). Her rigorous recruitment of high-profile staff and educators and fundraising for student scholarships attracted more traction for attendance (Jones, 2021). Additionally, she removed the mandatory chapel and promoted involvement in student organizations (i.e., fraternities, sororities, academic clubs, and athletic clubs) (Brown & Heintze, 2020). Dr. Branch's ability to step into this role and cultivate networks with students, faculty, staff, and local communities fostered tangible change that established a reputable name for herself and the college. Five years into her tenure as president, Dr. Branch reorganized the structure of the college by receiving recognition as a four-year coeducational school and a membership in the American Association of Colleges (Howard, 2018). In 1943, Tillotson was awarded an "A" ranking by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACSS). This recognition made Dr. Branch the first woman to lead an accredited institution within the SACSS membership. She was the only Black woman to serve as a senior college president before her passing in 1944 (Jones, 2021). She devoted her expertise to youth engagement and education and created a space for the college's civil rights affairs (Brown & Heintze, 2020).

Within the first wave of Black women college presidents, Dr. Bethune and Dr. Branch's presidencies were focused on designing curricula and forming a sound academic foundation for their students attending the institutions. Their impacts were connected to student success and

ensuring that learning environments promoted stability and rigor. The historically Black institutions they led are well-known for continuously educating Black communities and other races and ethnicities. Nonetheless, the Christian origins of these HBCUs are important to note as the literature captures the experiences of other Black women presidents and the laborious responsibilities that they committed themselves to in the name of racial uplift and opportunity (Commodore, 2019).

Wave Two

During this second wave of Black women's college leadership, the Civil Rights Movement began to peak as racial tensions in the fight for equality caused a stark divide throughout the country (Jackson & Harris, 2005). Generally, college presidents would attempt to be neutral in their actions toward civil unrest because they did not want to upset college stakeholders or boards of trustees by favoring one side over the other (Gasman, 2011; Stewart, 2019). However, some Black women presidents at HBCUs were more inclined to respond to injustices despite the call for neutrality by hosting civil rights leaders or openly supporting student groups for civil action (Gasman, 2011; Jean-Marie, 2006: Linnaberry et al., 2014). This radical understanding was, in large part, Black women's reality in fighting for equal rights to protect their coupled identities of race and gender (Collins, 2009). Many Black women presidents have personal and second-hand experiences witnessing how oppressive structures perpetuate the exclusion of low-income, people of color, and women in education. They were compelled to address the issue during their administration. The subsequent generation highlights another saturation of Black women presidents from 1955 to 1970 who unceasingly steered the charge for social equity and radical change within postsecondary education. This wave of leadership, according to Jackson and Harris (2005), included women such as Dr. Willa Beatrice

Player, president of Bennett College for Women, and Dr. Yvonne Taylor, who served at Wilberforce College, both historically Black colleges.

Dr. Willa B. Player was a civil rights activist who was unafraid of people's opinions regarding her leadership style. Though she is a lesser-known Black women president, her impact was vital in setting a framework that allowed college presidents to support students regarding liberation and equal rights (Gasman, 2011; Jackson & Harris, 2005). She was one of the few Black presidents who encouraged students to participate in demonstrations and welcomed guests such as Martin Luther King, Jr. to address the student body (African American Registry, 2021; Gasman, 2011). According to Gasman (2011), Dr. Player's meek and feminine appeal made whites believe she was tempered with their feelings. However, Dr. Player's leadership approach went against what white society thought Black college presidents should do by not reprimanding students who participated in active sit-ins or other demonstrations. Her journey into postsecondary education began at Akron University but then transferred to Ohio Wesleyan, where she would graduate in 1929. Dr. Player would teach in Akron's American public school system and became the first Black teacher in that area. During this time, she pursued a master's degree at Oberlin College and was hired at Bennett College to teach Latin and French (Civil Rights Digital Library, 2021). Her interests progressed as she became the director of religious activities at Bennett, but she then went abroad to study in France for a stint. After she returned to Bennett College, Dr. Player was the director of admissions and served as the dean. Earning a doctorate from Columbia University bolstered her administrative career as she was promoted to the coordinator of instruction and, in 1955, then hired as the vice president. In 1956, Dr. Player would become the first woman president and the first Black individual to lead Bennett College, a four-year liberal arts school (Jones, 2020). Bennett College presented Dr. Player with the title

"president emerita," which recognizes her as a president after retiring. She later served as the first Black woman on a board of trustees for Ohio Wesleyan, but her tenure was not specified (Price, 2021).

Her presidency was remarkable in Black women's leadership because of her commitment to students. Approximately 40% of Bennett's student body was arrested or in jail for participating in demonstrations (African American Registry, 2021). Dr. Player, however, did not allow this to deter students from receiving and completing their education. She frequently visited the students in jail and coordinated with faculty to instruct and administer exams for those students (Civil Rights Digital Library, 2021). To some, her work may not be surprising, but to others, her work as a president was courageous during an era of lynchings and violence toward Black people. Dr. Player's philosophy on student development was that education includes the freedom of expression and builds on top of one's fundamental values to form equal opportunities for all (Gasman, 2011). In 1966, Dr. Player resigned as president but continued her work to better education and access, support the connections between race and religion, and serve as a trustee board for Clark College. Regardless of domination, the influence of the Christian church led many Black women to administration and beyond their tenure.

Dr. Yvonne Walker Taylor was yet another trailblazer during her tenure as a university president. Growing up in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church laid a foundation for Dr. Taylor's passion for education and creating opportunities for others to achieve the same. Her father served as Wilberforce University's president until 1941. He ingrained in Dr. Taylor the belief that she could do and be anything, not conforming to the gender roles and expectations of the time (The Dayton Foundation, 2016). Dr. Taylor graduated from Wilberforce, the oldest private HBCU in the nation, at the age of 19 with a bachelor's degree in science, received a

master's degree from Boston University and earned an educational specialist certification from the University of Kansas (Dayton Daily News, 2006). Her career trajectory in education began as a secondary teacher and then as a French and English instructor at Wilberforce. Dr. Taylor, however, would soon hold significant positions at the university, which included the following: administrative assistant to the president, chair of the teacher education division, assistant academic dean, dean of instruction, academic dean, vice president for academic affairs, and provost (African American Registry, 2021). Her father influenced her passion for education at Wilberforce, as Dr. Taylor later succeeded him as the 16th president (Dayton Daily News, 2006). She was the first woman to hold the title at Wilberforce College (African American Registry, 2021). She developed many notable educational programs and fundraising campaigns (Willis, 2021). During her tenure as president, Dr. Taylor formed a reading lab, advocated for two new engineering and computer science majors in collaboration with the University of Dayton, and mandated a computer literacy program for all enrolled students (African American Registry, 2021). She also founded an honor society, a Women for Women in Wilberforce scholarship that recognized young women in 1984, and the Adopt-A-Student program with the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church (Dayton Daily News, 2006). Dr. Taylor was an active member of various professional associations and was awarded honors such as Metropolitan Civic Women's "Woman of the Year," Ohio Women's Hall of Fame, Greene County Women's Hall of Fame, and Miami Valley Ten Top Women (African American Registry, 2021). Her legacy in education remains notable today for creating student programs in conjunction with the AME church and engaging with political councils to cultivate growth for Black communities.

Wave Three

The third wave of Jackson and Harris' (2005) descriptor captures years from 1970 to 1987. Two presidents, in particular, are essential during this era of leadership, Dr. Mary Frances and Dr. Jewel Plummer Cobb. Until this time, most of the Black women presidents highlighted led HBCUs. From the early 1920s to late the 1970s/early 1980s, the nation's predominantly white institutions had not appointed a Black woman to lead the charge as president. Nonetheless, their experiences integrating into these institutions are worthy of sharing as this produces a new perspective on presidencies.

Dr. Mary Frances Berry was a public servant who began her journey into postsecondary education as a graduate of Howard University, an HBCU, in 1961 with a bachelor's and 1962 master's degree (Britannica, 2021). She continued at Howard as a history professor and taught at the University of Michigan, where she received her doctorate in history and a law degree (University of Pennsylvania, 2021). Dr. Berry was an avid activist, lawyer, thought leader, and scholar regarding civil rights legislation and advocacy. Before her involvement in federal cabinets, Dr. Berry served as the director of Afro-American studies at the University of Maryland from 1972 to 1974. She developed the academic program into a degree track for students. Her work with Afro-American studies led to an appointment as interim chair of the behavioral sciences division (the University of Maryland, n.d.). She later became the first Black woman provost at the University of Maryland in 1974 and chancellor at the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1976 (Rex, 2012). Dr. Berry's presidential appointment resulted in her being the first Black woman to oversee a major research institution (the University of Maryland, n.d.). In 1977, she concluded her term as president and remained at the University of Colorado as faculty until 1980 (Britannica, 2021). Dr. Berry would soon leave postsecondary education as the

assistant secretary for education in the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Her work for the civil rights commission contributed to her reputation as a dedicated public servant. Dr. Berry continued teaching American history and law at universities, such as Central Michigan University, Eastern Michigan University, and the University of Maryland. She also wrote books related to democracy, Black stories, and racism and sexism while leading the civil rights commission (University of Pennsylvania, 2021).

Another powerful story of dispelling the odds is Dr. Jewel Plummer Cobb, who experienced multiple forms of racial and gender discrimination (African American Registry, 2021). Dr. Cobb is known for her leadership, research, and pedagogical styles. She came from medical professionals and educators, but her access to academically challenging public schools was limited due to segregation (Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, 2019). However, Dr. Cobb knew that she was destined for greatness and grew interested in biology during her secondary schooling. She was inspired to enroll at the University of Michigan but later chose to leave due to the discriminatory campus culture. Dr. Cobb then earned her bachelor's degree in biology from Talladega College, an HBCU. As a graduate, she applied for a teaching fellowship at New York University but was denied because she was Black. Dr. Cobb's was unable to accept this blatant form of discrimination and decided that she would take a road trip to New York, where she advocated for herself and was accepted as a fellow. In 1945, she began her journey as faculty at New York University and received her master's degree in cell physiology in 1947 and a doctorate in 1950. Dr. Cobb was committed to researching skin pigment melanin and chemotherapeutic drugs in cancer cells.

In the 1960s and 1970s, she continued teaching at other institutions such as Sarah Lawrence College and Connecticut College, but she progressed to an administrator serving as a

dean at Connecticut College (African American Registry, 2021). Eventually, Dr. Cobb made her way to the west coast. In 1981, she was offered the presidency at California State University at Fullerton. As president, she focused efforts on increasing state funds to construct new science and engineering buildings, funding the university's first student housing building, and eliminating Fullerton's reputation as a commuter school (Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, 2019). One of Dr. Cobb's most notable acts as president was developing a tutoring program that assisted minority students in math as an avenue to bolster their success in college-level courses. A life's mission of Dr. Cobb was to empower young women and marginalized populations by extending opportunities to engage in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

She retired from the presidency in 1991 but was honored with the "emerita" title as part of a lifelong recognition of her administrative transformation. Following her presidency, she became a trustee professor and director of the ACCESS Center at California State University in Los Angeles, an initiative crafted for economically disadvantaged middle and high school students pursuing careers in math, the sciences, and engineering (Cal State LA, 2001). Dr. Cobb was a pioneer in cancer research, but she recognized that her purpose was to eradicate the diseases of racism and sexism in education through equal opportunity programs and writing about the forms of discrimination in the sciences (African American Registry, 2021). Both Dr. Cobb and Dr. Berry significantly contributed to the growth and status of Black women presidents having the capacity to lead prominent research institutions while also advocating for civil and social equality.

Wave Four

This next wave of Black women pioneers includes 1987 to 1995, adding three years from Jackson and Harris' (2005) original wave descriptor. Notable Black women were leading postsecondary institutions, but this section highlights two in particular—Dr. Johnette Betsch Cole and Dr. Niara Sudarkasa. Both started their higher learning at Fisk University, a historically Black institution, and then transitioned to Oberlin College, a historically white school. Many of the women listed in the waves were educated at historically Black institutions like Dr. Cole and Dr. Sudarkasa. They returned to HBCUs to pay it forward to the institutions that shaped their ideologies as successful academic leaders.

Dr. Cole began her education at Fisk, transferred to Oberlin College, where she received a bachelor's degree, and later earned master's and doctorate degrees from Northwestern University (Spelman, 2017). She jumpstarted her postsecondary career as a professor of anthropology at various colleges, including Washington State University, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and Hunter College. She held the director position for the Latin American and Caribbean studies program.

In 1987, Dr. Cole was selected as the first Black woman president of Spelman College, an institution designed to educate women of African descent. Her faculty service and work led her to instructing at Emory University as a distinguished presidential professor of anthropology, women's studies, and African American studies. Dr. Cole's legacy as Spelman's president marked the period of the college's most successful capital campaign raising over $113 million and the largest donation of $37 million, which resulted in Spelman having the most considerable endowment of all HBCUs (Spelman, 2017; Yelvington, 2003). Among Dr. Cole's ability to network and fundraise, she established multiple programs for mentorship, international affairs,

and community service. Further, Spelman's reputation and rankings skyrocketed under Dr. Cole's administration. The college was deemed a model institution for excellence in undergraduate science and math by the National Science Foundation and NASA.

In 2002, she became Bennett College's 14th president and the fourth Black woman to hold the esteemed position and concluded her tenure in 2007 (Bennett College, 2020). Dr. Cole's time, however, was equally as impactful at Bennett as she saw to a $50 million capital campaign, initiated African women's and global studies programs, supported the arts by erecting an art gallery, and founded the Johnnetta B. Cole Global Diversity and Inclusion Institute (Bennett College, 2017). She once stated that "the most critical lessons are always about how one moves through the world" (Yelvington, 2003, p. 277) and how it is imperative to understand the difference between being a leader and being an administrator. While listening to her friend, Dr. Ruth Simmons, inaugural president's speech, Dr. Cole had a revelation about her responsibility as a college president, which included addressing class and accessibility, blending the arts and science to foster a culture of holistic knowledge, and continuing the education and development of faculty (Yelvington, 2003).

Dr. Niara Sudarkasa also adopted this creative approach. She challenged the boundaries of confronting racism and emphasized a personal social responsibility to identify and combat issues as a fruit of her labor (Williams, 2018). Like Dr. Cole's journey, Dr. Sudarkasa continued her education after Fisk University by enrolling in Oberlin College for a double bachelor's degree and then attending Columbia University for a master's and doctorate (Babers, 2019). Upon graduating, she became the first Black woman to teach at New York University as an anthropology professor (Babers, 2019). In 1967, she was hired at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where she was also the first Black woman to instruct at the institution and became

the first Black tenure-track professor in 1969. As a young scholar, she continued her research on West African trade and developments and the roles of African women. Dr. Sudarkasa persisted as a campus leader who broke barriers as the first Black woman director of the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies at the University of Michigan and acted as associate vice-president of academic affairs. Dr. Sudarkasa was selected to lead as the first woman president at Lincoln University, the nation's first-degree granting HBCU, in 1986 and served until her retirement in 1998. Her fortitude in administration yielded a prominent reputation as a dynamic leader who had a keen sense of self-awareness, which translated into her presidential agenda— educating Lincoln's student body about their historical connections to Mother Africa and advancing the competitiveness of STEM field programs (Williams, 2018). The triumphs of storytelling and connecting students with the educational resources for identity exploration made Dr. Sudarkasa stand out among her peers during her tenure and contributed to the lineage of Black women presidents.

Though both Dr. Cole and Dr. Sudarkasa held highly regarded presidencies, they also prioritized their writing skills and ability to connect with those around the world through the power of words (Babers, 2019; Williams, 2019; Yelvington, 2003). Their perpetual scholarship on Black women—professional and familial aspects—and social justice and equity deepened academia's respect for their leadership and cultural knowledge. Although the number of Black women presidents was minimal, their influence on college administration and leadership strategy was unmatched in greatness when entering a new era of leadership.

Wave Five

Black women's age of becoming the "first" Black president or woman president continued into the 21st century despite the previous progression. One individual is highlighted

that captures the transition into the new millennium—1995 into the 2000s. Dr. Ruth Simmons received her bachelor's degree from Dillard University, a historically Black institution, and her master's and doctorate from Harvard University, an ivy league institution. Her learning experiences from an HBCU and the ivy league cultivated a unique perspective for her leadership approach while ascending to the presidency. She emphasized authenticity, transparency, trustworthiness, persuasion, and inclusivity while in the role (Quddus, 2018).

Dr. Simmons became the first Black woman president at Smith College, a women's college, in 1995 (Bartlett, 2010). Before her presidency, Dr. Simmons served as dean and associate dean of graduate studies, dean of faculty, vice provost, and provost. Her professional trajectory before assuming the presidency is important because it adds to the information on the pathway to the role. During her tenure at Smith College, she formed a campus climate working group to foster conversations regarding race relations, diversity, and inclusivity (Smith College, 2001). This was only the beginning as she expanded her reach to a national level and hosted a race and ethnic diversity conference. Her ability to appeal to political, community, and campus leaders as a change agent resulted in launching initiatives such as the first women's college engineering and technology program, a praxis that guaranteed undergraduates at least one paid internship throughout their academic journey, and a poetry center that invited renowned poets to speak annually (Smith College, 2001).

Furthermore, Dr. Simmons understood the importance of financial campaigns and raised over $65 million for the institution. Her priorities were focused on urban outreach and offering equal opportunities to disadvantaged student populations. The work of Dr. Simmons was well-known in postsecondary education and the political landscape, which led to her being presented

with various titles like "woman of the year" and one of "America's most influential women" (Smith College, 2001).

In 2001, Dr. Simmons was appointed at Brown University as the first woman and Black individual to become president at an Ivy League institution (Bartlett, 2010; The HistoryMakers, 2019). Accepting a Black woman into the presidency at Brown took nearly 240 years since its founding date. While considering the university's history, Simmons was suspicious of institutions that often display a façade of diversity, inclusion, and equity when hiring Black professionals (Lawson, 2021). Nonetheless, she was not deterred from pursuing the role and leaving an impact. During an interview, Simmons mentioned how she recruited Black scholars to the institutions to "demonstrate that African Americans were every bit as smart as the smartest" (Lawson, 2021, 02:43). Her legacy of fostering change on behalf of marginalized populations through fundraising, academic programs, and recruitment continues as she serves as Prairie View A&M University's, a HBCU, residing president (Lawson, 2021). Dr. Simmons leaves a mark at every institution by calling attention to cultural competencies and creating spaces to hear voices of color. Her presidencies are rooted in community uplift and navigating the structures of marginalization to reap the benefits for students, faculty, and staff (Lawson, 2021; Quddus, 2018; Smith College, 2001).

Each wave of presidents validates a history that is often overlooked in literature and positions the life's journey of influential Black women presidents in a positive light (Jackson & Harris, 2005). Introducing the context of Black women's pathways from receiving an education to their influence as higher education leadership forges a timeline and structures the discussion on how others view presidency preparation, leadership development, and the social politics associated with the pursuit of this coveted role. Most of these women launched their education or

first served as president at HBCUs, and not until recently did they have increased opportunities

to branch out into varying institution types. The Black women mentioned in this historical

context section are well-known presidents, but there is a need to explore the additional voices

preparing for the role. Further, most of the research available showcases their journey in and

through the presidency without identifying their reasons for retiring. The following section

examines the path to the presidency by reviewing self-direction, professional relationships, and

positions held before assuming or seeking the presidency.

Path to the Presidency

The following section outlines literature on pathways to the college presidency, including

preparation and components of leadership development. Black women's career pathways toward

college leadership present unique challenges and risks that require intentionally navigating

personal and relational networks. One of the main issues is that Black women are not progressing

into the presidency at equitable rates and are at a more significant disadvantage for being

overlooked or tokenized when applying for administrative positions such as the presidency

(Bates, 2007; Howard-Vital, 1989; Mosley, 1980). To appropriately address this concern,

scholars must examine how Black women aspirants and current presidents intentionally construct

pathways of experiences to enhance their skills (Oikelome, 2017). Reviewing the impact of

social networks such as community relationships and mentoring can also inform researchers on

Black women's progression toward the presidency. The final part of this section highlights the

positions that are traditionally pursued while also discussing non-traditional ones.

Self-Direction

Discovering one's path into higher education leadership stems from a personal interest

and investment of time, intentionality, and resources. Race plays a vital role in shaping the traits

and identities of Black women (Waring, 2003). Black women are groomed to be independent in their personal lives, either by choice or survival, from a young age (Collins, 2009; Seo & Hinton, 2009). The notorious matriarch or mammy stereotype placed on Black women illustrates the grooming in adulthood (Collins, 2009). First, these stereotypes perpetuate a motherly figure whose sole job is to tend to the needs of everyone but herself and declares that Black women are overly independent (Hall 2018; Maynard, 2018; West & Knight, 2017). Yet, conversely, dispelling those stereotypes propels Black women and invites them to explore their authentic leadership style (Commodore, 20219; Oikelome, 2017; Townsend, 2021). Black women possess a natural tendency to guide others to resources and create access for marginalized populations, which results in pursuing roles with the desire to serve a bigger purpose.

Scholars do not explicitly explore how Black women intentionally design their professional pathways; however, the expressions of Black women's call to leadership are embedded in their work on college campuses. Helping students of color navigate their educational experiences often translates into the servant leadership of Black women (Alston, 2005; Jean-Marie, 2006). The symbiotic relationship between wanting to develop personally and serving others inspires Black women to pursue administration despite not having formal guidance to assist in the transition (Brown, 2005; Farinde-Wu, 2018; Lehrke & Sowden, 2017). Black women are attracted to upper-level roles and persist in selecting positions that will add to their qualifications, though many Black women administrators voice concerns about the lack of direction and support from peers and supervisors (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton; Townsend, 2021). This knowledge leads scholars to believe that additional support from social networks is critical for increased opportunities for Black women presidency aspirants (Linnaberry et al., 2014).

Social Networks/Relationships

Scholars identified that social networks are critical to Black women's journeys toward the presidency. Forming sustainable relationships is also part of securing recommendations for advanced positions, gaining exposure, and developing a more profound knowledge of role expectations (Brown, 2005; Reis & Grady, 2018). Connections can be formal or informal, and both can create lasting impacts on future career opportunities. According to Bates (2007), Black women tend to gain more respect in the higher education field and receive more assistance toward their goals when connected to someone who has the experiences and knowledge to support them in the journey. Relationships with mentors and sponsors became notable to discuss Black women college presidents.

Mentorship

Serving as mentors to those within higher education—students, colleagues, etc.—was identified as part of Black women presidents' mission to uplift and empower historically underserved groups (Esters & Strayhorn, 2013). Many Black women stated that encounters with students influenced their desire to become president and continue supporting those around them through mentoring relationships (Wheat & Hill, 2016). However, scholars identified some strategies that Black women use to propel their professional trajectory, which involve relationships with mentors and sponsors (Holder et al., 2015) and personal networks that benefit their status as leaders (Brown, 2005; Commodore, 2016; Linnabery et al., 2014; Oikelome, 2017; Vaughan, 1989). Brown (2005) mentioned that mentors have the opportunity to plant seeds of empowerment and knowledge when seeking the college presidency. Brown also cited that the connection facilitates their career ascension to this role. Oikelome's (2017) study explicitly

stated that additional research is needed on the professional relationships for Black women since the study participants shared that their mentors were primarily white men.

The recommendation for research from Oikelome (2017) targeted the need to explore the impact and differences having a cross-gender and cross-racial mentor made on Black women's pursuits. Though mentors could reveal much about the resources needed for Black women, many create supportive and influential networks with other women and men (Holder et al., 2015; Oikelome, 2017). Black women are the most disadvantaged population when navigating the executive pipeline based on the lack of access to networking with influential mentors or sponsors. Identifying and removing barriers of isolation, tokenism, or "otherness" through (in)formal mentorships offer an avenue that promotes professional development and opportunity (Brown, 2005; Beckwith et al., 2016). Women are more likely to seek mentors or a professional network. The chance to engage with others sharing similar plights or successes is beneficial for persistence and retention (Beckwith et al., 2016; Gause, 2021). Though there is a level of importance to learn from someone who has experience in the role, having a professional sponsor to introduce or recommend others is of more significant effect for Black women.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship was noted as an equally impactful method of increasing opportunities for Black women pursuing the college presidency. Sponsors, unlike mentors, are the invisible voices that possess the influence to recommend and redirect attention to marginalized individuals or populations. Black women benefit from sponsorship because sponsors often validate Black women's level of competencies, "which is subjective depending on the perceiver and is particularly important for Black women considering the pervasive stereotype of their inferior intelligence" (Holder et al., 2015, p. 177). By engaging or receiving this form of leadership

development, professional institutions may notice an increase in qualified Black women interested in senior-level roles (Alfred, 2001; Jackson & Harris, 2005). However, the scholarship on Black women's sponsorship for the college presidency is primarily available in graduate theses or dissertations. Holder et al.'s (2015) work noted that studying the influence of gaining sponsors could indicate a pattern or strategic plan to ascend to the presidency.

Family Support

Though professional mentorship and sponsorship are relevant to the success of Black women, understanding the need for familial and communal support is essential for Black women's success in overcoming racism, sexism, or other co-existing forms of discrimination (Collins, 2009). Many Black women participants in Linnaberry et al.'s (2014) study discussed how they rely on their personal/home lives to refresh, restore, and recharge their mindset when battling negativity on the job. The family network is the most intimate group that offers professional and personal support.

Many Black women chose to advance their education level and leadership status because they recognized how previous generations in their family encountered oppression and were not afforded the same opportunities (Chance, 2021). Black women also thrive when they have access to strong spousal and friend connections (Linnabery et al., 2014). Family systems also require successful jobs, wealth, and stability, which is a delicate balance for Black women as they consider the demands of their careers and responsibility to their families (Chance, 2021). Although this may appear taxing to some, Black women assume their familial roles and duties as a motivating factor to persist in positions.

Pathways/Aspirations

The journey ascending to the college presidency is complex. Yet, professionals steadily set their aspirations for the role. Most people in this position intentionally build their professional path, brick by brick, to gain specific skills and knowledge that assist in their leadership development. The research on the experiences throughout the aspiring stage to the presidency is not explicitly available. However, the American Council on Education (ACE) (2017) published data on the career pathways of respondents in their national college president study, and the results show that many presidents are attracted to positions from differing leadership levels in their current roles. This indicates that the aspirational journey to the presidency is a relevant phase to examine but especially critical when considering the distribution of race and gender among presidents (Lepkowski, 2009; Oikelome, 2017).

As the percentage of Black women in higher-level positions remains low, identifying their professional pathway and what fields they left to pursue higher education becomes relevant. Women are more likely to serve as first-time presidents and have shorter tenures than men—less than 13% serve more than 10 years (ACE, 2017). Although the percentage is small, women are navigating the presidency pipeline as seasoned presidents and gaining experiences at varying institutions. The pathways of women presidents vary from assuming roles such as chief academic officers or provosts, deans, or student affairs executives (ACE, 2017). College presidents are also recruited from other professional fields who possess extensive backgrounds that contribute to their leadership skills for the presidency (e.g., communication, collaboration, management, and cultural awareness (ACE, 2017; Beckwith et al., 2016; Jackson & Harris, 2005). Being aware of the "path to promotion" is a pressing matter for women when choosing the next step in their

career and gaining the skills needed to become a competitive candidate (Reis & Grady, 2018, p. 103).

Based on the biographical sketches offered in the earlier portion of this chapter, most of the Black women presidents worked in higher education before assuming the presidency. There was a trend that many followed by serving as an educator in their respective nichés and were drawn to administrative positions later in their careers. The gender imbalance leads to a general understanding that "women are expected to engage communally and lead with traditional female traits" as opposed to "an agentic leadership style [that] may be acceptable from a male leader" (Reis & Grady, 2018, p. 98). Societal gender norms impact women's progression in straying away from the traditional perception of women's ability to lead. Women leaders are not viewed equally to men, which subjectively skews hiring decisions (Begeny et al., 2020). However, stakeholders expect similar results. Waring's (2003) study on the self-conceptions of leadership offers an avenue to discuss the intersections of racial and gender for women presidents. The need to highlight Black women's pathways to the college presidency becomes imperative to addressing how they aspire to and attain the presidency. Jackson and Harris (2005) examined Black women's presidential pathways and set a framework for future research by reviewing how educational backgrounds influenced Black women's leadership approaches. The research revealed that Black women presidents assumed that they had to exceed professional expectations, obtain positions that were they could further develop a multifaceted skillset, and earn terminal degrees to be perceived as qualified. The following section details how Black women navigate in, through, and out of the presidency.

Black Women's Experiences Moving in and out of the Presidency

Scholars suggest that Black women presidents offer an essential seat at the table which introduces opportunities to advocate for equity, empower their campus stakeholders, and challenge the status quo when part of the decision-making processes (Collins, 2009; Wheat & Hill, 2017; Oikelome, 2017). However, Black women college presidents' experience is highly scrutinized (Commodore et al., 2020). Once a Black woman enters the presidency, added challenges may sustain or end their tenure (Reis & Grady, 2018; Tekniepe, 2014). This section covers the importance of assessing different institution types' institutional and organizational culture and potential barriers. Next, a review of Black women's leadership approach will follow. Then, the influence of social politics on Black women's decision-making process is introduced. The concept of resilience as means of survival will conclude this transitional period of the presidency.

Institutional and Organizational Culture

Black women presidents often balance a level of social conservatism (Commodore, 2019). Conservative ideals resound throughout many aspects of the Black community and gender norms related to appearance, speech, and actions (Commodore, 2019; Shepherd, 2017). Over the years, Black women leaders succumbed to the beauty standards, moral high ground, and aesthetic of being presentable assumed by Christian women in the Black church (Bryant, 2013; Commodore, 2019). Self-presentation is the silent policing of one's image that Black women are often conditioned to practice to be perceived as intelligent, credible, or worthy (Bryant, 2013; Commodore, 2019; Collins, 2009; Townsend, 2021). This balancing act stems from how society perceives Black women's point of influence, whether leading a PWI or HBCU (Commodore, 2019). According to Commodore (2019), leaders pursuing the HBCU presidency should

anticipate assimilating into the culture of religious standards. Though she specifically mentioned private HBCUs, Commodore also addressed the tendency for public HBCU presidents to respond similarly. This level of conservatism fosters a deepened awareness of how others may or may not perceive one's leadership credibility. Black women are prone to caving in to those ideals in hopes of furthering their career trajectory. Commodore (2020) stated that media commentators foster a problematic environment that perpetuates controlling images such as the matriarch, Sapphire, or Welfare Queen during her study on Black women HBCU presidents. This deepens Collins' (2009) stance that biases and stereotypes dictate how Black women choose to present themselves in the professional setting and how others will shape perceptions of Black women's qualifications. Nonetheless, Black women's leadership commits to cultivating a quality student experience through administrator-student relationships and recognizes that their position provides an opportunity to advocate and create change on campus (Commodore, 2019; Esters & Strayhorn, 2013; Jean-Marie, 2006).

Conservatism and HBCU Influence

Religious affiliations and gender hierarchy played a critical role in how Black women chose to navigate their surroundings or advocate for change when working at HBCUs (Commodore, 2019; Gasman, 2011). These expectations were unwritten aspects of an interview process, leadership approach, or social engagement with campus and community partners, and those hidden criticisms still dictate how Black women pursue administrative positions. Commodore et al. (2020) further analyzed online conversations from students and faculty at HBCUs and their perspectives regarding Black women presidents' leadership as part of the church's influence on Black women's conversative demeanors. The discourse revealed that the societal (mis)treatment of Black women with derogatory or gendered words mirrored the

responses collected. Most of the excerpts targeted Black women's leadership abilities to communicate, their overall competency as leaders, and the perceptions of likeability by the community. However, most statements perpetuated controlling stereotypes (Commodore et al., 2020; Collins, 2009), much like the mammy or matriarch, who is ultimately responsible for nurturing and tending to the specific campus or student body needs. Collins (2009) and Roberts (2002) similarly agreed that Black women are often forced into matriarchy based on experiences within the Black family and the concept of generational duties expected of Black women. Throughout the study, Black students' expectations of Black women presidents mirrored what could be categorized as maternal duties. There is also an expectation that Black women presidents be more conservative in appearance, leadership approach, and overall presence.

Racist and Sexist Barriers

Gendered racism impacts Black women's physical and emotional health, and their professional trajectory is stunted by loaded labor from students, campus service, and collegial expectations (Owens & Fett 2019). Societal perceptions of Black women's ability to contribute substantive work were drastically influenced by the history of mistreatment and heavy laborious loads (Owens & Fett, 2019; Roberts, 2014). According to Waring (2003), Black women leaders must "work more to let people know who they are and what they can do" (p. 43). Enhancing their work ethic and credibility may be irrelevant to some as the trope of being a strong Black woman sets a foundation to be overworked while ignoring potential professional and personal hardships (Linnabery et al., 2014). Black women are forced to grapple with presenting a socially acceptable aesthetic that is more palatable to college stakeholders rather than embracing the fullness of their authentic leadership style/personality (Commodore, 2019). Researchers are

aware of women college presidents' obstacles to instituting leadership, credibility, and trust (Reis & Grady, 2019).

Leadership Approach

Part of Black women's professional impact as college presidents involves reflection on developing as a leader, leadership approaches, sustaining partnerships with the organization, and managing their respective institutions, which might necessitate a compromise (Anderson et al., 2019). Black women presidents rely on their sound decision-making skills and outsource collegiality to ensure efficiency and equality (Anderson et al., 2019). Further, Black women college presidents found that their religious values influenced their leadership. Spirituality guides their ethical standard and establishes a source for resiliency against racist and sexist perils (Anderson et al., 2019; Southern, 1996)—this is their moral compass when interacting with faculty, staff, and students.

Black women's ability to cultivate an internal source of persistence against sexism and racism sustain a foundation of skills that translate into their interactions with campus partners. However, this does not eradicate stereotypical perceptions of the "strong Black woman" or "angry Black woman" when in leadership roles. Attributes such as assertion, pragmatism, and masculinity were viewed as dominant variables contributing to the leadership gap. Black women are often victims of being deemed too masculine, aggressive, or outspoken (Gause, 2021; Madsen, 2007; O'Connor, 2018). Women assert themselves in combating perceptions and discrimination but often experience forms of retaliation, such as hostile work environments and being overlooked for promotions, that negatively impact their ascension to positions of influence (Hoyt & Simon, 2011).

Social Politics

Societal perceptions of Black leaders are riddled with criticism (Commodore, 2019, 2020), but the narratives of mistrust and disdain of Black women are deeply perpetuated (Collins, 2009). Waring (2003) declared that Black women leaders must "work more to let people know who they are and what they can do" (p. 43). Promoting their work ethic and credibility may be irrelevant to some as the trope of being a "strong Black woman" sets a foundation to be overworked while ignoring potential professional and personal hardships (Linnabery et al., 2014). Black women are forced to grapple with presenting a socially acceptable aesthetic that is more palatable to college stakeholders rather than embracing the fullness of their authentic leadership style/personality (Commodore, 2019). According to scholars, Black women progressing in the academy confront forms of tokenism, invisibility, and bifurcation of their professional and cultural codes that often dictate perceptions of character (Hinton, 2010; Moore, 2013). Navigating the white gaze while validating the coupled identities of race and gender among Black women connects to self-presentation and how they are perceived by colleagues through a lens of racism and sexism (Commodore, 2019; Collins, 2009; Hinton, 2010). Resilience is required to socially and professionally persist despite these mentally and emotionally abusive spaces.

Resilience

Black women exude high levels of resiliency as a resistance strategy (Chance, 2021; Gause, 2021; Lewis-Strickland, 2021). There is, however, an internal price sometimes paid when resiliency is the only resource for maintaining a position. For example, Townsend (2021) found that African American women administrators at predominantly White institutions (PWI) had to navigate identity politics, which subjected participants to emotional exhaustion. Townsend

described identity politics as a hyper-awareness of how colleagues perceive Black women's work ethics, identity-based support for students beyond their job duties, or how they present themselves based on attire, hairstyle, or other cultural indicators. Identity politics demands a level of skill where an individual is aware of potential occurrences of racism, sexism, and classism.

Within the more prominent theme of identity politics, Townsend identified three sub-themes 1) Black tax, 2) presentation of an authentic self, and 3) microaggressions that highlighted racial exhaustion and scrutiny of their physical and mental characteristics. These unwelcoming and problematic realities with colleagues are some of the burdens that Black women carry throughout their journey as college leadership and can present as additional barriers. Opposite to what may be a daunting reason to leave, some Black women persist and allow their negative encounters to catalyze their leadership development (Chance, 2021). Participants from Chance's (2021) study were compelled with "the fortitude to press on" based on their longstanding history with adversity from childhood as Black girls into adulthood as Black women (p. 616). They further expressed how the next generation of Black women in higher education senior leadership should dispel the notion of perfection and ignore those who speak negatively about their presence. Women like Bethune, Berry, and Simmons believed in cultivating future leaders so newcomers may understand that they have a place as a Black woman, and this model reverberated in the participants' responses (Lawson, 2021). Although Chance attempted to establish a connection from adolescence into adulthood, the article presented long-standing physical and emotional abuse and trauma during childhood as catalysts for tolerating, to some extent, the racist, sexist, and classist actions of others as adults in the workplace. The women from the study were forthcoming in sharing their experiences. Still, the

implications did not introduce concrete strategies that would assist in the retention and holistic development of other Black women pursuing postsecondary leadership.

Nonetheless, the study did succeed in narrating how those crucible turning points in their lives influenced their ability to overcome challenges as leaders in and outside of higher education. Davis and Maldonado (2015) also studied the leadership development of Black women, and their findings showed that participants were hyper-aware of the game that must be played when navigating the professional arena. By understanding their position as two marginalized identities in a white male-dominated network, they were skillfully routing the organizational bureaucracy in a way that benefits them. One participant's example included being conscious of how often she spoke so that her voice would be recognized and not overlooked (Davis & Maldonado, 2015); this may appear as a simple task, but the extra layers of racism, sexism, and classism often barricade progression and result in others leaving. Two critical reasons that Black women remain in administration are: 1) they believe that their presence is paving the way for future women to enter the profession and be represented (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Davis, 2009; Wilder et al., 2013) and 2) to advocate for all minoritized populations (Griffin, 2012). Although both are valid reasons, scholars are still learning about Black women's intrinsic motives for pursuing positions that often result in battling stereotypic narratives rooted in racism and sexism.

Lewis-Strickland (2021) studied Black women deans by exploring their perceptions of leadership resiliency and their strategies to ensure success in that position. Four themes were identified to capture their ability to establish a conducive environment for professional growth: 1) introspection, 2) speaking up, 3) striving for personal growth, and 4) utilizing feedback. While Lewis-Strickland's findings illuminated new approaches to addressing barriers, participants'

consensus was that their race and gender identities dictated how they managed each theme. Reed and Blaine (2015) declared that a resilient leader possesses thinking skills that envision opportunities, monitor their capacity to lead, and, finally, act to demonstrate their unique skill set. If a Black woman succeeds in an upper-management role, she must learn to self-protect and self-soothe during crises and begin preparation to move forward (Lewis-Strickland, 2021). Implications for practice from Lewis-Strickland suggested universities diversify the presidency and the presidential pipeline, but the article failed to address adaptable strategies that participants can recommend for their respective institutions.

Black Women and Emotions

The discussion around Black women's experiences is generally reduced to racial and gender inequities without including nuanced elements that add to their stories (Collins, 2009; Dillard, 2022). This remains true in the literature on Black women leaders and their aspirations for the presidency (Oikelome, 2017). According to Cromer (2021), Black women benefit from expressing their range of emotions, including radical forms of self-care—such as joy and self-love—and the frustrations or anger accompanying Black women's suffering. For Black women aspirants, exploring joyous emotions can sustain their mind, body, and soul (Cromer, 2021; Dillard, 2022; Durr & Harvey, 2011). Scholarship on Black women's leadership experiences centers on the trauma, negative impacts, and challenges to overcome without illuminating Black women's purpose, celebration, and spirit. An increased focus on one while neglecting the other creates an imbalance that must be addressed (Cromer, 2021). Scholars are now considering the psychological aspects that influence someone's decisions, personally or professionally (Heath, 2007; Lewis et al., 2017; Reed & Blaine, 2015). Many spaces attempt to regulate Black women's feelings by restricting their authentic response in certain situations by deeming them aggressive

or out of place. Very few researchers explore the emotional expressions of Black women, and there is an even smaller pool of literature on the inner consciousness of Black women pursuing the college presidency. However, some do exist. Dillard (2022) published research on the spiritual consciousness of Black women and how their spirituality encourages self-validation and creativity when reclaiming the narrative. Black women have a full spectrum of emotions but are often limited in expression based on their environments. Durr and Harvey (2011) noted that emotional expressions are critical undercurrents to the rise and progression of Black women. The sections below highlight the spiritual connectivity, inner consciousness, and emoting process that Black women move through as they seek fulfillment in their professional roles and overall self-awareness (Chance, 2021).

Spirituality

Following a spiritual calling has been a trend for Black women to discover one's purpose on this earth (Dillard et al., 2000; Heath, 2007; Tunheim et al., 2015). This emotional journey guides one's values while embracing the highs and lows that may accompany it. Heath's (2007) study showed how intertwined mental health status and spirituality are for Black women. This nuanced practice assists in sustaining inner peace and joy. The intrinsic expression becomes limitless in mind and manifests how Black women glide through hardships. Spirituality steers their ethical standard and establishes a solid foundation for resiliency when battling against racist and sexist perils (Anderson et al., 2019; Southern, 1996).

Black women's ability to cultivate an internal form of resistance against sexism and racism aids in building a foundation of skills that better prepare them for leadership. Spiritual awakenings occur through acceptance and discovering ways to incorporate a sense of spirituality in all facets of life, including the workspace (Dillard et al., 2000). Black women in Southern's

(1996) study recalled moments in their professional journey where they felt compelled to lead others through higher education administration. The opportunity to invest in students and create spaces for faculty and staff of color were selling points for Black women leadership. Holder et al.'s (2015) study expressed how Black women's religious upbringing influenced their perspectives on coping with discrimination. Harris (2018) studied Black women's activism and discovered that love, compassion, and empathy were also leading strategies to manage emotions that motivated participants to give back to their communities. The spirituality and emotional connections intersect to create an element rarely discussed in scholarship on Black women—joy.

Inner Consciousness

Peace. Delight. Comfort. Acceptance. Lightness. All these aspects encompass joy. Often, Black women are limited to their expression of those emotional competencies as racism and sexism tend to invade the moments that bring forth such satisfaction. The familiar trope of the "angry Black woman" limits people's awareness of Black women possessing and exuding joy amid trials. Joy itself, is a form of resistance to the oppressive systems that attempt to shrink the ability and credibility of Black women (Nast, 2017; Packnett, 2017; Stewart, 2019).

As a political act, joy shifts the narrative from oppression, trauma, and anger into a place that allows Black women to celebrate their position (Jordan-Zachery, 2017). Possibilities for a "new visionary way of being and working for progressive social change" (Golden & Utah, 2015, p. 14) are accessible through joyful work and engagement. So often, Black women must consider how society will judge their entire being: from their hair to their clothes to their persona. Nonetheless, Black women view a joyful expression as a resource for self-care and value. According to Shorter-Gooden's (2004) study on Black women's coping strategies with racism and sexism, the strategy of valuing oneself by doing things or believing in oneself led to positive

self-images of their journeys. A key aspect of Shorter-Gooden's examination was the inclusion of Black women's challenges and celebrations; scholars tend to focus on the former rather than the latter. The hyper-focus of the negativity Black women experience transitions into the topic of restricted emotions and the mannerisms that they are limited to expressing.

Restricted Emotions

Restricted emotions are those that an individual cannot freely express, whether for personal reasons of avoidance or being in a space that does not welcome them because it signals a threat (Bonilla-Silva, 2019; Campbell, 1994; Doharty, 2020). Jordan-Zachery (2017) introduced *hauntology* to transform trauma from racism and sexism into "a place of healing, love, and activism" (p. 64). Black women have every right to be angry at their mistreatment and (inter)generational trauma experienced based on racism and sexism (Griffin, 2012; Jones & Norwood, 2017; Jordan-Zachery, 2017). However, anger is the leading emotion among Black women and is overly scrutinized and stereotyped. Amelia (2020) wrote a poem titled "Have You," which expressed her frustration with the unhealed scars of hurt, invisibility, and mistreatment:

Have you ever spent time with your skin?

Lotioning from elbow to elbow only to notice the scars that never healed.

Our cells repopulate every so often, but I still feel the weight of carrying around the ones who touched me in places that never quite felt right.

It's hard not to fight the constant feeling of never being enough for someone who consistently makes your needs into wants.

I am haunted by the reminders that left me empty and alone.

Have you ever been in a room filled with people and felt your soul being shown a

reflection that never appeared in the light?

Amelia's (2020) ability to capture the essence of how Black women limit their emotional

expression offers a glimpse into the dilemma and some guidance on how to address it: reflection

and acceptance. Lorde (2012) stated that the most potent emotion Black women cannot express

and are fearful of expressing is anger. Either Black women share their frustrations and are open

to potential ridicule with stereotypical responses by peers (Collins, 2009; Harris, 2018) or hide

their feelings which is a way of silencing their voices (Alfred, 2001; Jordan-Zachery, 2017).

However, Lorde's view on anger situated the emotion as a motivating force that can harness the

influence for social and political change. Though Lorde's perspective is notable for scholars

exploring Black women's emotional capacity, there is not enough literature supporting the need

to examine how anger presents a reverse positive effect in the workplace.

The manifestation of suppressed emotions, whether positive or negative, can ultimately

influence job satisfaction and how one defines their purpose in that role (Linnaberrt et al., 2014;

Motro et al., 2021; Travis & Price, 2013). Black women are counteracting these restricting

emotions by exposing themselves to the meaning of joy and avenues that welcome them as a

whole person. Emoting is complex on an everyday basis but being in a professional setting adds

a layer of mindfulness regarding verbal and nonverbal cues. The scholarship on Black women's

emotions and Black women aspirants are separate research bodies. Thus, the following section

introduces literature gaps as a basis for my study.

Literature Gaps

The literature review highlighted Black women pioneers in the college presidency,

pathways to the role, and Black women's overall ability to express emotions. Instead of only

focusing on Black women's journey to the presidency or the downfalls of gendered racism, the emoting piece grants permission to explore the positive side of their experiences with joy, fulfillment, and purpose. This scholarship brings attention to the current gaps in the literature that could be explored in a study. First, there is limited literature on the aspirations of Black women and what support is necessary for Black women's journeys. The aspiring stage is critical as Black women remain interested in the presidency but are rarely presented with a complete picture of the aspiring stage. Second, there is little research on Black women leading HWIs. Most of the studies available either included various institution types (Eddy, 2003; Gearhart & Miller, 2018), were only discussing the HBCU experience (Freeman et al., 2016), or grouped all women presidents (Oikelome, 2017; Reis & Grady, 2018). Some scholars detail presidents who attended HBCUs or pursued roles at those institutions (Anderson et al., 2019; Commodore, 2019, 2020; Freeman et al., 2016; Gasman, 2011; Jean-Marie, 2006). Regardless of the institution and education background, the elements of mentorship and sponsorship are discussed at a basic level (e.g., there is a need for mentors and sponsors for those wanting to serve as presidents). Additional data on the impacts of cross-racial and cross-gender relationships (Oikelome, 2017) is warranted to delve into the nuances of opportunity. Lastly, Black women's stories on their positive encounters while journeying to the presidency and how they validate their emotional expression do not exist. A large portion of the literature stems from the psychology field instead of education. Researchers studied some aspects to Black women and the college presidency throughout the years, but the articles are outdated—within the last five to 10 years.

The previous sections of Chapter 2 and identified gaps forge an argument that supports my study. There is a form of resistance to discrimination, racism, and sexism with joy (Cromer, 2021; Lu & Steele, 2019). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to center Black women by

exploring their full humanity, which requires a new perspective. The following chapter addresses

the methodology and how portraiture as a data analysis was applied to the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand how Black joy influenced Black women's aspirational journeys of becoming college presidents at historically white institutions (HWI). I examined Black women aspirants through participant stories, verbal self-portraits, and artifacts. This chapter illustrates the rationale for my study's chosen methodology, research design, and data analysis. I aimed to answer the following questions:

1) How do Black women define Black joy about their aspirations for the college presidency?

2) In what ways do Black women describe the practice of Black joy in the pursuit of the presidency?

First, I discuss the philosophical underpinnings that guide the rules of engagement with participants. After, I introduce the qualitative research design as an appropriate structure to capture participant experiences. Next, a description of the methodology is presented to explore how participants perceive their joyousness. Then, I share the procedures of establishing criteria, recruiting and selecting participants, and my reasoning for studying aspirants on this journey. Following the procedures are the co-portraitist profiles which highlight individual backgrounds and perceptions of their professional surroundings After, I discuss the method for data collection. Lastly, I detail how I analyzed the data that resulted in the key findings.

Philosophical Underpinnings

Scholars must acknowledge the oppressing realities Black women face to examine Black women's truths. I used Black feminism as the philosophical underpinnings to guide the research approach for this study (Collins, 2000, 2009; Evans-Winter, 2019). Collins' (2009) Black

Feminist Thought (BFT) integrates the presence of resistance and empowerment. BFT acknowledges the collective oppression of Black women and calls out the systems that attempt to label Black women's humanity as inferior. Racism and sexism are not mutually exclusive, similar to ontology and the inability to separate knowledge and reality. The structure of BFT as a critical epistemology edifies Black women's consciousness as valid and invites them to self-define their lived experiences. An aspect of BFT suggests that Black women should be able to name their conditions as a political statement and act of resistance to dominant perspectives (Collins, 2000). By doing so, Black women then move from the chorus supporting roles and into the spotlight as leading actors who can re-write societal narratives.

Though Collins (1989) discusses a unified perspective, she informed scholars on how there are "multiple realities among Black women" (p. 757). I did not assume that co-portraitists' individual stories established a universal truth for Black women. The integration of BFT was essential to crafting this methodology and participant engagement. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) portraiture permits the researcher to consider their lived experiences when analyzing data. However, Collins (2009) takes the researcher positionality a step further as one's racial and gender identities as a Black women can positively influence participants' rapport. This philosophical stance integrated me into a relational headspace with other Black women co-portraitists. I had a platform to create dialogue and inquire about how Black women support their joyful existence.

Research Design

Qualitative research introduces the richness of details inside a bigger picture (Bhattacharya, 2017; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). According to Billups (2021), qualitative research aims to inquire about the actions, emotions, and perceptions of people's lives

on a deeper level. Further, qualitative designs allow the researcher to interview individual

participants and ask additional questions that may strengthen the story being written (Few et al.,

2003; Lawrence-Light & Davis, 1997). The researcher can better analyze participants' lived

experiences in qualitative inquiries when observing and notating the information shared. The

essence of this design strongly encourages participants to reflect on their emotions and seek to

understand how those elements influence their career trajectories. This aspect gives space to

showcase a participant's full humanity as the researcher (Collins, 2009; Lawrence-Lightfoot &

Davis, 1997). Further, qualitative studies are intimate and focus on a smaller participant pool

(Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Therefore, qualitative analysis was necessary for presenting Black

women's wholeness as they share parts of their journey.

Methodology

Part of describing the experiences of Black women, requires viewing them as one would

a work of art, an aesthetic of Black womanhood without the visions of stereotypes (Collins,

2009; Commodore, 2019; Commodore et al., 2020). Self-presentation and identity politics were

critical in understanding the nuances of Black women's experiences within the workplace

(Commodore, 2019; Collins, 2009; Townsend, 2021). Therefore, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis'

(1997) creation of portraiture helps shape Black women's complexities of their image, external

perceptions, and the intersection of both. Portraiture was chosen to successfully narrate the

participants' stories and pinpoint how their social identities and Black joy influence their career

aspirations. Painting the portraits of Black women with portraiture adds the background of

historical context, highlights the foreground of their passion, and colors the various experiences

as professionals. This methodological design permits me as the "portraitist" to apply historical,

socio-political, personal, and internal context as a framework for the art of written narratives.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis establish the boundaries of portraiture by redefining how researchers interpret data and translate the information into the content. For example, portraitists had the opportunity to initiate a relationship with participants to make meaning of their stories. This union between researcher and participant forges an open atmosphere to recognize the nuances and expressions within the data (Collins, 2009; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). As the portraitist, creating vivid art through the narratives of Black women presented a beautiful gallery of images, relationships, and emotions. The unique balance of art and narrative offers a perspective that "seeks to achieve a visual order through the interrelationship of the elements of the composition around the center of the work" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 33).

There is a balance in the challenges and successes of Black women pursuing an ascension to the college presidency that forms a portrait designed with sharp corners and fluid strokes. Portraiture allowed me to take a creative stance in describing participants' experiences. This methodology captured the "ability to embrace contradictions, its ability to document the beautiful/ ugly experiences that are so much a part of the texture of human development and social interactions" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 9). In other words, Lawrence-Lightfoot's structure of portraiture encourages methodologists to seek the raw emotions of participants while acknowledging the passion for their actions.

Portraiture is a paradoxical framework for researchers to combine the art of human encounters and the science of inquiry. Researchers must possess a level of discernment, creativity, and intentionality when applying portraiture. From this point, I refer to myself as a portraitist and participants as co-portraitists throughout the study. Co-portraitists, as an identifier, were chosen to offer participants the artistry to design their cultural and emotional work with

color, depth, and composition alongside me. This "co-constructed piece of artwork" between the portraitist and co-portraitists will craft a gallery for scholarship (Evans-Winters, 2019, p. 5).

Methods and Procedures

In this section, I discuss the procedures taken to identify, recruit, and select co-portraitists. I also include the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process to get my study approved. Next, I mention why purposeful sampling was a beneficial step in identifying Black women. I conclude with methods of contacting potential co-portraitists and the criteria used to select them.

Sampling, Recruitment, and Criteria

I selected six co-portraitists for the study. The intimate pool of co-portraitists allowed me to cultivate meaningful relationships and spend additional time for in-depth conversations (Collins, 2009). To accomplish the targeted number of co-portraitists, purposeful sampling was used to identify interested Black women by reviewing the criteria and selecting co-portraitists from various states, institution types, and titles. The sole criteria for sampling included the institution type of a prospective co-portraitist as this included public or private, not-for-profit or for-profit, and 2-year or 4-year. Purposeful sampling strengthened the number and type of co-portraitists during my recruitment process (Patton, 2002). There were 10 interested in participating, one did not meet the criteria of the overall criteria of the study, and one worked at a for-profit institution and could not verify the institution's history. Eight Black women were contacted to inquire about participation, and six confirmed interests during the recruitment period. I remained more accessible to those interested and expanded the variety of stories collected within the study. Further, purposeful sampling complemented my efforts to build a

network of Black women pursuing the college presidency and keep prospective Black women in mind for future studies.

After receiving IRB approval, I created an infographic describing the scope of the study and included my contact information. The infographic was then posted in social media groups for Black women in higher education and educational research. According to Sikkens et al. (2016), using social platforms for outreach engages wider audiences and increases the chance of a diverse participant pool. Various members tagged Black women who may fit the criteria, and I also received emails with additional questions. I collected an email address for the Black women who contacted me through social media to formalize the process (See Appendix A). I retained the personal information in a safe location that was only accessible to me. After receiving an interest email, I confirmed the following items:

- Name

- Email

- Interest in the college presidency

- Self-identified as a Black woman

Since purposeful sampling permits selectivity, the opportunity for prospective co-portraitists to indicate interest remained open while discussing the perimeters with others. I did, however, decline participation from interested Black women due to their current institution/system type or desired role. For example, some worked at for-profit institutions or aspired to dean positions which were outside of the scope of this study.

The following criteria were used in the selection process:

1) Must self-identify within the Afrodiaspora or Black

2) Must self- identify as a woman

3) Must be a current higher education administrator or faculty member

4) Must work at a two- or four-year historically white institution

5) Must be aspiring to the college presidency at historically white institutions

Including these criteria covered previous scholars' recommendations for exploring the aspirations of Black women administrators (Oikelome, 2017; Lepkowski, 2009). Co-portraitists were contacted individually through an encrypted Outlook email to confirm their engagement in the study. I provided various dates and times to coordinate a scheduled time for a one-on-one interview. To honor anonymity and promote full disclosure (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), co-portraitists were asked to select a one-word pseudonym representing their concept of joy, liberation, or movement. Inquiring about their pseudonym was the first portion of data collection and segued into how I intended to paint the co-portraitists. The recruitment phase remained open for a month until all initial interviews were conducted. After this period, I focused on the six co-portraitists and dive deeper into their lived experiences as aspirants.

Co-Portraitist Profiles

The professional backgrounds, upbringing, and perspectives on Black womanhood voiced by the co-portraitists were narrated through the power of storytelling. This section of the chapter profiles the co-portraitists and their different employer institutions (See Table 1). This study had six co-portraitists: 1) Tatiana, 2) Chrysanthemum, 3) Lisa, 4) Candace, 5) Faith, and 6) Serenity.

Tatiana

Originally from the Midwest, Tatiana has a professional background in human resources who developed onboarding and management skills. Although she never imagined enrolling in a degree program, she transitioned into higher education studies to honor her mother's wishes. She

completed her Bachelor of Art and Master of Education degrees and is actively working toward achieving her research as a doctoral degree. She intends to graduate by the end of 2022. Her experiences as a postsecondary administrator affirmed salient identities and her commitment to her work in student success.

Tatiana believes that anyone can control their exit strategy and that there is great joy in recognizing the power of those choices. She is currently the vice president for student success but does not anticipate advancing within her college system for her next career move. Her desire to become a college president remained important, but she shared that her increasing knowledge of the role and the facade for social change is unappealing. Though the following steps may not be solidified, Tatiana is optimistic that she can cultivate environments that promote opportunities and cultural awareness among stakeholders.

Chrysanthemum

Chrysanthemum's professional background began in higher education focusing on institutional effectiveness and institutional research. She remained in the postsecondary field after completing her Bachelor of Art, Master of Education, and Doctor of Philosophy degrees serving as an administrator. However, as faculty, she taught courses on qualitative research at the graduate level for master's and doctoral students. Chrysanthemum also produced various publications as an author.

Chrysanthemum is currently an associate vice president for academic affairs within a state college system but is also strategic about what her next moves must be to gain the necessary skills. She intends to seek an executive director position as the positions from a coordinating agency to a university do not translate one-to-one. From there, she will pursue roles such as an associate vice presidency or associate vice provost at the university level. Chrysanthemum

believes that a two to three period for each steppingstone position will yield her readiness for the college presidency if she remains interested.

Lisa

Lisa has a professional background in student affairs with housing and residence life. Her time in higher education began during her undergraduate tenure which was greatly influenced by her involvement. As a student, Lisa paid homage to Black students by ringing the on-campus bell (See Artifact E24) representing an era when Black students needed to be home by a specific time to avoid racialized incidents. Thus, this experience propelled her into student-centered work. She earned her Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. During her full-time doctoral studies, Lisa organized a graduate student organization centered on fostering a space for women of color and set a foundation for her understanding of creating sustainable programs that benefit students at the university.

Her current position is the assistant dean of students and director of community living, but she aspires to be a more prominent voice for students. Lisa anticipates advancing her career to the vice president for student affairs role and assessing what her next move will be afterward. Lisa perceives this as a potential challenge, as most presidents have experience within academia, but also believes that she will construct the best possible skill set for the presidency. Additional skills she aims to develop are a passion for fundraising, alumni and community engagement, and strengthening a relationship between academic and student affairs.

Candace

Candace's sociology background increased her passion for storytelling and understanding how positive interactions can alter one's trajectory. Her experiences within higher education led to an interest in writing, as she is now a published author, and shaping young scholars as faculty.

Candace earned multiple degrees including a Bachelor of Art, Master of Art, and Doctor of Philosophy. She currently serves as vice provost for diversity, equity, & inclusion and earnestly began pursuing the college presidency in 2017 through the Rutgers University Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) Aspiring Fellowship Leaders Program. However, Candace knew she wanted to be a college president upon graduating from her undergraduate studies in 1982. She desires to remain in her current position for the next three to four years to gain additional skills such as fundraising, board engagement, and strategic visioning. Because she actively contributes to the provost's team, Candace anticipates her next move to be the presidency—the final stop in her journey.

Faith

Faith's background stems from the undergraduate studies that led her down a path to student affairs—being a first-generation college student taught her how to seek opportunities and forge spaces where others could do the same. Her philosophy is rooted in identifying "your why" and amplifying voices for students who cultivate a culture for social change. Throughout her academic career, Faith was an active student leader on campus. She was elected as the first Black student body president in high school and won student body presidencies again during her undergraduate and graduate studies. Faith earned her Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

She currently serves as the vice president for student affairs and anticipates pursuing chief operating officer roles to gain a deeper understanding of the university landscape from a different professional lens. She is intentional about building strong partnerships with academic affairs, learning the nuances of political environments, and recognizing the importance of institutional boards. She envisions her college presidency as one that engrains a global

perspective across community members and desires to amplify the voices of minimized populations on college campuses as an advocate for representation.

Serenity

Serenity has a professional background in student affairs influenced by her involvement at her historically Black college for undergraduate studies as sorority chapter president and student recruiter. She always knew that she wanted to achieve a doctoral degree but did not quite identify her initial academic path. Before working in student affairs, Serenity aimed to remain in social work and counseling but quickly discovered that she loved being on a college campus instead. She earned Bachelor of Art, Master of Social Work, and Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

Her current role is vice president for student affairs, and she believes that this position will offer a comprehensive view of the student experience as a president. Working as an administrator and instructing faculty provides her with a solid balance for gauging academic and student affairs needs. Serenity would like to gain additional budgeting experience and knowledge about university operations, allowing her to have better inquiries regarding finances when she is president. She also anticipates needing more engagement with fundraising and requesting donor dollars. Though Serenity is hopeful in her pursuit of the presidency, her next move might be another vice presidency or shifting outside of higher education for a stint to refine her career experiences.

Context

The study included co-portraitists from various universities and college systems across the United States. Therefore, a finite research site was used. With the perimeters of the COVID-19 pandemic, the site selection was virtual for safety and convenience. According to Pocock et al. (2021), there are many advantages to conducting virtual research methods; the

Table 1

Co-Portraitist Demographics

Co-Portraitist	Current Role	Region	Institution Type/System	Desired Institution Type(s)	Timeline for Presidency
Tatiana	Vice President for Student Success	Southwest	Large, 2-year, public	Community college	3 to 5 years
Chrysanthemum	Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs	Southeast	Large, Public College System	Regional comprehensive	10 to 15 years
Lisa	Assistant Dean of Students & Director of Community Living	Pacific West	Large, 4-year, private	Mid-size, religious	15 years
Candace	Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion	Pacific West	Medium, 4-year, private	Small, MSI, community college	3 to 4 years
Faith	Vice President for Student Affairs	Southeast	Large, 4-year, public	Liberal arts, HBCU, research I, land grants	10 years
Serenity	Vice President for Student Affairs & Dean of Students	Northeast	Small, 4-year, private	Small, PWI, HBCU	5 years

communication technology is flexible and time efficient. Co-portraitists were free to join the

video interview wherever they felt most comfortable. The virtual interviews were primarily held

in co-portraitists' offices with the doors closed for privacy. Further, the power relations of

interviewing in a campus office, a more formal location, could have impacted the dynamics

between the co-portraitists and portraitist. The context of expressing their experiences within

their employer institutions or at home was undeterred regardless of office culture and freedom to

speak. However, conducting the online interviews through a virtual site offered a relaxed and casual setting for data collection.

Data Generation

The portraiture method of collecting data relies on the researcher's voice, thorough questioning, and rigorous scrutiny of personal and professional biases (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). According to Dixson et al. (2005), portraitists have an integral part in identifying the details of their portrait (e.g., how someone goes about their day to day, the outfits they choose, routes taken when walking around campus) by sifting through the perspectives and voices of co-portraitists. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describe the voice of the data collection process as a six-step sequence: 1) witness, 2) interpretation, 3) preoccupation, 4) autobiography, 5) listen, and 6) conversation. The voices of co-portraitists and mine produce a blueprint to discover new findings. By generating this data with the co-portraitists, I understood my responsibility as an instrument to echo the sounds of joy, freedom, and lightheartedness. I engaged in the portraiture methodological sequence as a co-partnership to code central themes about their emotional expressions while journeying to the college presidency.

Voice (Semi-Structured Interviews)

The first step in portraiture data collection is witnessing, which took place via two video conferencing interviews. Before initiating a formal interview, I scheduled the first 60-90 minutes time block with each participant in advance and requested that the formal IRB consent form be reviewed (See Appendix B). The co-portraitists also gave verbal permission before recording the video interview (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Once scheduled, I used the interview protocol (See Appendix C & D). Co-portraitists had the agency in selecting a preferred pseudonym to remain anonymous throughout the study (Allen & Wiles, 2016). Before

interviewing, I wrote down the guiding questions used for each to warrant standard engagement across co-portraitists. Tensions, as the researcher, arose during moments when co-portraitists accepted the phone and email notifications. However, I addressed them by confirming if the scheduled interview time remained sufficient. The benefit of applying Black feminism and Black joy as guiding frameworks included the opportunity to engage as a Black woman, myself. At the end of the interviews, the co-portraitists inquired about my journey as a doctoral student and my interest in this topic which led to receiving advice and encouragement.

The first interview recorded collected demographic information, their life's stories, and what interests them regarding the college presidency. However, co-portraitists were invited to discuss other related aspects that were not listed in the original questions. At the end of the first interview, co-portraitists were assigned homework to collect artifacts as part of their portrait (Evans-Winters, 2019; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Co-portraitists had until their next scheduled interview time to gather symbols, traditions, photos, etc. as part of an artistic elicitation that expressed their joy (Evans-Winters, 2019). During the second recorded interview, we then discussed why those artifacts were chosen, how they related to joyousness, and their connected to their aspirations. The elicitation was not limited to one particular item but invited exploration of self and emotional capacity. Additionally, the artifact gallery introduced a form of triangulation to the stories being shared during the interviews. Artifacts were accessible to co-portraitists as most kept their items near them in the office or readily available. The gallery consists of 34 artifacts (See Appendix E), and the discussion of artifacts is part of the detailed findings. However, only four were woven into the findings because each directly connected to the collective portrait of Black women's joy as aspirants. As the portraitist, I drew the artistic variations of the photographs and items presented by co-portraitists. Each artifact added richness

to the context of co-portraitists' wise stories of learning, healing, and aspiring. The additional artifacts can be seen in the appendices except for two due to the revealing personal identity of the items.

Recording the interview allowed me to actively listen, though Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest documenting notes as impressionistic records during and after interviews to highlight moments that either connect to literature or present follow-up questions. Immediately following an interview, I wrote journal entries on the non-verbal cues (body language, movement, facial expressions) observed and characteristics of a participant's outward aesthetic (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). This collection stage was part of identifying patterns, reflecting on the interactions as the portraitist, and adding pieces of the puzzle to draft a more extensive narrative (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The verbal collection of data presented the outline of the portrait, but the depth of colors was layered through artifacts.

Relationship (Portrait Collection)

Portraiture has the dual ability to explore how the co-portraitists paint their surroundings and permit the portraitist to construct the final image. By adding artifact elicitation to my qualitative study, I accounted for another line of communication with the co-portraitists (Bagnoli, 2009). The collection of artifacts increased social interactions and accurately interpreted the artifacts. Given this arts-based research style, I requested that all co-portraitists detail and share visual representations of Black joy during the second interview. Though I did not limit visual or physical artifacts, co-portraitists interpreted joy through photos, gifts, and pets.

As I prepared to study Black women's perspectives on joy, personally and professionally, I actively recognized how Black feminism informed my interpretations. By collecting artifacts

from co-portraitists, I could grout the pieces of their stories into a mosaic masterpiece (Evans-Winters, 2019). Gerstenblatt (2013) informs researchers on ways to engage in collages, or collective artifacts, by adding imagery, text, participant quotes, texture, and color to create depth with each narrative. Each co-portraitist's aesthetic and expressive content drew on their experiences to paint a picture. Combining photos and texts created dimension and highlighted the importance of context as I interpreted the meanings (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

In the second semi-structured interview, co-portraitists were invited to express their full humanity and present what they deemed to be their authentic selves with each artifact collected. Questions in the interview protocol addressed how their joyous expressions translated into their professional journeys and practice of being. Adopting Bagnoli's (2009) approach to self-portraits invites the co-portraitists to "show… who they [are] at that moment in life" (p. 550) which guides me in making sense of the data during analysis. Further, this artifact exploration assisted in identifying the ways Black women consciously connect positive emotions to their holistic being, including their pursuits as an administrator. According to Barton (2015), using elicitation tools such as artifacts opens a communication channel for transparency. Applying the artifact elicitation technique demolished barriers during the interviews and gave total control to co-portraitists for authentic responses and storytelling.

Data Analysis

According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), coding in portraiture is an ongoing process that analyzes field notes, memos, and impressions of one's day-to-day environment. Once all co-portraitists were interviewed and invited to send photos of their artifacts, I used third-party services to account for the information discussed. Each interview transcription was corroborated with the audio recording using Rev, a third-party service (Davis, 2009). From there,

I read the transcripts for accuracy and highlighted words that were similar between co-portraitists' two interviews. Korstjens and Moser (2018) suggest that researchers begin classifying emerging themes into categories and using distinctive quotes to visualize findings. Similarly, William and Moser (2019) discuss coding as recognizing and notating repeated phrases, words, or fragments of experiences that may be related and later used as a theme.

The coding process remained iterative, and I continued searching for and identifying patterns that led to over 180 codes. Next, I wrote down key words and phrases that were alike in a notebook from all 12 interviews of the six co-portraitists. I purchased NVivo qualitative software to organize co-portraitists' transcripts in folders and initiate coding. After the folders were created, I re-read the co-portraitists transcripts, highlighted chunked quotes, and labeled the quotes under various codes. The initial codes were specific to the quote selected, but I later grouped codes on a broader level (See Table 2). I categorized even broader codes related to joy, spirit and spirituality, racial representation, self-care, family, and purpose. Lastly, I considered what overarching themes taught co-portraitists most about joy.

Table 2

Findings from Broader Coding Process

Findings	Themes	Broader Codes	
Black Joy as Spiritual Guidance	Familial Relationships	Spirituality	Church
		Joy (general)	Resilience
		Spirit	Scripture
		Religion/secular	Presence
		Dreaming	Maternal influence
		Validation	Humility
		Mental health	Grounded
		Family history	
		Spouse/partner support	
		Prayer	

Black Joy Centers Purpose	Mirrors as Reflection	Education/teaching	Reflection
		Aspirations	Community
		Mirrors/Representation	Offering resources
		Motivation	Black womanhood
		Opportunity	Preparation
		First-generation experiences	Growth
		Global perspective	Celebration
		Mentorship/sponsorship	Service
		Purpose	Workplace
			Negative encounters
Black Joy as Self-Preservation	Giving Yourself Permission	Emotions/self-expression	Reading
	Call for Humanity	Rest	Theater
		Humanity	Travel
		Burnout	Motherhood
		Self-care	Black girl magic
		Self-control	Joy (intentional choice)
		Boundaries	Physical health
		Self-sacrifice	Therapy
		Artifacts of joy	

I used available literature, Black joy as the conceptual framework, the research questions, and co-portraitists' artifacts as guides for analysis. The discussion of co-portraitist artifacts adds depth to the larger portraits painted by each woman. In this study, co-portraitists collected artifacts representing their expressions of Black joy. The following section addresses trustworthiness, delimitations of the study, and a chapter summary.

Trustworthiness

With portraiture, accounting for the accuracy of co-portraitists' stories and carefully weaving them together requires trustworthiness (Denzin, 2009; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Collins (2009) and Evans-Winters (2019) center on the communal respect Black women offer from a young age. As a little girl, staying out of "grown folks' business" was taught— despite the fact of listening, they knew to not share with anyone outside of our family about what

was heard (Evans-Winters, 2019). Rapports with co-portraitists was like listening to grown folks'

business. We spoke in a way where I listened, and my analysis was the interpretation of

what I heard and needed to share with the family (other Black women). My positionality as a

Black woman offered a relational level of trust with co-portraitists. I ensured trustworthiness by

recognizing Black colloquialisms and requesting that co-portraitists elaborate to remove biased

analyses (Collins, 2009).

Moreover, I applied a validation strategy with member-checking (Billups, 2021) to

ensure the credibility and authenticity of the findings. According to Billups (2021),

trustworthiness is determined by the coherence and consistency of responses during data

collection. Co-portraitists shared similar stories specific to their expressions of joy but each with

a particular nuance. My memos tracked the differences in every interview and grouped them

accordingly during the coding process.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) implemented triangulation as a method of accuracy

by reviewing interviews, observations, and factual knowledge. As this relates to this study, the

transcripts and artifacts from interviews, researcher journals, and literature were used to

triangulate emerging themes. Triangulating these methods of data "reflects an attempt to secure

an in-depth understanding" (Denzin, 2012, p. 82) of Black women's perceptions and reality of

joy. In other words, triangulation was not used to find the ultimate truth. Portraiture is reflexive

in its nature, which forced me to confront potential biases while also honoring my knowledge as

a fellow Black woman. Yet, to further interpret participant experiences, member-checking and

triangulation were necessary for the data analysis process (Billups, 2021).

Member checking and triangulation allowed the co-portraitists to review preliminary

findings. By doing so, I ensured that the information was accurate and well-represented by all

co-portraitists. An email with emerging themes and subthemes was shared, and I followed up with co-portraitists to address comments, when necessary. Three co-portraitists were responsive and confirmed accurate depictions of artifacts and narratives. I used the triangulation of researcher memos, interview transcripts, and co-portraitist artifacts to further analyze for findings. I also engaged with reflexivity to honor co-portraitists' voices, ideas, and experiences to not overpower theirs with my own (Few et al., 2003). Being transparent about my relatable experiences and using that as a method of connection was helpful, but I also had to check my reactions. After ending an interview, I would often call my dissertation chair to share my joys and release my excitement in a neutral space as the researcher. Though this was an inspirational interaction, I did not take the rapport with co-portraitists for granted. Instead of assuming any underlying meanings of a phrase, I asked follow-up questions requesting clarification to establish credible findings. I also participated in collecting an artifact that represented my joy in the process of listening to the co-portraitists, which is presented in the discussion.

Delimitations of the Study

Though this study contributes to the knowledge of Black women aspirants' expression of joy, there lies the delimitations of not situating the study within white supremacy that must be acknowledged. First, including co-portraitists who only work at HWIs was intentional as the historical context lends insight into Black women's systemic barriers and the scarcity of literature. Selecting Black women who worked at HWIs also addressed the notion that Black women, and their joy, cannot escape the bounds of structural marginalization (Dillard, 2022). The inclusion of Black women at Historically Black College and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and other higher education institutions may have provided a different understanding of how context influences joy and career aspirations. Secondly, examining Black women

aspiring to the presidency emphasized their deliberate and cognitive choice to persist toward a role despite their encounters with intersecting oppressions throughout their journeys. This further exemplifies what W.E.B. Du Bois (2015) expressed in his seminal 1903 book on double consciousness which "refers to the ability of [B]lack Americans to see themselves only through the eyes of white Americans, to measure their intelligence, beauty, and sense of self-worth by standards set by others" (p. 24). The tension between validating one's Blackness while existing in a society that aims to erase the identity is complex. Focusing on Black women's aspirations and ability to imagine beyond the limitations of policing and discrimination animates Black women in their full humanity.

Chapter Summary

This study aimed to explore how Black joy manifests in Black women's aspirations while pursuing the college presidency at HWIs. The goal was to discover how Black women reclaimed ownership of their positive emotional capacity and presented a colorful depiction of those experiences through art-based research. My study was designed as a galleria of Black women showcasing their versions of purpose, spirituality, and self-preservation as an art form. The upcoming chapters include the findings from the data analysis and a discussion of co-portraitist artifacts.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

"Black self-compassion is radical; it is personal and political. Black self-compassion

challenges the stereotypes that we are just hard and tough, that we are not fully human."

—Dr. Adia Gooden.

The following chapter offers a gateway into the conversations and rapports fostered between me and the co-portraitists who are Black women aspiring to be college presidency. Though collective findings are presented, the unique stories of co-portraitists' background, purpose, and overall journeys are peppered throughout the chapter. The purpose of this study was to understand how Black joy influences Black women's aspirational journeys of becoming college presidents at historically white institutions (HWI). I provided additional context from co-portraitist interviews to create a vibrant fabric of Black women's stories. First, the three key findings are addressed with related themes and artifact elicitation. Then, an analysis will proceed on how Black joy, as the conceptual framework, manifested as a critical value among the co-portraitists and became a tool for life beyond survival. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a summary of the findings.

The co-portraitists spoke of childhood and adulthood encounters that resulted in gaining wisdom about their purpose and listening to those who affirmed their leadership abilities. Co-portraitists' definitions of Black joy were evident in their professional practices and conscious decisions to express joy throughout their administrative journeys. Black joy was conveyed, through stories and artifacts, as an access point that granted permission to pause for deeper consideration of co-portraitists' aspirations, to be in a present moment of gratitude for their journeys.

Black joy is defined as an emotional state of being that extends beyond the boundaries of white supremacy and establishes a space for creativity, liberation, and fulfillment (Johnson, 2015). However, Black joy cannot be fully experienced without self-compassion, which can be a challenging feat to give oneself when society has conditioned a deficit view of Black people (Lewis-Giggetts, 2022). The experiences of the Black women in my study were no exception. Each co-portraitist elaborated on how Black joy filters the spirit to move forward in their purpose as administrators destined to be college presidents. While the co-portraitists were sure of their pathways, they were also incredibly mindful of how joy contributes to their aspirations and ability to care for themselves. Ultimately, three findings were generated from the data and four subthemes that emerged from more prominent themes:

1) Black joy as spiritual guidance

    a. Familial relationships

2) Black joy centers purpose

    a. Mirrors as reflection

3) Black joy as self-preservation

    a. Giving yourself permission

    b. Call for humanity

Black Joy as Spiritual Guidance

"We are the ones we have been waiting for." –Alice Walker.

For this study, spirituality was defined as an inherent sense of knowing "the order, power, and unity that flows through all of life and encompasses an energy and responsibility greater than ourselves" (Dillard, 2022, p. 3). Most co-portraitists often referenced spirituality and the inner spirit as sources of their Black joy. Five out of the six co-portraitists explicitly shared details

about faith or spiritual practices throughout their stories. However, all co-portraitists spoke of their inner spirit being a guiding force for their aspirations for the presidency. The first finding of Black joy as spiritual guidance describes the ways co-portraitists tapped into a higher power and spirit to withstand moments of frustration, turmoil, and disappointment.

Like a tenet of Black joy, spirituality invites those on an inner journey to look inward for self-validation and trust. For example, Candace shared, "many of us have been looking for reflections of ourselves outside of ourselves. And that's where part of the challenge comes up. You keep looking for somewhere else to validate you, to tell you you're doing all right." The spirit is a celebration that radiates from within oneself. The co-portraitists' spiritual understanding was rooted in religion and secular perspectives that narrated stories of resilience and restoration. Faith states, "everything about my journey has been about faith, whether it's my faith in the higher power, the faith that folks have put into me to do the work that's before me." Often, the co-portraitists called spiritual guidance a move of the spirit that incited action. The spirit is a vibrant energy that goes beyond human understanding and the capacity to touch. Spirit lays the foundation for values, emotions, and character.

Expressing the spirit is an emotional release that recognizes the divinity and importance of one's spirituality. The co-portraitists spoke of their spirits in a way that others could not break or steal. Lisa referenced her spirit as a "queen" through an artifact (Artifact 1) which served as a reminder of Black women's confidence to command spaces. She exclaimed, "this tied me to my career, to my family, to my self-esteem with the 'Queen,' and how I see myself." Embodying the spirit meant that co-portraitists acknowledged their past, present, and future aspirations as a mechanism to refresh and renew the mind when faced with adversity.

The spiritual guidance of co-portraitists was forged in the fires of leading social action

Artifact 1

Lisa's Spirit Artifact
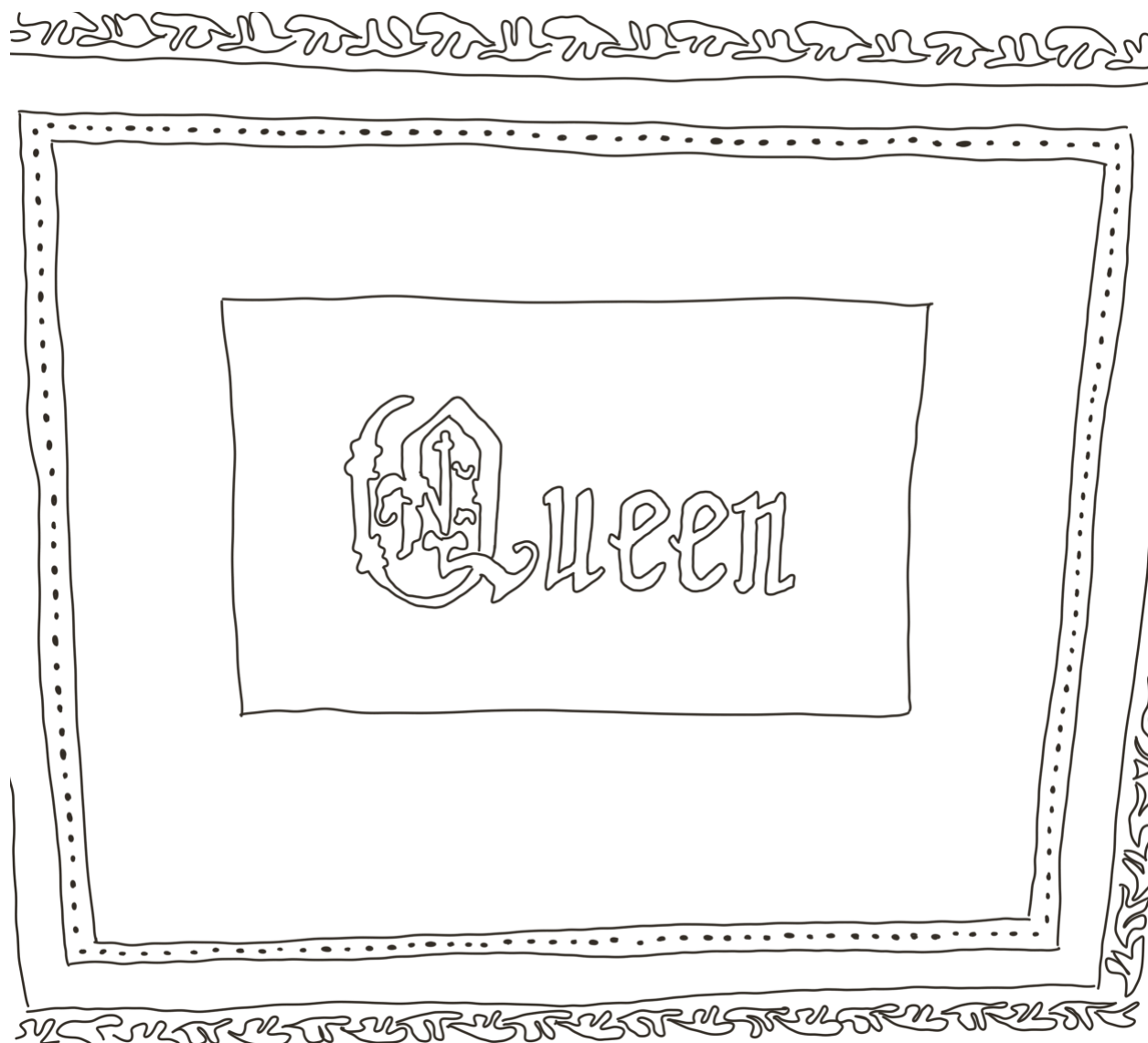
within the walls of higher education, beginning as students and now as administrators. Faith proclaimed

> Knowing that life is about being centered and balanced and recognizing that everything won't go your way but having a spirit and a belief that things will get better, they will improve. And that ultimately, you trust in God, but you lock your car doors. God gives us discernment, and he gives us the ability to make the way. You can't just sit around and pray; faith without works is dead.

Spirituality meant that co-portraitists were activating a spirit that deconstructs oppressive systems for Black people entering higher education or pursuing a career within the field (Dillard, 2022). Co-portraitists' spirituality as Black women represented a glimmer of hope to empower families, students, and staff through the hardships that many communities experience. The spirit was a whispering voice that guided the actions of co-portraitists and led them to their aspirational journeys as future college presidents. For example, Chrysanthemum's tenacious spirit guides her desire to work within higher education systems as a change agent.

She declared:

> I want to be in the business of not just changing the course of people's lives but changing the courses of their families. That is what education has done for my family. It changed the course of the trajectory of our family because none of that would've been possible without education. I want to change the system. I want to give access to 15,000 students, not five. That is what sustains me to move towards the presidency because I'm not talking about some research I've done; I'm not talking about what I've heard. I am being motivated by what I have seen happen in my own family.

Similarly, Faith emphasized

> The faith that I have to have in myself, that I can get the job done, and then the faith to know that what I'm doing for a student makes a difference and moves the needle every day, so everything comes back to faith for me.

Spirituality is the belief that there is power in trusting the process and taking action to achieve the unimaginable. Chrysanthemum's expression of her spirit through the act of fostering environments for entire families to experience the joys of higher education was influential in her aspirations. Her familial experiences informed her aspiration to use the college presidency as an instrument to attract prospective students by including celebratory family affairs. Faith also shared that her spiritual journey stemmed from having confidence in herself, mentors, and sponsors, but ultimately, she trusts that her spirit will guide her in making the best decisions on behalf of students.

The potential of creating welcoming atmospheres on campus for students and families was essential to co-portraitists. However, the daily hustle of being on the go and pursuing goals for the co-portraitists can overwhelm the spirit. Chrysanthemum exclaimed

> Get your bag? There's all these messaging of overwork. I think this movement is largely led by Black women. I don't care what nobody says. You can see this shift in conversation about every everything ain't got to be about making paper; everything ain't got to be about getting to the next thing.

Although Chrysanthemum described having a tenacious spirit to continue in her aspirations, she also recognizes the external pressures that society places on Black women to achieve with no regard to themselves. Serenity discussed how she loves student-centered work and following her passions for the presidency, but she acknowledged that her joy does not stem from those interactions. Serenity mentioned how she does not want to be the type of president known for

crisis management but instead a celebratory president who possesses a spirit that is unafraid to lead out loud with joy. Serenity commented, "I would like to be seen as a person who exhibits and exudes joy. Joy in the work, joy in herself, joy in family. You can't expect that from others when you can't model it or give it yourself." Her relationship with Black joy is at peace within the moment that she is in and allowing that to radiate inward and outward.

Co-portraitists' spirits were full of wisdom and experiences that they wanted to share as college presidents. Trusting that they will receive the call for a presidency interview or being encouraged by a supervisor to apply for a presidency was spiritual for co-portraitists. Their spirits validated their joys, excitement, and anxieties of the next phase in their journeys. By accepting the full range of emotions that accompanied joy, the co-portraitists reflected on their growth and what was needed to continue persevering to the presidency. Candace, for instance, knew in 1982 that she wanted to become a college president after her undergraduate studies and felt in her spirit that she was destined for such a role. Once she began applying for presidencies, Candace was met with disappointment. She disclosed:

> I remember the first couple of times that I applied for presidential positions, and I didn't get any response. I was like, what the devil? These people don't know how wonderful I am… How come I'm not getting a call? I'm not even getting anything. They don't even tell you that they got your stuff and you were considered, or they'll tell you that you've been eliminated.

Candace's experiences with rejection could have negatively impacted her pursuits of the presidency. Yet, she persisted with an open spirit, willing to adhere to feedback and adjust her approach. Candace shared,

You got to be able to look back at your life and you need to see where you need to grow

up. One of those things was okay; you need to swallow your pride… So intellectually, I

understand that but heart wise, that's a little hard thing to deal with. Being able to say it

and to understand that, right. Allowed me to say, 'okay, I'm going to continue to look for

a position,' because I'm waiting for the one that's ideally suited for me. And I will tell you

that two weeks, a week ago I was sitting in reflection and prayer.

She taught herself how not to internalize being left in limbo when search committees did not

reach out but instead sought encouragement in her faith that God would order her next steps.

Spiritual validation guided all co-portraitists in similar ways which illustrated the power of Black

joy when accompanied by fulfillment in their work.

Familial Relationships

Despite the available literature on the spirituality of Black women, few scholars

examined familial relationships as spiritual inspiration in the ways that co-portraitists reflected

on their sources of joy for their presidential aspirations. Spirituality was a collaborative practice

where co-portraitists could gravitate to their families and partners' words, comfort, and support.

The fellowship with loved ones offers a tender place for praise and affirmation in co-portraitists'

journeys. Each co-portraitist showcased artifacts that represented the depths of family ties in

their spiritual choices to pursue the college presidency—being part of a family whether sister,

mother, or daughter—was a salient part of co-portraitists' spiritual guidance in their paths to the

presidency. Family was essential in identifying ways to express spirituality and validate one's

existence. Serenity warmly conveyed, "there's so much of who I am and the way I show up in

my work is because of her" when speaking of the relationship with her daughter. Her daughter

informs her professional practices because she is mindful of family influences on self-care,

persistence, and support. The co-portraitists humbly spoke of how family members taught them how to commune with their inner selves to recognize growth, faith, and hope in things unknown—knowing that at some point, all things will be revealed in due time. These teachings were applicable as children but, more importantly, as Black women aspiring to the college presidency while searching for joy. Lisa, for example, praised her relationship with her brother when presenting one of her artifacts, a name plaque that he carved for her in a woodshop. She shared how he was one of her first students, and their interactions impacted her aspirations for the presidency. The joy of teaching him education fundamentals, like the ABCs, was a glimpse into her passions for leadership and cultivating meaningful relationships.

Co-portraitists found comfort in their families and partners to be quirky, authentic, and seen as a whole human in their aspirations to the college presidency. Those aspects were critical after many detailed encounters in their presidential aspirations where their humanity and ability to lead as a Black woman was questioned. Faith shared how her familial relationships molded an aspirational spirit sparked through education. She shared

No one in my family knew how to get there, but they always told me that I was smart, and I always believed them. I think about the fact that early on, messaging that I had been taught. I believe that what you tell a kid they're going to be, nine times out of 10, becomes true. Certainly, knowing that my family, again, didn't know the tools.

Faith continued

They knew that there was a route to get me there, and so making sure that I knew that I was smart and that I was capable became a very big part of my foundation… So, for me, certainly being in spaces where I could be at the table and advocate for the things that I

thought were of benefit to the population I was advocating for because I spoke with them

a lot to figure out what I should be also advocating for.

The co-portraitists' testaments to how the spirit and spirituality inspired visions of a presidency. The joys of advocacy, family support, and education influenced Faith's belief system in herself and her abilities. Each co-portraitist's story was like Faith's story in many ways. Four out of the six co-portraitists explicitly state how their mothers taught the origins of understanding and accessing the spirit.

For most of the co-portraitists, their mothers were the first to introduce spirituality as an internal resource during hardships and how to discover joy. The co-portraitists learned early on how to tap into their leadership capabilities from modeling their mothers, the first examples of executive leadership. Tatiana reflected on the tenacious spirit that her single mother instilled in her as a young girl. She stated

I didn't intend on a degree path of higher ed but felt compelled to do well to honor my

mother and to honor what I knew she had done for this entire family. It wasn't explicit but

it was implied that we were to be excellent.

There was joy in carrying a spirit of excellence from childhood into adulthood for Tatiana. Her mother was the first glimpse into how she could access joy by pursuing avenues that cultivated academic and social opportunities. When sharing memories of her mother's teachings through an artifact (Artifact 2), Candace spoke to the importance of "surrounding yourself with really smart people but also seeing yourself as being one of them." Artifact 2 depicts Candace as a little girl and her mother playing ball outside a prominent higher education institution. This was a "fairytale" moment for Candace as she viewed the institution as a castle where dreams could

Artifact 2

Candace's Family Artifact
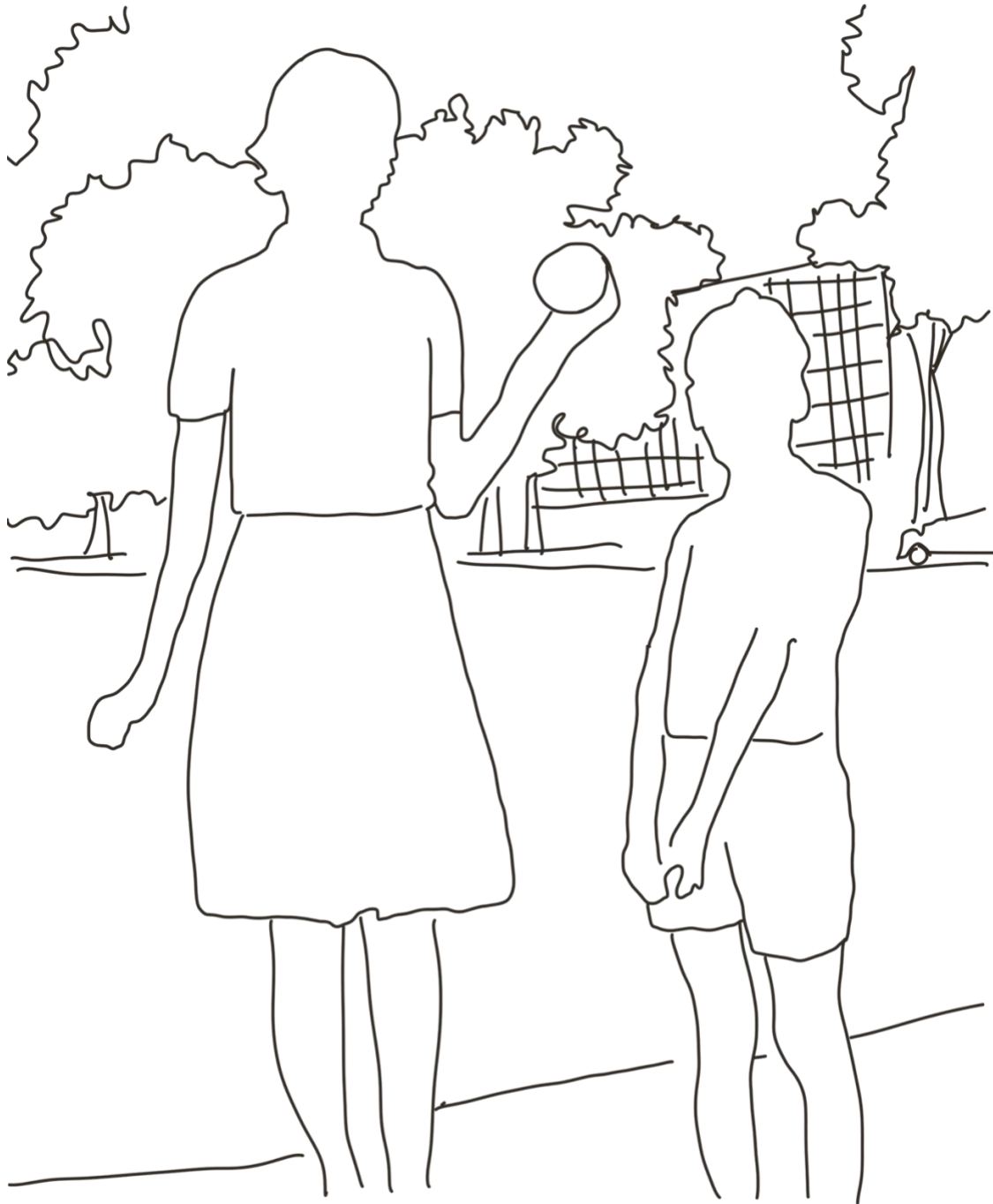
come true. Though Candace learned more about the value of education, she later understood the underlying message from her mother—that her faith in the Lord will always affirm her abilities and desires. Candace's mother taught her the significance of observing others' character, but she also learned spirituality as validation of her intelligence and spiritual journey toward her goals. As the portraitist, I witnessed how Black joy further aided in the women identifying their purpose in life.

Black Joy Centers Purpose

"When I liberate myself, I liberate others. If you don't speak out, ain't nobody going to speak out for you." –Fannie Lou Hamer.

The Black joy of co-portraitists surfaced from the ability to live out their purpose as administrators with the opportunity to build on that vision as a college president. Centering is the act of prioritizing oneself when being pulled in different directions, as many Black women tend to experience. The expression of Black joy calls Black people to reexamine what their attention is focused on and question if it serves a purpose to the spiritual calling on their life. Therefore, Black joy acts as a catalyst to discover and pursue a bigger purpose than the individual. The process of centering purpose was the co-portraitists' way of reflecting on their journeys and focusing on new ways to achieve their goals of a presidency. Candace shared how her altar is a wellspring of joy and centers her purpose. She commented:

> Being able to go back and see the successes that you've had, right. Incrementally. If you look back at that altar of my successes, my growth, my iterations of myself. You got to be able to look at that and say, "man, I've come a long doggone way." It also helps you when you turn around and you look towards your future for you to be able to say, "I know I made it through all of these things. I can make it through that."

Purpose was defined as a concept that reveals the past, honors the present, and directs the future. Faith described purpose as "being able to figure out what my door was, that's what I think purpose is all about. There will always come a time for you to figure out which way you're heading in life." Purpose was depicted as a moment for self-discovery and an opportunity to give rather than receive without expecting anything in return. Lisa shared similar sentiments in finding purpose when establishing an organization for women of color. She said "I think that's an important part of knowing that my spirit is a giver, it's giving to folks. But also at the same time, what are some ways that I need to know to fill my cup as well?" For Lisa, her purpose was to leave a legacy for future generations that is tangible. Purpose was excitement in knowing that their representation as future college presidents meant that others could be validated in seeing a Black woman achieve the presidency—despite the long-standing history of being excluded in higher education and then executive leadership positions.

The liberation that co-portraitists exuded when sharing their purpose in life left me in awe of their journeys. Part of the co-portraitists' purpose in life aimed to share the wealth of creativity and possibilities with underserved communities throughout higher education. As college presidents, each co-portraitist dreamt of forging spaces to amplify unheard voices, whether for themselves or others. Tenets of Black feminism support co-portraitists' expressions of centering Black women's purpose, developing relationships with other Black women as a collective, and advocating for more Black women to be heard in their experiences.

For this group of Black women, service was their calling and the pinnacle of joy. Sharing stories of their work in supporting students fulfilled their calling in higher education and toward the presidency. As college presidents, the co-portraitists would play a critical part in influencing the success of students, faculty, and staff. For example, Faith shared how her educational career

positively impacted her niece's dream of enrolling in college. She affirmed, "I think about the way I got to influence my niece and help her realize that [higher education] was the path forward. This was a path." Crafting a holistic educational environment for students is part of Faith's joy in her aspirations for the presidency. Faith's ability to establish legacy programs means that she could paint a vision and rely on her colleagues to create the depth of details for a colorful new project when a college president. Faith expressed

> College presidents get to do that every day. Create passports for new research and engagement, new innovation, new student scholarships, and new developments for athletic facilities. All those things that really do create an immensely powerful student experience that's what college presidents get to do.

Like Faith's commentary, other co-portraitist spoke of vision casting as a vital element of their future presidencies. Tatiana envisioned the purpose of the presidency to be a barrier remover for students battling hardships. She responded:

> I see myself at a community college level because my heart is with the people. So, what is ailing that community? Is it employment opportunities? How do we start trying to entice? So how do I get with chambers [of commerce]? How do I work to try to build the skill level of our workforce so that we become attractive to employers? If it's childcare needs, what are those partnerships? Or how do we write campus grants? Or what is it that we need to do to make the resource available so that education becomes a reality?

To Tatiana, asking those questions and acting accordingly were the most significant responsibilities of a college president. Increasing the resources to the student body and building community across campus were purposeful for her. The joy in knowing that she could make sustainable changes as president was fulfilling for Tatiana. Serenity also described the care she

provides when interacting with students. For her, culture shifts occur when care and attention are appropriately given to students. As Lisa said, college presidents should "want an evolution, not a revolution," which requires the time to learn and process the impact of continuous change. Discussing incremental changes with colleagues and providing details can avert an uprising of negativity and banter. That mantra is a guide for Lisa's leadership approach and assists in grounding her for a purpose—to provide adequate resources for students and surrounding campus communities. Through our conversations, the co-portraitists etched many purposes for desiring the presidency, but one, in particular, was consistent among responses; to be a mirror for Black women.

Mirrors as Reflection

Being a mirror means to reflect. To reflect on yourself. To reflect a message to others. To present a complete portrait of what could be if following a similar path. Many co-portraitists commented that they were their daughter's first mirror into Black womanhood. Chrysanthemum presented an artifact (Artifact 3) of her and her daughter when sharing how intentional she is about setting an example of what could be as a Black woman. Artifact 3 represents Chrysanthemum's intentions of being a mirror for young Black girls and Black women. Aspiring to be a college president permits Black women to dream of the possibilities with their leadership. Purpose is woven into the fabric of Black joy as it gives meaning to life, which is cause for celebration and inspiration. Black feminism calls for the liberation and restoration of Black women, and the co-portraitists were firm in their purpose of doing such. Co-portraitists realized the divine calling on their lives to be mentors and sponsors as many other Black women were for them. The passion for helping aspiring and seasoned Black women administrators achieve their professional advancement goals was also purposeful. Although Black women's expression of

Artifact 3

Chrysanthemum's Mirror Artifact
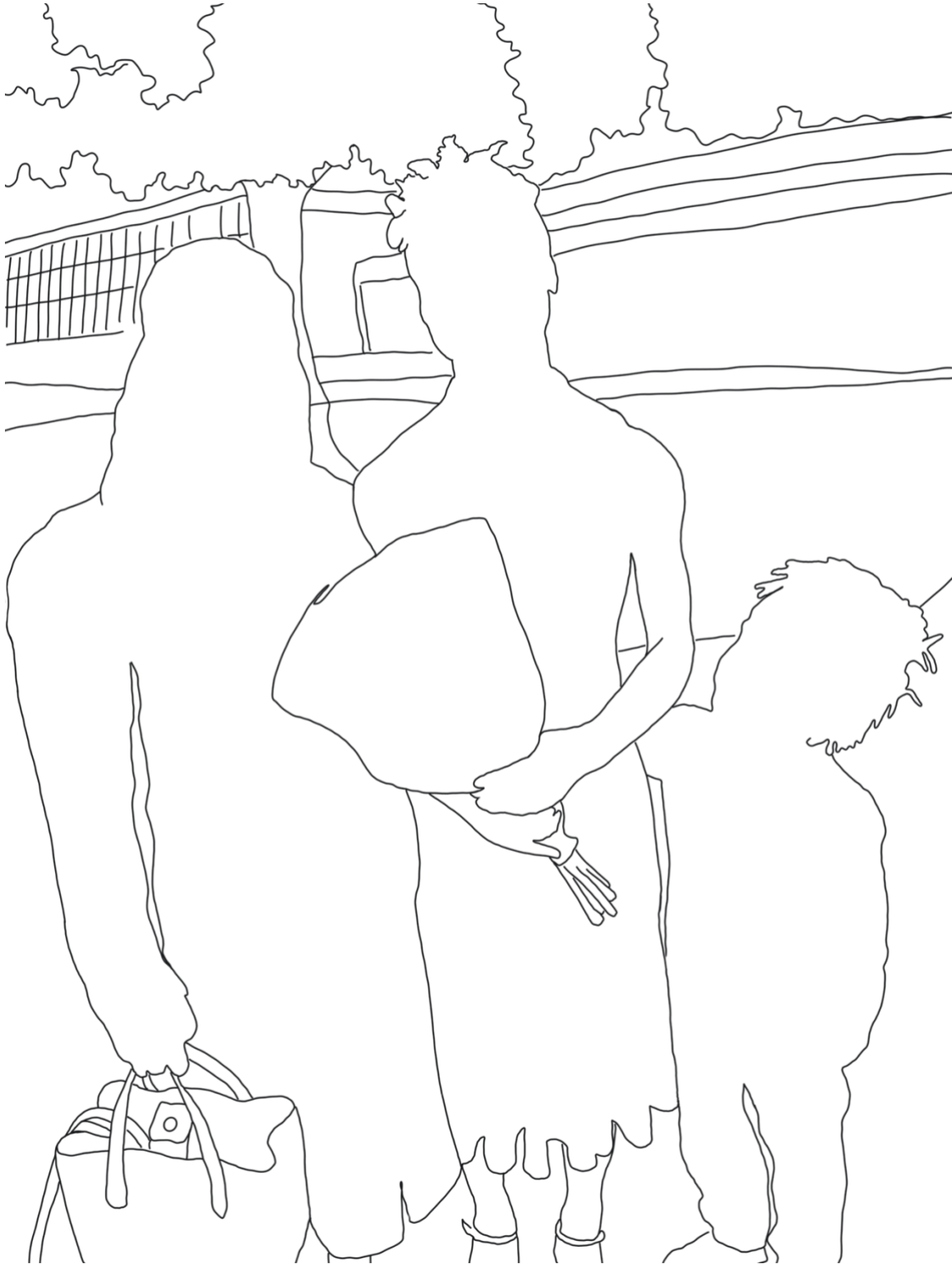
joy is not a monolith, they can see, feel, and speak about them when observing other Black women. Co-portraitists viewed the presidency as a bright reflection of representation. When talking about her positionality as a Black woman administrator, Candace conveyed

> I am very much aware of the fact that, particularly in predominantly white spaces, having access to people who look like you, looks somewhat like you and who have some of the same experiences of you are really, really important.

Being the representation as a Black woman president communicates critical messages regarding belonging, authenticity, and triumph to people of color when batting marginalization and discrimination at any level. Historically white institutions, more often than not, remain predominantly white, which can leave a small margin of opportunity to discover social communities that offer the racial and ethnic support needed. Black women are hyper-aware of the weight that their representation carries—to be a confidant, mentor, friend, educator—and still, Black women accept the responsibility that comes with the role. The co-portraitists from this study were no exception to this visibility. Co-portraitists are aware that their words can affect those around them. They are cautious when speaking but never silenced.

As Black women, the co-portraitists remain undeterred to regain control of their narratives for success. The communal tenets of Black feminism resound the magnitude of having mirrors. Faith recalled:

> As a black woman, to see another black woman be able to walk into a space and own it with compassion, humility, grace, authority, security, strategy, all those things that make her successful is how she got to the presidency. Being able to figure out what parts of that I would like to emulate. Now, even in my role as vice president, it has been very

powerful for me. Again, I keep saying the word powerful because I don't know any other better word to describe it.

The "power" of seeing another Black woman trailblaze a path to the presidency indicates that more work needs to be done in recruiting and hiring Black women for the position. Each co-portraitists found joy in their purpose of aspiring to the college presidency and leading fellow Black women, hand in hand, along the way. Candace shouted out with glee, "Come on girl, we need you!" The excitement of pursuing the college presidency and building a community of aspirants fuels co-portraitists' purpose. Black women being in community with one another throughout the aspiring stage aids in reminding them how essential taking care of their wellbeing is when striding to the end of their race–a college presidency. The co-portraitists transition from mirroring their mothers, mentors, and other Black women who are sources of inspiration throughout their journeys to becoming role models and trailblazers in their right—reflections of success and perseverance to lead future generations of aspiring young women. Co-portraitists are colorful stain-glassed windows reflecting the possibilities of joy and hope for future aspirants.

Black Joy as Self-Preservation

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence. It is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." –Audre Lorde.

Managing their personal and professional lives was a delicate balance for co-portraitists as many expressed the burdens of both. Nevertheless, the co-portraitists relied on Black joy as a means of self-preservation. Lorde (1988) wrote the words above as a notice to the world that self-care was not, in fact, selfish or a nonchalant activity that one seeks by happenstance. Self-preservation is a mindful act of tending to your basic and desired needs without the guilt of choosing yourself over others. Further, self-preservation is described as protection against the

structural forms of oppression that Black women battle. Within this study, the co-portraitists expressed Black joy when they allowed themselves to rest, either willingly or unwillingly. During Chrysanthemum's interview, she discussed a recent injury limiting her mobility. Chrysanthemum voiced

> That's what I'm trying to figure out, how to get to that space of giving myself permission to rest. Because right now, I am a slave to my bad back. So, this whole day of rest has really just been forcibly pushed upon me. I would like to be able to do this without it being forcibly pushed upon me.

Learning to seek rest before a breaking point was difficult for all co-portraitists. However, four out of the six co-portraitists spoke of their techniques for self-care. The remaining two were still trying to reimagine what self-preservation looked like in their aspirations for the presidency. Regardless, self-preservation was an intuitive state of mind that reminded co-portraitists to stray away from sacrificing things that matter most (themselves, family, pets, time) for their aspirations. Learning how to give themselves permission not to overindulge in work, kick their feet up, or grab a bottle of wine was difficult at times but remained an essential part of their practices.

The intense journey to the presidency takes a toll on the mind, body, and spirit. Self-preservation is necessary to maintain emotional and physical equilibriums when faced with adversity. The co-portraitists portrayed feelings of never having enough time or running out of time to make a difference at their institutions. There was an internal clock within their minds and bodies addressing the constant commotion of managing crises, networking for leadership development, and leading staff on their teams. As Candace reflected on her childhood when hearing Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, she softly replied

I don't want to die without making a difference. I want to have made a difference in the

world. So, with that, at 61, I feel like I'm running out the time, so I got to get some stuff

done.

Though the pressure of leaving a legacy was heavy, Candace found joy, like other co-portraitists,

in the optimism of living another day to foster change.

Co-portraitists' responsibility to tackle things can leave them in heightened states of

flight or fight; either they get it done or the fallout from not getting it done becomes another

burden. Serenity mentioned that she lives with the philosophy to "stop killing yourself out

here… If something happens to you, we're going to replace you and you cannot be replaced by

your family." Her mindset helps to reconsider how she behaves in her best interests. Higher

education sends the message that people are disposable, and the taxation on Black women to be

exceptional or without error is often the byproduct of that messaging. For Chrysanthemum, her

mind and body do not yet know how to rest. She stated:

I suffer from the whole; if I'm doing "nothing," my brain just turns constantly about all

the things I need to be doing, supposed to be doing, should be doing. I'm never really

truly resting. It's just a constant rat race in my mind about okay, what's next?

Chrysanthemum's awareness of her habits lets her reimagine what rest could be if she gave

herself the space to prioritize the joy in people, activities, or stillness. Commonly, Black women

do not have the luxury of relaxation or rest. Each co-portraitist asserted how taking a break or

scheduling time for themselves was challenging with work, family, and social commitments.

However, taking the time was essential. For Tatiana, she found solace in musical beats that

stimulated movement during her commutes from her job to dance her worries away. Lisa would

buy gift cards for her favorite outings and treat herself to dates as a sign of appreciation and

validation of working toward her goals. She said, "whether it is massages, dinners, movies, or whatever, [she will] schedule out times throughout the semester" to treat herself to enjoyable activities to escape workplace expectations. The joy in self-preservation is about transporting the mind and leaving the current environment with a mental or physical break. Though co-portraitists spoke of being drained in their aspirations to advance at times, the opportunity to access Black joy was their moment to take a step back and breathe. Faith recommended:

> You have to become tough but not hardened. You have to be able to block out while also still letting light in. In some ways, I guess you have to be a pair of light reducing curtains, because you have to still be able to open up when you need to but shut everything out as needed as well.

Being guarded and offering vulnerability requires a unique skill set that the co-portraitists possess as Black women. Having to process racist and sexist epithets said to them while assisting those very people is a difficult ask of Black women. Yet, the co-portraitists know to access joy as a form of resistance to the oppressive tensions of their jobs. Co-portraitists recognize that their purpose in life as aspiring presidents is more powerful than tactics of white supremacy. Candace asserted

> If you are a Black woman, on top of that, you are accused of being hyper-angry if you're passionate. Some of the most passionate people that I know, I mean, can really argue a point. If they are male and they are white—man, they can do it every day, all day, and not have a problem.

She continued

> You let [a Black woman], you let a Latina do it, and all of a sudden you get sort of this whole, 'they're fiery, they're angry, they got all this passion, they're emotional, they can't

reign themselves in…' I would also suggest that some of my confidence is being

misconstrued as arrogance as a result of that.

Candace's self-preservation technique was grounded in her religious faith by believing that God

authenticates a "purpose [that] is beyond sort of the human capacity to touch." To preserve

oneself against white supremacist dominance, co-portraitists must acknowledge the stressors in

their presidential aspirations and permit themselves to prioritize acts of joy and validation.

Giving Yourself Permission

Black joy implies an inheritance of liberation and peace in whatever capacity manifests

for people. Part of that joy includes making room for the things your body and mind require as

self-care versus after-care (i.e., a reactionary thought or action to recover from an experience).

Co-portraitists learned that permitting themselves to love on themselves lightened the load in

incremental ways throughout their journeys and was critical to sustaining their joy. For example,

Tatiana presented a pair of fuzzy socks as an artifact because she welcomed any opportunity to

toss some heels aside and slide into comfort. She is intentional about relieving her work-related

stress by grounding herself in her office and feeling the support of the earth. The little things the

co-portraitists engaged in were Tatiana's concept of joy in "removing the mask" or expectations

to show up in a palatable way to the white gaze. Seizing control of their emotions and seeking

moments of peace were Serenity and Chrysanthemum's ways of granting self-permission. While

presenting an artifact (Artifact 4), Serenity recalled when she attended a Broadway play of the

Lion King and how cleansing the performance was for her wellbeing. She said:

> It was like two and a half hours of forgetting all that is going on… I think there was a
>
> sense of calm. I didn't feel anxious in terms of, like, what's next? What do I have to do? I
>
> need to check my phone; I need to make sure everything's okay. It was just like, I am

Artifact 4

Serenity's Self-Preservation Artifact
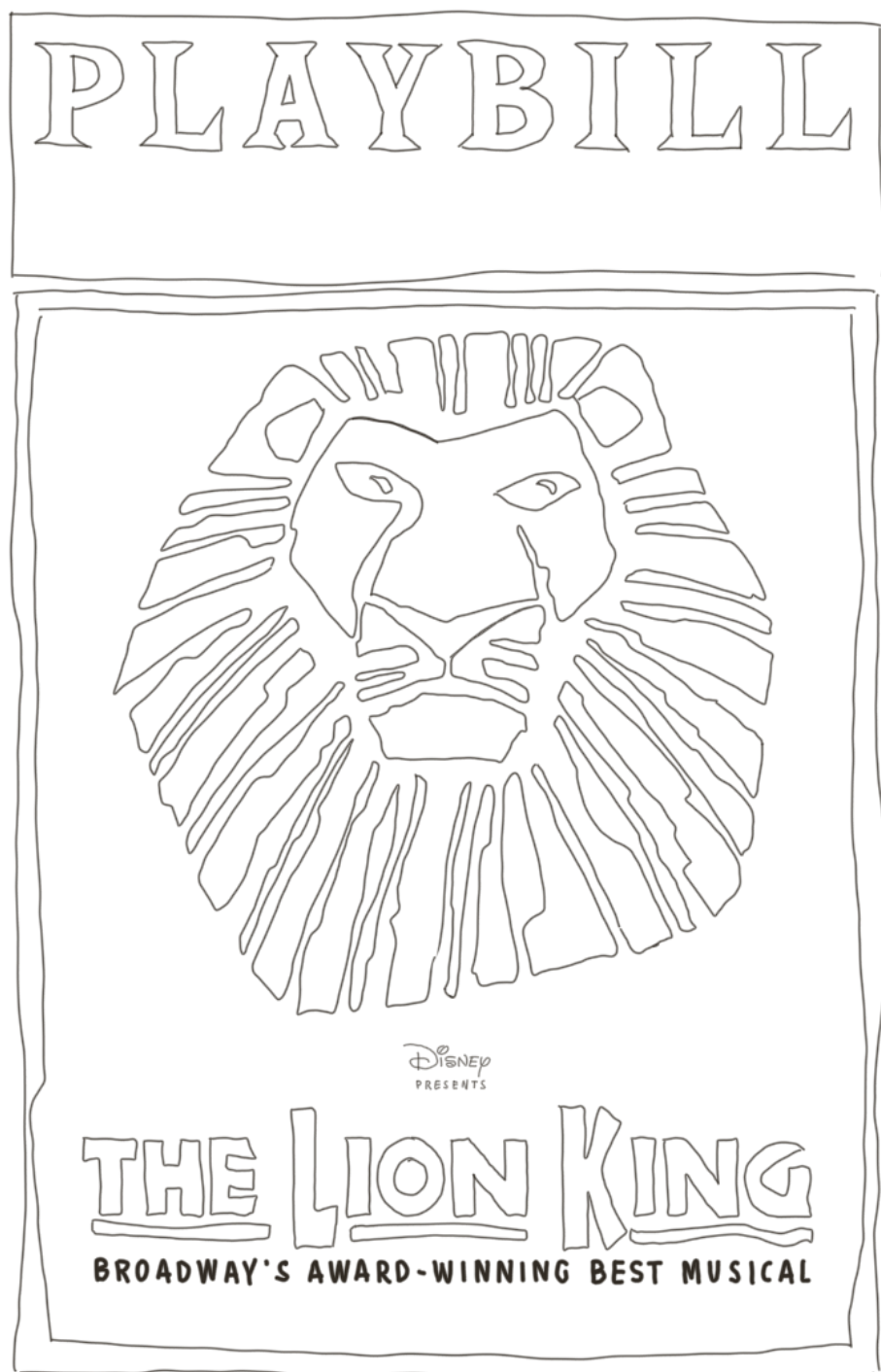
here in this moment, and all as well.

The presence was a gift that Serenity gave herself without considering her aspirations or position. That same action, within itself, is radical self-preservation. Ignoring the conditions that society places on Black women to be available to the needs of others constantly is healing and restorative for co-portraitists. In granting time and space for their own needs, the co-portraitists declared that further attention be given to their humanity.

Call for Humanity

Black women have a history of being exploited in society by not receiving credit where it is due and being overworked while receiving less pay for their labor. The co-portraitists of this study painted humanity as authenticity and transparency, liberated from perfectionism or trying to be the perfect leader who does not fit the stereotypical images. The embodiment of Black joy for all co-portraitists was rooted in their humanity as Black women. Showing the full range of emotions in their existence influenced co-portraitists' leadership approach and their perceptions of self-readiness for the presidency. Further, centering their humanity informed administrative practices and philosophies when leading supervisees. Serenity disclosed her daughter's birth as one of her greatest moments and a turning point where she realized that she was not superhuman. She shared:

> There's so much of who I am, and the way I show up in my work is because of her. I will share, and this is part of like my orientation to work when I had her, I almost died. H1N1 was out then, which was similar to COVID, but different president, management was different, right? So I was in a coma for a week and almost literally died. It was crazy. And right after having her, hours after having her, I was working, I was sending emails.

Similarly, Chrysanthemum's experiences with workload burnout led her to mention:

I was doing the job of two and a half people for a year. And my then provost said to me,
"But we know you can do it." And I was like, that's not the point. And my colleague over
there with her shitty attitude and talking back, never got asked to do anything because she
was so difficult. I was just like, that's not fair. I am being punished for being a good
worker.

Serenity's cognizance of her near-death experience caused an immediate shift in prioritizing
being an administrator and what she would value as a president. For Chrysanthemum, she
understood that her work was underappreciated but frequently requested. In both co-portraitist
cases, the women experienced pressures to perform despite their need for rest and recuperation.
Higher education entities do not view Black women as those who need breaks because Black
women have been forced to push through the mental and physical extremities associated with
work (Collins, 2009; Lewis et al., 2017; Livingston et al., 2012). Further, capitalism and work
culture send (in)direct messages that employees should prioritize their job or their holistic health
(Collins, 2000; Harley, 2008; Tevis et al., 2020). Despite experiences where co-portraitists'
humanity was at risk, their Black girl magic gave them a recharge to remain steadfast in their
presidential pursuits. Candace described Black girl magic as such:

We can take spaces that were not traditionally made for us, and we can recreate them so
that they are places that thrive under our care. And that we have the capacity to generate
knowledge and to generate lasting knowledge and legacy building.

As a person who aspires to the presidency, Candace understands that historically, white
institutions do not provide all the resources or attention necessary for Black women.
Nonetheless, Black women presidents are the architects designing the blueprints for future
generations of Black women leaders in higher education. The co-portraitists echoed an

appreciation for this study, precisely due to the humanistic approach to learning about Black women aspirants versus, as Chrysanthemum stated, engaging with Black women from a "purely professional perspective."

Chapter Summary

For co-portraitists, painting the imagery of Black joy was a colorful yet dark process as the interviews invited them to identify how they embody a spirit of joyful expressions. Their responses indicated that Black joy is an ever-evolving exploration given with each new chapter that life reveals. Yet, the foundations of validating the spirit, discovering purpose, and prioritizing self-preservation summarized the essence of co-portraitists' embodiments of joy. This study was designed for Black women to reflect on their journeys as administrators aspiring to the college presidency and how joy reaffirmed or redirected their aspirations. The findings were centered around how co-portraitists defined and practiced Black joy in higher education spaces that historically have not appreciated their presence. Part of the co-portraitists' practice of joy was through the artifact gallery. The photographs of mother-daughter relationships were impactful in their offices as the photos reminded them of their purpose. For Chrysanthemum, being a mirror for her daughter brought her joy in aspiring to be an exemplar for Black women pursuing the presidency. For Candace, the photo with her mother symbolized purpose rooted in the joyous moment captured through film. All artifacts carried a heartfelt story of empowerment, passion, and love, which influenced co-portraitists' aspirations for the college presidency.

The significance of this study was to illuminate Black women's humanity by centering the joy that allows Black women space for imagining alternative realities despite their continued experiences of gendered racism in their journey toward the college presidency. The findings of this study add to the growing literature on Black women in higher education. The upcoming final

chapter addresses recommendations and implications tailored to the needs of Black women

reading this study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

"I speak not for all Black women but for myself in the hopes that my voice will echo and affirm the experiences of women who look like me." –Rachel A. Griffin.

The purpose of this study was to understand how Black joy influences Black women's aspirations to pursue university or college presidencies at historically white institutions (HWIs). Further, the goal was to explore how joy informed Black women's active practices in their current role while preparing for a presidency despite the impacts of racism and sexism. Townsend (2021) recommended that higher education should devote more attention to the retention of Black women as "Black women [are] a pipeline to the future of education" (p.596). With this in mind, I centered on the lived experiences of Black women as narrated and interpreted by Black women. This study served as a communal space for free expression, laughter, jokes, and wisdom.

Additionally, the study's findings were envisioned to expand the literature on Black women college president aspirants and Black joy as a form of reimagination and restoration. The conceptual framework of Black joy added a humanistic approach to exploring the needs and wants of Black women as they pursue their aspirations to the college presidency. The framework was fundamental in identifying how Black women (1) defined Black joy and (2) described the practice of Black joy as current administrators who battle the many faces of oppression in pursuit of the presidency.

The literature review outlined a template for inquiry into the lived experiences of Black women aspirants in higher education by focusing on the history of Black women as college presidents, the path to the presidency, and the ways Black women express emotions. Jackson and

Harris' (2005) wave indicator situated co-portraitists' aspirations to the college presidency through educational backgrounds and the positions that shaped co-portraitists' intentional of professional experiences. The previous waves of Black women presidents established a limitless legacy in ingenuity and innovation for the communities they served. The Black women presidential pioneers were the mirrors for the new wave of Black women college presidency aspirants as they prepared for the task of balancing the joys with the challenges of the role. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) portraiture permitted me, as the portraitist, to step into the worlds of each co-portraitist's story as a character witness. The findings highlight narratives written for Black women by Black women. Their stories center on us, our humanity, and our aspirations within the context of higher education.

The following research questions were used in conjunction with semi-structured interviews and artifacts:

1) How do Black women define Black joy about their aspirations for the college presidency?

2) In what ways do Black women describe the practice of Black joy in the pursuit of the presidency?

This chapter discusses previous literature on Black women pursuing the college presidency to the findings from co-portraitists in this study. Secondly, I highlight the limitations of the study. After, I share my portraitist artifacts of joy as a deeper connection to the research and offer an interpretation of the findings for my professional journey. Next, I provide recommendations for practice and research specific to Black women. Then, I address a message of action for others who support Black women in any capacity. Lastly, I conclude with a summary of my final thoughts.

Discussion of Findings: A Love Letter to Black Women

The following discussion of findings is a love letter to Black women aspirants as you continue your journeys toward reclaiming your agency, rest, and restoration. The parasitic ways of racism and sexism within higher education are draining for Black women. Co-portraitists' expressions of encounters with racism, sexism, and classism throughout their presidential aspirations were a common thread discussed. The intersections of oppressions highlighted in the co-portraitist responses correlated with the literature on Black women's experiences as higher education administrators and college presidents (Commodore, 2019; Jackson & Harris, 2005; Oikelome, 2017; Patitu & Hinton, 2004). However, the scholarship on the streams of support that Black women outsource aligns with the findings of this study. The influence of spirituality, social networks, and purpose informed each co-portraitist's leadership approach. Furthermore, co-portraitists were aware of their frustrations with higher education systems yet remained undeterred in sharing the impacts they would make as presidents. Like the Black women pioneers Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune or Dr. Willa B. Player, the co-portraitists dedicated energy toward reform and increasing the opportunities for marginalized populations while utilizing Black joy as a power source fueling their passions (Dillard, 2022; Heath, 2007; Southern, 1996).

When analyzing the data to answer the two research questions of 1) how Black women define joy and 2) what ways Black women practice Black joy, the co-portraitists' racial and gender identities played critical roles in their spirituality/spirit, affirmation, and self-preservation. Co-portraitists' status as Black women simultaneously forces them to face racist and sexist battles while also protecting themselves with the use of joy as recognition of their humanity. Further, the findings of this study suggest Black joy as a tool for combating racism, sexism, and other forms of layered oppression. Black joy is not the saving grace for higher education but a

personal expression for Black people working within those systems. Additionally, Black joy is not for non-Black people to exploit for their understanding or benefit. Black joy is simply that; to be felt by and with Black communities by relishing the unified emotional liberation from being "othered." Thus, the findings aligned with the concepts of Black joy as a platform for spiritual guidance, purpose, and self-preservation (Baker, 2020; Tichavakunda, 2021). The findings from this study indicate that scholarship should also prioritize the humanistic approach to studying the joys of Black women college presidents.

Black Joy as Spiritual Guidance: Follow Your Spirit

The spirits of Black women have long guided their inner consciousness against racist and sexist stereotypes, assisted in dispelling tropes, and resisted discrimination by activating joy. The finding of Black joy as spiritual guidance adds an emotional element to current literature on the journeys of Black women presidents and credits the spirit as a source of fulfillment. Black joy strengthens the spirit and adds to Black women's agency to address frustrations. Follow where your spirit guides you as a Black woman and an aspirant to the college presidency. For co-portraitists, spirituality and the spirit were entities that helped them make meaning of their emotions and provided a fundamental understanding that life is more significant than self. Co-portraitists' experiences of trusting a higher power or themselves for spiritual validation support existing literature on Black joy (Dunn & Love, 2020; Johnson, 2015; Lu & Steele, 2019). Black women's spiritual callings to create spaces that encourage students, families, faculty, staff, etc., were prominent throughout literature and among co-portraitists from this study (Dillard, 2022; Dillard et al., 2000; Southern, 1996). Co-portraitists' examples of the spirit also referenced a longing to bond with Black women through mentoring, participating in scholarly research, and sharing advice on sustaining passions for the college presidency. Building relationships with

other Black women is essential to recharging your spirit and joy with community. For some co-portraitists, the church was that spiritual rejuvenation.

Scholars uncovered Black women's ties have to the Black Christian church, an apex for belief and faith. Most co-portraitists saw the church as a spiritual outlet for fellowship and a center for exploring one's purpose (Dillard et al., 2000; Heath, 2007; Tunheim et al., 2015). The burdens of aspiring to the college presidency are heavy, but the spirits of co-portraitists led them to continue in their higher education paths. The study's findings align with scholarship on Black joy cultivating a resilient spirit among Black women to enact social and political change as college presidents (Anderson et al., 2019; Colón, 2020; Heath, 2007; Linnaberry et al., 2014). Resiliency is often a concept taught in biblical teachings, and Black women have become master architects at building their resiliency capital in toxic environments (Chance, 2021; Gause, 2021; Lewis-Strickland, 2021; Townsend, 2021). With Black joy as a coping mechanism and instrument for resiliency, Black women can follow their spirits down a path that reveals their purpose.

Black Joy Centers Purpose: Affirm Yourself

Like spiritual guidance, Black joy centered the co-portraitists' meaning of purpose and solidified a path for their aspirations to the college presidency. Waring (2003) asserted that Black women presidents rely on sound decision-making skills to achieve their goals. Black women's understanding of purpose is self-directed and highlights how past lessons inform current practices. Taking a moment to affirm their purpose as Black women aspirants is essential in mapping out the rest of your journey. Furthermore, this finding supports literature on the independence of Black women and how racial and gender formations shape Black women's servant leadership approach to validate their purpose (Alston, 2005; Jean-Marie, 2006; Seo &

Hinton, 2009). A key feature of Black women's motivators when aspiring to the presidency is the prospect of envisioning increased opportunities for marginalized populations (Griffin, 2012). Black joy centering purpose helps Black women who aspire to be presidents achieve in places without representation, lack of mentorship, and structural barriers. Despite those challenges, Black women's purpose drives their ability to advance and produce what is needed to sustain them for their journeys.

Co-portraitists often mentioned discovering their "why" as college administrators despite not being asked about the influence of Black joy on one's purpose. For example, all co-portraitists believed that their life's mission was to foster environments that uplifted Black women through mentorship or friendship. Thus, emphasizing aspects of Black feminism underscore the importance of Black women creating and reinforcing the agency for other Black women (Bates, 2007; Collins, 2009). Mentorship and sponsorship were both trends in the literature on ways to recruit and retain Black women presidents, and co-portraitists spoke of the importance of mentors as "mirrors" for their aspirations to the presidency (Brown, 2005; Esters & Strayhorn, 2013; Oikelome, 2017; Wheat & Hill, 2016). Co-portraitists' joy in having a representation of Black women as mentors encouraged them to question critical questions about the process, learn what additional skills are needed, and believe in their purpose of becoming college presidents. However, co-portraitists used the word "mirror" to precisely depict other Black women's impression of their aspirations, whether a mentor or not. The findings from this study added a nuanced experience of co-portraitists' mothers and daughters being an influence on their journeys. The importance of racial and gender representation among Black women was reiterated throughout this study and aligns with the literature on the need for diversifying representation among college presidents (ACE, 2017; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Davis, 2009;

Wilder et al., 2013). Co-portraitists found joy in simply knowing that other Black women were pursuing the presidency and chose to observe different leadership styles to adapt their styles. Thus, Black joy prioritizes the spiritual calling of Black women's purpose and grants them the exploration of possibilities through community restoration, personal reflection, and leadership development as presidential aspirants.

Black Joy as Means of Self-Preservation: Self-First Is Not Selfish, It Is Necessary

This finding is probably the most significant out of all three for co-portraitists and the contribution to the available literature on Black women presidents and pathways to the presidency. Black women exist within systems that constantly expose them to discrimination, micro-aggressions, and biases. Scholars focused on the trauma of managing oppression related to bettering the institutional environments (Chance, 2021; Commodore et al., 2020). Tropes of the angry Black woman or the mammy are projected onto Black women, and Black women must learn how to cope with these instances. Black women are not granted humanity that welcomes imperfections, mistakes, or emotional hardships (Collins, 2009; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). The findings suggest that co-portraitists reject the idea of perfection and validate their whole being as Black women.

Furthermore, co-portraitists expressed finding joy and liberation when saying "no" to tasks or interactions that mentally drain them. Self-preservation requires Black women to choose themselves over others regardless of external perceptions of selfishness. You must make an effort to view your existence as worthy enough to maintain. Therefore, the co-portraitists' experiences of Black joy emphasized the need to use elements of self-preservation and permit themselves the opportunity to tend to their dreams and aspirations. Existing scholarship mentions self-care but does not identify Black joy as the vehicle driving Black women's attention to

themselves as precautionary measures such as therapy and traveling (Holder et al., 2015; Linnaberry et al., 2014). Instead, scholars highlight general discussions on self-care as an individualistic expression while Black joy introduces both individual and communal aspects for Black women (Collins, 2009; Cromer, 2021; Dillard, 2022; Shorter-Gooden, 2004).

Lewis-Strickland's (2021) study on Black women administrators revealed that introspection and personal growth were critical strategies for Black women in preparation for senior-level positions. Choosing to focus on Black joy is a political act of resistance to the higher education systems that minimize Black women's emotions and expressions of their work—good or bad (Lorde, 2012; Lu & Steele, 2019). The growth of co-portraitists ranged from scheduling intentional personal time to escape the challenges of their jobs to being mindful of not checking emails after hours. Joy, for co-portraitists, involved learning the delicate balance of challenging thought processes and not becoming hardened in the process of fighting oppressive systems. When subjected to emotional and physical exhaustion, Black women rely on healing practices of breathing, laughing, fellowship, and intuitiveness to counterbalance the negativity throughout their journeys (Chance, 2021; Reed & Blaine, 2015; Townsend, 2021). Co-portraitists from this study acknowledged their awareness of self-preservation strategies and declared that further attention is necessary if they are to sustain their presidential aspirations. For example, many co-portraitists shared stories about sacrificing time with family, themselves, or peace for the job, but the results were never worth the costs. Moreover, self-preservation is a substantive form of protecting co-portraitists' interests in the college presidency.

Limitations of the Study

This study, however, was not without limits for both me as the portraitist and co-portraitists. First, I could not enter the physical spaces of co-portraitists as an immersive

approach to gauging the influence of their workplace environments. Observations could have strengthened the data related to context or ways co-portraitists accessed joy when facing a hostile encounter. Secondly, co-portraitists were limited in their expressions to the geographical boundaries of their office or home workspace. Witnessing co-portraitist reactions in their community could have better informed the findings related to how they defined and practiced Black joy as an aspirant. Lastly, I could not conduct interviews with additional members of co-portraitists personal and professional communities. Engaging in conversations with others could have introduced broader perspectives.

Researcher Artifacts

The exploration of co-portraitists revealed much to me about Black women and myself. I was grounded in this study by realizing that my joy as a Black woman centers on my purpose through my everyday actions. While completing the earlier half of the dissertation, I frequently wondered why I was finishing this research or how the research would benefit me post-graduation. I then recognized the magnitude of the interviews when co-portraitists would share their stories or words of wisdom with me as a young scholar. This experience as a portraitist offered me a clean slate to paint the next chapter of my professional career as an aspirant. Having the opportunity to speak with the co-portraitists was as if I was securing a personal board of mentors; each possessed each a unique quality that I admired. The study was a sisterhood of authenticity and care. Co-portraitists reminded me that I needed to continue affirming myself and that my joy is not an aspect of myself that is negotiable or an afterthought.

My fulfillment as the portraitist came from the tales, philosophies, and spirits of Black women who shaped their professional trajectories with such grace and poise. As the portraitist, I selected artifacts that contributed to my joy in this research. I did not present my artifacts to co-

portraitists; however, I acknowledged my delight in them through writing. One artifact that I selected was an image of an interview through the lens of two Black women sharing stories of feat and triumph. The care. The love. The candidness was received and reciprocated.

Hosting co-portraitists' interviews in a virtual setting allowed me to meet Black women across the country, expanding the range of experiences and connections, in my virtual environment, including plants. My plants were the background for interviews, and they were a connection to co-portraitists in ways (Artifact 5). Plants are critical sources of my joy and indicate my emotional health, as caring for a plant is like caring for myself. Candace conveyed a heartfelt response "always, whenever you start a new job, get a plant, and then watch the plant grow over the years. Because sometimes you don't see the growth." With that wisdom, I realized that I must nourish my soil: the unseen inner work to affirm my presence and existence as a Black woman scholar. I must find the sunlight: figure out where I will be valued and appreciated but also be okay with departing to find better lighting. To grow new sprouts. I must shed leaves of ego, pride, and imposter syndrome. As an aspirant for the presidency, I learned how to pull from my inner well for validation and celebrate myself through the disappointment, excitement, and emotions accompanying my journey.

Recommendations for Black Women

Through the lens of Black joy and Black feminism, this study explored the ways Black women defined and practiced joy while pursuing aspirations to the college presidency. Scholars conceptualize Black joy as gaining a sense of one's reality and reimagining a safe space for commemorating Blackness and Black culture (Dillard et al., 2000; Hirsch, 2021; Pham, 2021). The findings of this study support Black joy and Black feminist underpinnings of love, community, activism, and validation while illustrating Black women's dimensions of identities

Artifact 5

Portraitist's Environment Artifact

(Collins, 2009; Dillard, 2022; Evans-Winters, 2019; hooks, 1994, 1998). A benefit to the relationships established with co-portraitists included the opportunity to listen to Black women's advice for future research and practice. The co-portraitists and I offer practical and scholarly recommendations that encompass guidance specifically for Black women college presidency aspirants.

Practice

Journeying to the college presidency is no small task for Black women aspirants. Therefore, engaging in preparatory programs can be essential to growing your experiences, knowledge, and skills before applying for or accepting a presidency position. Researching opportunities similar to Rutgers University's free Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) Aspiring Leaders program can provide professional development, financial and strategic planning, and mentorships with current college presidents. The American Council on Education (ACE) also has the ACE Women's Network to facilitate a nationwide network of women pursuing leadership roles in higher education. Although these are only two preparation program recommendations, the preparation opportunities can be limitless. If you are active in professional associations, inquire about mentoring relationships or pursue affinity groups if available. This can increase your network of mentors who can advise you and your aspirational pathway while also securing sponsors for various opportunities. Additional aspiring programs are needed to increase the recruitment and retention of Black women's aspirations for the presidency. If you cannot connect with existing programs, consider the ways to create these spaces in your regions or through professional associations. Share your knowledge and needs with preparation programs so that they can adjust the curriculum to suit your aspirations. Co-portraitists, indeed, emphasized the practice of finding your mirrors of previous or sitting Black women college

presidents. Reach out to them and secure a board of Black women with differing experiences regarding institution types, professional backgrounds, length in the field, etc. and inquire about what helped sustain them in their process.

Secondly, learn to embrace feedback by not internalizing the information to discredit your work but rather information that will build your profile as a more qualified president. When applying for presidencies, request feedback from search committees and search consultants regardless of how the individual is selected. Doing so will increase your insight into the process and inform you on what responsibilities, skills, or experiences are needed. This study showcased the importance of reflection as Black women administrators when applying new knowledge to attain goals. Furthermore, you will be better positioned to assist other Black women who may encounter similar processes.

Lastly, co-portraitists and I suggest taking more time to be adventurous and explore the many ways you can define and practice joy in your aspirations. Connecting a playful spirit to your purpose can shift how you approach a presidency while activating your creative lens. Do not shy away from the difficult moments or allow them to deter your aspirations. You deserve to not only be in these spaces but to take up space. When your aspirational journey becomes too much, take a step back to reevaluate, breathe, and practice joy.

Scholarship

The research on Black women aspirants and their experiences with Black joy is minimal but not minimized. There is a great need to inspire Black women aspiring to the college presidency, but scholars must also highlight the joys of the journey rather than hyper-focus on the challenges. Continue to seek participation in studies that center on Black women's experiences with a humanistic approach. Black women are more than our burdens. To Black

women scholars further engage in telling the stories of fellow Black women—"we are the ones we have been waiting for" (Jordan, 2007, p. 498). Writing Black women into existence is part of our work as a community. This research indicates that additional scholarship on Black women's expressions of joy in higher education is warranted (Austin, 1989; Collins, 2009). Black women are open to discussing joy's possibilities in their personal and professional lives. The findings also suggest that scholarship on specific components of Black joy as self-preservation, such as an office or at-home practices, should be explored. Thus, the co-portraitists and I offer the following recommendations for future research: 1) scholarship that further examines how Black women's spirit and spirituality guide their understanding of joy, 2) scholarship on the mentoring relationships of Black women and how joy influences the connection, 3) scholarship on Black women sitting college presidents and their experiences with joy once in the role, and 4) scholarship on the ways joy influences Black women's creativity as college presidents.

Recommendations for Others

If you are experiencing cognitive dissonance with this study, I challenge you to explore why it might be challenging to conceptualize. Further, I invite you to listen to Black women carefully, not being critical but bearing witness to their expressions. Listen to them when they express their challenges without the need to respond immediately. Listen to them when they say that their workload is too much or that they are tired. Listen to them when they are silent— because there is also a message in that form of communication. Be open to Black women's creative approaches to resolving conflict and crises. Advocate for more Black women's voices during decision-making processes or as a sponsor for more Black women to be considered for presidencies. Your actions can communicate that you value their humanity or devalue their lived experiences. Be critical of the systems instead of the person. Speak up with Black women rather

than for Black women. Although sometimes well-intentioned, the act of fighting "for" Black women redirects the liberation away from us to be about you as the savior.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand how Black joy influenced Black women's aspirations to pursue university or college presidencies at historically white institutions (HWIs). In support of the tenets of Black joy and Black feminism, the findings of this study suggest that Black women college president aspirants experience interlocking oppressions while also expressing multidimensional aspects of joy. Further, the humanistic approach of Black joy and Black feminism naturally situated the co-portraitists' expressions by enacting the spirit as a guide for aspirations, centering Black women's purpose as higher education administrators, and granting permission to care for themselves without guilt.

The findings deepen the conversations on what influences Black women to pursue the college presidency despite the trauma associated with racism and sexism. The importance of gathering and building relationships with Black girls and Black women was evident throughout the narratives in the study. Co-portraitists' stories of triumph, rage, and calmness confront the stereotypes and biases about Black women by 1) acknowledging that controlling images of Black womanhood exist and 2) replacing the images with their truths through scholarship and reclaiming the oral agency of storytelling. This study was not designed to be the end-all, be-all for Black women aspirants but instead a starter manual for exploring joy and healing while on ascension to the college presidency. Discussing joy and Black feminism as essential aspects of Black women can generate deeper interactions within higher education and remove negative perceptions about Black women administrators' abilities.

Appendix A

Co-Portraitist Solicitation

Email in Response to Inquiry
Hello there,

Thank you for indicating interest as a participant in my "And Still I Rise: An Examination of Black Women's Joy While Aspiring the College Presidency" dissertation study. As you know, I intend to examine Black women's emotional expression of joy throughout their administrative journeys to the presidency. Those interested must meet the following criteria:

Must self-identify within the Afrodiaspora or Black
Must self-identify as a woman
Must be a current higher education administrator or faculty member
Must work at a two- or four-year historically white institution
Must be aspiring to the college presidency at historically white institutions

All participants are invited to review the attached consent form and email me your weekly availability to schedule the first interview. As a reminder, those participating are expected to complete two separate 60–90-minute interviews. Please confirm that you meet the criteria and remain interested by responding to this email.

I will then contact you with additional information to schedule an interview. Thank you, again, for volunteering your time and experience. If you have any further questions about participating, please feel free to contact me with any concerns.

Kindest regards,
Courtney Matthews

Email in Response to Peer Recommendation
Hello there,

I hope this email finds you well. A peer recommended you as a potential candidate for my dissertation study, "And Still I Rise: An Examination of Black Women's Joy While Aspiring the College Presidency." My study examines Black women's emotional expression of joy throughout their administrative journeys to the presidency, and you could be a great fit in sharing your perspective. Those interested must meet the following criteria:

Must self-identify within the Afrodiaspora or Black
Must self-identify as a woman
Must be a current higher education administrator or faculty member
Must work at a two- or four-year historically white institution
Must be aspiring to the college presidency at historically white institutions

All participants are invited to review the attached consent form and email me your weekly availability to schedule the first interview. Those participating are expected to complete two separate 60–90-minute interviews. Please confirm that you meet the criteria and remain interested by responding to this email.

I will then contact you with additional information to schedule an interview. Thank you, again, for considering your time and experience in this research. If you have any further questions about participating, please feel free to contact me with any comments or concerns.

Kindest regards,
Courtney Matthews

Email Request for Member Checking
Hi there,

I hope that you are well! Thank you, again, for volunteering to engage in my study and share your stories with me. I completed my data analysis of the interviews and artifacts. Now, I invite you to read the chapter and provide feedback to ensure that your story is accurately portrayed through the writing.

If you could please share your thoughts with me by Saturday, April 9th, I would greatly appreciate it. Please feel free to contact me with any questions in the meantime. It is my sincerest hope to remain connected as we move forward. I cannot wait to read about the fantastic things you will continue accomplishing.

Kindest regards,
Courtney

Appendix B

Informed Consent for Minimal Risk Studies with Adults

Hello,

My name is Courtney Matthews, and I am asking you to participate in a UT Arlington research study titled "And Still I Rise: An Examination of Black Women's Joy While Aspiring the College Presidency." This research study is about understanding how Black joy influences Black women's aspirations to pursue university or college presidencies at historically white institutions (HIS). You can choose to participate in this research study if you are at least 18 years old and

1. Self-identify within the Afrodiaspora or Black
2. Self-identify as a woman
3. Working as a current higher education administrator or faculty member
4. Working at a two- or four-year HSI
5. Aspiring to the college presidency at historically white institutions
6. **Not** working at historically Black colleges or universities (HBCU)
7. **Not** a current sitting president

Reasons you might want to participate in this study include anonymously sharing your lived experiences as a Black woman administrator pursuing the presidency and engaging in creative outlets to discuss your perspectives or expression of Black joy. However, you might not want to participate if you cannot commit to scheduling two separate interviews and do not desire to complete additional tasks outside of interviews. Your decision about whether to participate is entirely up to you. If you decide not to be in the study, there won't be any punishment or penalty; whatever your choice, there will be no impact on any benefits or services you would normally receive. Even if you choose to begin the study, you can also change your mind and quit at any time without any consequences.

If you decide to participate in this research study, the list of activities that I will ask you to complete for the research are

1. Discuss your thoughts on Black joy
2. Collect artifacts and share their meanings in the second interview

It should take about 60 to 90 minutes each with a total of 120 to 180 minutes. Although you probably won't experience any personal benefits from participating, the study activities are not expected to pose any additional risks beyond those you would normally experience in your regular everyday life or during routine medical / psychological visits. However, some of the questions that I will ask may be about sensitive or uncomfortable topics.

You will not receive payment for participating in this research study. There are no alternative options to this research project other than non-participation.

The research team is committed to protecting your rights and privacy as a research subject. We may publish or present the results, but your name will not be used. While absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, the research team will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of your records as described here and to the extent permitted by law. If you have questions about the study, you can contact me at Courtney.Matthews@mavs.uta.edu. For questions about your rights or to report complaints, contact the UTA Research Office at 817-272-3723 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

You are indicating your voluntary agreement to participate by beginning this phone interview.

Appendix C

First Interview Protocol

I. Introductions

First, thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. Your time, experience, and perspective are very valuable, and your contribution is appreciated. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your response to pursuing the college presidency and the ways in which you express or conceptualize joy in that journey. This is an open conversation, so I encourage you to ask questions, clarify, and engage as you feel comfortable.

II. Study's Purpose and Application

III. Consent Forms/Approval

IV. Data Generation

V. Other Questions or Concerns

VI. Key Interview Questions

    A. Please tell me about yourself.

    B. What aspects of the college presidency interest or attract you?

    C. How would you paint yourself as an administrator?

    D. How do you define joy?

    E. How do you describe your practice of joy?

    F. Is there a question that I should have asked that I did not address?

    G. What would be something else that you'd like to add?

VII. Artifact Homework: At this time, I invite you to consider gathering symbols, traditions, photos, etc. as part of how you express joy for our next interview. There will not be a set

number or types of artifacts, but we will then discuss why those artifacts were chosen and how they relate to your journey.

VIII.   Thank You and Follow-Up Reminder

       A. Request for Additional Co-portraitists

Appendix D

Second Interview Protocol

I.   Welcome

First, thank you for volunteering to participate in this study and collecting your artifacts. Your time, experience, and perspective are extremely valuable, and your contribution is greatly appreciated. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your response to pursuing the college presidency and the ways in which you express or conceptualize joy in that journey. This is an open conversation, so I encourage you to ask questions, clarify, and engage as you feel comfortable.

II.   Consent Forms/Approval

III.   Questions or Concerns

IV.   Artifact Exploration

    A. How was your experience with collecting artifacts that represented joy?

    B. How do your artifacts relate to your pursuit of the college presidency?

    C. What stories or emotions came to mind as gathered artifacts?

    D. What aspects of this activity led to self-discovery, if at all?

    E. Is there a question that I should have asked that I did not address?

        1. What would be something else that you'd like to add?

V.   Information on Remainder of Process

VI.   Thank You

Appendix E

Co-Portraitists' Artifact Gallery

Artifact 6

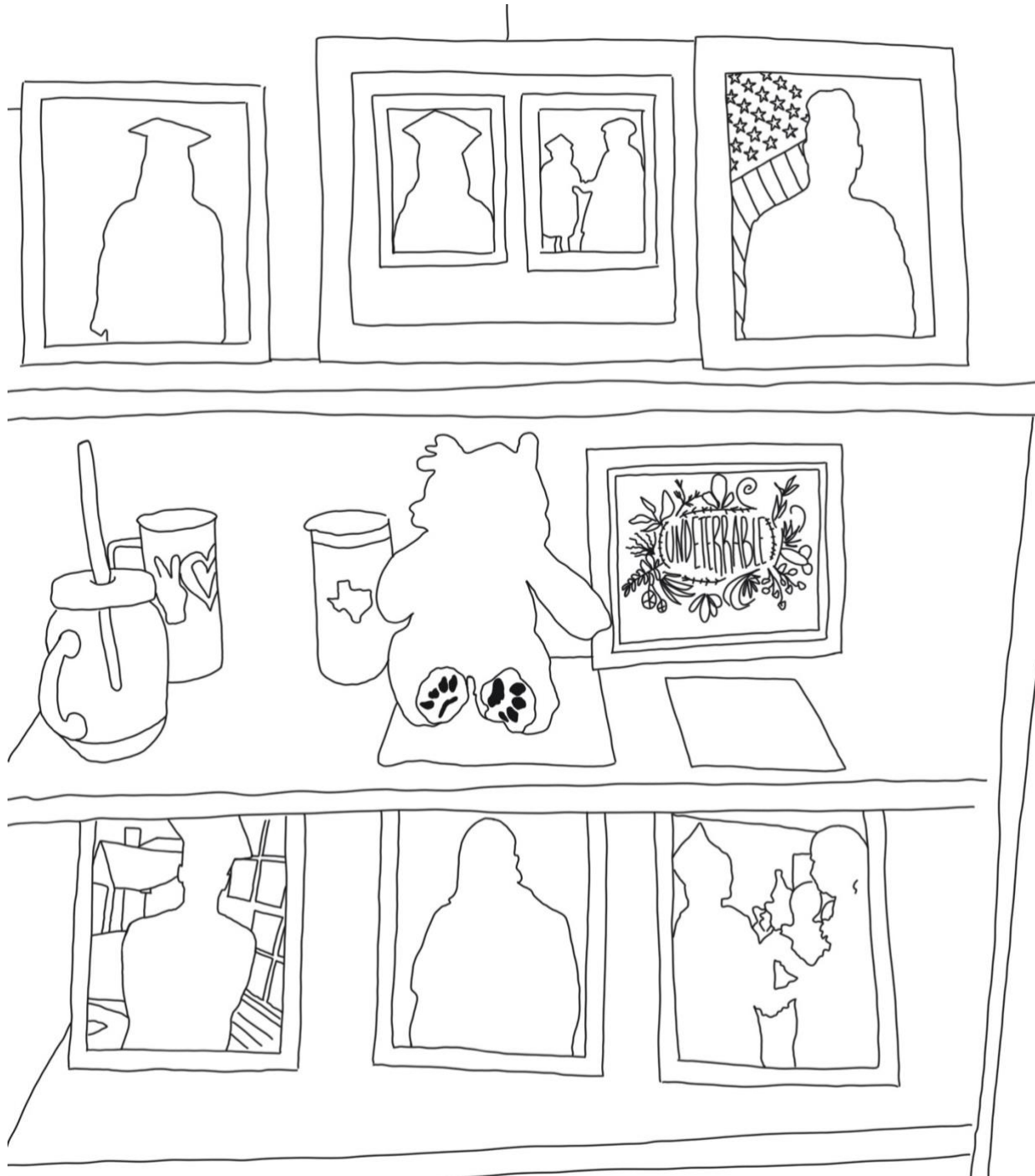*Tatiana's Self-Preservation Artifact*

Note. Tatiana presented this candle as an "escape" from work expectations when lit in her office.

Artifact 7

Tatiana's Humanity Artifact

Note. Tatiana's coffee machine (left) is a space for community in her office and serves as an indicator for her levels of energy (e.g., tired, excited).
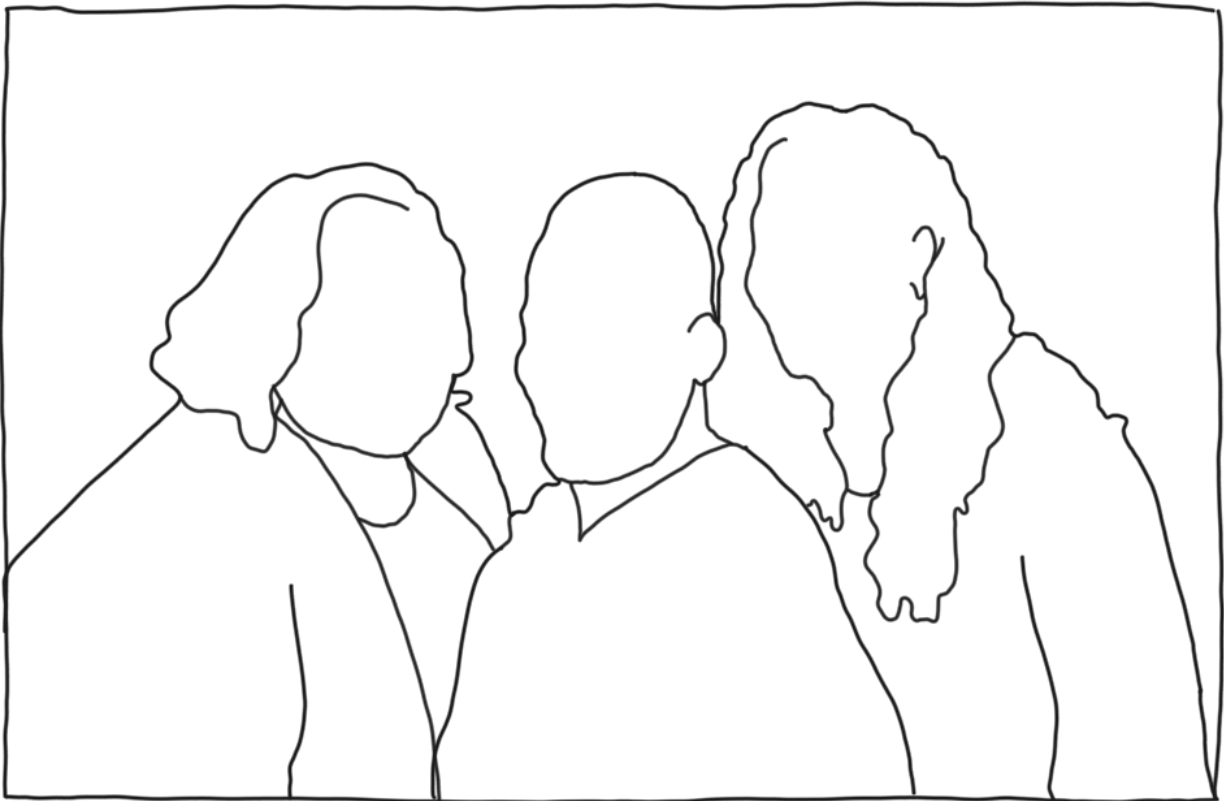
Artifact 8

Tatiana's Spirit Artifact

Note. Tatiana's artifact (center) represents a constant reminder of having faith in herself, her

leadership abilities, and her religious beliefs.

Artifact 9

Tatiana's Purpose Artifacts

Note. The framed photos of Tatiana's children (top and bottom shelves) placed in her office

serve as motivators toward affirming her purpose and building a legacy.
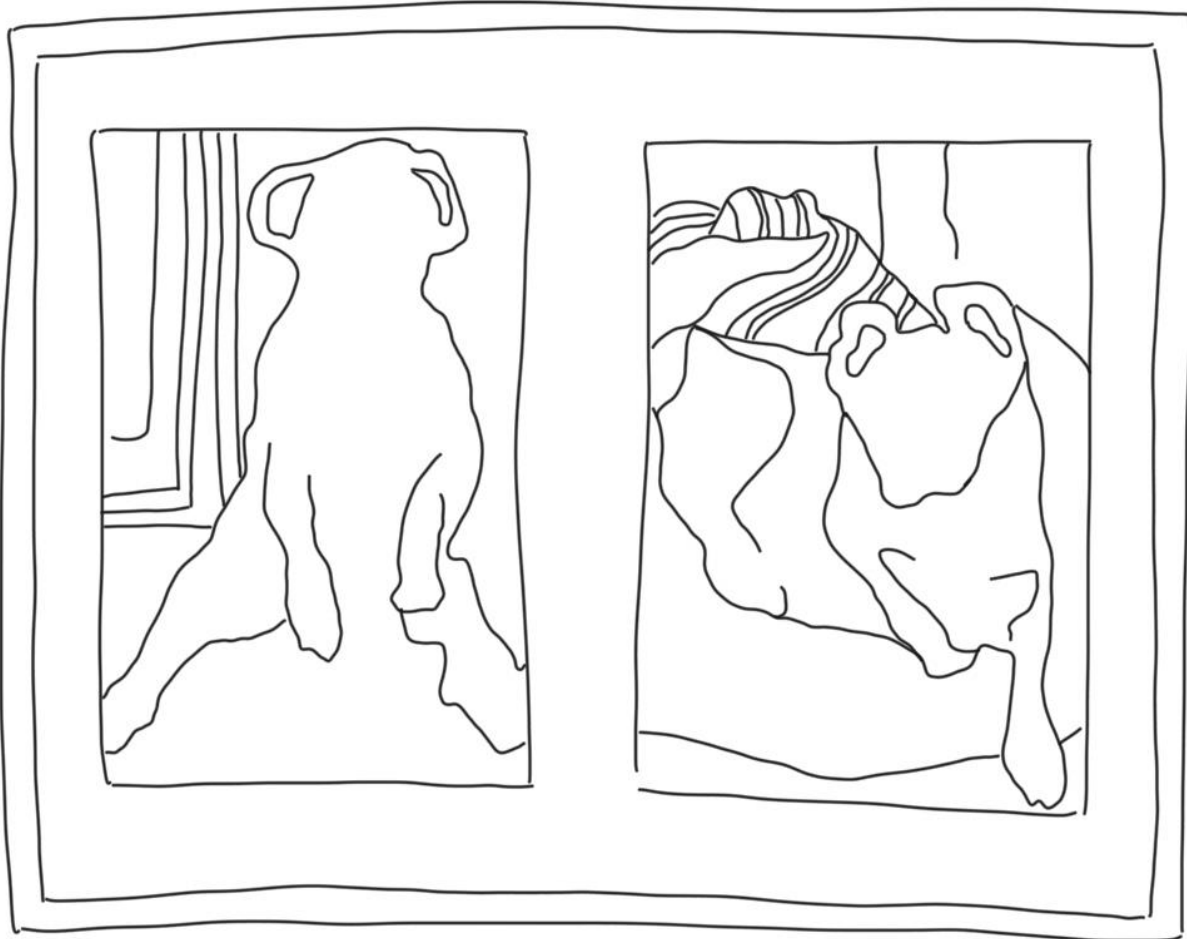
Artifact 10

Tatiana's Self-Preservation Artifact

Note. Tatiana shared how slipping on a pair of fuzzy socks created a space for rest and relaxation while in her office.

Artifact 11
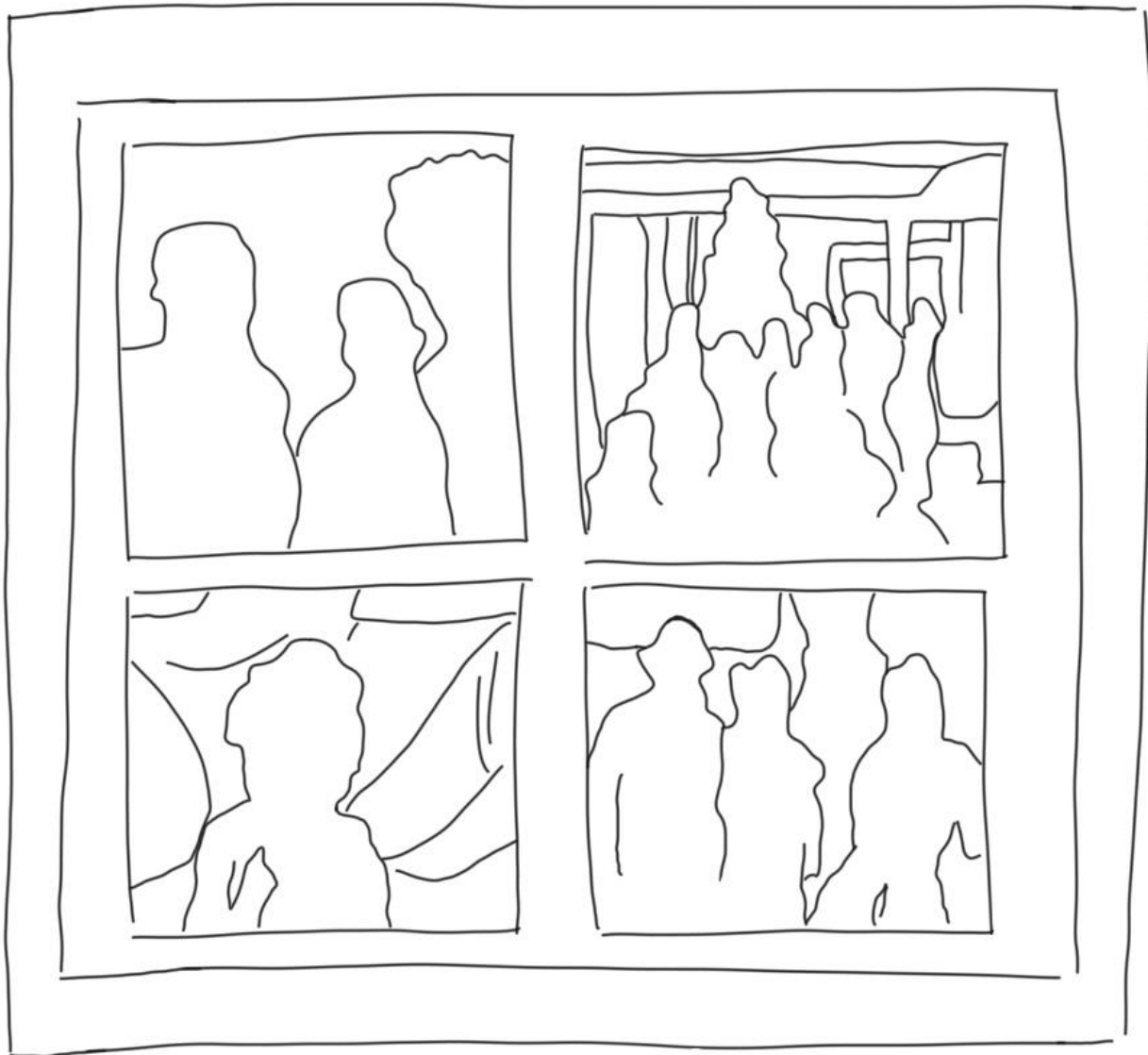
Candace's Family Artifact

Note. Candace offered this family photograph of her children (left and center) as an artifact to describe how they ground her impact as a mother and administrator.

Artifact 12

Faith's Purpose Artifact

Note. Faith presented this sign to depict her affirmations that center her purpose when expressing

joy and being intentional about her work as an administrator.

Artifact 13

*Faith's Family Artifacts*

Note. Faith showcased two framed photographs of her pets, who are like family, as they bring joy and lightheartedness into her space at home.

Artifact 14

Faith's Family Artifacts

Note. This four-photograph frame represented moments where Faith traveled with her family and spent quality time engaging in laughter.
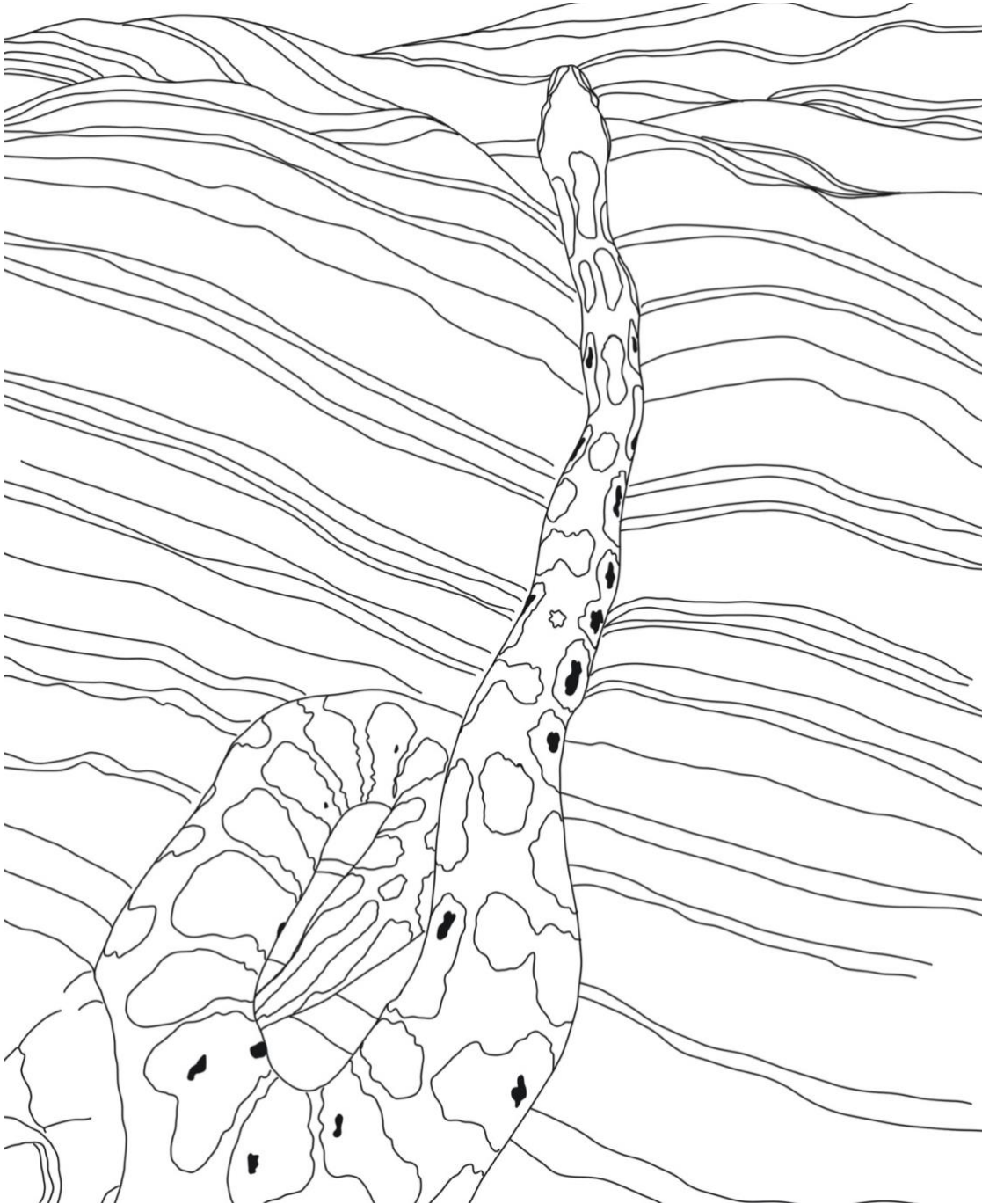
Artifact 15

Faith's Family Artifact
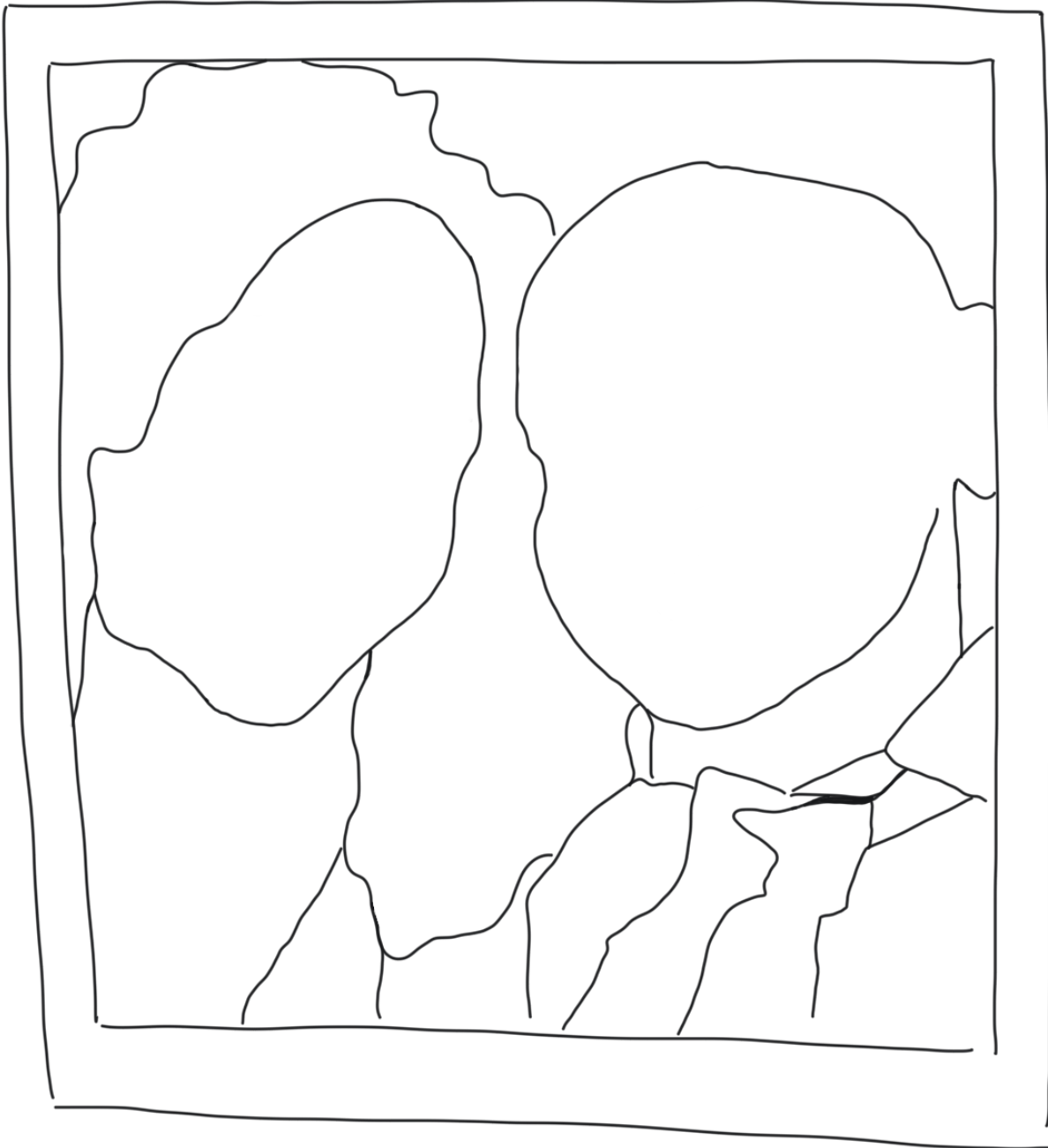
Note. This photograph of Faith and her partner was shown as an artifact that illustrated a more intimate level of support and space for her emotional expressions.

Artifact 16

Serenity's Mirror Artifact
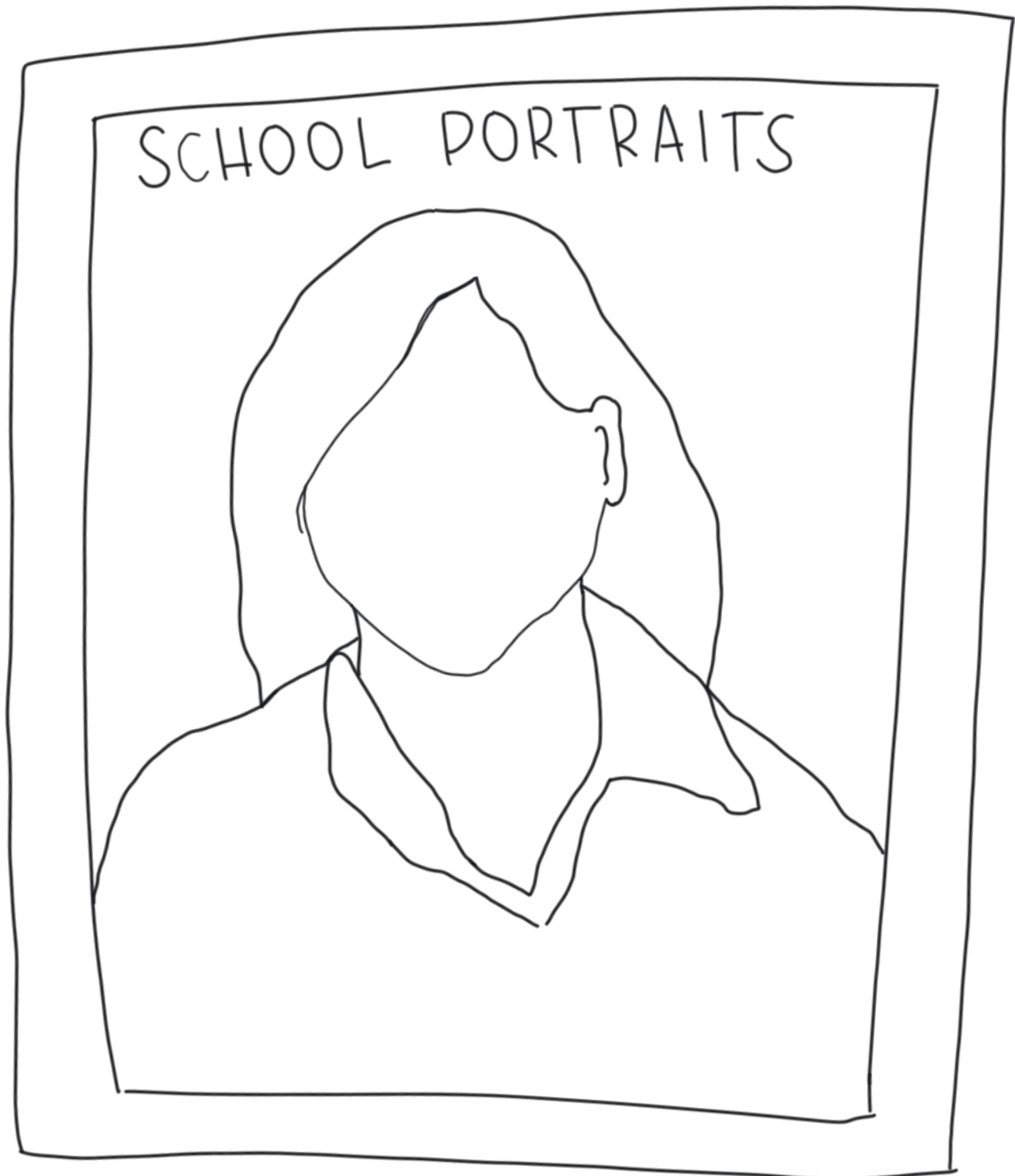
Note. Serenity displayed her daughter's school portraits as a mirror reflecting the characteristics

that she aims to portray as an administrator.

Artifact 17

Serenity's Self-Preservation Artifact

Note. Serenity's experience when visiting Jamaica was incredibly impactful. When looking at or using this bag, she is mentally transported to a warm place of tranquility and restoration.

Artifact 18

Chrysanthemum's Family Artifact

Note. Faith presented this sign to depict her affirmations that center her purpose when expressing

joy and being intentional about her work as an administrator.

Artifact 19

Chrysanthemum's Family Artifact
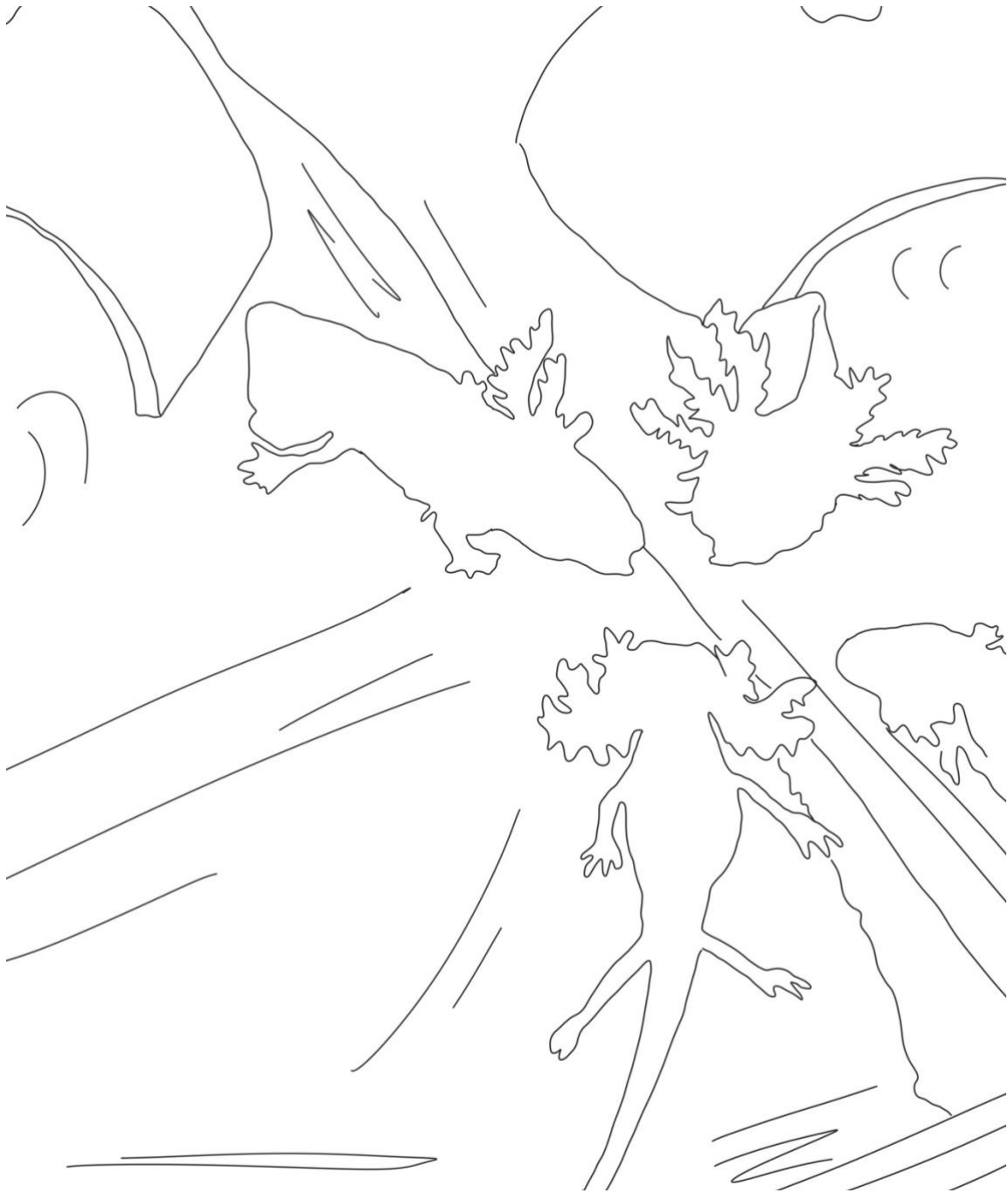
Note. Chrysanthemum's axolotls (i.e., aquatic pets) were shown as a family artifact.
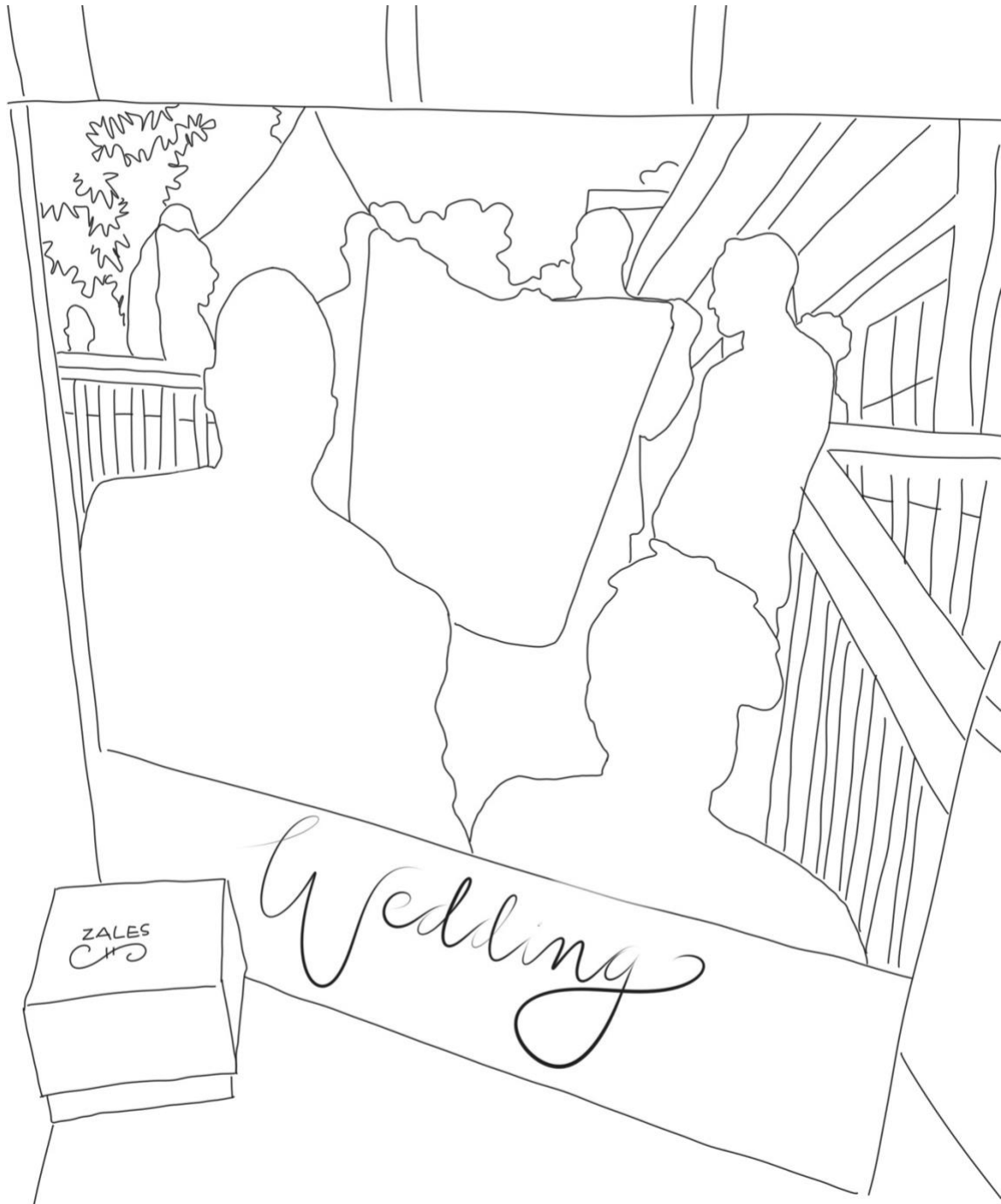
Artifact 20

Chrysanthemum's Family Artifact

Note. The death certificate of Chrysanthemum's pet was presented as an artifact as the family is still healing from the loss in 2020.
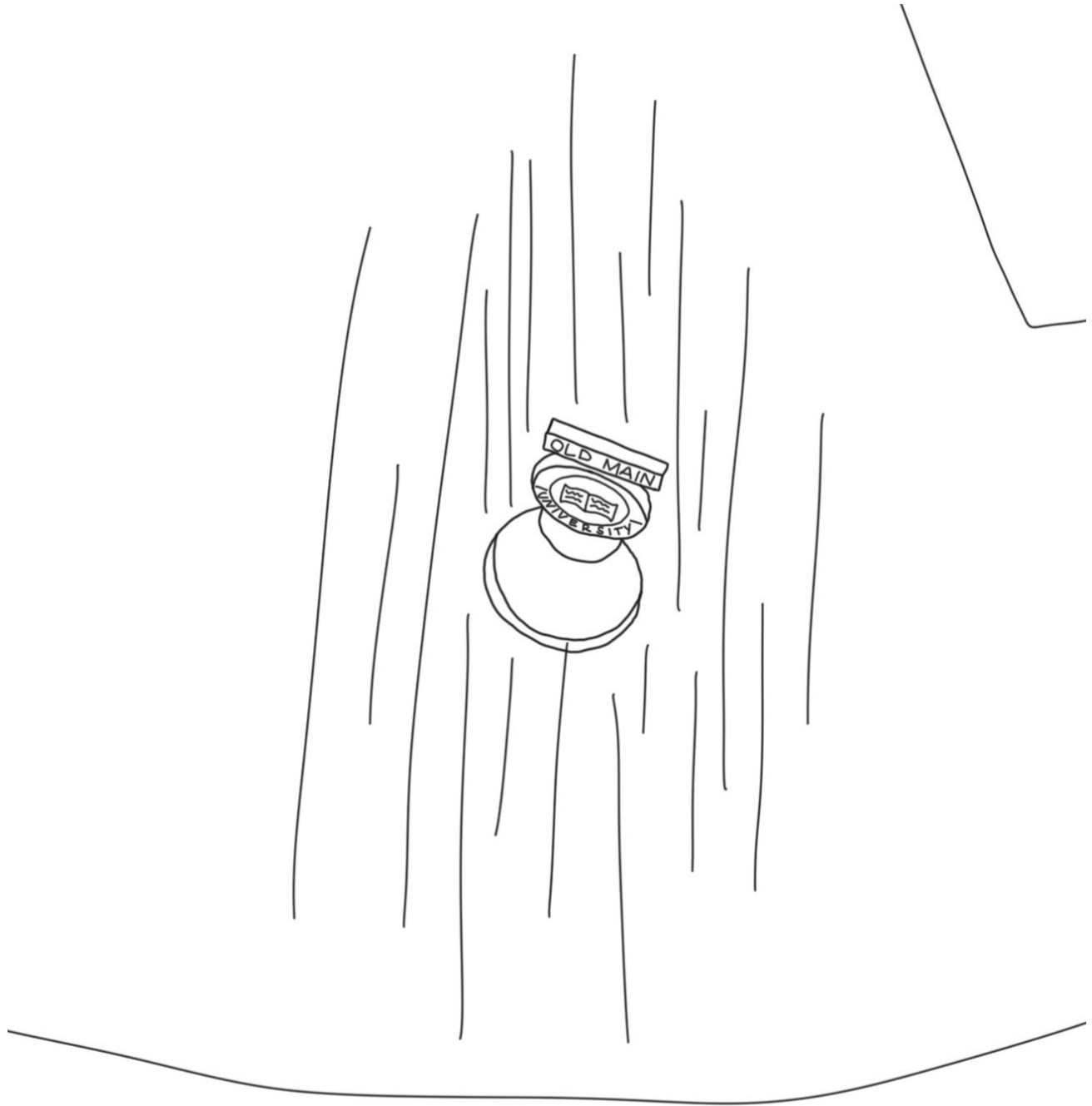
Artifact 21

Chrysanthemum's Family Artifact

Note. The death certificate of Chrysanthemum's childhood cat was also a significant artifact as she is still healing from the traumatic loss.

Artifact 22

Chrysanthemum's Family Artifact

Note. Chrysanthemum's cat purred its way into the interview as a family artifact that she

cherished and offered her much comfort as a pet.

Artifact 23

Chrysanthemum's Family Artifact

Note. One of Chrysanthemum's greatest joys was the chance to showcase her wedding book. She

knew that he would value her humanity and support her endlessly.

Artifact 24

Lisa's Purpose Artifact

Note. Lisa shared how this miniature version of a campus bell signified a joyous and influential

moment as a Black student, which resulted in her aspirations for higher education administration.

Artifact 25

Lisa's Purpose Artifact
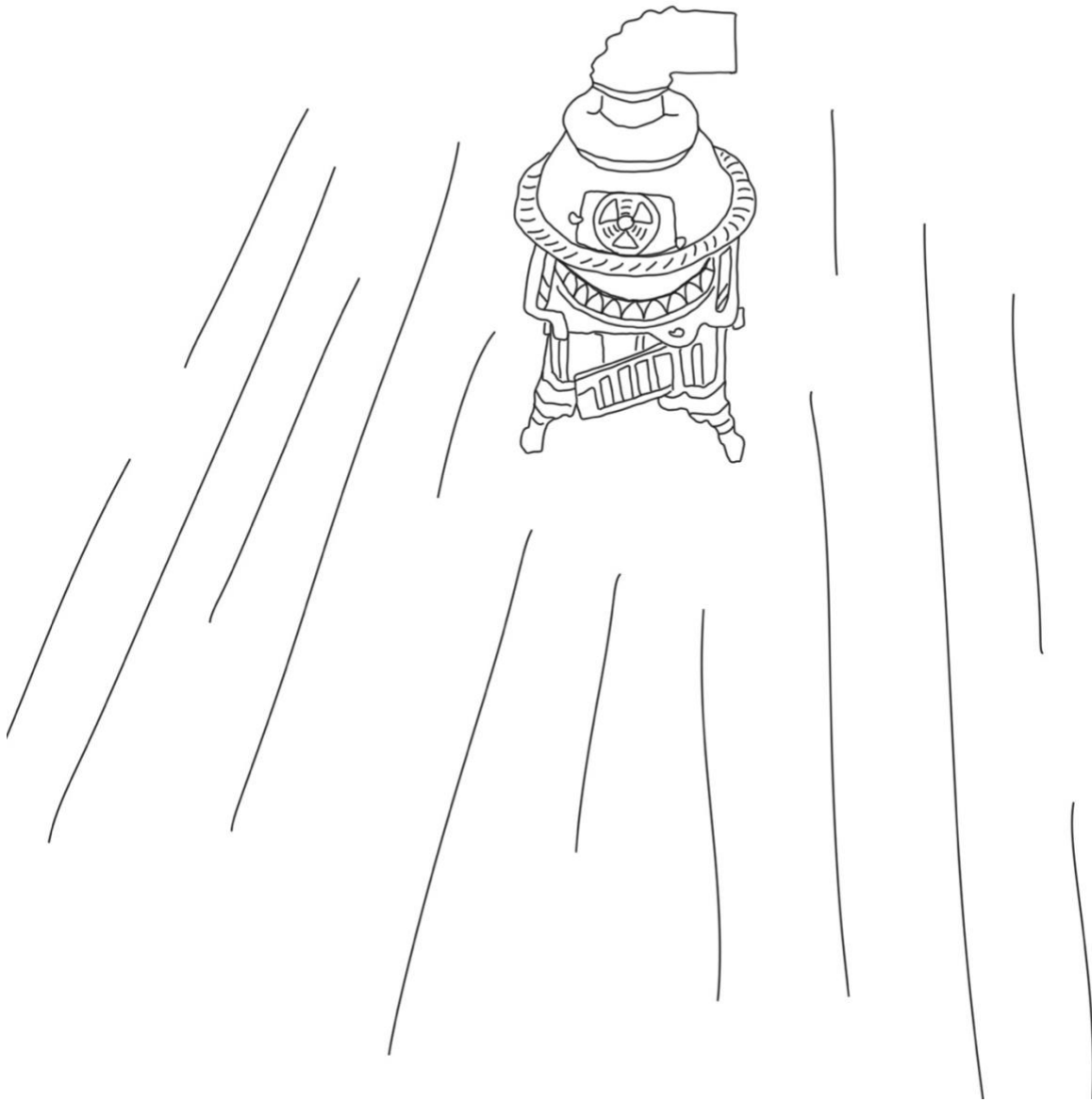
Note. This miniature stove is a pencil sharpener that reminds Lisa to keep the fires of her passion burning throughout her aspirational journey.

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