A Basic Interpretive Study of Professional Experiences of African-American Women Who Achieve Career Advancement in Institutions of Higher Education

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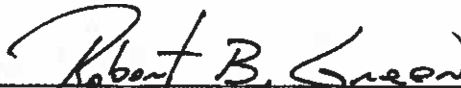

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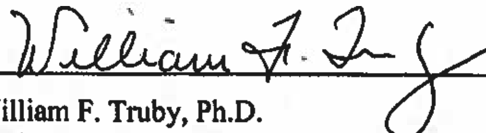

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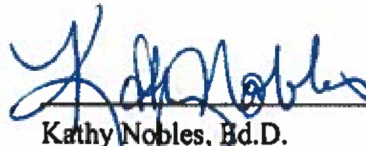

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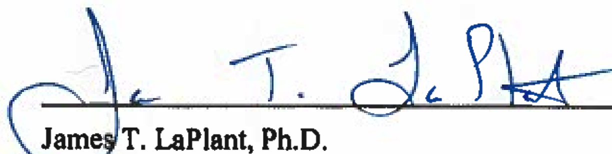

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ABSTRACT

In this basic interpretive study I investigated five female African-American directors working at predominantly white 4-year universities understanding of their career trajectories and professional roles, functions and responsibilities as department leaders. I examined the professional experiences and strategies used by African-American women who achieve director positions in predominantly white 4-year state universities in regards to their career advancements. This study contributes to the sparse academic literature on female African-American directors with a focus on how their experiences attributed to the manner in which they displayed leadership within their universities. On the basis of the literature review, I outlined some of the main trends, which are characteristic of female African-American director's career trajectories.

The conceptualization of ideas used to structure the data emerged organically and concluded with four themes: 1) Domestication of the Professional Space; 2) Influence of Family and Racial Beliefs on African-American Leadership 3) Marginalization; and 4). Navigating the Work environment. The findings suggest female African-American directors contribute important leadership attributes, which may benefit all department directors and may, in turn, assist new African-American students' transition into the PWIs' environments. Through the study I demonstrated how African-American female directors' historical views on race and gender roles provide a basis for how they view their career trajectories. Data from the study show the strategies they used to address social challenges they experienced in their day-to-day practices as directors. On the basis of the study I described potential research, which can form the foundation of further studies.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother Mary Lee Liferidge. Mommy, I did it!

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Personal Interest

In 1989 I entered the world of higher education as a freshman accounting and information systems student in a small, private, Christian university in Charleston, South Carolina. Looking back, I cannot remember ever having an African-American female faculty instructor. During those years, my desire was to be an accountant and I found it very difficult to find African-American female mentors. There were African-American women who served as clerks and secretaries in the financial aid office but none in director positions. Throughout campus, the only roles I saw African-American women play were as assistants, cooks, and dorm mothers.

After I graduated from college, I spent a few years in corporate America until I landed my first "big" position in higher education as a technical writer. This position was indirectly related to my degree, in that, I served as a technical writer and trainer for the information technology software used in my department for accounting purposes. Once again, it was very difficult to find African-American mentors in that predominantly white male dominated field. During this time, I began to identify with white women who shared in my frustration of being in a male dominated field. One woman in particular was the help desk supervisor. We shared many of the same views concerning women in higher education. We both felt the pains of being overlooked but what was different was

it seemed as though she was given opportunities to lead projects that helped to advance her career. I also noticed that her motivation to be promoted dominated her work life and she was eventually promoted. I served as technical writer for several more years before moving away and getting another job in higher education as an administrative coordinator. My new professional role in my department encompassed many duties.

In the beginning, I served as a database administrator. I collected demographic data of students in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences program. I also served as the standardized testing coordinator and the clinical coordinator. During the seven years as an administrative coordinator, I worked for a female Dean and female Associate Dean. One was African American and the other white. During this time, both served as mentors to me in different ways. They both helped me to develop professionally. The white dean stressed the value of being on time and always looking professional while striving for perfection, but the African-American dean always expressed the importance of furthering my education. I remember the conversation she and I had about my future endeavors and she asked me, “Where do you see yourself in ten years?” I did not have an answer. I never considered my career goals as long term plans. When I told her I didn’t know, she asked me, “Why don’t you go back to school? You know the university allows you to go for free.” I was stunned. I had not heard about free tuition in my three years working there.

Since then, I have earned a Master’s degree in Instructional Technology and working to complete my doctorate in Education next year. During this time of transition, I have sought mentoring from other African-American women; however, women who

have successfully overcome some of the challenges of gender and race in institutions of higher learning tend to be overloaded with maintaining their own scholarships, mentoring students, and additional institutional responsibilities. While there are several white women in my department who are in a position to mentor, they are not always able to address some of the challenges that arise from being a double minority. It is my hope that this study will not only address my transitional needs but also identify strategies that can be the foundation for addressing policy issues that may benefit other African-American women who seek leadership roles. Furthermore, the results of this study may help those currently seeking director positions at institutions of higher learning gain a better understanding of the successful strategies of African-American females that have advanced their careers to directorships.

Background

In 2013 The National Center for Educational Statistics reported a significant increase in African-American female graduates from 4-year public universities (Institution of Education Sciences, 2013). The increase in qualified African-American women has seemingly changed the job market for predominantly white 4-year universities seeking a level of diversity in directorships on their campuses. While the number of African-American female college degree holders have increased steadily, the number of African-American women in director positions in predominantly white colleges and universities stagnant for the past ten years (Institution of Education Sciences, 2013). This stagnation may be a result of African-American women's lack of interest in pursuing career advancement in this area or they may be seeking opportunities outside of predominantly white 4-year colleges and universities. For those who do desire

career advancement in predominantly white 4-year colleges and universities, there is a need to examine the experiences and common professional practices of African-American women who have achieved career advancement in predominantly white 4-year colleges and universities.

Traditionally, gender related issues were the most prevalent barriers of women desiring access to employment as well as educational opportunities in higher education (Holmes, 2003; Parker K. , 1986). Job opportunities for people of color in higher education can be linked to the history of segregation in the United States (Lindey, 1999; Brown-Glaude, 2009), which has created race and gender segregation in higher education's employment picture (Davison & Burke, 2000; Lewis, 1990; Loder, 2005). For example, African Americans and Latinos are more likely to be clerical workers and white Americans are more likely to be faculty or administrative executives (Lee, 1997). The high level positions that African-American female directors hold tend to be well respected even though they have limited control over budgetary or hiring decisions as well as limited authority (Smith, 2008). Despite the history of lack of opportunities for women, African-American women in particular, there have been African-American women who have managed to craft opportunities in college administration. For example, Mary McLeod Bethune founded a training institute for African-American girls that would later become Bethune-Cookman University and Lucy Diggs Slowe who became the first African-American female administrator in higher education serving as the Dean of Women for Howard University in 1922 (Brown II & Dancy II, 1966). Stories of African-American women who achieve career advancement do exist; thus, there is a need to understand the professional experiences of female African-Americans who advance to

directorships to understand how they perform their roles and responsibilities, their challenges and strategies they use to advance their careers.

Statement of the Problem

Women have made enormous strides in closing the gender gap in director positions in universities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in Fall 2013, women represented 63.9% of all directors whereas men represented 36.1%. Of the male directors, statistics reflect an underrepresentation of African American men; white men represented 27.1% and African-American males represented 3%. Furthermore, white females represented 45.6% and African-American females represented 7.6%. When examining Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), the National Center for Education Statistics, reported 40.9% African American female directors and 3.4% white female directors. Despite the progress made by female directors, a huge racial gap exists between white and African-American female directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities. The National Center for Education Statistics, in Fall 2013 reported that white female directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities represented 49.8% and African-American female directors represented 6.6%.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the professional experiences of African-American women and identify their strategies used to achieve director positions in predominantly white 4-year state universities in regards to their career advancements.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What were the experiences of successful African-American female directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities located in the Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States in regards to their career advancements?

RQ2: What did female African-American directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities believe are strategies for increasing the number of directors at predominantly white institutions in the Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States?

Significance

African-American women, whether intentionally or unintentionally, have not fully participated in career advancement opportunities in predominantly white 4-year colleges and universities. This has led to an under representation of African-American directors in leadership positions at predominantly white 4-year state universities. This study examined the experiences of and identified strategies used by African-American women who achieve the roles of directors in predominantly white 4-year state universities. This study may prove significant to colleges and universities seeking to initiate the examination of campus racial climate. Moreover this study may help establish employee development programs within colleges and universities that will utilize the strategies and experiences captured by the stories of the participants of this study. Personnel directors may also benefit from the study by using its review of institutional policies and hiring data to provide search committees with guidelines for hiring practices. Mentors and other African-American women aspiring career advancement may also use the stories provided

by the participants; the stories may provide them with a roadmap for navigating towards successful goal achievement.

Assumptions and Limitations

The study was limited to predominantly white institutions of higher education in the Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States (Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana). Participants consisted of five female African-American directors who have served as directors at accredited institutions of higher learning within the past 20 years. The women represented different age ranges and were employed at different universities throughout the Atlantic and Southern region of the United States. These are women who may have begun their careers as secretaries and low-level administrative support and, consequently, achieved academic success along the way by earning advanced degrees in areas of Education, Higher Education or Leadership. The data collected provided professional experiences and strategies employed to advance into directorships in higher education. Limitations occurred due to the participants' fear of backlash from telling their stories. By assuring their anonymity, I was able to ease any anxieties they may have had. As with the nature of interpretive qualitative research methods, it is difficult to reconstruct the past in one's own words without coloring the facts of incidents and circumstances. It was therefore necessary to withhold the temptation to give meaning to events that they did not have at the time they occurred (Trahar, 2009). To address the possible argument of a small sample size, Maxwell (2013) states that phenomenological studies of this nature are not meant to be generalizable to a larger population and therefore do not need as many participants.

Theoretical Framework

To examine the professional experiences of African-American women and identify their strategies used to achieve director positions in predominantly white 4-year state universities in regards to their career advancements, I examined their stories through the theoretical lenses of the Critical Race Theory, the Black Feminist Theory, and Campus Racial Climate Theory. It was also important to give a historic perspective surrounding culture and identity in today's society to gain an understanding of how the theories played a part in the experiences of these women.

According to Delgado et al., Critical Race Theory (CRT) rests on five primary tenets. First, racism is an ordinary occurrence; it is not something that is an extraordinary circumstance; furthermore, it is the normal way people of color experience their lives in this country. Second, racism serves an important purpose for the dominant group, which makes racism difficult to address because it is not acknowledged as an issue. Third, race is a "social construction" meaning it does not correspond to any biological or genetic reality but merely represents categories that society invents, retires or controls to its convenience. Fourth, CRT is that of intersectionality which purports people do not have a single identity. A white feminist can be Jewish or middle class; an African-American activist can be male or female, gay or straight. For the purposes of the study, intersectionality referred to women who are African-American. The final element is the notion of a unique voice of people of color. The voice of color thesis affirms that because of their experiences with oppression, people of color who are writers and storytellers may be able to communicate with their white colleagues issues to which they are not able to relate (Lorde & Clark, 2007; Solorzano, 2010; Delgado, Stefanic, &

Liendo, 2012). This notion of using storytelling to relay the experiences of African-American women was the foundation of this study. The Black Feminist Theory builds upon the foundation of CRT.

Black Feminist Theory (BFT) is a critical social theory developed by educational philosopher Collins (2009). There have been efforts to provide an all-encompassing, precise definition of the title of the theory, yet the ambiguity within the theory allows for the basic concepts to be continuously expanded upon. At its core, it is a theory of social change based on the everyday experiences of women of color and other female minority demographics (Collins, 2000). According to Collins, BFT has three key themes:

First, experiences Black women have encountered in their lives produce the framework for how African-American women relate, navigate and advance personally and professionally. Second, although the stories and experiences of all women are unique, there are intersections of experiences between and among Black women. Third, although commonalities do exist among Black women, the diversity of class, religion, age, and sexual orientation of Black women as a group are multiple contexts from which their experiences can be revealed and understood (Collins, 2009). Through the interpretive lens of BFT, the development of understanding how African-American women relate, navigate and advance in their careers was gained. BFT not only allows women of color to tell their own stories, but it asserts the need for Black women to define their own sense of self identities based upon their experiences. BFT illuminates how a common thread ties African-American women together with the binding ties concerning the challenges of sexism, racism, and classism.

Campus Racial Climate Theory (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998) was the interpretive lens used to examine the aspects of the institution environment impacting the common practices of African-American women who successfully advance to director positions in predominantly white 4-year state universities. Campus Racial Climate was first introduced as a model for describing campus climate for racial/ethnic diversity (Fries-Britt S. L., Rowan-Kenyon, Perna, Milem, & Howard, 2011). It is represented across four specific dimensions:

> …an institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial/ethnic groups, its structural diversity in terms of numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups, the psychological climate of perceptions and attitudes between and among groups, and the behavioral climate, as characterized by intergroup relations on campus. (Victorinio, Nylund-Gibson, & Conley, 2013, p. 47).

Initially, Campus Racial Climate was a model that related to underrepresented racial/ethnic minority students, but the model has since been used to guide research to examine the experiences of faculty and other academic professionals (Victorinio et al., 2013, Fries-Britt et al., 2011, Hurtado et al., 1998 and Gmelch, et al., 1986).

Methodology

This study sought to understand the professional experiences of African-American women directors who advance their careers in predominantly white 4-year colleges and universities. To gain understanding of how these women advanced, I utilized an interpretive qualitative research approach. Interpretive qualitative research is

research focused on understanding the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world they live in (Merriam, 2002). I gathered the stories of five female African-American directors who have been, in the past 20 years, promoted from administrative coordinator or secretary positions to directorships within predominantly white four colleges and universities. Additionally, I utilized open-ended questions in a two series interview process to allow for their stories to emerge in their own words (Seidman, 2006). Data analysis utilized categories and connected strategies that helped to identify emergent themes in the data (Maxwell, 2013).

Definition of Terms

African-American: A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (United States Census Bureau, 2013).

Black Feminist Thought: A Theory conceptualized by Patricia Hill Collins, which promises to offer an understanding of the intersecting identities of African-American women by explaining the ways their needs can be addressed effectively (Collins, 2000).

Critical Race Theory: A collective movement composed of legal and education scholars that sought to challenge dominant ideologies by transforming the discourse regarding race, racism, and power in society (Delgado, Stefanic, & Liendo, 2012).

Challenges: A demanding task that calls for special effort or dedication (Henderson, Hunter, Hildreth, 2010).

Culture: An expression of a uniformed ethnic or racial community through symbols such as food, music, religion, art and other outward forms (Alfred, 2001).

Director: For the purposes of this study, a director is a person who heads their own department within a predominantly white 4-year state college and university. This role manages the day-to-day operations of the department through carrying out policy and procedures set by the university.

Intersectionality: The examination of race, sex, class national origin and sexual orientation, and how their various combinations play out in different settings (Delgado, Stefanic, & Liendo, 2012).

Leadership: The time when a person holds the position of leader (Moses, 1993; Hiraldo, 2010).

Marginalization: Feeling invisible, having no decision-making power, having limited access to resources, and feeling undervalued and undercompensated (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010).

Mentor: Someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person Alfred, 2001; Bullock-Yowell, Andrews, & Buzzetta, 2011; Edmondson, 2012).

Predominately White Institution: Schools of higher learning in which whites account for at least 50% enrollment (Jones, 2014, Brown II & Dancy II, 1966).

Phenomenology: The study of human consciousness and self-awareness as a preface to or a part of philosophy (Creswell, 2007).

Race: A socially constructed system used to identify humans through specific observable traits, like skin color, eye color, height (Delgado, Stefanic, & Liendo, 2012).

Underrepresented: To provide with insufficient representation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

Summary

African-American female directors in predominantly white 4-year universities remain underrepresented despite current recruitment efforts (Owen, 2004). There was, therefore, a need to examine the professional experiences of African-American women who do achieve their career goals to give hope to those who serve as administrative coordinators, administrative support, and assistant directors at predominantly white institutions of higher education that higher-ranking positions of directorships are attainable. By utilizing the theories of Critical Race, Black Feminist Thought and Campus Racial Climate, these women's stories were used to identify their unique leadership qualities that may help fellow African-American female administrators on similar career trajectories and inform policy makers of the special leadership qualities these women possess that may be transferable to other directors in their universities.

Chapter II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Women have made great strides in closing the gender gap in director positions in universities across the country. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in Fall 2013, women represented 63.9% of all directors whereas men represented 36.1%. Of the male directors, statistics reflect an underrepresentation of African American men; white men represented 27.1% and African-American males represented 3%. Furthermore, white females represented 45.6% and African-American females represented 7.6%. When examining Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), the National Center for Education Statistics, reported 40.9% African American female directors and 3.4% white female directors. Despite the progress made by female directors, a huge racial gap exists between white and African-American female directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities. The National Center for Education Statistics, in Fall 2013 reported that white female directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities represented 49.8% and African-American female directors represented 6.6%.

There is a need, therefore, to examine the professional experiences of African-American women and identify their strategies used to achieve director positions in predominantly white 4-year state universities in regards to their career advancements.

In depth, this chapter reviewed related literature to allow readers to understand the professional experiences of African-American women and identify the strategies they used to achieve career advancement to director positions. The literature research for this study began in Fall 2011. The academic databases used in this literature search included: Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, and ProQuest. Valdosta State University's library was used to access these databases. During my coursework in the Education Leadership program at Valdosta State University, I was required to review 50 peer reviewed journal articles in four of my courses. Because the focus changed during my research, I did not utilize all of the articles reviewed; however, of over 200 articles reviewed and 65% of them were useful and relative. Publication dates of the articles range from 3-7 years old. In addition to the review of articles, I utilized a number of books and textbooks. Books such as Hill-Collins (2009) *Black Feminist Thought* and Maxwell (2013) *Qualitative Research Design* helped to build the foundation of the literature review.

During the actual search for literature, I utilized various phrases and keywords such as "African-American Women in Higher Education," "African-American Women," "Campus Climate" and "Career Success in Higher Education." These searches yielded many articles relating to African-American women and many of the struggles these women experienced in their positions. As my search narrowed to successful stories of African-American women in higher education, the number of results was significantly lower; thus, displaying a need for this study.

Conceptual Framework

Experiential Knowledge

It was my current journey from junior level administration to directorship that tied me to this study. I am an African-American woman working in higher education as an administrative coordinator for the past ten years. During this time I received professional mentoring in my endeavors from fellow women but these mentors were very busy in their own career advancement efforts and could not fully address all of my mentoring needs such as: persistence; strategies they have used to successfully overcome their perceived struggles as minorities in higher education.

Prior to working in higher education, I worked in the field of information technology, a male dominated field (DePillis, 2013). I worked for Robert Bosch, Incorporated as a technician for several years. I always considered myself an exceptional technician but my years there were spent serving in roles that assisted “the guys” with scheduling appointments, and updating software for computers they would take to our clients for installation. During this time, I offered my services as a software trainer to keep myself active and current in my field and I also did a great deal of technical writing. I always believed I was a valued team member and I believed I had earned the respect of my colleagues and my supervisor, who was a Latino male. I was nearing the end of my contract with the company when a position for a full-time manager became available. The position description was basically what I had been doing for the past several years with managing our scheduling software, providing software training, writing technical documentation and managing the schedules of the technicians. I was a perfect fit, or so I thought. After the interview process, I went to my supervisor to ask for feedback as to

why I did not get the job. I wanted him to tell me what I could do to improve my chances of sitting in his chair someday. He offered insightful advice and I attempted to apply the advice he gave me, but as I began to put it into action, my persona changed from a team player to a "hard nose." In other words, my attempt to show leadership among my co-workers proved to be a hindrance to my professional advancement to Information Technology management. Years later, I found myself in a similar position as the assistant to another IT manager. This time the manger was a white woman. My experience with her was slightly different in that she was completely immersed in her career goals and had very little time to mentor me. I often felt as though I was merely blowing around in the wind and I had no real way of realizing my career goals. Coupled with my lack of direction, the duties of being a wife and mother took precedence over any ideas I may have had of making a career for myself. It was not until years later after my divorce and facing the prospect of raising two children on my own, that I was literally forced to think about what I wanted my career to look like. I had a strong desire to be able to take care of my family without assistance from the government or dependence on my ex-husband. After all, I had seen so many women do just fine being breadwinners and making their households work with one income. I just needed to "put my hand to the plow" and work towards making a comfortable life for my children and for myself.

Once I was offered the position at my current university, taking care of my family only motivated me. So I accepted a job that took me out of the day-to-day work of Information Technology. It was then my life took a drastic turn towards success when one of my supervisors encouraged me to go back to school. She took on the role of mentor and gave me the tough talks I needed to get my career goals in order and map out

a plan to achieve them. I am still working my plan but I often wonder if my career goals would have come together a lot sooner had I the guidance that she provided me. My experience is similar to many African-American women like me who have glimpses of what they want their lives to look like but are unable to find the guidance they need to successfully make the transition from merely having a job to having and managing a career. There is current literature that supports the idea of minority women having different mentoring needs (Alfred, 2001; Bullock-Yowell, Andrews, & Buzzetta, 2011; Edmondson, 2012). By reviewing the literature of existing theories and knowledge, I will further build on this framework.

Existing Theory and Knowledge

According to Maxwell (2013), literature reviews can be written in a thematic or historical summation. This literature review was thematic in nature. To begin, I examined the history of African-American women in higher education to examine their employment history, their experiences of inequality, and their history of under compensation. Next, the review of literature examines African-American women directors' experiences as they relate to their culture and identity. Additionally, research identifying the strategies and professional practices of African-American women were examined to understand how they maintain their roles and responsibilities working for PWIs. Finally, the literature review examined the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Thought, and Campus Racial Climate, respectively. The goal was to provide a strong foundation for why the study of the professional experiences and strategies of African-American female directors who achieve career advancement in predominantly white 4-year colleges and universities was necessary.

A Historical View of African-American Women in Higher Education. In examining African-American's access to higher education post World War II, Supreme Court decisions such as Sweatt v. Painter (1950) began to shape how African-American women would begin to enter higher education (Wallenstein, 2015). This Supreme Court case successfully challenged the "separate but equal" doctrine of racial segregation in higher education established by Plessy v. Ferguson (1896). The Supreme Court ruled in Sweatt v. Painter that separate schools were not equal because of the differences in facilities and intangible influences. The court held that in graduate education, intangibles must be considered. The Sweatt v. Painter decision mandated access to graduate and professional programs for African Americans (Wallenstein, 2015). Subsequently, Brown v. Board of Education dismantled "separate but equal" system of education which, in turn, positively effected African American's participation in higher education (Brown II & Dancy II, 1966; Crase, 1994; Cobb-Roberts & Agosto, 2011; Wallenstein, 2015).

Post *Brown v, Board of Education*, African-American women were primarily educated and were employed at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Events such as the interpretation of *Brown v. Board of Education* and the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act 1964, which made it illegal to discriminate in public and private institutions in higher education, allowed African-American women opportunities to move from HBCUs to predominantly white institutions of higher education as students. This did not, however, address the hiring of faculty and administration at this institutions. Various affirmative action executive orders beginning with Order 10925 issued in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy, and detailed further by Executive Order 11246 in 1967 by President Lyndon B. Johnson, expanded legal pressure for integration

of higher education. These orders required public and private institutions that received government funds to take "affirmative action" in the hiring and promotion of minorities and women in their work force (Mosley, 1980; Wilson, 1989; Valentin, 1997; Aguirre & Martinez, 2003, Wallenstein, 2015). Additionally, three statutes enacted in the 1970s supported African-American women’s access to predominately white institutions. The passage of Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 added sex as a category of protected classes of people and prohibited the exclusion of any American citizen from participation in an educational program or the denial of benefits based upon sex. This amendment extended protection against sex discrimination to administrators, professionals and executives in higher education (Valentin, 1997; Sandler, 2000; Glazer-Raymo, 2001; Wallenstein, 2015).

As more African-American women have found their way into employment by PWIs of higher education, they have experienced what researchers described as an insider/outsider phenomenon (Aronson & Swanson, 1991; Collins, 1986; Lorde & Clarke, 2007; Brown-Glaude, 2009; Hernandez, Wambura Ngunjiri, & Chang, 2014). The phenomenon described an experience of being physically allowed to enter a space but not being recognized as one who embodies the merits, authority, financial compensation, and scope of the space. Audre Lord (2007) explained the phenomenon as a time in American society wherein members of the opressed, objectified groups, were expected to bridge the gap between themselves and their opressors. In studying the experiences of African-American women working in predominantly white 4-year state universities, although African-American women were allowed access to the institutions in which they were employed, they were not fully accepted in the institutional

environment. This resulted in feelings of isolation and marginalization due to racial and gender bias and lack of support in career development (Collins, 2000; Loder, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Myers, 2007; Zamani, 2003; Hernandez, Wambura Ngunjiri, & Chang, 2014; Holmes, 2003). Patricia Collins (2000) stated:

> Black women with academic credentials who seek to exert the authority that our status grants us to propose new knowledge claims about African-American women face pressures to use our authority to help legitimize a system that devalues and excludes the majority of Black women. When an outsider group – in this case African-American women – recognizes that the insider group – namely, elite White men – requires special privileges from the larger society, those in power must find ways of keeping the outsiders out and at the same time having them acknowledge the legitimacy of this procedure. Accepting a few safe outsiders addresses this [legitimacy] problem. (p. 272)

In 2011, Croom examined the difficulty of advancement in academia. Findings from three semi-structured interviews with seven participants indicated that racism and sexism played a major role in their professional experiences. Further, racial and gender oppression existed to limit the power and influence of African-American females in academia.

African-American women also experienced inequality in the areas of compensation and disparate hiring in terms of the types of administrative positions they held (Allen, et al., 2000; Lloyd-Jones, 2009). Kim Barrett-Johnson (2009) conducted a

study focused on the experience of an African-American woman selected to the position of chancellor. Results of her qualitative phenomenological study revealed four key themes, including the need for institutional sensitivity and representation in key positions; ensuring that search committees were actively looking for diverse applicants; ensuring candidates understood the institutional environment and were prepared for the search and selection process; and ensure candidates know how to interview (Barnett-Johnson, 2009).

African-American Female Directors' Experiences. Traditionally, African-American women face opposition at three levels—gender, race, and socio-economic status (Crawford & Smith, 2005). As members of society at large, African-American women are on the low end of the socio-economic order, meaning they are often overlooked in the job market and are, therefore, at a great disadvantage (Crawford and Smith, 2005). In addition, their educational limitations make it difficult for them to make significant contributions to society. As members of their own group, African-American women identify family members and former schoolteachers as role models and state that their families provided their support for reaching professional and educational goals (Crawford & Smith, 2005). These two perspectives carry implications that shape the job opportunities for African-American women in higher education (Crawford & Smith, 2005). For example, African-American women have been in lower level administrative positions that carry out policy rather than creating policy.

In reviewing experiences of African-American women, many believe searches for directors utilize filters to eliminate African Americans from getting positions (Sagaria, 2002). Furthermore, Crase (1994) stated that many minority administrators often wind

up in dead-end jobs, and constantly have their authority challenged by their white peers. This study examined the professional experiences and strategies used to overcome those types of leadership challenges. According to Moses (1993), there are three ways institutions have developed structures that hinder success for African-American female administrators; 1) by having strong opponents of change; 2) by white employees not believing minorities can handle upper level leadership responsibilities; 3) by perpetuating a lack of cultural diversity.

Culture is an expression of a uniformed ethnic or racial community through symbols such as food, music, religion, art and other outward forms (Alfred, 2001). Likewise, traditional psychology looks at identity as a uniformed "fixed phenomenon" that has defined stages (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). The continuum of stages range from: conformity which reflects a model of social interaction in which one identifies with the dominant culture more than their own, to integrative awareness wherein emphasis is made on the commonalities of African Americans and the rest of American society. Moreover, there is a strong belief in working within mainstream institutions to challenge systems of oppression and resistance while stressing the importance of interaction between Blacks and Whites (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998).

Alfred (2001) explained how some individuals believe that both culture and identity are phenomena that are difficult to pin down. Both are continually changing based on the places and contexts in which they exist. Alfred also asserted that race is an important variable in addition to culture and identity when examining minority career development. Leaving race out of the equation of culture and identity would imply that

there is, in the instance of African Americans, one Black race that has one Black culture. This leads to the assumption that minorities often construct individual and group identities that represent allegiance to one's own racial – cultural groups (Alfred, 2001). A study that examined the professional advancement of African-American women must therefore incorporate the phenomena of race, identity, and culture to fully examine how they influenced developing careers. Much of the literature, however, includes studies that show the negative effects of a long history of discrimination (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Studies such as Johnson-Bailey and Tisdell (2001) suggested that stereotypical images of women of color can affect their professional advancement. In the study, the authors used their personal experiences and outlined career development theories to explore diversity issues regarding women's career development. The two subjects, Junita and Libby both told stories of their academic development and how it ultimately led to their career development. In Junita's story, for instance, she explains how as a high school student, her teacher emphasized a need for her to learn French in case she "was ever lucky enough to dine at a French restaurant." She explained that her young white female instructor saw her learning French from a limited perspective. There was no expectation of Junita ever needing to use French outside of a chance meal at a fancy restaurant. Other stereotypes such as African-American women's work ethic being subpar, or their being dishonest, or having a bad temperament can, according to Johnson-Bailey and Tisdell (2001), give non-African-American women a professional advantage. The study went on to identify themes such as stereotypical images of women of color, psychological barriers, and the significance of mentoring as key components to career development of women of color.

Mammies, matriarchs, welfare queens, and angry, menacing, unintelligent Black women better known as "Sapphires" are the externally defined images that have controlled African-American women and how they are viewed in society (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010). Such derogatory, and at times inflammatory, images overshadow the image of the Black intellectual woman. The absence of this type of positive imagery puts these women in roles that hold less value to the academy (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010).

Hackett and Byars (1996) conducted a study on African-American women's career development from a social cognitive perspective. In the analysis, they attempted to identify counseling implications associated with various sources of efficacy information. Their research identified sources of efficacy information such as performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, physiological arousal, and verbal persuasion and linked them to examples of typical socialization experiences of African-American women and the possible effects on career related self-efficacy. They concluded that given the connection between cultural identity, among other things, and outcome of professional advancement, it is important for those counseling African-American women to assess and explore their ethnic identity development. Their findings tie into the theme of cultural identity and how it relates to career development. Hackett and Byars did not, however, attempt to address successful strategies for using cultural identity to enhance career development; thus, further examination of career development strategies becomes an essential part of a future study.

In examining the professional experiences of African-American women, many studies (Alfred, 2001; Bullock-Yowell et al.; Grier-Reed & Ganuza, 2011) employ

constructivist theories as a guide. Constructivist Career Counseling utilizes the premise that constructivism encourages people to construct their own identities and careers through life planning skills, the creation of knowledge, and personal meaning making (Grier-Reed & Ganuza, 2011; Collins, 2009).

Grier-Reed and Ganuza (2011) examined whether a constructivist career course would improve career-decision self-efficacy for 81 college students (45 Asian American and 36 African-American). They found that constructivist approaches to education work effectively with multicultural students. Career decision-making self-efficacy, according to Grier-Reed and Ganuza, is a person's belief about their ability to perform tasks related to the process of career decision-making. Grier-Reed and Ganuza identified four basic tools used to develop a constructivist career course to improve career decision-making self-efficacy of African-American and Asian-American college students: 1) narrative (telling one's own story); 2) action (exploring personal aspects such as culture, beliefs and values); 3) constructing (creating identity in light of context); and 4) interpretation (gaining personal meaning to direct one's path). Of the 81 participants, 44% were African-American and 56% were Asian American. The results of the study suggested that the course increased the career decision self-efficacy of the participants with changes in students' self-efficacy regarding goal selection and planning accounting for the greatest proportion of the variance.

In a similar study, Grier-Reed and Skaar (2010) used pretest designs and post-test designs to assess the empowerment and career indecision of 82 college students. In a large urban research university located in the mid-west, seven sections of a constructivist career course were offered through the College of Education and Human Development.

Data from pre and post testing were analyzed using a multivariate analysis of variance. The study's results indicated the participants were more empowered (significant increase in career-decision self-efficacy), however, there was no change in career-indecision and the effect was similar across gender and race/ethnicity. Both studies attempt to address self-efficacy and career decision-making; nonetheless, their foci centered on students and were therefore excluded when examining professionals. Studies that center on African-American professionals conclude that many focus their efforts on finding the right job (Crawford & Smith, 2005). They may earn graduate degrees, accept staff assistant positions, work harder and put in more time than required with the hopes that someone will notice their efforts and advance their careers (Crawford & Smith, 2005). The authors found that African-American professionals lack the ability to align their career goals with the goals of the organization; consequently, this often leads to job dissatisfaction and lack of motivation.

Henderson, Hunter, and Hildreth (2010) used Black Feminist Thought to frame a study that identifies three areas of resistance and tension that may affect motivation of African-American Women—inequality without regard to education, expertise, and professional experience; the mammy-sapphire continuum of being; and white privilege that dismisses the intersection of racism and sexism. Concerning the area of inequality without regard to education, expertise, and professional experience, many Africa,-American women, faculty and administrators reported feelings of marginalization, isolation, and invisibility while at the same time feeling as though they are under a microscope where work, attire, language, and behavior are concerned (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010). The researchers found African-American women believe

though their scholarship, work, and instruction are undervalued and that there is a lack of respect for their educational background, credentials, and experiences.

Finally, Henderson et al., (2010) examined the notion of white privilege being used to dismiss the experiences of racism and sexism. White privilege is "the invisible hand of support and prestige through which white colleagues are supported, advocated for, and given access to valuable information and opportunities" (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010, p. 32). African-American women do not have this invisible hand at work for them and thus are unable to partake in such benefits like their white colleagues. This makes it difficult for them to speak to white faculty about their experiences of racism and sexism because white privilege becomes the lens through which these experiences are re-examined and dismissed (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010). These areas of resistance and tension add to the challenges of motivation, self-efficacy and career goals African-American women in the academy have (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010).

A common thread across many studies was the effect of African-American women administrators' strong ties to their families and communities (Grier-Reed and Ganuza, 2011; Crawford and Smith, 2005; Collins, 2000, 2001, 2009). Many participants reported this strong sense of allegiance as having a significant effect on their sense of self-efficacy where career choices were concerned (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010). Studies by Alfred (2001) and Bullock-Yowell et al., (2011) have also revealed where self-efficacy and career choice has been guided by family history. Alfred's study, for instance, examined the professional development history of five tenured African-American women at a predominantly white university to explore how minority professionals develop professional practices to meet career expectations. Their findings

support indications that race, culture and identity play a significant role in career development. Moreover, most of the women in the study associate their career successes with being able to connect with family as a strong support system. Although this study had important implications for career development for African-American women who were faculty, it did not address the needs of those who were seeking career development outside of teaching.

Crawford and Smith (2005) also found a common thread of family history among African-American women who achieve career success in institutions of higher education. In their study, they investigated how mentoring of African-American women proved to be important in the selection of higher education as a career choice. The focus of the study was African-American women who hold or held senior level positions in higher education in the state of New York. The research incorporated life histories and interviews of the participants. Their study found that not only did mentoring effect these women's selection, but family did as well. Many African-American women carried the legacy of family members, reporting how they made career choices based on their mother's or father's desired career choice for themselves but could not because of financial, social, or other barriers. The aforementioned study closely mirrors the current study in that it focused on African-American female administrators' professional practices. This study, however, sought to give a broader examination of professional practices whereas Crawford and Smith's study used mentoring as a primary focus.

Settle (2006) used intersectional framework to examine African-American women's racial and gender identities. The study included a sample of 89 undergraduate and graduate African-American women students at 31 different universities in the United

States. The study found that over 26% of the participants had a sense of personal esteem as Black women. Many of the women identified themselves as being strong and beautiful, but they also felt the stress that goes along with the expectation of being seen as strong all of the time (Settles, 2006). The feelings of the participants, identified as personal esteem had a direct effect on their career choices and goals. The article did not examine in-depth how these feelings manifested into better career outcomes for African-American women.

African-American Female Directors' Professional Strategies and Practices. To examine professional practices for career advancement for African-American women, Edmonson (2012) described the process she went through in her efforts to advance from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor to Full Professor. In her study she identified specific strategies for African-American women wanting promotion, tenure, and administrative positions at predominantly white institutions. Edmonson (2012) suggested seeking feedback from trusted people who are not people of color. She also suggested finding ways to make significant contributions to one's institution through collaboration with people who had similar personality types and were perceived positively regardless of race or gender. Edmonson went on to stress the importance of choosing peer coaches who were treated like valuable members of the team. Furthermore, trying to become friends with mentors who were not interested in being friends was seen as unnecessary. This can complicate the dynamics of the relationship whereby one may not have received the tough feedback needed for achieving career goals. Finally, Edmonson suggested being willing to adjust one's communication style in the workplace. Communication

styles are learned behaviors and therefore could be changed to suit one's work environment.

Jones, Dawkins, McClinton, Glover, and Brazzel (2012) outlined strategies for women of color who aspire to become higher education administrators. They provided personal and professional experiential knowledge and considerations for African-American women to be aware of when charting their career trajectories in higher education. The information presented throughout the book is based on the four constructs gleaned from the Black Female Administrator Survey that studies issues pertaining to persistence and success: (a) leadership skill development, (b) academic behavior, (c) development of a career path, and (d) mentoring. The book articulates the necessity of establishing mentoring relationships, balancing work and family life and community engagement are keys for African-American women advancing their career trajectories in predominantly white 4-year state universities.

Williams Sheley, Alvarez McHatton, McCray, and Thomas (2014) researched persistence strategies utilized by African-American faculty through personal narratives. The authors highlighted successful strategies to navigating life in the academy and themes such as: embracing students of color and faculty of color as valuable, contributing members of the institutional community; ensuring institutional leadership reflects the diversity it desires to achieve and/or maintain; and supporting faculty and students in culturally appropriate ways—from recruitment to retirement or graduation and making certain their voices are included in all conversations regarding the direction of the collective. The authors concluded that inasmuch like faculty of color must individually

address the barriers they experience and institutions of higher education must do likewise. Diversity must extend beyond simply an area to be addressed in values and mission statements. Although the article reflects strategies for increasing and maintaining diversity in the ranks of faculty and students, it does not address the needs of administration, thus posing implications for further studies in this particular area.

Recent studies focused on the experiences and resistance strategies for African-American women in senior-level administrative positions in higher education found that the creation of support systems, spiritual and psychological support, and mentoring have helped African-American women be successful (Beckem, 2009). Furthermore, Bailey (2010) examined the life histories of four African-American women who were serving in Chief Academic Officer (CAO) positions at minority-serving institutions. Bailey's findings included the foundational role of family and education in their success, the role of mentoring both personally and professionally, and the need to be prepared for challenges faced in academia, specifically the affects of racism and sexism on African-American female administrators. Additionally, Wolfe (2010) explored the experiences and persistence strategies of six African-American administrators at higher education institutions in the southeastern portion of United States and his findings revealed themes such as maintaining a healthy self-image, understanding the higher education environment, and establishing a support system.

Critical Race Theory

A review of the literature concerning Critical Race Theory was necessary to understand professional experiences of African-American women administrators as it

relates to culture and identity. Critical Race Theory (CRT) was the foundational theory of this study. Both Black Feminist Theory and Campus Racial Climate have underlying principles guided by the tenets of the CRT. The tenets provided a foundation to develop and understand the experiences of African-American women. To gain a full understanding of how the theory gave the study its foundation, I briefly reviewed the history of CRT.

Critical Race Theory's (CRT) early origins began in the mid-1970s. A small group of lawyers, legal scholars, and activists recognized that the civil rights movement was at a lull and new theories and approaches were needed to identify and eliminate subtle forms of racism (Delgado, Stefanic, & Liendo, 2012). Although CRT began as a legal/civil rights movement, there are many in education that used CRT's principles as a basis to understand phenomena that exist in k-12 as well as higher education (Solorzano, 2010; Evans, 2007; Hiraldo, 2010). For the purpose of this study an educational lens was used to examine CRT's tenets in relation to higher education. The five tenets of CRT are counter-storytelling; whiteness as property; interest conversion; critique of liberalism; and the permanence of racism (Hiraldo, 2010).

Counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling is a method of telling stories of people whose experiences are not often told. It is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majorities' stories of racial privilege (Hiraldo, 2010; Solorzano, 2010). It gives students, staff, and faculty voices to tell their experiences of marginalization. These stories can be used to analyze campus climates and give room for discussion on how institutions can become more inclusive. Many times a campus strives for diversity of student population

without making the necessary changes to make its campus climate more inclusive (Hiraldo, 2010). The lack of attention to campus climate inclusivity makes it difficult to maintain diversity. The counter-storytelling is a way to show the permanence of racism—another tenet of CRT. Griffin, Ward, and Phillips (2014) in their essay, used counter-storytelling as a way to narrate the experiences of Black male faculty on predominately white campuses. Utilizing well-informed interviews of 11 Black male faculty members, Griffin et al. reflected on how these faculty members' daily experiences cause racial battle fatigue in the struggle to circumvent an exclusive campus community (Griffin, Ward, & Phillips, 2014).

Permanence of Racism. According to Delgado and Stefenic (2012), "racism is ordinary, not aberrational - normal science." Racism is a controlling factor politically, socially, and economically in the United States, and is seen as an inherent part of American society that gives preference to people of Caucasian descent over other minority subgroups in most situations including education. Hiraldo (2010) asserted, because racism is systematic, it renders diversity plans on college campuses ineffective. It is important, therefore, for administrators to examine the policies, processes and structures that hinder the successful professional experiences in career advancement of educated, qualified African-American women. Harper (2012) expounds upon how some researchers discuss and theorize racial differences in faculty and staff turnover, student achievement and other disaggregate outcomes in studies about higher education. He also documented how scholars make sense of the experiences of minorities on predominantly white campuses. Harper concentrated on answering the research

question, ‘How do higher education scholars discuss and make sense of race-related findings that emerge in their studies?” Harper purported that many researchers use an “anything but racism” approach to explain findings. The implication here is that in past findings of research articles regarding race, researchers attempted to theorize and guess in their discussion sections using words such as “perhaps,” “may,” or “presumably.” He discussed how past researchers have reported how minorities perceived and experienced campus racial climates differently than their white counterparts. Researchers rarely, however, attributed structural and institutional racism as an explanation (Harper, 2012). This unwillingness to explain research findings in light of the permanence of racism campus wide can be viewed as a roadblock to the policy changes necessary for African-American women aspiring to achieve career advancement.

*Critique of Liberalism***.** Grounded in the idea of colorblindness, the critique of liberalism makes the argument that many policies do not comprise the thoughts or ideas of minorities (Hiraldo, 2010). It lends to the idea that those in the majority are colorblind to different interpretations of alternate possibilities or what could be. Overall, it criticized the idea that there is equal opportunity for all races (Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Harper’s 2012 article identified a second category of findings he entitled, “Common Semantic Substitutes.” He outlined the emergence of a common theme- absence of the words racism or racist. Harper found that instead of using those words to describe campus environments, researchers commonly used words such as “alienating,” “hostile,” “chilling,” “isolating,” or “unfriendly.” These words were used in over 63% of

the articles Harper reviewed (Harper 2012). Furthermore, rather than naming what participants experienced as racism, researchers used terms such as "minority stressor" or "racial tension." The argument can be made that prior research conducted by, and more widely accepted by the majority, does not support the need for policy changes to provide opportunity for career advancement in higher education. This lack of equal opportunity is propagated in the notion of whiteness as property.

Whiteness as Property. According to Hiraldo (2010), the tenet whiteness as property argues the idea that white America has access to resources that are inaccessible to minorities. Resources or rights such as the right to possession, the right to disposition, the right of exclusion, and the right to use and enjoyment are outlined by Hiraldo as exclusive to whites. Hiraldo gave as example the notion that many African Americans earn their doctorate degrees in educational administration but do not gain faculty status or higher-level administrative positions. This leaves them unable to influence faculty owned curriculum or policies. Because the majority of faculty and administrators are white, the continuation of the idea subsists that the input of white faculty is valued more than minority input. Thus, there is a trend of the majority creating curriculum, policy and procedures and the minority carrying them out (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Interest Conversion. This tenet, Interest Conversion, brings to the forefront the idea that African Americans in higher education are only offered leadership opportunities and access to resources if their interests align with those

of whites. Hiraldo (2010) supported this notion when she purported that the tenet "acknowledges white individuals as being the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation." Moreover, Hiraldo asserted that on campuses of higher education, international students are used to gain funding because of their extended financial support and to help the student population become more cultured, while increasing the rankings of the institution. To further examine how race and gender affected the professional experiences of African-American women in higher education, it was important to explore the intersectionality of CRT and Black Feminist Thought.

Black Feminist Thought

Black Feminist Thought encompasses theoretical interpretations of Black women's reality by those who live it (Collins, 2000). As previously stated the tenets of the Critical Race Theory give foundational principles of subsequent theory development such as Black Feminist Thought, which was used in the study to provide further insight specific to the experiences of African-American women. The overarching guide of CRT provided a suitable foundation for examining the evolution of BFT. Three goals of CRT, as explained by Creswell, Parker and Lynn (2011), are to address areas of difference like gender or class to identify inequities in the experiences of individuals of color, to present story-telling as a way to examine race and racism in law and society, and to argue for the abolishment of racial subjugation while recognizing that race is a social construct (Creswell, 2007; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Critical Race Theory, therefore, was established as the umbrella under which the concepts of Black Feminist Thought reside.

BFT evolved from the womanist stance. Womanism is a social theory rooted in the racial and gender oppression of Black women. It pertains to a type of feminism that acknowledges the abilities and contributions of Black women. Womanism took on varying interpretations that gave way, in later years, to Black Feminism which is "the belief that women are full human beings capable of participation and leadership in the full range of human activities – intellectual, political, social, sexual, spiritual and economic" (Cleage, 1993, p. 29). Black Feminism made a clear political divide between itself and Feminism because often times the feminist agenda aligned itself with the accepted view of the majority where areas of race were concerned (Collins, 2001). The framework of Black Feminism involves ensuring political rights and economic development through collective action to promote change in social institutions. The framework aligned with the goals of this study because it not only addressed the issues of gender and race, but it also addressed the need for economic development.

An analysis of African-American women's economic development required a historical look at their positions in the labor market. According to Collins (2001), African-American women's work histories revealed two common themes: the intersecting oppressions of race, inequality in the labor market, gender and class; and themes of how African-American women's unpaid labor within their families and extended families represent a source of both confinement and empowerment for them.

The position of African-American women in the labor market has gradually changed since the post-civil war era. Historically, they have held jobs in specific "occupational niches" like domestic work in private homes (Collins, 2009). Collins (2009) offers that these changes, however, continue to perpetuate the image of African-

American women in service roles such as nursing home assistants, day care workers, and fast food employees. Thus, the shift has moved them from in home service roles to low paying service work outside of the home.

The less developed theme concerning the duality of confinement and empowerment of unpaid work within African-American women's families and extended families examines how unpaid work such as caring for family members, teaching children life skills, and keeping their families together is seen as a form of resistance to oppression more so than a form of mistreatment by men (Bullock-Yowell, Andrews, & Buzzetta, 2011; Collins, 2009; Alfred, 2001). Collins also suggested that more attention and research should be given to the idea that while African-American women do embrace the role of caring for the family, this type of unpaid labor is often exploited (Collins, 2009).

Collins' (2009) description of the difference between white feminism and Black feminism lie in the conceptual knowledge of black and white women living in a patriarchal system but race is what separates them. Women from diverse racial groups may share interpretations of experiences that have to do with gender; conversely, their racial standpoints and pasts make for different experiences that can only be addressed through the voice of that group. BFT gives a voice to a self-defined collective Black woman's standpoint about Black womanhood (Collins, 2001).

Horsford (2012) conducted a study on leadership for diversity, equity, and social justice in education. The goal of the study was to show how the intersection of race and gender for Black women leaders has served as a bridge for and to women of all races

(Horsford, 2012). Horsford recognized that in the United States, black women have been leaders for equality and social justice since the mid-1800s quoting Sojourner Truth's speech "Ain't I A Woman" to point out societal challenges of the norms and systems that give certain rights and privileges to white women while devaluing black women. Her speech marked the separation of the abolitionist movement from the women's movement and later began the start of new ideas like Black Feminism. Horsford's study provided a historical account of African-American women leaders' struggles for Civil Rights to Women's Rights describing the point at which the two fronts of gender and race come together to form the concept now referred to as "intersectionality." Intersectionality directly aligned with the overarching concepts of the Critical Race Theory (CRT) in that it addresses the area of gender and race and, therefore, addresses the participant's focus of the study.

Walker (1983) introduced the notion of 'womanism' as a sub-theory of intersectionality. Walker defines the term "womanism" as a more intense interpretation of the term feminism. She likens the oppression experienced by the African-American woman in comparison to that of the white American woman as the color purple to lavender. Womanism is a reaction to the realization that feminism does not encompass the perspectives or stories of African-American women (Collins, 2001). The sub-theories of Intersectionality and Womanism helped to further illuminate gender and class differences addressed in BFT and tied together issues of gender and class in a way that the Feminist Theory did not. It allowed African-American women to express their perceptions of professional experiences and what they saw as challenges to career advancement in higher education.

Story-telling in the context of BFT is the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims. When discussing professional advancement of African-American women in higher education, it was important to examine the professional practices of women as they related to story telling. The use of dialogue or storytelling, according to Collins (2000), is a way for African-American women to develop new knowledge. The assumption here was that African-American women gain more knowledge from connectedness and dialogue than by separation and isolation (Collins, 2000). This type of storytelling should not be confused with "adversarial debate" but was, rather, the validation process that empowered women to share knowledge and experiences (Collins, Black Feminist Thought, 2009).

In a case study about an African-American college administrator by Dowdy and Hamilton (2011), one woman, referred to as Willa, depicted her experiences as a scholar and chairperson. The study documented the values she held as a leader in a predominantly white institution. In it, Willa stated, leaders should be more selfless though this is not the nature of human beings. She extended the following strategies as key proponents to professional advancement in academia.

> Be people-oriented, observant, responsive and have a general sense of how the organization works. Be aware of your contribution to the organization. Finally, be yourself because people will eventually see through pretense and you will be unhappy pretending.

Dowdy and Hamilton (2011) affirmed that while women still remain underrepresented in leadership roles in higher education, they tend to carry the major

responsibilities for maintaining their households and caring for their children. When considering African-American women's abilities to take on the major household responsibilities, it illuminated and mirrored the perspective of the participants of the study as it related to them considering the needs and interest of others before their own.

Dowdy and Hamilton (2011) also showed that while race did impact Willa's work life, it was her sense of pride and the desire to "surpass her peers" that was of paramount importance to her. Although competition drove her, she also had a strong desire to influence the way gender and race was viewed in her setting. This was a motivational factor at the start of her journey (Dowdy & Hamilton, 2011). Willa's story demonstrated that there have been African-American women in higher education who have overcome discrimination to make significant contributions despite being employed in lower policy making positions (Jackson, 2003). To strengthen the study, more interviews with successful African-American female administrators could add to the already rich data provided by the case study. This study collected stories like Willa's to examine the professional practices of African-American women in institutions of higher education associated with career advancement.

There were other examples in history of African-American women who have overcome discrimination to make significant contributions in higher education. For instance, Anna Julia Cooper was born a slave but as a result of her resiliency, earned a bachelor's and master's degree at Oberlin College and earned a doctorate degree from Sorbonne University in Paris (Evans, 2007). Cooper believed that all human beings had a right to grow and that higher education was a means of growth. Evans states, "Rather than basking in her own scholarly success, Cooper worked to improve higher education."

Cooper made it her life's mission to expose more African-American women to Higher Education.

Another example of African-American women who have experienced career advancement in higher education is educator and civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune who founded a training institute that later became Bethune-Cookman College and dedicated her life to improving educational access for African-American women (Evans, 2007). These women gave instances of a more positive perspective on African-American women's experiences in higher education. Though they may have encountered obstacles, they overcame them and made an impact on African-American women's presence in higher education. Conversely, Crawford and Smith's (2005) study investigated some of the challenges minority faculty and administrators experience and made the argument that some of these challenges can be addressed through mentoring.

Crawford and Smith (2005) identified in their study several common descriptions of challenges women faced. These include isolation, loneliness, and racially motivated victimization. The participants of the study spoke of being on the outside of the organization and having little guidance, which made them feel isolated and alone (Crawford & Smith, 2005). The participants also stated that lack of sensitivity on college campuses creates vulnerabilities among the African-American female administrators. Crawford and Smith identified the most significant gains of African-American women as directors of affirmative action or equal employment opportunities; but the two affirmed that these positions tend to hold lower level administrative powers in which they carry out policies as opposed to creating them. Thus, it was important to examine how

university policies and the campus climate may affect the career advancement of these women.

Campus Racial Climate

The framework for Campus Racial Climate as established by Hurtado et al. (1998) is a four-dimensional model that examines the racial components that effect colleges and universities. Those components are the institution's historical legacy for inclusion or exclusion of various racial and ethnic groups and the structural diversity of various racial/ethnic groups. This can also be stated as the diversity of the student population as well as faculty and staff hires. Furthermore, the behavioral dimension examined social interaction across race and ethnicity including classroom diversity and pedagogical practices, the psychological dimension which is characterized by perceptions of racial and ethnic tension, perceptions of discrimination, and attitude and prejudice reduction (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Theoretically, campus racial climate is an examination of members' behavior patterns, their feelings about the institution, and their cognitive images of the institution (Victorinio, Nylund-Gibson, & Conley, 2013). It should be noted, although campus racial climate originally began as a model applicable to racial/ethnicity in minority students, the foundational features of the model have been used as a guide for researchers to study the experiences of faculty and other academic professionals (Mayhew, Gunwald and Dey, 2006; Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, and Han, 2009; Fries-Britt S. L., Rowan-Kenyon, Perna, Milem, & Howard, 2011).

Mayhew, Grunwald and Dey (2006) conducted a multiple regression study to examine the factors that influence staff perceptions of their community and whether or not it has achieved a positive climate for diversity. The study addressed two primary research questions: The first question of the two questions is, "How do staff members' perceptions of their campus communities as having achieved a positive climate for diversity differ as a function of their demographic characteristics? More specifically, how do these perceptions differ as a function of their gender and race?" The second of the two questions is, "What role do staff professional characteristics, the structural diversity of the department, staff experiences with diversity on campus, staff perceptions of their departments' climate for diversity, and staff perceptions of their institution's commitment to diversity play in influencing these perceptions?"

This study used a survey created by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA given to a sample of 1029 staff members randomly selected from a population of 2202 from a large public university to collect data (Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2006). Conducting the survey yielded 437 useable surveys. The demographic makeup was 83% white and 17% minority staff. Of the 17%, 10.7 were African American, 2.8 were Asian/Pacific, .05 were Hispanic/Latino, 2.3 were Native American, and 1.7% were categorized as other (Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2006). Some of the variables used in the study such as job satisfaction, job affiliation, job classification, and length of employment were noted as being among the study's strengths. The variables were compared to the perceptions of diversity and using multiple regression; the model significantly predicted 34.7% of the variance in the dependent variable "achieved a positive climate for diversity" (Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2006). The results also

revealed female and racial/ethnic minority staff had more negative opinions about the racial climate of their campuses compared to their white male colleagues (Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2006; Victorinio, Nylund-Gibson, & Conley, 2013). According to Mayhew et al., the study could be strengthened by adding more universities and by further defining the dependent variable "achieved a positive climate for diversity." The researchers concluded assessments of campus racial climates for diversity should include voices from all members of the institution's community. Ultimately, institutional planners should consistently emphasize the campus climate for diversity as an institutional priority.

Fries-Britt, Rowan-Kenyon, Perna, Milem, and Howard, (2011) conducted a multiple descriptive case study of 33 faculty and administrators of color to examine the racial climate for minorities at three flagship institutions. Specifically, the study examined how the college campus climate contributes to underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic faculty in the academy, and how faculty and administrators at the public flagship institutions in Georgia, Maryland, and Texas perceive the institutional climate and the work environment for the faculty of color."

Semi-structured interviews lasting one hour with directors and 90-minute focus group discussions with minority faculty, staff, and students were used to collect data. Participants described their climate as "uncomfortable" regarding minority faculty recruitment and retention (Fries-Britt S. L., Rowan-Kenyon, Perna, Milem, & Howard, 2011). The study suggested there is much work needed in the area of recruitment and retention of minority faculty members. Furthermore, the results show that challenges exist for even those institutions that have more access to financial resources. These

challenges can be overcome by systematic changes in the institution's strategic planning procedures concerning diversity.

Harper and Hurtado (2007) conducted a study of 278 students of various ethnic backgrounds to examine how cohorts of students experience college campus racial climates. The 278 students represented five predominately white institutions located in three different geographic locations in the United States. Data was collected through focus groups across the five campuses. Each of the focus groups was homogeneous (for example only African Americans in one group and Latinos exclusively in another). In addition, a focus group was facilitated with entry and mid-level staff persons from student affairs, academic affairs, and multi-cultural affairs at each university. Analysis of the transcripts of each focus group led to the identification of nine recurring themes. Those themes included cross-race consensus regarding institutional negligence, race as a four-letter word and an avoidable topic, self-reports of racial segregation, gaps in social satisfaction by race, reputational legacies for racism, white student overestimation of minority student satisfaction, the pervasiveness of whiteness in space, curricula, and activities, the consciousness –powerlessness paradox among racial/ethnic minority staff, and unexplored qualitative realities of race in institutional assessment (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Strengths of the study were the diversity of the locations involved in the study and the difference in the racial/ethnic makeup of the focus groups. Conversely, the use of only large institutions was noted as a limitation of the study.

Overall implications of the study as stated by Harper and Hurtado (2007) call for more transparency regarding racial inequalities. Furthermore, it is suggested that

administrators, faculty and institutional researchers proactively audit their campus climates and cultures to determine the need for change.

Summary

To examine the experiences and identify common professional practices of African-American women who achieve career advancement in predominantly white 4-year state universities, this review of literature outlined the background of how the history of culture, career and identity affect African-American women socially and economically (Crase, 1994). In order to illuminate their experiences and common professional practices, it was important for these variables as well as race to be examined when addressing minority career development (Alfred, 2001).

To gain further insight, Critical Race Theory was used as the foundational underpinning of this study. Using an educational lens, the study addressed the five tenets of CRT as it relates to higher education. Those tenets were permanence of racism, critique of liberalism, interest conversion, whiteness as property, and counter-story telling (Hiraldo, 2010). For the purposes of this study, Critical Race Theory was identified as the umbrella under which the other theories of Black Feminist Thought and Campus Racial Climate reside.

The use of the theory Black Feminist Thought provided an even deeper insight and interpretation of Black women's realities as told by Black women (Collins, Black Feminist Thought, 2009). The framework of Black Feminist Thought involved ensuring rights and political development through collective action to bring about institutional changes by addressing the issues of gender and race as well as economic development.

This framework directly aligned with the goals of this study. To gain insight on how institutional policies and campus climate may affect the career advancement of African-American women, this study examined the theory of Campus Racial Climate.

The four-dimensional model of Campus Racial Climate examined the racial components that affect colleges and universities (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Additionally, Campus Racial Climate was an examination of the behavior patterns, feelings, and cognitive images of the constituents of its institution (Victorinio, Nylund-Gibson, & Conley, 2013). It is through the lens of Campus Racial Climate this study examined policies that may contribute to the underrepresentation of African-American women in institutions of higher education.

Chapter III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Women have made immense strides in closing the gender gap in director positions in universities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in Fall 2013, women represented 63.9% of all directors whereas men represented 36.1%. Of the male directors, statistics reflect an underrepresentation of African American men; white men represented 27.1% and African-American males represented 3%. Furthermore, white females represented 45.6% and African-American females represented 7.6%. When examining Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), the National Center for Education Statistics, reported 40.9% African American female directors and 3.4% white female directors. Despite the progress made by female directors, a huge racial gap exists between white and African-American female directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities. The National Center for Education Statistics, in Fall 2013 reported that white female directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities represented 49.8% and African-American female directors represented 6.6%.

There is a need therefore, to examine the professional experiences of African-American women and identify their strategies used to achieve director positions in predominantly white 4-year state universities in regards to their career advancements.

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the experiences of successful African-American female directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities located in the Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States in regards to their career advancements?

RQ2: What do female African-American directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities believe are strategies for increasing the number of directors at predominantly white institutions in the Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States?

Research Design

In basic qualitative research design, the researcher is interested in understanding how the participants make meaning of a situation or set of circumstances (Merriam, 2002). Meaning is facilitated using the researcher as the instrument. The data is collected through interviews, observations, or document analysis. The data is inductively analyzed and recurring themes or patterns are identified. This research design was chosen to allow the researcher to understand the participants' experiences while maintaining their individual ways of interpreting the experience. According to Creswell (2007), interpretive qualitative research is used to study problems that seek to understand the meaning of individuals or groups and how they identify with social or human problems. The goal of the interpretive constructivist researcher is to understand shared meanings of participants' experiences (Merriam, 2002) without losing sight of each person's unique way of interpreting the experience. The participants can, therefore, have multiple or differing versions of the same experience at the same time.

There are several other approaches to qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). All of the following approaches were considered for this dissertation: narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, case study, and ethnographic approach. There were strengths to each method and I addressed them with my rationale for selecting the basic interpretive qualitative approach.

Narrative research is a specific form of qualitative design that tells the story of people's lives and experiences (Creswell, 2007). This approach focuses on one or more individuals, gathers data through the collection of their stories and reports chronologically their individual experiences (Creswell, 2007). While the narrative method did collect stories, it did not allow for the interpretation of the participant's meaning of the stories and was, therefore, rejected.

The phenomenological method, unlike narrative research, takes into account the person's participation in and reaction to a situation by utilizing written and oral descriptions from the participant as the raw data (Merriam, 2002). The goal of phenomenological research is to report on the meaning of the lived experiences of a phenomenon for a group of people (Creswell, 2007). Although phenomenological method was closer to what was needed for this study, the required focus was not broad enough and was, therefore, rejected.

Grounded theory is created inductively from a research study (Creswell, 2007). Its theory is produced from continuous interaction with the data. Grounded theory is used when a theory is not available to explain a process. Since there were a substantial amount of theories to frame my study, grounded theory was ruled out as an approach.

When considering ethnographic research design, I considered the focus it had on interaction, social context and the social construction of reality by a culture sharing group (Creswell, 2007). Because ethnography is most useful when the researcher is conducting cultural anthropology and the research goals are to understand a social-cultural system, it was rejected for this study. In addition, ethnographic studies are very time consuming, often requiring years of field work (Creswell, 2007).

The case study can be utilized in a study about a group of people, an individual, a community or an organizational policy (Patton, 2002). The case study's strengths can be found in its ability to use multiple sources of data and multiple forms of triangulation. Creswell recommended that at least six sources of data be utilized in case study designs (Creswell, 2007). Case study was not selected since I used less data sources for my study due to time constraints.

Site Selection

The research was conducted in the Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States (Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana). Skype, FaceTime and other video conferencing software were used when face-to-face meetings were not feasible for the participants. Otherwise meetings were held in person in private meeting rooms located in the university library or conference rooms. Participants lived in various locations in the South so there was no single location for conducting interviews.

Participant Selection/Sampling

I conducted interviews with five participants. The participants were selected through purposeful and snowball sampling. This yielded successful African-American female directors in institutions of higher education in the southern region of the United States.

The women selected were all between the age of 30 and 65 and they were all of African-American decent. Additionally, the women were all current of predominantly white four-year state colleges or universities. According to Maxwell (2013), purposeful sampling has five major goals. The first goal is to achieve representativeness of the settings, individuals or activities selected. The second goal is opposite to the first and was not considered in this study; it is to capture the heterogeneity of the population. This ensures that a wider range of variation is represented in a study's conclusion. The third goal is to deliberately select participants or cases that are critical for testing the theories that started the study or have emerged since the study began. A fourth goal in purposeful selection can be to establish comparisons used to examine reasons why differences exist between people and settings. This goal was not considered for this study. The fifth goal is to establish relationships with participants that will best enable me to answer my research questions.

The decision to use five participants also aligned with criteria established by Seidman (2006): sufficiency and saturation of information. The idea of sufficiency of information supported the goal of representativeness of the individual. Saturation of information centered on the inundation of information to the point where no new themes emerged from the data (Seidman, 2006). Consequently, participants in this study were African-American women who have achieved career advancement in institutions of higher education. According to (Patton, 2002), the difference in purposeful sampling techniques is whether the researcher uses homogenous or heterogeneous sampling. To allow for more focus on subgroups with specific criteria, my sampling techniques were more homogenous. In addition, I established a pool of eight participant candidates to account

for attrition. This ensured a minimum of five participants in the study. Additionally, none of the interview data collected was eliminated from the data collected even if the participant did not complete both interviews.

Data Collection

Instrumentation encompasses specific methods used in collecting data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The data may be organized loosely or tightly depending upon the methods used in the collection process. Deciding early on what type of instrumentation will be used helps give direction to the researcher before and during fieldwork. According to Merriam, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis (Merriam, 2002). In order to gain rich context descriptions and a deeper understanding of a study, the researcher as the instrument allows information to be processed immediately, the summarization and clarification of material, and the accuracy of interpretation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Moreover, Miles et al., stated that instrumentation could consist of observations, open-ended interviews and survey questions and documents and text. For the purposes of this study, I utilized open-ended interviews and review of current policies that promote campus racial climate and diversity in career advancement as the main sources of data.

To begin data collection, I conducted in-depth interviews consisting of open-ended questions. According Seidman (2006), in depth interviewing allows participants to tell their stories and give details of their experiences. The goal was for participants to reconstruct their experiences within the framework of the study (Seidman, 2006). In addition, Patton (2002) provided three basic approaches to open-

ended interviews: Informational conversational interviews, the interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. As a means of structuring this study's interviews, I utilized the interview guide approach. This approach allowed me to establish the focus of each interview (Seidman, 2006). The interview questions were developed from the literature. They were designed to allow the participants to tell their experiences of how they gained career advancement. Questions that addressed their daily routines, how they interpreted and used current policies and what they perceived as obstacles to their success.

For convenience of the participants, I utilized video conferencing software and telephone interviews. For face-to-face interviews, I used a hand held recorder as recording devices. I also had my iPhone to use as back up. Both the iPad and iPhone contain voice-recording software.

I utilized Seidman's (2006) "Three Interview Series." This approach utilized primarily open-ended questions. The first interview was tasked with using the participants' experiences and placing them in context of the research. For the purposes of this study, questions addressing the participants' childhood, their experiences as college students, and questions that focus on "how" they came to choose their current careers are some of the open ended questions that were asked. The second interview focused on the details of the participants' current lived experiences. Questions regarding what they do on a day-to-day basis on their current jobs, what their relationships are like with co-workers, and asking them to tell stories of their interactions with co-workers were asked. According to Seidman, interviews should be spaced out in a span of three days to a week. This allowed the participants

to reflect on their interviews and recall the conversations from the past meetings. Moreover, this method of data collection added a measure of validity before initiating a second interview. During the interviews, my personal observations of participant answers to questions were recorded through memoing. These memos provided a second level of data that will allow for triangulation. I used member checking as a way to systematically solicit feedback about the data collected (Maxwell, 2013).

To provide a third source of data, I requested a review of Human Resource documents from the participant's university. In addition to Human Resource policies, I also sought historical data from the university that relates to promotion practices of African-American women within the last ten years. Finally, I requested documentation of employee development opportunities that are made available to employees wanting to further their education.

Data Analysis

According to Maxwell (2013) categories used in data analysis consist of categorizing strategies like coding and thematic analysis, and connecting strategies like narrative analysis (Maxwell, 2013). For the purposes of this study, I used versions of all strategies but the primary strategy used was categorizing. Categorizing allowed for the emergence of themes within the participants' experiences. Categorizing are "prompts or triggers for deeper reflection on the data's meaning" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Moreover, I used memos throughout the interview process to document my thoughts, recognize biases, and connect ideas together during analysis of the data. To compile my memos in one place I used a research journal.

Prior to beginning the process of analyzing data, Maxwell (2013) suggested that researchers simply listen to recorded interviews several times before transcription. This process allows for reflection on the data before processing. Furthermore, Maxwell asserted that researchers should engage in note taking throughout the process of listening to recordings to gain insight to possible themes that may emerge (Maxwell, 2013; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). In the analysis of the transcripts I utilized First Cycle, Second Cycle, Jottings, and analytic memoing as prescribed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). Codes, according to Saldana, are defined as "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based or visual data." During the First Cycle, codes were initially assigned to chunks of data. According to Miles et al., (2014), there are three elemental methods to coding: Descriptive, In Vivo, and Process Coding. For the purposes of this study, In Vivo Coding was used because as a beginning qualitative researcher, this method helped me to learn how to code data. Moreover, the use of In Vivo coding in this particular study will gave priority to the participants' own voices. In Vivo coding has been called "Literal Coding" and "Verbatim Coding" (Saldana, 2009). The root meaning of the word In vivo is "in that which is alive." In coding it refers to the actual language found in the data record. These are terms used by the participants themselves. By using in vivo coding the participants' views were captured in their own words. The use of in vivo coding can provide a crucial check on whether you have an understanding of what is significant to the participants (Saldana, 2009). Therefore, to keep track of the codes that were participant

generated, in vivo codes were always put in quotation marks. It is also important to note that in vivo codes capture behaviors or processes, which explained how problems of the participants are processed and resolved. This concept aligned with my study's research questions as it gives insight to the behaviors of African-American women who have achieved success in their career trajectories.

The Second Cycle coding methods or "pattern codes" normally work with the codes generated in the first cycle. This part of data analysis was a way to group the summaries from the First Cycle into smaller categories. Pattern coding identified emergent themes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). According to Saldana (2009), pattern coding has four important functions:

1. It condenses large amounts of data into a smaller number of analytical units.
2. It gets the researcher into analysis during data collection, so that later fieldwork can be more focused.
3. It helps the researcher elaborate a cognitive map-an evolving, more integrated schema for understanding local incidents and interactions.
4. For multicase studies, it lays the groundwork for cross case analysis by surfacing common themes and directional process.

For the purposes of this study, Second Cycle Coding or patterning was used the in vivo data collected and analyzed to develop possible themes associated with successful career trajectories of African-American females in institutions of higher education.

Jottings and Analytic Memoing was the final part of data analysis. Jottings are what the researcher used to record reflections on the emergent data during fieldwork or data analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). These jottings referred to personal reactions to participant remarks, revealed doubts about the quality of the data, mental notes to pursue an issue further in the next contact. Jottings added to the coding of the data by pointing out deeper issues that needed to be analyzed. The use of analytical and memo was a way to document the researcher's reflections and thinking process about the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). According to Saldana (2009), analytic memos can be developed along the following topics: How you personally relate to the participants and/or the phenomenon, your studies research questions, or emergent patterns, categories, themes, concepts, and assertions. This method of data analysis, along with the use of coding allowed me to identify common professional practices of successful African-American women's career trajectories in institutions of higher education.

Data analysis also included a review of documents. Reviewing documentation regarding current policies of the participants' universities provided knowledge of history and context to the experiences of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Moreover, reviewing historical data relating to budgets or money spent on programs participants used to develop successful professional practices and analyzing documents produced in the day-to-day activities of participants allowed for an unobtrusive way to triangulate data obtain through interviews.

Trustworthiness

The process of assessing validity and trustworthiness began with the interviewer's understanding of how her interaction with the participants affected the interview (Seidman, 2006). As stated by Peshkin (1988), subjectivity is "inevitable" (Patton, 2002). Maxwell (2013) described two similar threats to validity as researcher bias and reactivity. Reactivity refers to how the researcher influences the setting or individuals studied. Researchers should take care not to use generalizations during interviews and eliminate the use of "leading questions." Moreover, Maxwell (2013) asserted that researchers should begin their studies with an identity memo to self-identify their ideas, suppositions, and biases before they begin conducting their studies.

Trustworthiness in qualitative research means methodological soundness and adequacy (Holloway and Wheeler (2009). To develop a way for researchers to gain validity within their studies, definitions of trustworthiness and authenticity were developed by Guba and Lincoln (1989). Dependability reflects studies that are consistent throughout. Credibility examines how internal validity is maintained. Transferability refers to the concept that knowledge acquired in one context will be relevant in another (Wheeler, 2009). Thus for the purposes of this study, validity checks outlined by Maxwell (2013) and Seidman (2006) such as member checking and audit trail approach were used to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of this study.

Member Checking

To verify that information in transcripts have been transcribed accurately, I sent completed transcripts to the participants. According to Maxwell (2013), this reduces the

possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants said and the perspective they had on what was going on. This also allowed the researcher to identify biases and misunderstandings of what was observed. The participants received the transcripts electronically. Once they reviewed the transcripts, I contacted them and obtained feedback prior to the next scheduled interview.

Audit or Decision Trail

Miles et al., (2014) described auditing as logging and then describing procedures that move a researcher from hundreds of pages of field notes, interview transcripts and documents to a final report. For the purposes of this study, I used contextual, analytic, and personal response documents (Rogers and Cowles, 1993). Descriptive notes from the interviews served as contextual documents. Analytic documents included memos directly related to the data analysis. Personal response documents were used to describe the thought processes and to show the researchers self-awareness.

Ethical Issues

No participant was subjected to any illegal or unethical activities in this study. To protect the identities of the participants, pseudo names were used. The participants of this study were chosen because they have utilized professional practices that have led to career advancement in higher education. Because they had current ties to their universities, it was important to remove any identifying language from their transcripts to protect their identities. Moreover, I informed the participants about the focus of the study and the rights and responsibilities pertaining to their participation.

Regarding the ethical responsibility relating to my data analysis within my conceptual framework, my personal biases were identified as well throughout this study. Through the use of analytic memos, member checking audit trails, and the use of two interview structure subjectivity and bias reactions to participants' experiences were minimized (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006). The data from the study was stored on a protected drive accessible to the researcher only.

Finally, VSU guidelines regarding the protection of human participants required a review be submitted to the VSU IRB for approval to interview the participants for this study. After IRB approval was received, data collection began with the recruitment of participants.

Summary

A basic interpretive qualitative research method was used to examine the professional experiences of African-American women administrators who achieved career advancement in higher education. A purposeful selection sampling method was used to identify five respondents to participate in the study. Data was collected through a series of interviews in addition to review of current university policies related to professional practices. The data was analyzed by using First Cycle, Second Cycle and Analytic Memoing. This process allowed the researcher to develop themes. The quality or trustworthiness of the study was addressed through member checking, audit trails/memo, and the three-interview series structure. I used VSU's IRB guidelines to ensure protection of all participants.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to identify the professional experiences and strategies used by African-American women who achieve director positions in predominantly white 4-year state universities. The CRT and Black Feminist theoretical frameworks captured the women's experiences and illuminated their strategies to achieve these positions. In addition the theoretical framework of Campus Racial Climate was used to examine how the universities where the participants are employed facilitated their professional growth. This chapter describes the process by which data was collected and analyzed across multiple participant cases. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the experiences of successful African-American female directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities located in the Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States in regards to their career advancements?

RQ2: What do female African-American directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities believe are strategies for increasing the number of directors at predominantly white institutions in the Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States?

In chapter 4, I presented brief narratives of the participants as a means of illuminating background information regarding their family backgrounds, educational

and professional experiences. I then presented a detailed description of the process by which data was reduced to first codes, categories and emergent themes and subthemes. Additionally, a thorough account was provided to address the research questions connecting them to each emergent theme and subtheme. The participants' direct quotes were summarized as needed to maintain a comprehensive flow without compromising the thoughts, ideas, and intents of their words.

The process of data collection and analysis of this research was conducted over a six month period which began in May and ended in September, 2016. Using purposeful and snowball sampling strategies, Five participants were selected from eight female African-American directors of various departments in predominantly white 4-year state universities located in the southeast region of the United States. As an African-American woman currently employed with a predominantly white 4-year state university, I was able to select participants through my professional affiliations within the state. The selected participants also offered referrals for other African-American women whom they believed met the criteria for engaging in the study.

Prior to their interviews, each participant submitted professional profiles via a short demographic survey. Table 1 gives an illustration of their demographic profiles. The participants' ages ranged between 35 and 53 years. Three of the five participants were married, one was single and one divorced. All participants served as directors for at least three years; ranging from three to twenty-four years. Pseudonyms were chosen for each woman to protect their identities. The pseudonyms were randomly selected and have no relationship to their real names or personalities. In addition, the names of the

universities where the women are employed were changed to maintain strict confidentiality.

Table 1

Participant's Demographics

Participants (Pseudonym)	Age	Marital Status	Director Title	Institution (Pseudonym)	Years In Directorship
Nancy	35	Married	Director of Advising	Mountain State University	3
Randy	36	Single	Director of Admissions	Hometown State University	6
Monique	47	Divorced	Director of Standardized Testing and Assessments	Alvin State University	10
Deidra	49	Married	Director of Budget and Finance	Middle East University	20
Andrea	53	Married	Director of Student Services	Eastern University	24

Participants' Career Trajectory Narratives

Nancy

I met Nancy four years ago during a work related conference in Georgia. Since that time, we had little communication so I was unsure she would remember me. She graciously agreed to participate in my research and I interviewed Nancy three weeks later. She was a 35 year old wife with no children. She was born into an upper middle-class Christian family in middle Georgia. Her mother and father impressed on her the value of education in America. Nancy proudly recalled her parents' high academic

expectations for her. She described how her parents "… pushed [her] academically …" and always inquired "Now that you've achieved this, what's next?" Nancy was very active at school and participated in a whole host of extra-curricular activities including cheerleading, dance, and having piano lessons. Outside of those activities Nancy remembered, "Being at home with mom and dad".

Nancy seemed not so sure about her identity as a Black woman. She tended to minimize her story as a Black woman and felt like she did not have much to share about being a female Black professional. She confessed, "I have never been a 'typical black woman' so I don't think my experiences will help you." A quick assurance of the importance and value of her story helped her relax and she freely shared her story.

Race issues were rarely discussed in Nancy's family. Her parents did not perceive race as an impediment to a successful life. Consequently, Nancy believed her identity, as a Black woman had no bearing on her educational and professional experiences. She explained, "I wouldn't say I ever had parents that gave me the speech about working twice as hard because I was black… But I did have to work harder because I am a woman." Nancy's lack of black consciousness may be attributed to her growing up in a very diverse neighborhood. She stated, "We always had people who were around us who were from different races."

Nancy's childhood was influenced by diverse cultural values and she increasingly felt disconnected from the traditional African-American cultural values. She described moments during elementary and high school that were particularly challenging for her. She often felt misunderstood by her peers as being different simply because she did not

use traditional African-American lingo - what she called “black code”. She sometimes felt isolated among friends because she did not understand certain communication that most Black people are familiar with. She justified her predicament, “black code … that everybody is supposed to understand certain things … I didn’t understand because I came from a different environment.” Nancy conceded that this was not a serious problem “until [she] got to college.”

Religion played a big role in shaping Nancy’s cultural values. As a young girl she remembered church being “the only other place besides … extra-curricular activities [her] parents allowed me to go…” Nancy attributed many of her professional successes to her faith in God. She believed many of her positive opportunities and experiences were primarily a result of her trust in God to “lead her in her decision-making process”. When faced with difficult situations at work, Nancy shared that she often “quotes scriptures” which she believed gave her a sense of peace.

Nancy had a challenging experience transitioning from her sheltered home environment into the college environment. She felt very isolated when her parents dropped her off at college and had to navigate college alone. She recalled her “… first English class… and notice there weren’t too many people who looked like me.” Her sense of fear of the new environment was not based on race issues – she “just didn’t want to be left without my support system.” Nancy’s adjustment to college life was slow but by the end of her first semester she became very involved and among the many friends she met, one would be her future husband.

Nancy described her relationship with her husband as “unique”. She explained they are both very ambitious so she is very careful when making career decisions though he is “100% supportive”. Nancy was very conscientious of her husband’s goals and how they related to hers and confessed, “If I had to choose my career over my marriage, I do not think I would choose career…”

Nancy described other college friendships as being “across the board” culturally. She enjoyed friendships based on the organizations she belonged to. She joined student organizations across campus, became a resident assistant, served as an orientation leader and as a mentor to incoming freshman. When asked about her relationship with faculty members, Nancy recalled one “amazing” faculty mentor. This older white woman would not only serve as a mentor to her, she became very instrumental in her gaining a part time teaching position at the university as a graduate student. Nancy remembered “I made the greatest connection with her while I was there.” Through her leadership roles on campus and her part time teaching job during graduate school, Nancy came to realize she wanted a career in higher education. Again, her faculty mentor proved to be influential and guided her to her first full time job teaching at a technical college.

Nancy’s first full time position as an instructor was “horrible… [she] was applying for other jobs on my first day.” She felt underrepresented on the faculty as the only African-American woman in her department. She stated, “…the only other faculty member that was different was a white male … he would barely even look at me.” In addition to this concern, Nancy felt ill-prepared for the job and often missed out on professional development opportunities because her teaching schedule conflicted with the job training events. This problem was further compounded by her dean’s unwillingness

to provide alternative professional development opportunities. She felt like she was being set up to fail. Nancy recalled her dean's reluctance to train her, "…she told me, if need be we can give you the information." Eventually she decided to quit this job.

Later Nancy was hired as an advisor at her alma mater. Conditions at the new college were not very good as she soon felt over whelmed with too many responsibilities that she was ill prepared to assume. A year after being hired, her supervisor the director of the advising center's resignation forced her to take on this extra role. She shared her exasperation, "There were only two people in my department and when she left I took on the responsibilities of both roles without the title." She endured being over worked for about six months before being offered an interim director position. During this time, she was disillusioned as co-workers in her college who were also in interim positions received substantive program director appointments. She shared her frustration. "I couldn't understand why I was the only person not appointed to the position I was already doing."

Nancy increasingly felt undervalued and considered quitting her job. She believed the bar to qualify her to the director position was unfairly moved higher for her than her co-workers. Unlike her colleagues, she had to compete with many outside applicants to get the directorship. She lamented her decision to stay on this job for "the students …"

Monique

Monique and I have known each other for a number of years. We met through a mutual friend and have always maintained a good professional relationship. I

interviewed Monique on June 21 at 3:30 pm. Monique is a divorced 47 year old mother of one son. Growing up in a single parent home, Monique was the product of an interracial marriage that ended in divorce when she was six years old. Her mother was White and her father was Black but Monique believed "one does not preclude the other" and she identified with both parents. Her multicultural background had always been a source of struggle growing up in south Florida. Monique experienced racism in a number of ways. She shared one racialized anecdote when she and her parents were denied access to the store front to buy her shoes for being black. They were forced to use the back door of the store, which was the only access for Black people. Except for a few racialized incidences, Monique enjoyed a "happy" childhood. She grew up in a close knit "lower socioeconomic" Black neighborhood where people lived as a "village where everyone looked out for one another…"

Because her parents divorced when she was very young, her mother was the central figure in her life. Although her mother was not African American she was accepted in their community. Monique observed her mother served as a role model, mediator, and guardian of the neighborhood affairs. Monique reminisced, "My mom was a part of the community... she made sure everyone got off of the bus… everyone had snacks after school… she was the problem solver of the neighborhood." Monique spent her elementary and high school years in different schools but "always excelled academically". Despite her mother's lack of education, she recalled being an avid reader and was very proud when she "…graduated from high school and [her] mom got her G.E.D."

Monique’s first semester at a historically black college/university (HBCU) changed her understanding of African-American culture. College was different from her close knit community. Her first semester at the HBCU was “traumatic” and “... a real culture shock.” Monique struggled with the attitudes of the young women around her. She described them as being “catty and back biting”. Monique also struggled with her unique identity as a black woman with “long hair and fair skin”. She felt conflicted about her African-American cultural heritage. She did not have a sense of belonging into the community. She elaborated, “Black women thought I was conceited… black men treated me differently as well…They ... talk about Black Pride and HBCU pride, but inside they were a mess.” Monique’s first semester at the HBCU would be her last. She was never able to fully make the transition to college life.

Monique returned home to work as a model and a teacher’s assistant on a migrant farm. It was during these years she gave birth to a son whose father was Monique’s best friend. Shortly after the demise of their relationship, she moved away from her hometown. From there, she worked various desk jobs until she accepted a position at Alvin State University where she worked as an administrative secretary for several years. Motivated by the need to make a better life for her son, Monique went back to school during this time and earned a bachelors and graduate degrees. Monique recalls her struggles raising her son through middle and high schools as a single parent. She recalled having a hard time feeding her son. She started, “…they’d pass out coupons for Chick fil a …I’d get three or four of them and that would be his dinner every night.” Professionally, the situation was not as bad. She was gradually promoted through the university system and become the assistant director in the office of testing. Similar to

Nancy's story, Monique felt overwhelmed when she had to assume more work responsibilities following the death of the department director. She felt exploited by the system, "I worked for over a year as the interim director without the title or the respect." She remembered this period of time as challenging as she had "inherited" a team that wasn't used to technology and was often combative when it came to change. She experienced disrespect from her colleagues for being Black and young. She was often referred to as "kiddo" in meetings. Monique often felt the need to lift her chair higher and lean into the conference room table at meetings to enhance her sense of confidence.

Monique took great pride in having earned the respect of her peers and faculty. She proclaimed, "...Faculty know they can trust me to test their students… they know we will be as accommodating as we can..." Monique believed she was divinely placed in her directorship position to be a light and a comfort to students of all races especially African Americans. "There aren't many African-American administrators across campus and if our babies don't see more of us here, they are more likely to leave."

Randy

A potential participant introduced me to Randy via emails. Interviews with Randy were subsequently conducted via Facetime. Randy was the youngest daughter of two educators. She and her brother were raised in a small city in South Carolina where their mother was a math teacher and their father was an instructor at a local college. She described a very structured home life: "We had a certain time for bed, we had to make straight A's and we had to work hard in our household."

Randy's mother was the central figure in her home and according to Randy she, "…ran a tight ship". Her mother had strong views on the images of African Americans on television. As a result, Randy and her brother were not allowed to watch many of the shows their peers were allowed to watch. She reflected, "We were allowed to watch the Cosby show and A Different World but not much else."

Growing up in a military town, Randy was constantly surrounded by people of different races and cultures. "I met new friends every two or three years." Randy attended a very diverse local high school with a large military student population comprising of children born and raised in the small town. Randy found those childhood years very controlled because of the way she spoke and because of her name. "We were not allowed to use slang so our peers thought we talked white…and of course having a boy's name gave my peers a reason to single me out."

Randy went on to college where she pursued a degree in music education. Although her transition to college life was not difficult, Randy talked of her first experiences in college as "eye opening". Her school was located in a small, rural town a predominantly white population. It was common to see white people working as ground maintenance, cafeteria workers, and other "blue collar" jobs. Randy reflected, "I realized then, lack did not have a color." Randy seemed to embrace her new surroundings despite being one of three African-American students in her freshmen class. Randy reconciled her strong sense of identity as an African-American woman and fought hard to dispel stereotypical images she believed white people held about Black people.

After a failed attempt at taking the PRACTISS exam to become a music teacher, Randy turned her attention to admissions recruiting. She began recruiting at her alma mater full time shortly after receiving her degree. During this time, Randy excelled in her work and quickly moved up the ranks becoming Associate Director of Admissions. Her desire to "solidify" her new career by furthering her education moved her to a new school. She expressed her strong desire to go back to school during her interview and after she was settled into her new role, she was told to wait a year before entering into her chosen graduate school. She was very disappointed and felt "... devastated… I left my comfort zone, took a step down in title just to go to graduate school. I felt like I had been misled." Not willing to let this stop her, Randy continued on at her new school until the newly appointed Director of Enrollment of her alma mater offered her an interim position as Director of Admissions. Randy surmised the reason for being offered an interim position was based on the history of the school's affiliation with the Presbyterian Church. She explains, "… this school had very strict rules about women serving in leadership roles and this was his way of getting me in through the backdoor." She was later appointed Director and made history as the first African-American director in the schools 172-year history. Randy moved from her alma mater to her Hometown University several years later. She attributed her willingness to stay with predominantly white institutions to her "wanting to break stereotypes society has about African-American women." Randy believed that as long as she continues to work with excellence, she would serve as a positive role model in her area of influence.

Deidra

I met Deidra five years ago at a professional organization meeting. She took me under wing and freely shared details of her professional experiences. Deidra grew up in a small middle class family in a rural town of Virginia. As the eldest of two girls, Deidra was a tomboy and shared a close relationship with her father. He treated her as the son he never had. Deidra recalled, "…there were only two girls so I was the one… outside with my dad… cutting grass, pulling weeds, or being in the garden...." Deidre's close relationship with her father did not allow time for her to cultivate a traditional feminine role or identity. She confessed, "I didn't know how to cook when I left home… didn't know how to sow, and all that good stuff..."

Religion was a central part of Deidra's family. Her family was actively involved in the local church and attended multiple services a week. Deidra and her family practiced Christian beliefs in their daily lives and believed in "…doing things that were acceptable in God's eyes…" African-American culture and identity was not as important to them as maintaining their devout practices. As a result, Deidra lived a sheltered life and was only allowed to go to church, participate in sports and go to school.

In elementary and high school, Deidra was well liked and admired by her peers because of her outstanding athletic abilities. Her athletic accomplishments filled her with pride. She fondly remembered one of the proudest moments in her life as "…earning her letterman's jacket in high school." Deidra not only excelled in sports, she was a high achiever academically as well. She reminisced, "… I made honor roll all the way through… good grades was something that was expected…" Deidra's teachers served as

positive mentors for her during this time. She fondly recalled pleasant interactions with teachers. She stated, "because it was a small school in a small community, the teachers often served as not only educators, but mentors and close friends."

Despite her "... sheltered lifestyle", Deidra became pregnant in her senior year of high school and had a son. Deidra's son motivated her to continue with education to "… make a good life for my son…" Consequently, she was determined to travel 45 minutes away to attend college. Commuting back and forth to school, while her parents cared for her son was her biggest challenge in college. She "... had to get up before dawn to commute to the city and ... often times wouldn't get home until late at night."

Deidra tried unsuccessfully to obtain a degree in nursing and ultimately settled on a career in budget and finance where she worked as a work study student. Her exceptional work in finance quickly resulted in her promotion in the department. Deidra was promoted several times, moving from finance level I, to budget manager. Her "work ethic and expertise" propelled her to Director of Finance position where she served for several years reporting to the Dean of the School of Nursing.

Deidra faced many challenges as the Director of Finance when the dean she worked for retired and there was a change in regime. Deidra described their conflict, "…She had a different mindset and way she wanted the school to be structured." It wasn't long after the regime changed that the new dean restructured the finance office and hired an Associate Dean of Budget and Finance. During this process, Deidra worked with the dean to develop a job description for the position and participated in the search for who would essentially become her new boss. Deidra speculated hesitantly, "…I just

went along with the process believing that the Dean had the school's best interest at heart." The restructuring of their department did not have a negative effect on her. Deidra remained positive about her role. She shared confidently, "I love what I do. I am good at it, and I know I'm contributing to the success of the school."

Andrea

Like Randy, Andrea was recruited to participate in this study through a snowball sampling selection process. Andrea grew up in a happy two-parent home as an only child of two educators. Andrea's mother was a strong influence in her life and Andrea aspired to follow in her footsteps and become a teacher. Andrea mused, "… I never allowed myself to think about doing anything other than what mama did."

Despite growing up during a time where racial tensions were at their peak; Andrea never believed she was limited in what she could accomplish in life. She attributed much of her tremendous success in higher education to her "…willingness to step outside the box and learn new things." Over the years Andrea has enjoyed a successful academic career at what is considered among the "Ivey League of HBCUs". Moreover, she has served in student affairs at both PWIs and HBCUs, her career expands from working in multicultural affairs to counseling services. Her drive and ambition and what she deemed as "having a thick skin", allowed her to achieve career advancement and become Director of Student Affairs at the age of 29. She shared: "I have never taken anything personally. I tend to believe the best in people."

Over the years, Andrea channeled all of her interest to excel in her administrative work in student affairs. She earned various certificates in law and career counseling; all

of which she used in her work daily. Andrea believed her willingness to continue working for a PWI was rooted in her desire to be a type of mentor for African Americans who may be first generation college students. Andrea shared, “I am here for young people of color to see positive images of African-Americans.” Given the opportunity to address young women of color, she stressed the importance of having a backup plan, especially for employment purposes for Black women. She stated, “You must have plan A through D.” Andrea has a “pay it forward” mentally and found joy helping others reach their professional goals, whether it is being President of an institution or Director of Student Affairs. She was committed to informally advising young African-American women and believed that “if you catch young women while they are young and teach them to work with excellence and not allow them to give themselves excuses they WILL achieve career success…”

Discussion of Themes

Data analysis utilized Miles, Huberman, and Saldana’s (2014) three cycles. First, Cycle involved developing codes based on common meanings, In the second Cycle, related codes were groups into chunks of data called categories, and finally analytic memoing involved developing larger chunks of data from associated categories (See tables 2 and 3). This method of coding involved identifying words or short phrases that express salient, summative attributes for a portion of visual data (Miles et al., 2014). Interview and institutional documents data was analyzed through the lenses of Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Thought, and Campus Racial climate to develop thematic codes, categories and final themes for this study. The emergent themes were based on the literature reviewed for this study and addressed the research questions that guided the

study. The emergent themes were derived from interview data, personal reflections, and institutional documentation.

Interviews were conducted utilizing Seidman's (2006) three series interview guide. Analytic memos were written throughout interviews to record my personal reflections, and a review of institutional policies was conducted after each participant's first interview. Through a process of constant comparison among all three sources of data, I was able to rule out any discrepancies in the data. This process also allowed me to compare the women's experiences for similarities and differences (Maxwell, 2013).

As each interview transcript was read, initial codes were generated based on similar words or phrases that captured participants' experiences. For example, Randy remembered, "my mother was the central figure in my household growing up." To capture who she identified as the central figure in her home, I coded the word mother with CF for central figure. Table 2 reflects a portion of the initial codes developed during the first cycle of coding

Table 2

Examples of First Cycle Codes

Code	Code Description
CF	Central Figures – Mother, influence, strong
BJ	Behavior Justification – Accepted, intentional
RI	Racial Identity – My identity, African American, woman, culture, black

CT	Career Trajectory – Career path or career choice

Utilizing a matrix of the various codes developed from the participant interviews, I grouped the repetitive codes across interviews to create different categories. In Table 2, for instance, codes associated with CF (central figures or influential people in the participant's life) were combined to create a category associated with that and other similar codes. Table 3 illustrates the generation of the category Cultural Awareness through similar codes identified across the data matrix.

Table 3

Example of Second Cycle Categories

Category	Participant Response
Cultural Awareness	1. Nancy: I wouldn't say I ever had parents that told me I had to work harder because I was black. But I did have to work harder because I am a woman. 2. Randy: Growing up the neighborhood that my brother and I grew up in, we were the third black family in that neighborhood. Because it was a military town, many of my friends were non-black; they were Philippines, Latinos, and White. 3. Deidra: I grew up in a Christian household so it was more so doing things that were acceptable in God's eyes. Being black had little to do with how I was taught to

behave.

4. Monique: I always have to acknowledge the fact that I come from a multicultural background. My father is African American and my Mother is white. One does not preclude the other and so I associate myself with both.

5. Andrea: Well you know I grew up in an era where we were taught to love ourselves and our culture. I was always proud of who I was as an African-American woman.

Related categories of data were grouped into large chunks to develop four major conceptual themes for this study: (1) Domestication of the Professional Space (2) Influence of Family and Racial Beliefs on African-American Female Leadership, (3) Marginalization and (4) Navigating the work environments.

In reflection to the literature reviewed on Black feminist theory it was essential to understand the women's experiences and perceptions regarding the roles of African-American women as gatekeepers for young women matriculating through PWIs. Participants of this study associated informal advising with caring and nurturing of students, mainly students of color, and the understanding of race related issues exist at PWIs. Likewise, notions concerning self-identification, family and cultural values, and racial/cultural identity development for the purposes of assimilation into a PWI were grouped together to develop the theme Influence of Family and Racial Beliefs on

African-American Female Leadership. This theme examined participants' perceptions of their cultural awareness and identity, how they reconciled their views of racialized experiences, and their assimilation into PWIs. Finally, the notions of institutional climate and circumstantial career trajectory were grouped together to develop the theme of Marginalization. This theme captured the participants' experiences concerning their career paths and their views regarding perceived road-blocks, and influences that guided their passage to their current roles as directors.

Utilizing cross case analysis (Merriam, 2009), I studied the meaning of each theme to gain an understanding of the findings. The experiences shared by the participants were compared and contrasted as a group. Each theme has been enhanced and corroborated by excerpts from participants' interviews. Although these themes are regarded as distinct, the boundaries between them are porous and overlap. Table 4 illustrates a matrix used to identify the emergent characteristic themes of each female director.

Table 4

Characteristic Themes of each Female Director

Participants	Domestication of the Professional Space	Influence of Family and Racial Beliefs on African-American Female Leadership	Marginalization	Navigating the work environment
Andrea	X	X	X	X
Deidra		X	X	X
Monique	X	X	X	X

Nancy		X	X	X
Randy	X	X	X	X

Domestication of the Professional Space

All five women in this study provided college students and peers a form of literacy that is particularly understood and executed by them as Black women. Johnson-Bailey, Lasker-Scott, and Sealy-Ruiz, (2015) defined mentoring as a way in which individuals aspiring toward personal and career success find support from a person who has already achieved that desired goal. Although there is no concise definition of mentoring, many scholars have described the roles of mentors and its benefits to mentees as providing career and psychosocial support as one navigates toward a goal (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012; Knight & Trowler, 1999; Mullen, 2000). In recent years, these types of informal advising models have been expanded in an effort to increase retention and promotion rates of historically marginalized members of campus communities (Fletcher and Mullen, 2012). Moreover, informal advising models developed to support African-American women have been found to be mutually beneficial and work toward collective achievement (Griffin, 2012; Tillman, 2002). African-American women's informal advising relationships are unique and provide a means for them to receive career and psychosocial support within environments that are perceived as unsupportive or hostile (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2015).

Female directors in the current study expressed overt acts of caring and nurturing and a heightened sensitivity of race related issues towards African-American students at PWIs. Informal advising in the study was reflected through the participants' experiences

regarding their interactions with students. When asked to describe their roles and responsibilities as directors, three of the five directors believed that outside of their formal job descriptions, they also served as mentors to students with whom they came in contact. Andrea described how she has often held pizza nights for African-American students to come and talk openly about their classes and campus life. "This is a time for [her] babies to speak freely and talk about their day. [She] shows them love and offers advice for dealing with faculty and life."

The women developed family-like bonds with the students they come in contact with and often served as care-givers, mentors, and gate-keepers for first generation college young African-Americans students seemingly struggling to navigate their way through culturally diverse college environments.

The women's characteristic of caring and nurturing was examined through the lens of BFT (Black Feminist Thought). Collins (2009), proponent of the BFT theory explained how African-American women's unpaid labor within their families and extended families represent a source of empowerment. He argued unpaid work such as caring for family members, teaching life skills, and keeping their families together is seen as a form of resistance to perceived career roadblocks (Bullock-Yowell, Andrews, & Buzzetta, 2011; Collins, 2009; Alfred, 2001). While African-American women undertake the role of caring for others, their efforts are often overlooked and exploited (Collins, 2009). These roles illuminated through BFT often translate into how African-American women directors relate to students.

As a director Monique facilitated the day to day operations of the testing center. She was in charge of the testing schedules of standardized tests and maintained security for the testing environment. More importantly, Monique took it upon herself to provide a learning environment where students felt safe and supported. She would often times find herself "celebrating when the student celebrated and crying when the student cried." This behavior aligns with the Black Feminist Theory's view of nurturing and caring for individuals perceived as marginalized. Monique demonstrated this behavior by comforting students who often come through [her] office seemingly scared and nervous. She empathized with students who felt traumatized with the very prospect of taking serious exams that would ultimately determine their career trajectories. She assumed the role of comforter in-chief and advised students on the importance of preparation and discipline when preparing for high stakes testing. She often found herself "chastising them [students] and really getting in their faces like their mommas would." Although, Monique was not considered faculty and did not know much about the subject matter being tested, she felt compelled to offer them practical knowledge and strategies that could help them find success in the test.

Monique also advised two minority student campus organizations: a national fraternity and the university's gospel choir, thereby extending her official role as director. Her maternal nurturing insticts compelled her to help the students and assist them in navigating through campus policies. Monique explained, "I have taken on the responsibility of making sure the students conduct their campus activities according to the university's policy… I don't mind the extra work because I believe they [students]

need guidance and they don't always understand how to communicate outside of their normal interactions with their peers."

Likewise, Randy's maternal instincts drove her to extend her official director responsibilites to include guiding African-American students through the process of admissions in a way that is culturally unique and distinct. Randy as the "first impression the students have of the university", felt responsible for creating a warm welcoming atmosphere for students. Randy often spent extra hours helping potential students comprehend the application process. Randy also went beyond the her official responsibilities and reached out to not only potential students but parents as well. In her previous role as Senior admissions counselor, Randy neatly encapsulated her behavior as follows :

> I did not have a defined role and so I began to focus my recruiting efforts on minorites… spending time outside of my regular hours establishing relationships with high schools which had a high population of minority students. I gained the trust of these students by being honest with them and helping them interpret the university's requirements in relation to the coursework they were currently taking.

Randy empathized and sympathized with first generation college students who had no reference for passing admissions tests, applying for financial aid, and manuevering through the university's admissions process.

Andrea also shared similar sentiments regarding her extended role as director of student services. She candidly admitted:

….. I tend to develop more personal relationships with my African-American students simply because when they see me, they feel as though I can relate to what they may be struggling with… and some even call me their second mom… I take that role seriously so I don't pull punches with them and I talk to them like their mothers would.

She recalled creating opportunities for herself to be involved with minority students. Her story bore a strikingly familiar tone to Monique's in that she too served as a campus advisor for a minority student organization. Andrea remembered taking on, the role as campus advisor not realizing the work involved. She 'spent countless hours teaching these young ladies proper strategies for effectively dealing with faculty, staff and administration' She wanted to help them avoid making "any mistakes because they are judged more harshly than their peers"

Data from the study suggests participants gained a sense of fulfillment through their interactions with students and often chose to continue their work at PWIs because of the students. This sybiotic relationship is revealed across the data and aligns with studies by Griffin (2012) and Tillman (2010) in which they affirm African-American informal advising relationships are benificial to both parties. When asked why she chose to continue working for a PWI, Monique revealed, "Students are my motivation… I've been on the edge of quitting because of previous negative interactions with administration… then I'll have a student that will walk in and express gratitude and say thank you so much for helping me get through this test… I appreciate you so much…. It is moments like these that make you realize your work is important." Past students treasured Monique's help and stayed in touch with her by calling and visiting her after

they had completed their education and their successes inspired her to continue “the unseen work” of guiding young African-Americans to success.

Providing an analougous response, when asked what her motivation was to continue working for a PWI, Randy expressed:

> Working and living in an area whose population has a large number of minorities, I see a need for students (African-American women in particular) to have a person they can identify with as they come through the doors of the university. I see my role as representative of the universtity bridging the gap between first generation minority students and the institution.

Andrea’s response resonated the similar notion of informal advising providing a valid motivation for persistence in working for a PWI as she explained:

> I look at this university and there is no representation of African-American women at the VP level or higher administrative levels. If I see it, the students see it as well and they need someone they can relate to and come to and I am that person. ... The minorities are between thirty and forty percent at this university and this should be mirrored in your administrative structure so students can say they have someone to go to. I need to be here for the students because if I’m not here and they don’t see anyone at this level they feel they can relate to, they are going to go home and not come back.

Influence of Family and Racial Beliefs on African-American Female Leadership

The respondents' ideology of racial identity influenced their views of institutional cultures of PWIs. Institutional culture is a useful concept for understanding how the female directors viewed themselves. All women were keenly aware of the impact of race, class, and gender oppression upon their career trajectories. The women's survival strategies and actions were characterized by acts of courage, independence, and pragmatism under the PWI institutional culture. The theme of Influence of Family and Racial Beliefs on African-American Female Leadership was examined through participants' accounts of their lived experiences in relation to how they viewed themselves as African-American women working for a PWI. In addition, the theme examines the views of their families' cultural values as well as their experiences concerning self-definition, rejecting stereotypes, and understanding academic culture and its role expectation.

All of the women shared the common notion of having strong influences from their central figure in the home; their mothers. Of the five participants, three recalled having a family structure in which their mothers were the central figure in the home. Although some had fathers who were present in the home, the women identified their mothers as the primary influence in their lives. They viewed their mothers as managers of the household finances, maintaining the daily domestic duties of the home, and facilitating the household rules of order. The notion of the African-American mother's being the central figure in the home is substantiated in the conceptual framework of this study (Alfred, 2001; Henderson, Hunter, and Hildreth, 2010; and Grier-Reed & Ganuza, 2011).

Randy fondly reminisced of her mother as she recalls how "Mom ran the house. ... and dad adored and respected that." This family experience may have influenced her leadership role regarding her behavior towards student and peers at work. All participants proudly embraced the common stereotype of the "strong black woman". This is commonly associated with African-American women who must assume the primary responsibilities in their homes, maintain careers, and take care of their families (Settle, 2006). The participants felt compelled to outperform their peers with regards to the quantity and quality of their work and often adopted this notion that African-American women must perform above and beyond the normal expectations of women from other races. Randy surmised, "When I look at all my mother accomplished: from having a successful career in education, raising two children, and managing the day to day operations at home, there was just an unspoken expectation as a black woman we must do these things and do them well."

Nancy echoed a similar sentiment when describing her family structure as being "very strict… mother was definitely the central figure in our home… Although my father was present, my mother was the final decision-maker." Nancy also revealed how her mother's influence guided her in her ambition to achieve her educational and career goals.

> My mother was my motivator. She was always the one to challenge me. She was always pushing me by constantly asking me what's next. Every time I would achieve some goal either in school or in my extracurricular activities, she would always ask me about my next accomplishment. She would never let me rest in what I had just achieved.

As with the other women, Monique's family structure centered around her mother as the primary figure in the home. Although, Monique's experience is slightly different due to her mother being white, she recalls, "even though [her] mother was white, she was still embraced in [their] community… she was the problem solver and the person many depended on to help with their children." Watching her mother serve as a leader in her small community motivated her to be and do more. She shared, "One of my proudest moments was when I was able to purchase a home by myself because I knew it was something my mother wanted for me because she was never able to do it." The stories shared by the participants align with studies regarding African-American women and the duality of their roles in the home and in the workplace (Collins, 2009; Settles, 2006).

In this study, racial identity development is defined as the basic progressions individuals goes through when defining their racial identity (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998). All five women assumed their mother's identification as strong women. However, with regards to race and cultural identity all participants' divulged varying stages of racial identity development. This finding reflects Crawford and Smith, (2005); Steele, Spencer, and Aronson, (2002); and Wolfe and Dilworth, (2015) idea of cultural identity and self-efficacy. These researchers have concluded race is an important variable when examining minority career development. When asked about their experiences as African Americans, their responses ranged from conformity; where the participants exhibited a preference for the dominant cultural, to awareness; wherein a sense of security and the appreciation of positive aspects of all cultures is developed (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998).

African-American Women's Conformity to PWI's Majority Culture

The conformity stage of the racial identity model is a framework to understand attitudes and behaviors of minority individuals in relation to their ethnic development (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998) which is continuous and many of its stages blend together. This first stage identified by researchers, reflects a model of social interaction in which the female directors identified with the majority culture associated with the PWI more than the traditional African-American culture they grew up in. Their stories revealed a history from childhood of being perceived as different from their peers. Nancy poignantly recalled being humiliated by other African-American children because she "talked white". She states

> I have always been different from my peers because there is this "black code" that everybody is supposed to understand certain things and some things I didn't understand. It's because I came from a different environment. I was someone who was different.

Nancy expounded on her "being different" and recalled a recent incident wherein she was at an assembly with other coworkers and was asked if she was familiar with a mainstream colloquialism often used by African Americans to which she replied, "How am I supposed to know what that means?"

As with Nancy, when Monique remembered her experiences in her first semester at an HBCU (Historically Black College/University) she states:

> From day one, I never felt comfortable. It was all that pride. It was

> constant… not saying it was a bad thing. They constantly talked about African-American pride and African-American strength. I felt out of place because I felt like I was stereotyped as soon as I got there because I wasn't interested in the things the other girls were in to. I didn't relate to their views and so I was isolated my first semester and when I went home for Christmas break, I never went back.

The self-identified "difference" from traditional African-American culture reverberated in the women's stories is reflected in much of the literature surrounding the conformity stage of racial identity in which there is a preference for the dominant culture (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998). This preference for the dominant culture can often times effect the way in which African-American women relate to the institutional culture of their university and cause them to devalue their own work and worth or to justify incidents that have racial implications (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Harper and Hurtado, 2007). A clear example of this can be seen in how three of the five participants accepted interim director positions without seeking a temporary pay increase to compensate their increased work loads.

African-American Women's Moments of Dissonance at PWI's

Researchers identify the second stage in the racial and cultural identity model as dissonance. In this stage, an individual experiences an encounter of a personal or public nature that causes them to alter their feelings regarding their preference to the dominant culture (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998). When asked about her experiences during her transition to college Randy revealed how she experienced culture shock when

she dined in the school's cafeteria for the first time. She remembers, "I had never seen a white person serve food or wash dishes… I was eighteen years old and a freshman in college and I started learning poor did not have a color."

Andrea recalled a story that occurred early in her career shortly after she began working at a PWI. She was asked to serve on a search committee where intense salary negotiations were taking place. She remembered:

> There were two very qualified candidates with equal educational and professional backgrounds. My concern was, one of the candidates was African-American the other was Caucasian. The Caucasian candidate was asking for more money than the other people who currently held positions with the same job descriptions. I struggled with whether I should voice my concerns because the rest of the committee seemed to be okay with the decision to bring her on at her desired salary. In the long run, I took the easy way out but it changed the way I looked at the institution as a whole.

These defining moments for Randy and Andrea marked a stage researchers define as dissonance (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998). Randy's beliefs regarding the roles and positions of White people in the workforce and in society was challenged and ultimately shifted her way of thinking with regards to her own career trajectory. Andrea's beliefs that her educational and professional experiences dictated her career trajectory were confronted and a lack of trust in her university was formed.

Integrative Awareness

Most of the participants shared identifiable moments in which they projected an acceptance of their identities and sought to affect change in the thinking of not only younger women like themselves, as demonstrated through their informal advising, but in the dominant White cultural stereotypical views of African-American women. Their desire to be positive role models and examples align with the foundational tenets associated with the racial identity model (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998). In this stage, emphasis is made on the commonalities of African-Americans and the rest of American society. Moreover, there is a strong belief in working within mainstream institutions to challenge systems of oppression and resistance while stressing the importance of interaction between Blacks and Whites (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998). Most of the respondents represented a counter narrative to stereotypes regarding African-American women and share a desire to break those stereotypes in their circle of influence.

Randy was "unintentionally breaking down all types of stereotypes about African-American women". When asked about her motivation to continue working for PWI's she shared:

> Every time I hear them say Randy you are so pleasant and so positive.
> You smile all time… I am hearing everything that is being communicated
> to me and what's being communicated is you are not the person I see on tv
> rolling her neck and popping her lips and I don't take offense to that at all

> but I need people to know this is not rare. You are the issue. You have no exposure.

Andrea echoed a similar response when asked about her reasons for continuing to work for a PWI. She stated: "Every time I open my mouth in a meeting or speak up regarding racial and cultural difference, I am acting as a change agent." Andrea believed that her role allows her to "bridge a gap that breaks down barriers of communication and understanding between African Americans and the university".

These and other stories shared by the participants mark a stage of racial identity researchers categorize as Integrative Awareness or Assimilationist (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998). The women in this stage have a definitive understanding of who they are as African-American women and how they must navigate perceived roadblocks in institutional policies for the betterment of themselves and those that will follow in their footsteps.

Marginalization

All respondents shared personal experiences aligning with the theme of marginalization in the workplace which influenced their career trajectory and their ability to navigate in the work environment. For the purposes of this study, marginalization is defined as any issue, situation, or circumstance that has placed these women outside of the flow of power and influence within their institutions (Patitu and Hinton, 2003). The notion of marginalization is substantiated in the theoretical framework provided by the psychological dimension of Campus Racial Climate (Fries-Britt, Rowan-Kenyon, Perna, Milem, & Howard, 2011; Harper and Hurtado, 2007). This dimension is characterized by

perceptions of racial and ethnic tension, perceptions of discrimination, and attitude and prejudice reduction within an institution. All of the women, at various times during their professional careers in higher education were placed at the periphery of decision-making processes and had limited access to resources in their organizations. Marginalization in the work place was revealed through the lived experiences shared by the participants wherein they experienced feelings of not being appreciated, overworked, and undercompensated. The respondents shared stories in which their work was not recognized or rewarded, where they were given limited access to resources, and their contributions were overlooked or ignored completely.

Deidra, the Director of Budget and Finance for her college, reported to the dean of the college and was responsible for managing fiscal transactions and budget preparations. Deidra remembers a turbulent time in her career involving the transition in administration.

> When the new dean came on board it was challenging. It was like I had to prove myself all over again. She was used to a certain structure and her mindset was different. She was used to having a CPA on board. Although my position didn't require me to have a CPA, and I was already providing her with the same reporting and budgeting oversight.

Deidra described how the dean eventually created a new position, Dean of Fiscal Administration, and hired a CPA as her direct report. "I ultimately ended up training a CPA to do what I was already doing." The new position added a layer between her and the dean, which ultimately moved her completely out of fiscal management.

Similarly, Nancy shared an experience wherein she was excluded from resources that were made available to other colleagues in her department. As an advisor, Nancy's work involved commuting to different campuses daily. Her schedule often times conflicted with the professional development courses offered to her peers. Nancy reflected:

> I was off campus every day of the week. At that point I was gung ho about growing and learning and since I was placed in this position, I missed a lot of professional development. I told my dean that I wanted to attend this presentation and her response was "…if need be, we can give you the information."

Nancy tried on numerous occasions to work with administration to schedule professional development during times she would be able to attend but there was no change. Nancy eventually found courses on her own that were convenient to her schedule.

Monique also described stories with the similar underpinnings of the theme of marginalization. She recalled attending a director's meeting where all of her colleagues were asked to give updates on their division. Monique shared, "Right in the middle of my update one of the senior directors made a dismissive gesture and talked right over me." She went on to share how she was often called "kiddo" in these meetings and asked to take notes.

All respondents' experiences surrounding their promotion to the director positions reflected marginalization and revealed a common thread of "not feeling good enough" and the undervaluation of their work. Monique "was asked to take on the role of interim

director after the current director unexpectedly passed away." She was underpaid for one year and nine months while serving as interim director until the institution conducted a formal search that required her to apply and interview for the position. Ultimately, she was selected as director, but she believed the decision to conduct a search and her having to compete for the position had racial implications. "Although [she] was hired, it was bitter sweet because [she] was already doing the work so it made [her] feel like they didn't think [she] was competent".

Nancy's rise to directorship was precipitated by the resignation of the incumbent. Similar to Monique, Nancy was also required to apply for the director position after serving in the role for six months with her same pay. Nancy remembers feeling "like [she] wasn't good enough because others in my department had been appointed to their directorships around the same time without having to go through an official search."

Although the circumstances regarding Randy's promotion to director were slightly different, a common thread was revealed:

> When the new vice president of enrollment was hired he basically came in surveying his land and he was told by everyone he talked to he needed to rehire me and bring me back "home". So he brought me back as interim director.

A review of institutional polices from all three of the universities, yielded no policy regarding the appointment of those serving interim positions. Therefore, appointments of those types were left up to the discretion of the administrators/dean. Moreover, it should

be noted, a review of the hiring data at Randy's university showed her as being the first African-American woman director in the 107 years history of the institution.

The synonymous notion of marginalization threaded within the participants' responses aligned with the conceptual framework that purports the idea of African-American women being undervalued in the workplace (Collins, 2009, Hiraldo, 2010). Moreover, their stories reflect an institutional cultural that can be perceived as indifferent concerning policies that may affect African-American women's career development (Harper and Hurtado, 2007; Fries-Britt et al., 2011).

Navigating the Work Environment

The respondents' in this study revealed a paradoxical view regarding their perceptions of their daily work at a PWI. Their stories affirmed that all of their institutions provided ample access to resources that assisted them with day-to-day operations in their departments, as well as provided access to employee development opportunities that personally facilitated their career development. However, they found the institutional bureaucracy, campus policies, and their lack of decision-making authority, at times, constraining on their ability to be effective in their roles and responsibilities. The participants' notions regarding their daily work and navigating institutional cultures aligned with the Campus Racial Climate theory (Victorinio, Nylund-Gibson, & Conley, 2013). The theory was introduced as a four dimension model which describes a campus' climate for racial/ethnic diversity (Fries-Britt S. L., Rowan-Kenyon, Perna, Milem, & Howard, 2011). Those dimensions include: an institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial/ethnic groups, its structural diversity in terms of numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups, the psychological

climate of perceptions and attitudes between and among groups and the behavioral climate characterized by intergroup relations on campus (Victorinio, Nylund-Gibson, & Conley, 2013). Researchers purport the aforementioned factors can have a significant effect on how African-American women navigate their work environment (Collins, 2009; Fries-Britt, Rowan-Kenyon, Perna, Milem, & Howard, 2011; Harper and Hurtado, 2007 Hewlett, 2013).

A review of institutional policies regarding employee development revealed employee opportunities to engage in strategic learning programs and services. These programs were designed to increase individual and institutional effectiveness in achieving the university's goals. The majority of the universities have varying levels of employee development that meet the needs of all employees. All institutions provided employees with courses designed to enhance management/leadership, personal development, technology, and university procedures. Several of the universities offered certificate programs that allow employees to take a series of courses that culminate in earning certificates in administrative assistant, advising and diversity. All universities offered some form of tuition assistance programs that allow employees to take college courses and earn advanced degrees for little to no cost to the employee. This allowed the women to further their education by earning undergraduate and graduate degrees. Monique was able to earn her bachelor's degree early in her career through tuition assistance.

Monique participated in human resources and leadership courses. Monique explains, "Both my team and I attend classes. We try to do two per semester but that doesn't include the webinars we have with different testing agencies." The webinars, according to Monique, are required to effectively facilitate testing for the university. She

is required to review topics involving test security and the computerized test environment to increase her knowledge base for the director position she has now however, these type courses do not help further any long term goals she may have outside of the Office of Testing.

Randy attributed her rise to the director position to the support she received from her institution. She earned her graduate degree through her university's tuition assistance program. She expressed gratitude for her institution's employee tuition policy that "invest[ed] in [her] education ..."

Conversely, Randy was promised a mentor to help her learn the requirements of her new director position and at the time of this study she was disillusioned as she had yet to meet with her mentor.

Andrea was assigned a mentor as well but they were unable to meet due to several scheduling conflicts. She received mentorship via "a few emails, and that was it." She quickly learned " to play the game". She gained an understanding that many times communication of campus policy changes happened during university committee meetings. She utilized this knowledge of the institutional climate and campus politics and often served on different campus committees to "surround herself with access to upper administration". Here is where she learned strategies that aren't taught in the traditional employee development courses that allowed her to advocate for herself and her employees without being perceived as "angry" or "aggressive". She reflects,

> It's funny because often times in my personal life I get accused of talking over people and not letting them finish their sentences. I believe it is a

> habit that I have developed because when I am in a meeting often times if I don't speak out, I won't get a word in edge-wise.

Nancy developed strategies that were less outspoken to navigate her work environment. She recalls challenges with maintaining the chain of command:

> I'll never forget I was asked to create academic maps for all of the majors in our department. I wanted to let my supervisor know because I didn't want her to think I was working on something she didn't know about. She called the person who asked me to create the maps and told them we didn't want them that way.

Nancy went on to explain that when she is faced with conflicting directives she often worries that she will appear "incompetent" if she tries to ask for clarification. She relies on the chain of command and does things the way her supervisor would even if she doesn't agree because she believes she lacks decision making power. She lamented, "I am not in charge, so what am I supposed to do? There is not a lot of room for new ideas."

Summary

In this chapter, I utilized the basic interpretive research method using comparative analysis to examine the experiences of African-American women who achieve director positions in predominantly white 4-year state universities. Chapter 4 delivered the findings through data analysis, review of interview transcripts and review of institutional policies. Utilizing first and second cycle coding methods of analyzing data, four themes emerged. The four themes relating the experiences of African-American women

directors are: (1) Domestication of the Professional Space; (2) Influence of Family and Racial Beliefs on African-American Female Leadership; (3) Marginalization; (4) Navigating the work environment.

Participants' responses indicate African-American women employed as directors at PWIs serve as mentors to African-American students by helping them to access resources, providing a sense of family for students while away from home and by serving as role models. Many of the participants gain a sense of fulfillment serving in these unpaid roles and believe the students are a major contributing factor in their continuing to serve at PWIs. Secondly, African-American women shared similar experiences throughout their lives that shaped their views regarding their roles as women as well as their racial identities. All participants shared the common cultural background of having a strong mother figure that shaped their views on cultural and identity. However, there were identifiable differences in their developmental stages of racial identity. Finally the study revealed circumstantial career trajectory as a prevailing factor in the participants achieving director positions. Few of the women reported having earned professional positions through conventional methods of career advancement. Their stories revealed promotions based on the needs of the institution. Moreover, institutional policies did not reflect clear guidelines for the appointment of those serving in interim positions.

The findings of this research study examined the experiences of African-American women who achieved director positions in PWIs. The data suggests there are implications and recommendations for policy and further research. In my conclusion of the dissertation, I will discuss the limitations and implications of the study and render suggestions for further research

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

Analysis of African-American Women's Comprehension of Their Career Trajectories and Service as Department Directors

This basic interpretive study investigated five African-American women's comprehension of their career trajectories, roles, functions and responsibilities as departmental directors. The study used CRT and Black Feminist lenses to explore how race and gender influenced and shaped their professional behaviors as practicing female department directors. This is particularly relevant to the United States context where African-American women are severely underrepresented in higher educational departmental director positions. In such context, it is therefore pertinent to identify the professional experiences and strategies used by African-American women who achieve director positions in predominantly white 4-year state universities.

In this chapter I analyzed the multiple ways in which the five directors understood their career trajectories, roles and responsibilities as educational administrators. In addition, the conceptual framework and the methodological approach were summarized and findings interpreted. The study's limitations and the implications for research, policy and practice were highlighted. Four conceptual themes were used to characterize the various ways in which the female departmental directors perceived their trajectories and responsibilities as leaders: (1) Domestication of The Professional Space; (2) Influence of

Family and Racial Beliefs on African-American Female Leadership; (3) Marginalization; and (4) Navigating the Work Environment. For the purposes of analysis, these themes were treated as analytical isolates, even though the same phenomena may reflect more than one of the above categories simultaneously.

The study addressed two main research questions:

RQ1: What are the experiences of successful African-American female directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities located in the Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States in regards to their career advancements?

RQ2: What do female African-American directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities believe are strategies for increasing the number of directors at predominantly white institutions in the Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States?

As articulated in previous chapters, I utilized the basic interpretive methodological approach outlined by Merriam (2009). Using purposeful sampling strategies, participants were selected from a population of eight female African-American directors of various departments in predominantly white 4-year state universities located in the southeast region of the United States. After the participants were identified, interviews were conducted utilizing Seidman's (2006) three-series interview process. In addition, I examined the available policies of the institutions where the women are employed. The study was conducted over a five month period during which time I met participants in person and via online video conferencing to gain an understanding of their professional experiences as directors. After each interview was concluded and transcribed the interview, copies of the transcripts were made available to each

participant to clarify their thoughts and meaning of intent. Additionally, I recorded, reflected upon and acknowledged personal biases to address my subjectivity.

To analyze the data I utilized First Cycle, Second Cycle coding as prescribed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). This method of coding involved identifying words or short phrases that express salient, summative attributes for a portion of visual data (Miles et al., 2014). The raw data from each transcribed interview was notated with specific codes that identified words or phrases that could be used to answer the research questions. The codes were then grouped together by similarities to construct categories that captured recurring patterns across data sets. With the theoretical framework provided by the Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Thought, and Campus Racial climate, the categories were synthesized to develop the themes that answered the study's research questions.

Discussion of Themes

The four themes supported by the conceptual framework of the study indicate African-American women employed as directors at PWIs have extended roles including serving as informal advisors. They established personal relationships with African-American students and helped them to access educational resources such as professional tutors and counseling. They took on some of the functions and responsibilities of the student's parents and advised students on how to succeed in college and provided a sense of family for students while away from home and by serving as role models. The participants gained a sense of fulfillment serving in these unpaid, informal advising roles and believed the students were a major contributing factor in their continuing to serve at PWIs.

Additionally, African-American women shared an ideology of racial identity that influenced their experiences as directors at PWIs. All women shared the aspect of growing up with their mothers being central figures in their home. Moreover, they all recognized their mothers' influence in shaping their worldview and some attribute their mothers' strong influence on their career decision-making and on how they navigate their work environment. There were, however, identifiable differences in the developmental stages of their racial identity that affected their perception of racialized experiences working for PWIs.

The participants' experiences also revealed notions of marginalization in the workplace. Their stories reflected circumstances in which they, at some point in their careers, where placed at the periphery of decision-making processes and were allowed limited access to resources. In many instances, the respondents were left feeling as though their work was undervalued and they were undercompensated but they had no power to change their circumstances.

Finally, the study revealed a paradoxical viewpoint in how the participants interpret their institutional culture. Their experiences revealed a positive outlook regarding their institutions' employee development programs and in fact, all of the respondents shared how they have utilized employee development to enhance their departmental knowledge and earn advanced degrees. Although they were able in some circumstances to utilize these resources, they all acknowledged the bureaucracy and institutional culture of their universities hindered their ability to be effective in their roles. Many of the women reported having earned their position through nonconventional methods of career advancement. Their stories echo a similar notion of circumstantial

career trajectory that left them with a sense of feeling as though their contributions to their universities were not valued.

Theme I: Domestication of The Professional Space

This theme shows the complex relationship between gender, race and age. Here we see a situation where the boundaries between the home environment and the work place are blurred, a domestication of the workplace. All five women were actively involved in the general welfare of students, particularly African-American students whom they perceived as needing someone to help them bridge the gap between the home environment and the college environment. They provided these students a form of literacy that is understood and executed by them (Fletcher and Mullen, 2012; Knight and Trowler, 1999; Mullen, 2000). Furthermore, Johnson-Bailey et al., (2015) purported that African-American women's caring and nurturing relationships are unique and provide a means for them to give career and psychosocial support within environments which may be perceived as unsupportive or hostile. An analysis of the notion of African-American women providing informal advising specific to and for African-American students revealed three of the five participants expressed a belief that it was their duty as African-American women to informally advise African-American students to help them navigate PWI institutional culture. Monique used her role as director of testing and as campus advisor of African-American student organizations to translate campus policies, give insight on appropriate ways to manage interactions with faculty and administration, and promote student success. These beliefs align themselves with the underpinnings of the conceptual framework provided by BFT in which Collins (2009) purports African-

American women's unpaid labor within their families and extended families represents a source of empowerment and act as a form of resistance to institutional culture.

Symbiotic relationships were developed between the respondents of this study and the African-American students they informally advised. While the students may have gained a sense of family when away from home, the directors gained a sense of fulfillment in their extended roles as informal advisors. All of the participants who engaged in informal student advising felt a sense of purpose for their continued work at PWIs. Andrea, when asked her motivation to continue in her position as director of student affairs, explained the importance of African-American students having "someone they can relate to and come to". Monique shared similar feelings when asked about her reasons for continuing employment at a PWI. She admited to being on the verge of resigning from her directorship, "then I'll have a student that will walk in and express gratitude and say 'thank you so much for helping me get through this test… I appreciate you so much…'. It is moments like these that make you realize your work is important." These sentiments are echoed throughout the respondents' interview data and are highlighted in the literature supporting the notion of African-American women giving back to their community through informal advising (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2015; Fries-Britt and Kelly, 2005). Additionally, this type of informal advising supports models that have, in recent years, been expanded to increase retention and promotion rates of historically marginalized members of campus communitities (Griffin, 2012; Tillman, 2002). By advising the students on how to address issues properly with administration, how to handle perceived racialized incidents, and how to work with the institution to

fulfill the missions of their various organizations, the participants believed they are provided support to the students as well as the institution.

To the contrary, neither Deidra nor Nancy reflected a desire to informally advise students. For Deidra, the nature of her position did not allow her to come in contact with students at all but Nancy's position as Director of Advising put her in contact with students daily. Nancy's lack of interest in informally advising students may be attributed to the stage of racial identity researchers categorize as *conformity.* Nancy found it difficult to connect her experiences working for a PWI with her being an African-American woman. She would often preface the experiences she shared with "I don't think this has to do with me being an African-American woman." Additionally, her aversion for relating to traditional African-American culture and lingo is revealed by her use of the term "black code" with which she was unfamiliar. Her behavior reflected her identification with the dominant culture therefore; she had no insight to offer students on navigating the environment of PWIs from the perspective of being an African-American woman because she did not completely associate her experiences with those of African-American women.

In conclusion, the director's informal roles as student advisors may be understood as an added dimension to traditional advising models. This means their leadership goes beyond the formal professional roles of department directors. They tried to meet the psychosocial needs of young African-American students by providing services, which conventionally, falls under the remit of student affairs in a university. The actions displayed in their extended responsibilities as informal advisors often resulted in a

domestication of the professional space in which the roles they played in their home life are assumed in their professional lives as directors.

Theme II: Influence of Family and Racial Beliefs on African-American Female Leadership

Like many who grow up with an African-American upbringing, strong-willed, hardworking and purpose-driven mothers raised the female directors. They upheld the traditions, values and legacy of their families through their leadership. Randy and Nancy's mothers possessed natural leadership skills and seamlessly kept the family in line while running the family household. Data from this study suggests that their mothers, who were well organized, full of love, spiritually aligned and well balanced, prepared them for their leadership roles. This theme is supported by the principles of BFT, which contend that African-American women's leadership skills are developed in the home and in many cases transitioned into the work environment (Grier-Reed and Ganuza, 2011; Crawford and Smith, 2005).

Randy and Nancy both shared experiences of how they watched their mothers maintain careers, take care of their families, and set the tone in their households. Although both participants had fathers in their homes, it was their mothers' strong hand and guidance that provided support and motivation in reaching their professional and educational goals. The ideology of African-American women having strong female influences that influenced their career decision-making is supported in much of the literature of the theoretical framework provided by BFT (Grier-Reed and Ganuza, 2011; Crawford and Smith, 2005; Collins, 2000, 2001, 2009). Furthermore, Crawford and

Smith (2005) found a common thread of family history among African-American women who achieve career goals in institutions of higher education. Many of them carry the legacy of family members and report making decisions about their personal and professional lives based on their mothers' unrealized goals. Monique, in her interview, spoke of the moment she was able to purchase her first home and remembers, "One of my proudest moments was when I was able to purchase a home by myself because I knew it was something my mother wanted for me because she was never able to do it."

Deidra, in comparison, described herself as a "daddy's girl". Being the first born of two children, Deidra was "the son [her] father never had." In this role, Deidra spent most of her childhood bonding with her father, engaging in activities such as fishing, hunting, working on cars and doing yard work. As a result, Deidra hardly learned traditional female roles and she admittedly, "Didn't know how to cook, clean, or take care of home like [her] mother did". The effects of not having a tradition gender role as it relates to African-American culture can be recognized later in her career as a director as she shared experiences of being labeled as "hard-nosed and inflexible" at work because she did not display the nurturing, caring, supportive characteristics often seen in African-American women. Consequently, she did not embrace the role of informally advising students.

The five respondents' ideology regarding their racial identity varied when compared against the racial identity development model. The model examines the basic progression an individual encounters when defining their racial identity (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998). Many of the participants' responses regarding their experiences as African-Americans can be examined in light of the racial identity model

and subsequently places them on the continuum between conformity, where an individual exhibits a preference for the dominant culture, to awareness wherein a sense of security and the appreciation of positive aspects of all cultures is developed.

As the aforementioned data previously revealed, preference for the dominant culture is most evidently identified in Nancy's interview. She prided herself on being "different from [her] peers" and not understanding popular lingo associated with traditional African-American culture. Although she recalled being made fun of by other African-American children for "talking white" she did not see that as a challenge or struggle. In fact, she had a difficult time making meaning of what others would identify as racialized experiences and often found it difficult to share experiences about being an African-American women. This preference for the dominant culture can often effect the way in which African-American women relate to the institutional culture of their university. Many times, their inability to connect their experiences to the experiences of African-American women, cause them to devalue their own work and worth (Crawford and Smith, 2005; Harper and Hurtado, 2007). When Nancy described being denied access to employee development that was offered to her colleagues, she justified being treated differently. She justified the experience believing "[Her] supervisor more than likely thought [she] was planning to leave the university and didn't want to invest in sending me."

In comparison, Monique's experiences, in relation to the racial identity model, places her on the continuum between *conformity* and *dissonance.* Monique shared stories regarding her experiences attending an HBCU (Historically Black College and University) wherein she felt isolated and different from the other African-American

students because she was unable to identify with those students, particularly those who all had a strong sense of what she described as “black pride” to which she could not relate. This sense of disconnect can be explained by her self-identified “multicultural” background- her father being African American and her mother being White. Although, Monique thought it important to embrace both cultures as “one does not preclude the other”, she struggled with the passion her college classmates exuded with being African American. This disconnect reflected notions associated with the racial identity model’s *conformity* stage however, as Monique grew into her career she began to understand the implications of perceived racialized incidents and sought to help students navigate the culture of the PWI through informal advising.

The concept of *dissonance* is marked by a defining experience that is inconsistent with an individual’s culturally held beliefs (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998). Randy and Andrea echoed the clearest examples of this stage of racial identity. Both women shared specific experiences that altered their culturally held beliefs. Randy believed that only African Americans held jobs such as custodians, gardeners, and cafeteria workers in the public work sphere. These beliefs were altered when she went away to college and saw White people operating in roles she believed only African Americans held. Andrea shared an experience that altered the way she perceived the institutional climate of her university and ultimately caused her to lose trust in administration. Literature substantiates the shifts in thinking that may have altered the way African-American women’s view of their career decision-making (Alfred, 2001). Randy’s previously held cultural views did not allow her to see White people in service roles and caused her to limit her view regarding opportunities for African Americans to

hold leadership roles. This identifiable moment of dissonance changed those beliefs and allowed her to alter her career trajectory. Andrea's moment of dissonance, however, left her feeling as though she had to work harder to affect change in her area of influence to force administration to implement their hiring practices more objectively.

In the ending stages of the racial identity model, a person's beliefs become more integrative. The women in this stage have a definitive understanding of who they are as African-American women and how they must navigate institutional policies for the betterment of themselves and those that will follow in their footsteps (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998). This notion is reflected through the respondents' interviews but particularly in the older women who displayed a stronger sense of self and were willing to challenge institutional policies. Randy spoke of "unintentionally breaking down negative stereotypes" and clearly demonstrating her role of representing most African-American women at the institution. Literature supports the notion of negative stereotypes affecting the way African-American women are perceived in the workplace (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010) and she purposely challenges those stereotypes. She explains, "I don't take offense to [stereotypes] at all… [Administration] is the issue. [They] have no exposure." Andrea was keenly aware of how she might have affected change in her area of influence and she often seizes ideal opportunities in meetings and across campus to "bridge a gap that breaks down barriers of communication and understanding between African Americans and the university".

Theme III: Marginalization

The experiences of African-American women who achieved director positions at PWIs are characterized by feelings of alienation and marginalization (Alfred, 2001; Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010). Marginalization for African-American women can be interpreted as feeling invisible, having no decision-making power, having limited access to resources, and feeling undervalued and undercompensated (Collins, 2009; Henderson, Hunter, and Hildreth, 2010). All five of the women in this study identified experiences as directors that align with what researchers define as marginalization.

Deidra's expereience with her newly appointed dean supports researchers' notions of African-American women directors feeling they have limited decision making power, and are undervalued. During her interview, when she describe the process by which the dean made the decision to hire an Associate Dean of Finance, Deidra continually used the phrases, "this is what I was already doing" or "As I had done in the past". These type sentiments are expressed over and over in this particular discussion and concluded with her statement, "Although my position didn't require me to have a CPA, and I was already providing her with the same reporting and budgeting oversight...". She insinuated the work she was already doing was not good enough which ultimately was the reason the dean created a new position. Further review of the university's policies on creating new positions revealed that many times education can be substitued for experience in staff positions but for faculty the guidelines are more stringent. This notion is supported in literature that addresses how institutions often uses filters in searches to eliminate African-Americans from getting postitions (Crase, 1994; Sangaria, 2002;).

For Randy, the notion of marginalization was revealed in her shared experiences with white parents she came in contact with as the Director of Admissions. Randy shared an experience she had with parents of a potential student that wasn't accepted into the university. She shared:

> I was at the front desk for an open house and a couple walked in and ask to see the director of admissions. When I introduced myself, they looked down on their piece of paper and said, 'we are hear to see Randy'. I informed them that I was Randy and the lady looked up and said, 'Oh my goodness! I was looking for a white man'. I thought that was fair seeing as my name is Randy but once they realized that I was the director they said, 'We really need to talk to somebody that's in charge'. I was new to my role then and so I went and got my vice president who was a white man.

Her story aligns with literature supporting the theoretical framework of BFT. Researchers have found that negative or deragotory externally defined images that have controlled how African-American women are viewed in society at times overshadow the image of the African-American intellectual woman (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010). The absence of this type of positive imagery puts these women in roles that hold less value to the academy (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010). Though Randy's role as director made her the "somebody in charge", the family did not recognize her as such.

The notion of being undervalued and undercompensated was a prevalent undercurrent that pervaded the participants' interviews. Three of the participants

described circumstances surrounding their promotion to director and all three were placed in interim roles where they had increased responsibilities without increased pay. A review of institutional polices revealed administration can make appointments such as those with an increase in pay while an individual is acting in the role. All of the women believed taking on the responsibilities of director would allow them to move into their roles permanently so they were acceptant of not having an increase in pay with their new responsibilities. This idea of working harder for less pay aligns with current literature regarding inequality without regard to education, expertise, and professional experience. Henderson et al., (2010) framed a study that found African-American women believe as their scholarship, work, and instruction are undervalued and there is a lack of respect for their educational background, credentials, and experiences. These results are substantiated in that, after serving months in their interim roles, all of the women were required to apply for the directors' positions instead of being appointed to them. Experiences such as these may indicate devaluation in the education and work of African-American women directors. Moreover, their responses to these experiences indicate although they recognized they were being treated differently, they were still willing to accept the interim positions for less pay believing they had to work harder to prove they were qualified and capable of functioning in the role of director for compensation comparable for the position.

Theme IV: Navigating the Work Environment

Navigating the work environment was a critical component of how the participants handled their daily work in light of their perceptions of the institutional climate of their universities. The women echoed sentiments that revealed that although there were many resources their universities offered for employee development institutional bureaucracy, campus policies, and their lack of decision-making authority, at times, hindered their ability to be effective in their roles. The participants' notions aligned with research surrounding the conceptual framework provided by Campus Racial Climate that is characterized within the psychological dimension by perceptions of racial and ethnic tension, perceptions of discrimination, and attitude and prejudice reduction (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). These researchers have concluded all of these notions have a distinct affect on how African-American women navigate their work environments.

African-American women in the current study often found themselves forced to protect their careers over challenging institutional policies that are subjective in nature. Andrea presented an experience wherein her perception of administration had a direct affect on how she navigated her work environment. She shared how her involvement in a search committee ultimately left her conflicted about voicing her opinion on hiring practices. Forced with making a decision to face a perceived racialized injustice, she took the safer route and voted with the rest of the committee to protect her long-term career goals. Her perception of the university was if she "went against the grain", it could reflect poorly on her and hinder her work on campus committees in the future. Thus, there is a trend of the majority creating policy and procedures and the minority

carrying them out without questioning the racialized implications (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Monique also expressed the idea of protecting career goals versus challenging institutional culture when she shared an experience wherein she did voice an opinion that challenged the institutional culture of her PWI. She shared, “maybe I shouldn’t have said anything… but that would have been detrimental to that department and those students… Ultimately, I may never be promoted within this university again.” Monique’s statement reflects the sentiments many of the women in this study shared regarding how they navigate institutional culture at a PWI while protecting their career goals.

Randy’s perception of her institutional climate also affected the way she navigated her work environment. For her, legitimizing her long-term career goals through attaining a graduate degree was important. She shared, “I was already doing the work… I had all of the practical knowledge but I wanted to put some theory behind it”. Her desire to attain a graduate degree was delayed because administration denied her request to utilize the universities tuition assistance program. A review of her universities’ campus policies substantiated administration’s right to approve or disapprove requests for tuition assistance. Essentially, administration did not have to approve her request and they did not have to have a reason for doing so. Randy, being new to her role, chose to continue her work and “learn the job” until she was able to earn her graduate degree through other means. Administration’s denial of her request for tuition assistance not only affected Randy’s perception of the institutional climate, but it aligns with research that substantiates how many institutions only offered leadership opportunities and access

to resources if their interests align with those of the majority Hiraldo (2010). Furthermore, Hiraldo (2010) purports resources or rights such as the right to possession, the right to disposition, the right of exclusion, and the right to use and enjoyment are exclusive to Whites. Hiraldo gave as example the notion that many African Americans earn their doctorate degrees in educational administration but do not gain higher-level administrative positions. This leaves them unable to influence policies. Because the majority of administrators are white, the continuation of the idea subsists that their input is valued more than minority.

Research Questions: Looking Across the Directors

An examination across the female directors revealed some similarities and some fundamental differences in their career trajectories and service as leaders and the way they related to the institutions they served. The differences are a result of their different ages, social backgrounds and their roles at the various institutions where they were employed. Older directors, for instance, displayed a sense of obligation to teach young African-American students lessons based on their personal experiences with the institutional culture of PWIs. Monique and Andrea demonstrated this belief through their relationships developed with students that last long after students have graduated and moved on in their careers. These women's transcripts revealed how they took on extended roles almost as surrogate parents. Monique confessed to "getting in student's faces like their moms would". Andrea, in a similar fashion, offered a safe place for her students to ask questions and share perceived racialized experiences and offered them sound advice on navigating the institutional culture. Nancy, on the contrary, did not display a desire to offer psychosocial support to the students she advised. Her

perspective of the institutional cultural did not allow her to sympathize or relate with African-American students and their experiences. Differences such as these were used to answer the research questions guiding this study.

RQ1: What are the experiences of successful African-American female directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities located in the Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States in regards to their career advancements? This study revealed African-American women employed as directors at PWIs often have extended unofficial roles beyond their official job descriptions and serve as informal advisors to African-American students by helping them to access resources, providing a sense of family for students while away from home and by serving as role models. The participants gained a sense of fulfillment serving in these informal roles and in turn receive a sense of empowerment believing the students are a major contributing factor in their continuing to serve at PWIs. Three of the participants intentionally found ways to involve themselves with the informal advising of students outside of their roles as directors believing this practice serves as a means of persistence and resistance to the institutional culture of PWIs. Both Andrea and Monique have taken on advising student minority campus organizations as a means of meeting inherent traditional maternal instinctive needs to assist African-American students in navigating campus policies. These type notions, researchers have found, allow African-American women directors the opportunity to give back to their community, and provide a type of informal advising to African-American students only they can provide (Fletcher and Mullen, 2012; Knight and Trowler, 1999; Mullen, 2000).

Regarding African-American women's racial identity as it relates to their experiences as directors working for PWIs, all women in this study shared similar life experiences that shaped their views regarding their roles as women as well as their racial identities. Furthermore, all participants shared the common cultural background of having a strong mother figure who shaped their views on cultural and identity. Much of the literature surrounding African-American women's cultural identity as it relates to career advancement purports, African-American women identify family members and former school teachers as role models and state that their families provided their support for reaching professional and educational goals (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Alfred, 2001; Bullock-Yowell et al.,; Grier-Reed & Ganuza, 2011). The study also revealed how African-American women who did not grow up witnessing traditional gender roles function in their roles as directors. For some women who do not embrace the role of informal advising and being supportive, nurturing and caring, it means being labeled as "hard-nosed and inflexible".

For the purposes of this study, racial and cultural identity development was previously defined as the basic progressions an individual goes through when defining his or her racial identity (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998). African-American women directors' perceptions of their racial identities influenced the way they navigated their work environments. Some participants projected a preference for the dominant culture of their institution. This may have prevented them from identifying their experiences with other African-American women. Other women experience awareness, wherein a sense of security and the appreciation of positive aspects of all cultures is developed (Atkinson, 1979; Morten, 1989; Sue, 1998). These women identify a need to

serve as conduits for the majority's understanding of how cultural differences can affect how policy is implemented. In some cases, however, the notion of voicing differing opinions can negatively affect African-American women's career trajectories.

Finally, African-American women who served as directors at PWIs found alternative ways to navigate their work environments. Notions regarding the daily work and navigation of institutional culture align with current research associated with the theoretical framework provided by Campus Racial Climate (Victorinio, Nylund-Gibson, & Conley, 2013). Researchers purported factors such as the institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion and psychological perceptions of racial and ethnic tensions on a campus have a significant effect on how African-American women navigate their work environment (Collins, 2009; Fries-Britt, Rowan-Kenyon, Perna, Milem, & Howard, 2011; Harper and Hurtado, 2007 Hewlett, 2013). This study affirmed PWIs provided ample resources that assisted African-American women directors with day-to-day operations in their department, as well as provided access to employee development opportunities that personally facilitated their career development. These factors were seen as favorable; however, I also found the institutional bureaucracies, campus policies, and their lack of decision-making authority, at times, hindered African-American women directors' ability to be effective in their roles.

RQ2: What do female African-American directors at predominantly white 4-year state universities believe are strategies for increasing the number of directors at predominantly white institutions in the Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States? This study I found African-American women rise to directorships through circumstantial events. Beginning as early as college, career decision-making can be influenced by family

history and in some instances, the need to find jobs to support their families. Additionally, circumstantial career trajectories were often times precipitated by unforeseen events such as death or resignation of the incumbent. Circumstances such as these require implementation of objective hiring and compensation policies that will pay newly appointed or newly hired African-American women directors according to their educational background and experience.

It can be concluded then that an important criteria to increasing the numbers of African-American directors in PWIs would be the inclusion of African-American women in the creation of employee development programs and their implementation. The inclusion of African-American women may serve as a way to objectify the implementation of institutional policies that heretofore have presented challenges for advancing their careers.

Limitations

Findings in this study are the views expressed by African-American women directors who chose to work for PWIs. Because the study sought to capture the experiences of a particular population of African-American women directors, their experiences were not compared to women directors who work for HBCUs (Historically Black College and Universities) and thus may not be viewed as exclusive. To substantiate the exclusivity of their experiences, further research that includes all types of universities is required.

There are also limitations associated with the congruency of the participants' directorships. The selected participants included directors from various university

departments and in some instances; the differences in departments can be viewed as a factor in their lived experiences, institutional cultures, and career trajectory. Further research focusing on single university departments would capture an in-depth picture of African-American women directors in those roles.

Another limitation of this study to consider is the review of campus policies. Because all of the selected participants worked in state PWIs, there were very few differences in their institutional policies. Although, their campuses offered a variety of employee development opportunities, the policies for implementation and hiring practices were very similar. Extending the study to include or compare private institutions' policies may gain greater insight on how their implementation can be used to increase the number of African-American women directors at PWIs.

Finally, the findings presented in this study represent the perspectives of one facet of institutional views regarding increasing the numbers of African-American women directors. Because my study's sample only included strategies provided by African-American women, other views from stakeholders such as administration, staff, and faculty could not be used to triangulate the sentiments expressed by the participants. Further studies that focus on specific stakeholders' experiences and perspectives on increasing the numbers of African-American women directors should be considered.

Implications

This study on the professional experiences of African-American women who achieved career advancement in institutions of higher education has implication for research, policy, and practice. Findings in this study revealed African-American women in director positions at PWIs may be instrumental in increasing the percentage of minority student admissions and retention. The results of this study indicated African-American women directors embraced the unseen work of informally advising African-American students they come in contact with. This form of informal advising was viewed as giving back to the community and as a means of persistence and resistance to roadblocks African-American students may encounter as students of PWIs. The informal advising of African-American students has also been found to be a strong factor in increasing retention rates of PWIs. Further research involving African-American women directors and the affect their informal advising has on retention of minority students would further substantiate their effectiveness.

Findings also revealed that many African-American women directors relied on various strategies to help them navigate their work environment at PWIs. Many of these strategies include relying on supportive networks to guide them in negotiating institutional policies. Future implication is pivotal in this area because these strategies may provide an opening for institutions to offer an opportunity for administrators and campus policy makers to form institution wide support groups for minority directors in the form of luncheons, institutional professional organizations, or university wide mentor-mentee programs. These programs may benefit newly hired African-American women directors by establishing mentoring programs with senior directors. Furthermore,

the programs may assist policy makers in identifying areas of policy that may be biased in hiring and promotional practices.

Finally, African-American women administrators play a significant role in the growth of diversity at institutions of higher education. These women are, in increasing numbers, becoming more educated and qualified for leadership positions in higher education. Findings revealed that maintaining professional competency as a method of increasing the number of African-American women directors at PWIs is important. Maintaining competency includes increasing knowledge of professional theories through enrollment in graduate courses and participation in leadership development programs. Future implications, in terms of practice, are that African-American women in director roles at PWIs can partner with their institutional diversity and multicultural offices in coordinating leadership development programs focusing on the needs and concerns of African-American women.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although the number of African-American women achieving career advancement working for PWIs is slowly increasing, it is not reflective of the nation's increasingly diverse student population (Victorinio, Nylund-Gibson, & Conley, 2013). This study substantiates the notion that increasing the number of African-American women directors on PWIs may have a direct positive effect on student admission and retention. Moreover the results of this study supported much of the literature that calls for establishing career development programs that address the needs of African-American women.

Upon completion of this study, recommendations for future research exploring the

persistence strategies of African-American women employed at PWIs could benefit women and their employers in establishing supportive environments for leadership development. Moreover, the examination of work strategies used by African-American male directors may add a complete picture of increasing diversity at PWIs. This study may also be expanded to explore the differences between African-American women and African-American men with their career progression at PWIs. A closer examination of gender differences is needed to increase the understanding how differently they use persistence strategies. Additionally, the examination of persistence strategies utilizing quantitative research methods can add valuable data to further substantiate the findings of these studies.

Conclusion

Although the number of African-American women achieving director level positions at PWIs is slowly increasing, it is not reflective of the nation's increasingly diverse student population (Victorinio, Nylund-Gibson, & Conley, 2013). This current study identified the professional experiences and strategies used by African-American women who achieved director positions in predominantly white 4-year state universities. A critical analysis of the CRT and Black Feminist theories demonstrated how race and racism influenced the women's career trajectories and ultimately their service as department directors at PWIs.

The results of the study indicate African-American women employed as directors at PWIs assumed additional roles as informal student advisors by helping them to access university resources, providing a sense of family for students while away from home and by serving as role models. These maternal instincts emanated from common upbringings

in which African-American women tend emulate a family structure where their mothers displayed strong leadership skills maintaining households, families and careers. Moreover, the leadership and informal advising African-American women display may intentionally or unintentionally cause a domestication of the workplace wherein their work environment closely resembled their home life. Many directors gained a sense of purpose serving in these informal advisor roles and believed the students majorly contributing to their satisfying service at PWIs. Administrators and policy makers should be aware of how informal advising might help increase admission and retention rates of minority students.

Additionally, African-American women shared an ideology of racial identity that influenced their experiences as directors at PWIs. Moreover, it was found that growing up with mothers being central figures in the home has a strong influence in shaping African-American women's worldview and effects their career decision-making. There are identifiable differences, however, with regards to the developmental stages of racial and cultural identity that affect the perceptions of African-American women's racialized experiences working for PWIs and the way these women navigated institutional cultures of PWIs.

African-American women working for PWIs often experienced marginalization in the workplace and at some point in their careers and were excluded from decision-making processes thereby limiting their access to important professional resources. In many instances participants felt as though their work was undervalued and undercompensated but the institutional policies of the PWIs often times are too subjective to provide a means of fair promotion and compensation. Marginalization in the

workplace may be greatly decreased by allowing African-American women to have a voice in creating campus policies relating to hiring and promotion practices.

Finally, the study revealed African-American female directors at PWIs bring important helpful nurturing attributes fundamental to leadership that male directors may learn from. Women in this study have shown that leaders tend to do best when they their natural instincts of caring guide their actions and decisions.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Letter

To: Participant

From: Nicole Gunn

Date: June, 2016

Subject: Request to participate in research study

My name is Nicole Gunn; I'm a doctoral student from the Department of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology at Valdosta State University. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study that will identify the professional experiences and strategies used by African-American women who achieve director or leadership positions in predominantly white 4-year state universities.

More specifically, to explore the persistence and success strategies of African-American women directors. Based on your profile, you seem like an ideal candidate. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently listed at your respective institution as Director of XXXX.

If you agree to participate, two interviews will be scheduled at your convenience during this summer. Interviews will be recorded and any audio recordings will be destroyed upon completion of my dissertation process.

All data collected will be confidential. Your name will never appear on any document. Instead, pseudonyms will be used in place of the participant's names. Quotes will be used to support themes in the study. In addition, with your participation you can expect your experiences and data to further add to the research on African-American women directors.

Your participation in these interviews is voluntary, of course, and you may choose not to participate in the interview, to stop answering questions at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be an African-American woman at least 35 years of age, currently working as a director for a 4-year state university to participate in this research project. Your completion of the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you meet the criteria outlined.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Nicole Gunn at 229-375-9660 or by email at npgunn@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact IRB Administration at 229-259-5045 or by email at irb@valdosta.edu.

Thank you for considering being a part of my study and I look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Sincerely,

Nicole P. Gunn
Doctoral Candidate, Leadership
Cell: 229-375-9660
npgunn@valdosta.edu

APPENDIX B

Formal Interview Protocol Questions

First Interview: Background

To start tell me a little about your childhood?

1. Family structure
2. Relationship with your parents
3. Relationship with your siblings
4. Tell me about your families views on women and cultural

5. Tell about an experience you've had in elementary/high school that you'd describe as a challenge as an African-American girl?

6. Tell me about an experience you've had that made you feel proud/successful

7. Tell about your college experience?

8. Tell me about your circle of friends in college?

9. Tell me about your relationships with faculty?

10. After college tell me about your first job?

11. Tell about an experience you've had at work that you'd describe as a challenge as an African-American woman?

12. Tell me about an experience you've had that made you feel proud/successful

13. Describe you decision making process in choosing your career?

What factors influenced your decision?

14. Describe an experience that made you feel proud in your current position?

15. Describe an experience that made you feel challenged in your current position?

16. What would you tell your younger self about getting to where you are?

Second Interview: Work Life

1. Tell me about your work history prior to obtaining your current position?

2. Tell me about your journey in obtaining a leadership position?

3. How did you prepare for your current position?

4. What or who influenced your quest in obtaining a leadership position?

5. What characteristics do you believe a director or senior administrator should possess? How do these characteristics apply to you?

6. To help me understand your role at your university, tell me about a typical day interacting with people in your department, your administrators, etc.

7. Tell me about a difficult situation you've had to overcome in your daily work routine?
   a. Were you successful? What do you attribute to your success or what do think prevented you from being successful in this situation?

8. Tell me about a difficult person you've had to deal with in your daily work routine?
   a. Was the outcome successful? What do you attribute to your success or what do think prevented you from being successful in this situation?

9. What has been your most rewarding experience in your career?

10. What do you think has assisted you in your career advancement most?

11. As an African-American woman, what successful strategies can you give to aspiring African-American women just beginning their career?

12. Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently in your quest to obtain a leadership position in higher education?

APPENDIX C

Institutional Review Board Approval/Exemption

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **03364-2016** **INVESTIGATOR:** **Nicole P. Gunn**

PROJECT TITLE: **A Basic Interpretive Study of Professional Experiences of African-American Women who Achieve Advancement in Institutions of Higher Education**

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board oversight under Exemption Category(ies) 3 & 4. You may begin your study immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS:

Although not a requirement for exemption, the following suggestions are offered by the IRB Administrator to enhance the protection of participants and/or strengthen the research proposal:

N/A

☐ If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.

Elizabeth W. Olphie *5/10/16*

Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator Date

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.