A Phenomenological Study on the Journeys of
African American Female Academic Leaders
in Technical Colleges


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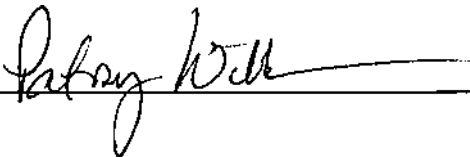Studies and Research**

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study examines the experiences of African American female academic leaders who blazed the trail in technical colleges in a southern state. The research approach was a qualitative phenomenological study implemented through guided interview questions using Seidman's (2013) three-stage approach. Three-stage interviews and phenomenological data analysis were conducted with five African American female academic leaders.

The results are presented in profiles in this study with each African American female academic leader sharing their stories and experiences of rising up into the ranks of leadership in technical colleges rooted in the South. Some of the themes that I found were related to (1) their personal and professional backgrounds, (2) their career experiences, and (3) the skills, attributes and strategies each believed to have been an asset in their careers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the first living souls on earth to show me love, my adopted parents Philip and Lorene Gibbs, my sister Betty Jean Gibbs, and my brother Marvin Gibbs. To my mother-in-law Mary Wilkerson for enabling me to go to college and earn my first degree by caring for my child. I know you are all looking down from above as my guardian angels. Also, to my loving husband, Theodore, my beautiful daughters, Tessie, Kimberly, Ashley, and to my grandchildren. I love you with all my heart and soul.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I will share the journeys of five African American female academic leaders in technical colleges in a southern state. In the upcoming sections, I will share my personal interest and describe what compelled me to take my journey to begin research in this area. I will also cover the background and some of the history as it relates to African American women in academia. Additionally, I will attempt to understand the problem this dissertation is intended to address. Also included is the purpose of the study, as well as, the significance of the study and its relation to success and retention as it relates to faculty, administration, and students. I will begin with my personal story.

At the ripe old age of 24, I made a decision that in order to succeed in life, I needed an education. I say "ripe old age" because at that time most of my classmates were graduating from college. However, I chose a different path, and it took me a little longer to come to the stark realization that education was important for me. Nevertheless, realization about education was a good beginning for me at the time. It is amazing how working in a sewing factory for 3 years can bring a person to her senses. After earning an Associate Degree in Science as a Legal Secretary, I went to work in a local government office, which I enjoyed for a very long time. However, after 17 years of working in the local government office and dealing with angry taxpayers and folks fed up with driving on bumpy dirt roads, I had another epiphany-I had reached my limit in

that organization, and I needed to go back to college in order to expand my career. During the time I was having these epiphany episodes, construction began on a technical college in our small town.

There was a big ground-breaking ceremony and my youngest daughter was asked to participate in the unveiling of the sign for the name of the technical college. This festive event only made me more excited about the prospect of furthering my education. Not that I would attend the technical college-oh, no-my ambition was to *teach* at that technical college. With transferable courses from my associate Degree, I enrolled in a 4-year college that same year, and within 2 years I earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Computer Information Systems. I worked fulltime during the day and took classes at night and on weekends. All this occurred at a time in my life when I was also a wife and busy mother of three daughters. By the time I completed the bachelor's degree, the technical college was completed in our town and had additional sites in three different locations in close proximity to where I lived. I applied for just about every teaching position that they advertised and finally was hired as an instructor for Business and Office Technology.

The Business and Office Technology program prepared students for a job working in a business office, and with my experience in the field and education, I was perfect for the job. I felt like I was on top of the world. I worked hard and wanted to be the best teacher ever. Our school's mission was basically to teach students a skill that would empower them to be productive citizens in life. After 2 years of teaching, I earned my master's degree in Business Education and continued to work hard at teaching and learning. I was the first in my division to earn certifications in all of the office products

that we offered to the students.  I knew I wanted to lead by example and wanted my students to follow in my footsteps in order to succeed in industry.

A few years later an opening came up in the Computer Information Systems (CIS) department, which was my heart's desire, but unfortunately, I did not get the job.  That, however, did not stop me.  I had a separate computer set up in my office so that I could practice the computer applications and courses that were being taught in the CIS department.  Before long I conquered the applications and thoroughly knew the curriculum required to teach CIS.  There were several certification exams required for those who wanted to teach and before long I had more certifications in the CIS field than the instructor they hired to teach the program.  The CIS instructor actually pulled me to the side one day and told me that "I was making her look bad," and I needed to "slow down on the certifications."  Needless to say, in 1 year I was the new CIS instructor for the program.  Never in my wildest dreams did I ever plan to take my education to that level.  It was as though I became addicted to wanting to learn all that I could learn, so 3 years later, I earned an Education Specialist Degree in Instructional Technology and continued to grow in my career.  Eventually, I applied for a leadership position as the Dean for Academic Affairs for the Business Division at the same school, and to my surprise, I got the job.  I was the first African American dean for the college and in addition the first female dean for the college.

When I was initially hired in the academic dean position for the Business and Professional Services Division, it was an extremely uncertain time for both the college and me.  The college had just recently come under the reign of a new president who was replacing the founding president to whom everyone was accustomed.  In my particular

case, I felt like it was a case of sink or swim. At times, it was very frustrating for me. Other times I felt very isolated as I was the first and only African American academic dean in our college. Coming from a computer information systems and business office technology program background instilled in me a procedure-oriented style of leadership in the classroom. I was a systematic procedural type person concerning work-related tasks. The majority of these academic programs are computer application based. We always emphasized to the student how critical it is to follow directions in order to get the correct and appropriate outcome for the task involved. Any distraction from the given instruction could cause the outcome to fail. The position for academic dean, however, came with a broad and vague description of the job. There was no owner's manual, guidebook, or procedure manual. It has been a very "by-the-seat-of-your-pants" experience, and I have come to believe that is the way it is for most academic leadership positions. I learned a great deal through my years of experience as an African American woman in academic leadership. I will share some of those insights and perspectives, as they are an important part of what conceptualizes this study.

After working through the transition to administration, I have now served as an African American female Dean for Academic Affairs for 11 years, and as a technical college instructor for 9 years. For 20 years I worked in the Southern State Technical College System. In my capacity as dean, I could not help but note the limited number of African American female academic leaders and faculty members in the system. This number is relevant because typically prior teaching experience is preferred for academic leaders and the small pool of African American female faculty members lessens the likelihood of increasing the number of African American women administrators. In my

4

division alone, which is comprised of the business and service programs, only 5 out of 25 faculty members (20%) are African American females and fewer than 10% of all faculty in the overall Academic Affairs division are academic leaders holding the position of dean, vice president, or president. With so few women holding these positions, it makes their experiences in the academy and their perceptions and recollections of what it took to get there a worthwhile and difficult-to-find treasure of information. Therefore, I completed a phenomenological study of the journeys of such women. I believed that sharing the stories of African American female leaders in the Southern State Technical College System would be a resource and inspiration for others who may consider pursuing a leadership position at the college level. To that end, I read more than 15 works written by or about others like me, although most related to university or community college, rather than technical college academic leaders, each provided relevant background information.

*Background*

African American women have been portrayed as nurturing (Collins, 2000) as well as resilient (Taylor, 2013), even though they were marginalized and considered outsiders in the workforce. The intersection of gender and race has been historically difficult for professional women of color in the workforce to navigate and will likely continue to be difficult to navigate (Bates, 2007; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). Nevertheless, African American women have come out as one of higher education's most accomplished minority subgroups in the attainment of college credentials despite systemic sexism and racism (Bates, 2007; Kaba, 2008). In fact, African American women have paved the way for their descendants in the midst of tremendous odds against

them to achieve higher education (Bates, 2007).  For example, Mary McLeod Bethune, Mary Jane Patterson, and Anna Julia Cooper were among the first African American women to open doors and tear down barriers for future generations in higher education (Bates, 2007).  Bennett (2003) articulated that Mary Jane Patterson was the first African American woman to ever earn a baccalaureate in 1862.  She earned the degree from Oberlin College in Ohio.  Cooper (1892) informed that her accomplishments included being the fourth African American female in the United States to earn a Ph.D. and the first woman and the first African American female to earn a Ph.D. from the University of Paris in 1925.  In addition, Hine (1993) stated that Mary McLeod Bethune, in her commitment to gain better lives for African Americans, founded Bethune College in 1904, which later merged with Cookman Institute in 1923.  This merger resulted in Bethune as college president and opened the door to permanent access to higher education for African American females.

Each of these women, like the majority of other African American female leaders about whom I read brought qualities of nurturing and support that enabled them to connect with, encourage, and mentor students who may otherwise run the risk of not completing their college journey successfully.  Collins (2000) theorized that these qualities were based on both the cultural experience of being nurtured as children and being held accountable for siblings and fictive kin or what is described in more detail in the theoretical framework of this dissertation, as *othermothering*.  I found the stories of these women fascinating, and they spurred my curiosity about women like them in the technical college, another reason I explored the experiences of African American female academic leaders in the technical college system.  It is my hope the data gained from this

work will inspire other African American females by providing stories of success and will generate an increased desire on the part of African American females to aspire to attain leadership positions in underrepresented faculty populations.

The goal of this study was to share the journey of five other African American female academic leaders in the technical college system. Their experiences and perceptions are not only valuable from the historical perspective because relatively few have made the journey, but also may be a valuable source of information for other African American females who aspire to positions in the academic leadership field. The stories shared from current and former African American female academic leaders (AAFALs) are intended to inspire, challenge, and guide others to follow in their footsteps. To accomplish that task, I sought to answer the question, "What were the experiences and perceptions of five African American females as they journeyed through technical college academic leadership?" To help answer this question we will first establish the statement of the problem currently at work in the system.

*Statement of the Problem*

Taylor (2013) stated that although the enrollment of minority students is increasing, the number of African American administrators is not increasing. For clarification, this dissertation is not a quantitative study and is not an attempt to state that the discrepancy is inherently the problem. However, the comparison of the number of African American students to the number of AAFALs, is relevant to the study. Approximately 36.7% of students in the southern state technical college system are African American and of that percentage, 62.4% are female (Technical College System of Georgia, 2018). These are females who can take advantage of mentoring and

othermothering qualities of AAFALs which relates to the theoretical framework of this study.  The Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) (U.S. Department of Education, 2011) reported a disproportionately low number of African American female academic leaders nationally, as well as in community and technical colleges.  IPEDS further indicated the number of females in administrative, executive, or managerial positions in degree-granting institutions in the U.S. was 129,244 in fall 2011.  Of the 129,244 females employed in an administrative, executive, or managerial position, 98,623 were White and represented 76% of the total females employed.  While only 13,923 of the females in administrative, executive, or managerial positions in degree-granting institutions were African American, this only represented 11% of the total females.  See Table 1 for more details.

Table 1

*Females in degree-granting institutions, by race/ethnicity, sex, and primary occupation: Fall 2011*

|  | Total | White | Black | Hispanic | Asian | Other | Race Unknown |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Executive Administrative Managerial | 129,344 | 98,623 | 13,923 | 7,618 | 4,434 | 1,809 | 2,937 |
|  |  | 76% | 11%. | 6% | 3% | 1% | 3% |

*Note.*  From Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS).  Copyright 2011.

These numbers reflected a disproportionately low number of African American female academic leaders.  The problem is there has not only been an underrepresentation of

academic leaders who are African American and female, but also that we don't know enough about the ones who do serve as leaders in higher education and therefore may not be recruiting or mentoring in a way that would change the underrepresentation. I embarked on this study believing that sharing stories of successful African American female academic leaders in technical colleges could positively impact the relatively low number of African American females who pursue academic leadership positions in technical college education. Therefore, stories of these women give this dissertation purpose and meaning.

*Topic and Purpose of this Study*

The purpose of this study was to tell the stories and analyze the data from their interviews to develop themes of women who blazed the trail into higher education administration. My study only included Black women leaders in the academic division in the technical college system in a southern state. In addition to fulfilling a historical gap, the study provided information-rich stories that may serve as a resource for African American females who seek leadership positions in the technical college system. The study also fills a gap that results from the absence of mentorship or preparatory guides for people acclimating to such a position. In this study I investigated African American female academic leaders' stories, experiences, and perceptions to discover if they developed strategies that were instrumental in their overall success. I articulated the constructed approaches these women employed to overcome challenges and be effective in their jobs. I expected issues related to resilience to surface as vital to finding success in technical college as an academic leader and they did. Those too are articulated in the profile section of Chapter 4.

The low and disproportionate number of African American female academic leaders makes the status quo an interesting and minimally explored area of focus for research. Who were these women? How did they get where they are? Why do they stay? What did we learn from their journeys? I believed answers to these questions could expose an untapped resource for faculty with similar backgrounds, and characteristics, and I was right. Their stories have value and provide insights that could improve faculty advancement. These African American female academic leaders shared leadership skills and experiences that helped them with the hope that by doing so they could help others rise to leadership positions even though they were from an underrepresented population. In the next section, we explore the relevance of this study.

*Significance of the Study*

The significance of this study is to reveal the experiences and stories of African American female academic leaders. When administrators of technical colleges and other colleges learn about the successes and struggles of these women, they will be in a better position to correct deficiencies in the number AAFALs who work and dedicate their lives to education. My study may help others understand the isolation, and marginalization that may come with their positions. Thereby, giving them the knowledge to deal with the systemic racism in our society, which is explained in more detail in the critical race theory section of the dissertation. System-wide understanding of the problem is critical to the development and mentoring of new academic leaders for purposes of retention.

Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003) indicated that an increase in the number of African American students in higher education has caused administrators and faculty to evaluate their institutions' diversity competence, which means institutions provide

support in the retention of African American staff, faculty and students.  Furthermore,

Collins (2000) stated that retention and success of Black women students, faculty, and

staff is critically significant and tied to the number of African American women on

college campuses.  The authors asserted that "all members of the higher education

community need to examine their assumptions, attitudes, and effectiveness in dealing

with the multiplicity of identities, values, morals and cultures presented by one group:

African American women" (p. 102).  They elaborated on their belief by suggesting that

African American women should receive encouragement from everyone on campus

including intellectual, spiritual, psychological, and programmatic encouragement.  This is

significant to my study because, as you read the profiles of the participants in this study,

you will understand how valuable mentoring would have been for new AAFALs.

Collins (2001) in her historical overview of Black women in the academy noted:

"What connects them all is the struggle to be accepted and respected members of society

and their desire to have a voice that can be heard in a world with many views" (p. 39).  I

believe that, based on my research, something as simple as being mentored in a

leadership position would make an important difference in the experience of a new

AAFAL.  This, in turn, could make a significant difference in a faculty member and

ultimately, in a student's education experience.

Howard-Hamilton, Phelps and Torres (1998) whose research was done from the

perspective of student services, realized that for many students, some colleges and

universities were not conducive environments for learning.  They found through their

work that some colleges did not support growth in knowledge for all individuals, causing

many members of underrepresented groups to voice concerns about the lack of diversity in faculty and administrators.

> Continuing evidence supports the assertion that university and college campuses are not conducive, growth-enhancing, or healthy environments for many students. Members of various underrepresented and minority groups (racial and ethnic minorities; gays, lesbians, and bisexuals; students with disabilities; nontraditional students) voice specific concerns regarding quality of life issues; unwelcoming and hostile campus climates; safety issues; insensitive, inappropriate, and discriminatory behavior by students, faculty, staff, and administrators; lack of diversity; lack of relevant and inclusive curricula; alienation and invisibility; and lack of access to information and resources. Many of these areas in which students expressed concerns are within student affairs divisions (residence halls, financial aid, admissions, campus police). Thus, the need for training programs to address multicultural issues and prepare culturally sensitive and skilled student affairs practitioners seemed compelling. (Howard-Hamilton, Phelps and Torres, 1998, p. 58)

AAFALs are policy makers who understand the experiences of students because they may have had the same type experiences in their educational ventures. The evidence of this is apparent as you read the profiles of these women. The authors further indicated that given the changing demographics of our institutions of higher education,

> There is a need for practitioners who are skilled, can help promote meaningful interaction among students, and can help all students develop to

their full potential.  Unless there is both understanding and acceptance of

the experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds, these goals will

not be reached.  (Howard-Hamilton, Phelps and Torres, 1998, p. 59)

Increased positive experiences for the underrepresented African American student

population may or may not ultimately result in higher student retention and higher

student graduation rates (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003).  Additionally, African

American females may or may not be able to contribute to ways of creating positive

experiences for these students.  In this study, I took a look at the experiences of AAFALs

in the technical college system and their perspectives on and practices related to their

leadership role and what brought them to this position in the technical college system.  It

is my hope that the stories and counter stories of AAFALs recounted in this study may be

important to the professional development of new academic leaders who happen to be

African American and female.  The insights revealed in this study may help them

understand, and be better able to cope with, the issues that will occur in their career due

to intersectionality of gender and race.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I have highlighted the theoretical frameworks that have informed my conceptualization of this study. The theories that I blended to design my study consist of Critical Race Theory, Othermothering, and Resilience Theory. A review of each of the key components from these three schools of thought will be presented in the order mentioned above. Also included in this section is a survey of published literature on the topic of AAFALs as well as a survey of dissertations on the topic. The section concludes with brief summary of the theories and how I viewed them informing my study.

*Critical Race Theory*

Critical Race Theory was one of the foundations of this study because theories of intersectionality and storytelling's underlying principles reside in the role that race plays in the lives of people of color. Critical Race Theory informed this study by providing a lens to understand the historical ideologies that have shaped equity in institutions. Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in the mid-1970s developed by legal scholars, activists, and lawyers (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). These scholars and activists wanted to challenge racism in the legal system. Derrick A. Bell, professor of Law at Harvard Law School, is considered the father of Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Others influential in its development include the late Alan Freeman, Kimberle

Crenshaw, Angela Harris, Mari Matsuda, Charles Lawrence, and Patricia Williams.  In

my study I have explored the implications that race plays in institutions of higher

education and specifically in technical colleges in regard to the ascension of AAFALs.  I

have also incorporated the tenets of CRT as it relates to higher education (Hiraldo, 2010)

being that the participants in this study all work in post-secondary institutions.

The major beliefs of CRT are as follows:

1. CRT scholars advocated that racism is the norm, not aberrant, and experiencing it

   is the usual order of business in the United States for most people of color

   (Delgada & Stefancic, 2001).  This belief is what distinguishes CRT scholars

   from others who study race.  The Critical Race Theory debunked the notion that

   racism is some random, isolated act of individuals behaving badly (Ladson-

   Billing, 1998).  Ordinariness is the first feature of CRT and addressed the

   difficulty of addressing racism because it is not acknowledged (Delgado &

   Stefancic, 2001).  Color blindness relegates racism to overt acts of racist acts

   (Closson, 2010).  For example, "refusal to hire a black Ph.D. rather than a white

   college dropout" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 8).  The theory has informed my

   study by providing a foundation for understanding and providing additional

   literature based on the current atmosphere of AAFALs in the technical college

   system.

2. Interest convergence

   Interest convergence is the second feature of CRT and indicated there is little

   incentive to eradicate racism because it advances the material and psychological

   interest of the dominant society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).  This includes elite

Caucasians (materially) and working-class Caucasians (psychically). Bell (2004) posited that the civil rights' litigation victory of *Brown v. Board of Education* possibly resulted from elite Caucasians' self-interest rather than from desiring to help Blacks. His view that the United States' international interests were at stake when the eyes of the entire world were watching as the civil rights of many African Americans were being denied was the true incentive for the victory (Bell, 2004). Interest convergence is also one of the foundational tenets of studying CRT from a higher education perspective (Hiraldo, 2010) and helped to inform this study by providing an understanding of how this theory related to the current state of AAFALs and who are the true beneficiaries of civil rights legislation in these institutions.

3. Social construction

The third theme of CRT is the social construction. This theme states that the concept of race is the result of social thought and relations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). They further elaborated that as a society we chose to focus on what is different in the minority races rather than focus on the multitude of things that we have in common. Social construction is socially and culturally constructed. This theme is not biologically based.

Another development concerned differential racialization and it informed that different minority groups are racialized at different times based on the needs of the dominant society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). An example is how during a particular era, Mexican or Japanese workers were viewed more favorably than Blacks for agriculture labor. During a different era, however, the Japanese

workers may have been viewed unfavorably and transitioned to war relocation camps.

4. Intersectionality and antiessentialism

The concept of intersectionality and antiessentialism informs that no person comes from one single identify (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). For example: A white feminist may also be Jewish or working class or a single mother. An African American activist may be male or female, gay or straight. A Latino may be a Democrat, a Republican, or even a black—perhaps because that person's family hails from the Caribbean. An Asian may have recently arrived with a rural background and unfamiliar with mercantile life or a fourth-generation Chinese with a father who is a university professor and a mother who operates a business. Everyone has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

AAFALs in this study have intersectionality with both race and gender. Therefore, intersectionality will help us to understand the significance this unique combination.

> Intersectionality is the way that different characteristics that people have intersect to amplify their level of oppression . . . so if you're black, you are suffering under systemic racism, if you're a woman, you are suffering under systemic sexism. So, intersectionality is a very important part CRT and all of your participants have intersectionality of at least gender and race (Dr. Richard Schmertzing, personal communication, 2016)

5. Voice of color

The voice of color theme advocates that minorities would be able to communicate the experiences of oppression and racism to writers and other white counterparts that whites may not be aware (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Black and brown minorities were urged by the "Legal Storytelling" movement to share their stories of racism and experiences with the legal system in order to bring their own unique voice. In my study, we have read the stories of AAFALs in the technical college system and given voice with additional literature which has informed future AAFALs.

In the study, CRT was used to explain the foundation of racial issues that are inherent in U.S. history and subsequently at play in the lives of the women whose stories were told. CRT provided basic assumptions of how race may have impacted or played a part in the AAFALs in this study. For example, I will never forget my first true encounter with systemic and endemic racism in the education system. I was in the seventh grade. We lived in a very small town that only had one caution light. As a matter of fact, it may not have had the one caution light at that time. We drove to a small town about ten miles away to buy groceries and other items. The African American students were also bused to the school for minorities in the next town. At one time, there had been a school for minorities in our little town, but it had deteriorated and was closed.

We lived next door to my uncle who was my father's brother. My uncle was a tall man with a booming voice. Whenever he spoke, people would listen. My uncle decided that he did not want to bus his children to the minority school ten miles away in the next town when there was a predominantly European American school right in our small

community.  He entered two of his middle-school aged daughters in the school, which enraged some locals in the community.  One night while we were all sitting in our living room, we heard shots rang out from a speeding car on our dirt lane.  The vehicle continued racing and shooting past our house, which was next door.  By the grace of God, no one in our house or my uncle's house was injured.  The next day, there were a lot of local and federal agents mainly at my uncle's house.  That was one of the first instances of desegregation in our little community.  The next school year, all African American and European American attended one school.  Because of this study, I am better informed that this change was based more on the interest convergence theory than the willingness and goodness of the hearts of others.

Regarding Critical Race Theory, it is my personal belief that Critical Race Theory is simply a fact of life for certain people.  I believe that race will always be a factor that affects all people of color.  I also believe that the theory's attempt to describe how institutional racism and discrimination affect people of color is a poignant analysis of the theoretical foundation of workplace practices and what some see as societal norms.  Nonetheless, some have prevailed despite these obstacles.  Their stories of success and survival are presented in this study.  I was hopeful that these individuals would share their voice of color to communicate experiences they have had during their career.

*Resilience Theory*

Resilience Theory (Polidore, 2004; Taylor, 2013) was first introduced as an idea to explain what Polidore found in her dissertation study of resilience in three African American female educators.  The theory presented resilience as multidimensional characteristics of participants, which occurred over time.  Seven resilience themes from

prior research that represented an ecological and a developmental process provided for the theoretical framework in Polidore's (2004) study. The first theme is the significance of religion. This theme was based on high moral desire to help others and a strong belief in God. The second theme was based on the extent that individuals believed they had some control over events in their lives. The author postulated that individuals who believe they have some level of responsibility and flexibility in events develop a stronger resilience to controversy than do individuals who believe they have no control. The ability to see the positive side of adversity was the third theme. This theme relates to helping one develop better problem-solving skills and having a more positive outlook on life. The fourth resilience theme was one of autonomy, which refers to the freedom of an individual to manage his or her own actions despite difficulties.

The fifth resilience theme was related to commitment and represented an individual's dedication and devotion to a particular cause. Theme number six was the way a person handled change. An individual's ability to adapt to and accept change positively assisted in developing and building resilience. The final theme of resilience theory which was used as a theoretical construct on which to build Polidore's study was based on the presence of positive role models and mentors in the lives of individuals. The fact that the mentor or positive role model may or may not have been biologically related to the individual, such as a parent or other blood relative, was not relevant; in other words, lack of a biological kinship did not reduce the impact of mentorship on facilitating development of resilience in the three educators (Polidore, 2004). In Polidore's study (2004), the most dominant of the themes found in the study were deeply committed, bias for optimism, and belief in control.

In support of the significance of the themes Polidore identified, Taylor (2013) shared that her informants also indicated "these themes influenced their teaching experiences and retention in education before, during, and after desegregation in the South" (p. 3). One particular teacher told Taylor the story of how having strong, positive relationships helped her when she had problems that were not related to the books. Some of the problems related to issues with health, finances, or the sudden early death of a loved one. She insisted that being able to talk with peers who had experienced the same problem helped her resolve issues. The themes continue to be evident in more recent research (Kamassah, 2010; Taylor, 2013; Terry, 2013, Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013). It will be interesting to see if any of these themes appear in my proposed study of five AAFALs in the southern technical college system.

Ironically, the seven themes of resilience—significance of religion, believing that I have responsibility regarding events in my life, my inclination to look for the bright side and being autonomous despite difficulties, my strong dedication to education and hard work, my ability to adapt to change, and the appearance of positive people in my life over the years-are all prevalent in my life story.

For my personal journey, the number one resilience theme regarding the significance of religion and the resilience theme number five regarding an individual's dedication and devotion to a particular cause are most prevalent. In July 2016, a promotion that I was very confident I would get, was denied by an interview committee of my peers. My new supervisor would be European American, approximately 15 years younger and had eight fewer years of experience in leadership in the Academic Affairs division. We both had similar years in the organization, but I unequivocally had more

experience in academic procedure and supervision. Needless to say, I was devastated and my whole world seemed to come crashing down around me. How could this have happened? I had worked so hard, given so much of my time and energy. I felt very humiliated and began to contemplate my retirement.

In October of 2017, I gained the strength, ". . . through Christ which strengthens me" (Philippians, 4:13, KJV) to gather up myself and strive to complete my doctoral progress. I am growing stronger each day and I keep remembering what my dissertation Chairperson told me during my proposal defense. She is European American, and she said to me: "Patsy, you can do this. I probably would not be able to get AAFALs to share their journeys with me as they will share them with you and, therefore; I know you can do this study" (Dr. Lorraine Schmertzing, personal communication, 2016). I don't think she had any idea how much that frightened me. I am not sure why I was so frightened, but I was also committed and determined to complete this research for my doctoral dissertation.

*Othermothering*

Another lens through which I chose to view this study is a concept termed othermothering. Collins' (2000) discussion of Black Feminist Theory provided insight into othermothering, which she explained as the concept of both biologically related and non-biologically related female individuals providing support and mentoring to another individual. Historically Collins (2000) noted that with othermothering, grandmothers, aunts, and/or cousins take on the responsibility for childcare for each other. The relationship is not restricted to biological family members only but can also be expanded to individuals brought together through informal adoptions as well. This tradition also

expands to include relationships developed by African American female teachers and their African American female and male students, which Collins (2000) referred to as "mothering the mind" (p. 207). Personally, I believed these relationships may go beyond the inclusion of African American students and include all races. Othermothering relationships go above and beyond providing academic and professional knowledge (Collins, 2000).

On a personal level, I believed that othermothering was an essential component in the development of my life. At my birth, an informal adoption agreement was arranged between two women through a mutual friend. My adopted othermother provided me with warm memories of love and compassion along with a deep dedication to Christianity in my early years. After the untimely death of both my adopted othermother and my biological mother, other female family members of my adopted family offered me their homes and families. These othermothers included my aunts, sister-in-law, and sister. Another othermother that was also instrumental in my development included my mother-in-law. Each of these African American women became a much-needed source of support at different times in my life. When your mother gives you away at birth, your biological father never bothers to find you, your adopted mother dies when you are 6 years old, and your adopted father basically gives up on life—what else are you left with besides your faith, the support of othermothers and a desire to make it in life because there is no one else to totally depend upon? Othermothers played a critical part in filling in the gap of being motherless at such a young age. Significant othermothers in my life include an aunt, a sister-in-law, a sister and a mother-in-law. It will be interesting to find

instances of Othermothering among the AAFALs in my study and to hear stories of how these people have impacted their career decisions.

Collins (2000) defined othermothers as "women who assist blood-mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities" (p. 178). During slavery, children were orphaned by the death or sale of their mother; therefore, the mothering of others became a necessity in these communities. Gruiffrida (2005) posits that "the practice of othermothering continued to influence the role of teachers in Black schools" (p. 715) after slavery and continues to appear in the more contemporary schools today. Othermothering will guide my study by allowing AAFALs to share their stories having an othermother in their life or of being an othermother for someone else during their lifetime. It will be interesting to see how othermothering may have shaped their future or how they may have shaped someone else's future by being an othermother to them.

*Summary of Theories*

The combination of these three theories—CRT, Othermothering, and the Resilience Theory--will provide the support as to why this study was done. The study gave voices to AAFALs in the technical college system in a southern state and provide much needed literature to this topic. The theoretical framework helped us to understand underlying assumptions and stereotyping that occurred in many of our institutions of higher education with a focus on academic leadership.

*Survey of Published Literature*

A review of published literature in this section discussed several studies that relate to the experiences of AAFALs in higher education as faculty and administrative leaders. It was arranged to discuss studies of leadership in higher education for African American

women, elaborating on their leadership qualities and progressing to the challenges specific to African American women in leadership positions. The section also discussed research on the affects that mentoring had on experiences of AA women who served in higher education leadership positions.

*Leadership in higher education.*

Articles from Collins (2000) implied that, in general, African American women bring characteristics of nurturing, caring. For most African American women, that is far from a compliment. By being generalized as loving, nurturing, and caring, black women were shown in a negative light due to caring for the White children and "family" better than her own. Black women were stereotyped as mammies. Some Black women executives are penalized if they do not appear warm and nurturing (Collins, 2000). Hooks (1984) recommends a servant leadership management style to leadership arenas in education. She (Hooks, 1994) also advocated that it is essential that the educator teach in a way that respects and cares for the souls of our children.

In addition, Waring (2003) researched African American female presidents of colleges and universities throughout the United States. Each participant served as president of a college or university for at least 2 to 7 years. Waring (2003) noted that several of the AAFALs were reluctant to lead and actually became leaders because they were either drafted or because they had a strong passion to improve the educational opportunities for African American students. Bates (2007) traced a progression to the "ivory towers" as beginning with a position of faculty, dean, or provost prior to becoming president of the college. However, Smith and Crawford (2007) claimed that most AA

female faculty and deans did not anticipate their jobs advancing to the presidency of an institution to be accurate.

*Challenges*

Challenges included multiple forms of oppression experienced by African American women in academia that needed to be understood before that oppression could be eradicated (Hinton, 2010; Waring, 2003). Sexual and racial barriers are not the only obstacles for these women who also are tasked with family and personal responsibilities (Nichols & Tanksley, 2004). In addition to that, while racial and class diversity continues to grow in our country, we do not see this same growth in diversity reflected in the academic leadership in our technical colleges (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007).

Smith and Crawford (2007) clearly communicated that there were significant barriers for minority faculty and administrators. Barriers included racially motivated victimization, isolation, and loneliness that inhibited their academic tenure and success. Waring (2003) found that although institutions were aware of the barriers faced by African American females in the workplace, the barriers typically were ignored. This study articulated challenges the participants faced and what they believed could be done to change things in the future.

*Mentoring*

Although mentoring was highly recommended as a means to improving job satisfaction in general (Hinton, 2010, Nichols & Tanksley, 2004; Smith & Crawford, 2007), several studies led authors to note the lack of formal mentoring in academia (Patton, 2009; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Terry, 2013). For instance, Smith and Crawford (2007) reported that none of the seven participants in their study of African American

female administrators were mentored prior to occupying the challenging job.  They all believed, however, that mentoring could have helped them in developing their career paths.  The research also pointed out that administrators who had been mentored also exhibited higher productivity levels in addition to greater job satisfaction than those who had not been mentored (Nichols & Tanksley, 2004; Smith & Crawford, 2007).  Patton's (2009) work with AA females in higher education showed how mentors provided a variety of services including serving as role models for the position.  By design, mentors have been in the position longer than the mentee and are able to offer what Patton's participants deemed much-needed advice.

Other strengths of mentoring included building confidence in oneself, developing time management strategies, developing a positive attitude, demonstrating optimism for the future of the organization, and developing a spiritual philosophy (Patton, 2009).  Even though African American females in Patton's (2009) study stated that it was easy to identify with other African American females who understood the issues they faced due to their race and sex, the research established that African American female mentors were difficult to find (Patton, 2009).  Even though African American females indicated that White mentors had positive qualities, among the negative was the important statement that some African American females felt uneasy with sharing deep concerns about race (Patton, 2009).  In stark contrast to the participants, a couple of the participants in the study indicated that having a White mentor was not an issue for them and that they did not feel they had to only connect with Black people.

*Survey of Dissertations*

In this section, I have reviewed dissertations on AA female leadership in higher education. I further illustrated the shortage of research as it relates to leadership from an AA female's perspective in higher education and the need for my study. This section also demonstrated an even greater lack of research as it relates to technical colleges and the experiences of AA females. The dissertations reviewed were studies between 2003 and 2013, which, although relatively current revealed a limitation in the amount of research done related to AA female leaders in higher education.

African American females appear to have been underrepresented historically based on some of the leadership studies. Evans (2009) stated that the majority of the literature related to leadership is based on the experience of White males and that there is a gap in the literature in relation to the experience of African American females. In regard to AAFALs, Jones (2003) stated that historically there was not much written or much documentation regarding the African American female administrator. In fact, Jones (2003) also observed that there was a "systemic absence" from the literature related to Black female administrators. Jones presented a study on African American female leaders in the K-12 school system. In her study, she explored the experiences of Black female administrators from a Systems Thinking perspective. Her study was based on the Holistic Triangle, which represented three prominent qualities in leaders. These qualities are spirituality, actions, and knowledge. In addition, Systems Thinking perspective, called for the researcher to view the participants from three perspectives. First, the participant was viewed as an individual or system, next, as a subsystem (how they interacted with each other), and finally, as a supersystem (how they interacted with others

overall).  The themes that evolved from this study relate to early leadership, tempered radicalism, mentoring, spirituality, reciprocity, and worthiness.  Jones asserted that collecting the experiences of these administrators was critical to understanding this underrepresented group.  One of the limitations of the study was that the AA female leaders were all from the same K-12 school district.

As far as diversification was concerned, Weatherspoon-Robinson (2013) found that American based organizations ranked far behind other countries when it came to diversifying the traditionally male dominated industries and businesses.  The study suggested that organizations should invest in leadership development programs as well as in mentorship programs.  This study also found that the woman's perspective should be brought to the boardroom, particularly women of color.  The study further concluded, "it will take a collective effort to be inclusive and acculturate industries, organizations and people to the way of the future, which is to include women and people of color in the decision-making leadership ranks" (p. 171).

Other studies suggested taking a closer look at leadership through the lens of African American women.  Studies (Terry, 2013; Weatherspoon-Robinson, 2013) suggested that there was far too little research designed to facilitate better understanding of African American female leadership.  Weatherspoon-Robinson's (2013) recommendations for future research included "taking a closer look at self-actualization and leadership through the lens of women of color" (p. 169), "a longitudinal study that assesses leadership and resilience" (p. 169).  The limitation of the Weatherspoon-Robinson (2013) study was the fact that there were only 14 participants.

My study is beneficial because it adds to the scant literature in the area of leadership in higher education by African American women.  In addition, the findings from my study provide information that could help other African American females successfully transition into academic leadership positions.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This study explored the personal and career experiences of five African American female academic leaders who worked in a southern state technical college system. The women's stories were gathered, analyzed, and told to deepen our understanding of the contributions they made to academic leadership in technical colleges. By using Seidman (2006) as a guide to phenomenological interviews, and Maxwell (2013), as well as Moustakas (1994) to inform my data analysis choices, I was able to create profiles (Seidman, 2006) of the women that led to my creation of themes by analyzing the data, and the identification of uniqueness both within and across the individuals. I did so by seeking to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the personal and professional backgrounds of five AAFALs in the technical college system of a southern state?

2. What are the career experiences of five AAFALs in the technical college system?

3. What skills, attitudes, and strategies are perceived by 5 AAFALs as most beneficial in academic leadership for AA women?

The processes used to answer the questions are detailed in the following sections, which begin with an explanation of choice of approach and continue to address participant selection, data collection, data analysis, data presentation, and validity.

Choice of Approach

A qualitative research strategy was most appropriate for this study because it is designed to help us "understand the meaning" (Merriam, 2002, p. 4) participants assign to their experiences, in this case, as AAFALs. Qualitative research methods emphasize the importance of context and the way people experienced things in that context. Merriam (2002) further confirmed that qualitative research was preferable for studies through which one wants to make sense of the world wherein individuals live their daily lives. As a goal of the study with AAFALs was to understand "what the world looks like in their particular setting and what's going on for them" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5), qualitative research was the best approach.

Additionally, Maxwell (2013) defined qualitative research as research that is intended to help you understand:

(1) the meanings and perspectives of the people you study—seeing the world from their point of view rather than simply from your own;

(2) how these perspectives are shaped by, and shape their physical, social, and cultural contexts; and

(3) the specific processes that are involved in maintaining or altering these phenomena and relationships. (p. viii)

All three were key to the purpose of my study as I wanted to know what my participants experienced throughout their lives and the viewpoints that developed as a result. The third point directly conflicts with quantitative research, which deals with variables rather than processes and bases its findings on numerical data. Qualitative research is inductive

and relies on textual or visual data. Clearly, qualitative research offered the best strategies for addressing the interest I had in AAFALs and subsequent questions.

Within the qualitative research paradigm, a phenomenological approach was used in this study to develop a deeper understanding of the essence of the experiences of AAFALs. A phenomenological study focuses on describing what individuals experienced and how these individuals experienced what they experienced (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2013; Vagle, 2014). This method of inquiry not only enabled me to learn more about actual experiences of these women in the technical college system, but it allowed me to gain a more enlightened meaning of those experiences from the participants point of view (Vagle, 2014). This method of inquiry enabled me to develop a personal relationship with my participants and fully appreciate their personal challenges early in life, their rise to leadership positions, and how that experience impacted their lives.

A phenomenological method of inquiry also enabled me to construct the experiences of AAFALs into a narrative by using individual profiles developed from a series of three interviews (Seidman, 2013) to share their stories. Furthermore, a phenomenological method of inquiry helped me to examine and divulge how the participants made sense of both their shared and individual experiences (Patton, 2002). Vagle (2014) further confirmed that "When we study something phenomenologically, we are not trying to get inside other people's mind. Rather, we are trying to contemplate and theorize the various ways things manifest and appear in and through our being in the world" (p. 22). In other words, we are looking for experiences through the voice of the person involved. With experiences of a particular set of people who share a common

phenomenon, which in this study is African American women who work in the academic profession and also work in leadership positions, participant selection was an important foundation to the study.

*Participants*

Patton (2002) stated that sample sizes in a qualitative study have no rules but are dependent upon what you want to know, what will be useful, the purpose of your inquiry, and what you will be able to do with available time and resources. This list is not all inclusive; but is the basis for my determination of the size of the sample I studied. Patton (2002) further declared: "The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size" (p. 245). In other words, one increases the validity of information gleaned from the participant based on the quality of the stories. The size of the sample is less important than the depth and richness of the data.

The sample in this study consisted of five participants from technical colleges in the southern region of the United States, one of whom was me. The individual participants were the unit of analysis. Patton (2002) wrote about a unit of analysis when noting the primary focus of data collection is on what is happening to individuals in a setting and how individuals are affected by the setting. I researched the technical colleges in this region by visiting each official website in addition to the technical college system's website. I determined the approximate number of African American female presidents, vice presidents, and academic deans in the system. I believed that five participants could provide information rich data. The criteria used for selection included

being African American, female, and holding a position in one of the following job titles: president, vice president for academic affairs or dean for academic affairs.

Participants I sought could come from any one of these groups, but I did not limit the pool to one from each group. The participants did need to hold positions of academic leadership, and they needed to work in the same statewide technical college organization, which meant the programs and structure for each college would be similar in nature. My initial thoughts were to use a technique where I would purposely select certain individuals.

First, I will explain how I intended to select my participants but did not. Later in this chapter, I will explain how the participant selection was actually done and the difficulties with the original plan that made it necessary to change things. In my study, I intended to employ a purposeful sampling technique, which permitted the selection of particular individuals based on certain predetermined criteria (Patton, 2002). The logic behind purposeful sampling suggests that by intentionally choosing select participants the researcher could and would have a better chance to obtain information-rich data for in-depth study (Patton, 2002). By engaging participants who appeared to be able to provide rich information, it was hoped that a deeper understanding would be gained, which would enable me to learn more about the issues that were of central significance to AAFALs. In my study, AAFALs holding the position of president of the college, vice president for academic affairs, or dean for academic affairs were purposely selected. I purposely chose AAFALs from both urban and rural communities. In addition to a purposeful technique, I would love to have used an extreme or deviant case sampling, but I was not able to employ this strategy.

Patton (2002) also explained that approaches to selecting samples are not mutually exclusive and that, depending on the purpose, more than one qualitative sampling strategy may be incorporated. With this in mind, I would have chosen to include the extreme or deviant case sampling strategy for selecting participants who have worked in the system for an extended period of time and exemplify characteristics of resilience based on how long they have been employed with the system. Patton (2002) elaborated: "This strategy involves selecting cases that are information rich because they are unusual or special in some way, such as outstanding successes or notable failures" (p. 231). In the next section, I will give details on the actual participant selection process.

Participant selection turned out to be a long drawn out process. During my search for participants in the study, I found that the majority of AAFALs were not eager to share their stories. I had initially assumed they would want to share just as I did. It took me 3 months or more to get the participants that I needed to complete my study. Initially, I sent out a blind copy email to all of the African American women in the system of whom I was aware, which was about 25 potential participants. The blind copy feature in Outlook email allowed me to send to several people, and they could not see the other recipients. The purpose was to provide anonymity to each person in the distribution email. I informed them of who I was and that I was conducting research through Valdosta State University (VSU). I also made them aware that in the study, I would keep their identity confidential and VSU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) had reviewed and approved the research project (See Appendix A). Unfortunately, I did not get any response from the first request for participants.

After 2 weeks, I sent the invitation to participate again. This time there were only two respondents to the invitation. I contacted these two respondents. With the first respondent, scheduling was a problem and we could never agree on a good time and date. After several calls and emails, we settled on a time and date for the first interview. We used Skype to communicate, which worked out perfectly. The second respondent and I had a difficult time settling on a date and time as well. We had a day and time scheduled, but she emailed that she would need to reschedule. After several attempts, we agreed on a day and time. We went through the interview process. She was very energetic and provided lots of good information about her journey. I began to find myself changing my criteria regarding AAFALs and not emphasizing years of experience. Instead, I was satisfied to find an AAFAL willing to participate in an interview at all.

I later resolved that the extreme or deviant participant selection process would not work. I was willing to interview academic leaders from both urban and rural technical colleges. I later transitioned to a snowballing sampling technique, asking participants about AAFALs, as this was not public information. A snowballing technique enabled me to find additional participants through networking with interconnected participants (Patton, 2002). Once I had two participants, I began data collection, which helped me finalize the participant list. Considering Seidman's (2013) warning that participants should not be incriminated or maligned by their statements, I assigned five pseudonyms to the participants, one of which was me, in order to increase the privacy of the participants. I found the data collection process the most exhilarating part of the research due to the amazing interaction with the participants, which I will share in detail next.

*Phenomenological Data Collection*

My study focused on the experiences of African American women who work in leadership positions in the academic divisions of technical colleges. Due to the phenomenological approach to my research, interviewing was my primary mode of data collection. Interviews provided interaction with the participants, which resulted in rich data from each of the participants. I relied on information primarily from Seidman (2013) on the interview process, and how to begin; Merriam (2002) and Patton (2002) for a better understanding of qualitative interviewing and why this approach was best for gathering data with a phenomenological approach.

*Phenomenological Interviews*

As the researcher, I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002). I followed Seidman's (2013) lead and collected data through three 90-minute interviews with each participant using in-depth, open-ended questions. Seidman, who is a phenomenologist, reported that the ultimate basis of in-depth interviewing is the desire to understand an individual's experience and the meaning that the individual derived from that experience. In essence, the purpose of interviews was to attempt to gather knowledge of the experiences, feelings, thoughts, and intentions of individuals who cannot be observed (Patton, 2002).

Interviewing in qualitative research is intended to allow the researcher to co-construct meaningful knowledge with the participants. It further "allows us to enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). The interviews conducted in this study were intended to open a window for me and allow me to hear about the experiences of AAFALs in the technical college system and, more importantly, develop an

understanding of the meanings attached to those experiences. Ultimately, however, Patton (2002) noted that "the quality of information obtained during the interview is largely dependent on the interviewer" (p. 341). I recognized my role as the key information-gathering instrument and subsequently piloted my interview strategy of using a general interview guide approach to ask questions. Collecting qualitative data through open-ended interviews involves the use of one of three basic approaches.

The approach that I chose to use was the general interview guide approach (See Appendix C). "The general interview guide approach (Patton, 2002) involved outlining a set of questions that are to be explored before interviewing begins. The guide serves as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered" (Patton, 2002, p. 342). Using this approach, I was able to have a guide, and at the same time, be able to ask the participant to elaborate on certain topics. They would then give more detail, and I would get a better understanding of their experience. I believe the use of a general interview guide approach worked better for me than the informal conversation interview or the standardized open-ended interview, and enabled me to make better connections with the participants during the analysis. A brief description of informal conversation and standardized, open-ended interviews is included in the next section.

Patton (2002) explained the informal conversational interview as one that ". . . relies entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction, often as part of ongoing participant observation fieldwork" (p. 342). The standardized open-ended interviews are described by Patton as "a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the

same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words" (Patton, 2002, p. 342).  In contrast, by using a general interview guide, I began with preset questions relating to the information about AAFALs in the technical college system.  In addition, the general interview guide enabled me to elaborate on a question or ask a question that was not on the list.  The questions were guided, in part, by the literature presented in the literature review on topics related to resilience, othermothering, and the tenants of critical race theory.

I gathered information-rich data, which was collected using in-depth interviews based on Seidman's three-interview series (2013).  Participants enlightened me about their childhood, family, how they got into education, and how they were promoted to leadership.  The interviews were spaced a week apart as recommended by Seidman (2013).  As described by Seidman (2013), the three interviews are conducted as follows: "The first interview established the context of the participants' experience" (p. 21).  I proceeded to gather as much information as I could about the participant's overall experience, including her past up to the time that she became an academic leader.  In the second interview that I conducted, participants answered questions that helped to "reconstruct and present the details of their experience within the context in which it occurred by asking specifics regarding what tasks they perform on the job or have them describe in detail an average day in their work lives" (Seidman, 2013, p. 21).  "The third interview encouraged the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them and how those experiences brought them to their current place in life that they now reside" (p. 21).  In the third interview, I guided participants in the reflection of their

experience as AAFALs in the technical college (See Appendix C). In the next section, discussion of procedures for the interviews are explained.

Interviews were obtained by scheduling Facetime, Skype, and face-to-face appointments. In the case of conflicts due to distance and schedules, Skype or Facetime sessions were arranged. Seidman (2013) posited that there are instances when interviewers and participants agree to interviews by Skype or Facetime. The audio portion of each interview was recorded with a digital recorder. I also used the Apple MacBook Pro laptop as a backup recording device. Backup copies of the taped interviews were placed in a separate location for security purposes. Memos were added immediately after the interview to denote time, date, and any special reminders. Some of my memos were quick shorthand notes taken during the interview to note body language. Notes were taken to locate important quotations, and "as a backup in the event the recorder has malfunctioned" (Patton, 2002, p. 383). However, in my guidance of the interviews, I did not attempt to influence responses or notes based on my opinion.

As an academic leader in the technical college system, I needed to recognize all my preconceived notions regarding my experiences as an academic leader in order to really be able to hear, with reduced bias, the stories that the participants shared with me (Seidman, 2013). I was able to do this by making a conscious effort during the interview not to interject my opinions or complete any sentences. I allowed them adequate time to respond with no pressure and at the same time, trying not to consider how I would respond. In addition, analyzing my own thoughts during the entire process of my research. I reviewed my experiences as the researcher and recognized any preconceptions that may have inadvertently made their way into to this study. By making

memos of my thoughts, I was able to distinguish my own bias from the stories being told by the participants. I reviewed my current thoughts and feelings regarding AAFALs and set aside any prejudgments and biases, in hopes of seeing the participants with new and receptive eyes. Moustakas (1994) called this phase of inquiry Epoche. I accomplished this by using memos to note my thoughts during the entire process of collecting and analyzing the data. I used a stenographic pad and wrote down my thoughts intermittently. Microsoft Word and MaxQDA were also used to memo thoughts. The next step was transcription of the recordings and the memos.

I personally transcribed the recordings along with use of an application called Dragon software. I believe that by personally transcribing the recordings I "came to know the interviewee better" (Seidman, 2013, p. 118). This strategy was time-consuming and took approximately 4 to 5 hours to transcribe a 90-minute interview, but it was worth it to me. I certainly believe my background of working 18 years in the clerical field was an asset in this particular situation. Maxwell (2013) suggested, "listening to interview tapes prior to transcription" (p. 105). During the process of listening to the interview, I reflected on the non-verbal cues that were used by the participant during the interview. I took advantage of this opportunity for analysis by reflecting on the interviews and writing memos on what I heard, which helped me to "develop tentative ideas about categories and relationships" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 105). Transcripts from the interviews were used as the primary data source, but memos were incorporated in producing valuable information. During the review of the transcripts, I continued to make notes and memo thoughts that I wanted to consider in addition to the transcribed information. I also used memos and ideas about constructing theories and relationships and used them to guide

my next interview session.  I included this information as comments in the word processing software.

After I reviewed the transcripts, the participants had the opportunity to review and validate what I had recorded in my transcript and ensure it was consistent with their perspective (Maxwell, 2013).  Participants had 1 week to review and comment.  Maxwell (2013) referred to this procedure as only one part of respondent validation.  He articulated that it is the only way to verify that the researcher transcribed the respondent's words correctly.  He further noted that this is an important way for the researcher to identify her biases and misunderstandings of the interview by reviewing the feedback from the participant.  Even though some analysis occurred during interviews and transcription, more formal, methodical analysis followed.

*Phenomenological Data Analysis*

I used Maxwell's (2013) three main groups of analytic choices: "(1) memos, (2) categorizing strategies (such as coding and thematic analysis), and (3) connecting strategies (such as narrative analysis)" (p. 105).  I emphasized the strategy of categorizing, but all three options were a part of my analysis process.  I began by using an application named MaxQDA to categorize material.  Initially, I found this method produced and extreme amount of data.  This method was very confusing for me.  I changed my methods by printing out the interviews and manually marked the interviews with different highlighters.  At this point I was able to look at the similarities and differences in each participant.  I coded the data to categorize similar responses and develop themes, which reduced the information for display in matrices (Seidman, 2013).  I used both digital and paper research journals to track my thoughts throughout the entire

process (Maxwell, 2013). Hand-written memos and notes were later transcribed for improved legibility. After the data from the interviews was reduced to a workable document. I used the highlighted information to write profiles of each participant. I wrote profiles about each participant's journey. Seidman (2013) stated: "A profile in the words of the participant is the research product that I think is most consistent with the process of interviewing" (p. 122). An in-depth description of data analysis continues in the next paragraph.

Data analysis for this study was an ongoing process and began during the data collection stage as described above. I began analysis by listening to the interview tapes and reading along with the transcription notes. As recommended by Maxwell (2013), "the experienced qualitative researcher begins data analysis immediately after finishing the first interview or observation and continues to analyze the data as long as he or she is working on the research, stopping briefly to write reports and papers" (p. 104). A large amount of text was produced by in-depth interviews (Maxwell, 2013; Seidman, 2013). However, "a detailed and careful transcript that re-creates the verbal and non-verbal material of the interview can be of great benefit to a researcher who may be studying the transcript months after the interview occurred" (Seidman, 2013, p. 119). Seidman (2013) also posited that, as the researcher, I must have an open attitude regarding the transcripts, "seeking what emerges as important and of interest from the text" (p. 119). It was critical for me to identify my interest in the topic in order to examine it and identify any biases. Only then did I begin to reduce the text by marking passages of interest with brackets (Seidman, 2013).

Continuing with a phenomenological method of analysis, I used a technique called "horizonalization" (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2013) in which, I used every expression that is relevant to the experience being researched will be highlighted with brackets (Seidman, 2013). These expressions were not listed in an order that gave precedence to any expression in particular. All expressions were treated equally and in no hierarchical order. While making notes and listing the expressions, I continued to memo my thoughts during this process. During this step, I examined the expressions to determine if they could be labeled. This process is also known as coding (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2013). I accomplished this by noting what was interesting, determining an appropriate label based on the passage, and suggesting a category that could hold multiple passages (Seidman, 2013).

Seidman also recommended labeling each passage with an indication of where it was located in the original transcript. He further explained that he used "the initials of the participant, a Roman numeral for the number of the interview in the three-interview sequence, and Arabic numbers for the page number of the transcript on which the passage occurs" (p. 128) in order to be able to go back and read the passage in its original context. I did not use the initials of the participant as a part of the label. This preserved confidentiality in the identity of the participant. I labeled passages with a pseudonym to the participant, an Arabic number for the number in the three-interview sequence and Arabic numbers for the page number of the transcript on which the passage occurs. For example, a passage from page 12 of the first interview with the first participant will be labeled as Pseudonym_1_12.

The bracketed data was then assigned a theme and tabulated according to category of response (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2013).  These categories were constructed by the researcher and based on the transcripts rather than from preset categories (Seidman, 2013).  Once all categories were constructed, expressions from each participant were listed under that category, which gave me an overall view of the related expressions.  I used a matrix that graphically displayed the categories and expressions vertically, while listing the participants horizontally (See Table 2 on Page 92).  This helped me to have a better visual of the data (Maxwell, 2013).  In addition to main categories, sub-categories were also constructed to display the data.

During the interpretation portion of the process, I listed each category and grouped each response under that individual question.  Using the constructed, grouped categories, which were based heavily on the judgment of the researcher; I was able to build a description of the experience of AAFALs (Moustakas, 1994).  For example, hypothetically consider a category of career ambitions based on interview responses of AAFALs, next label that category across the top of your matrix and list each participant's response in the intersecting cell with their categories on the left vertical axis and the names on the top horizontal axis (R. Schmertzing, personal communication, March 18, 2016).  I also used MaxQDA 18 coding software to assist with and coding.  Finally, in addition to categorizing themes, I made connective threads in the experiences of the participants (Maxwell, 2013; Seidman, 2013) through individual profiles of each participant's journey.  The profiles provided clear images of the struggles, feelings, and thoughts of AAFALs in the technical college system.  The individual descriptions

provided a vivid account of how each participant felt and the thoughts connected with the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

*Validity*

As an African American female academic leader myself, and following the strategies laid out by Maxwell (2013), I did my best to fairly represent the stories my participants shared. Maxwell (2013) recognized two threats to validity, which are frequently raised in qualitative studies. One threat to validity is researcher bias. Researcher bias refers to the idea that the conclusions are based on what the researcher sought to find relevant in the study. In the proposed study, the first step I incorporated was to examine my own bias. Maxwell (2013) reasoned that researcher bias is impossible to eliminate. This bias may include the researcher's "theories, beliefs, and perceptual lens" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). Rather than attempt to eliminate any bias, I was concerned with understanding values and expectations, which "may have influenced the conduct and conclusions of my study and avoiding the negative consequences of these" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). I evaluated my subjectivity by continuously using memos to recognize the thoughts and feelings that participating in the study may have invoked. Peshkin (1988) argued that researchers should not wait until after the data has been collected and analyzed, but while the research is in progress, researchers should seek out their own subjectivity in order to understand how it may shape their conclusions.

Another threat to validity is reactivity (Maxwell, 2013). I assessed knowledge of my influence on the individual or the setting in order to understand how I may have influenced what was said by the interviewee. I attempted to avoid these threats to the validity of my study by employing the following strategies: intensive long-term

involvement, rich data, respondent validation, in addition to searching for discrepant evidence and negative cases. I invoked the strategy of intensive long-term involvement by following Seidman's (2013) three-interview series approach of interviewing participants over the course of 3 weeks. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes. In addition, the strategy of transcribing interviews verbatim provided rich data that is detailed. I used memos to document my thoughts and subjectivity during the study, which added to the richness of the details of the interviews. Respondent validation (Maxwell, 2013) is another strategy that was included in this study. Allowing the interviewee to validate the transcribed interview helped eliminate the possibility of "misinterpretation of the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 126). This is also referred to as member checking (Maxwell, 2013; Seidman, 2013). By gathering feedback on my transcripts from the participants, I was able to check for flaws in my transcripts of the interviews. I have increased the confidentiality of my participants through the use of pseudonyms and by following the guidelines of Valdosta State University IRB (See Appendix B).

In this chapter I have discussed my choice of approach, my participation selection process, my data collection process, my data analysis process, my validity and any threats I may encounter. In the next chapter, I will present the results of our study.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Following the guidelines from Seidman (2013) my first step after the transcription of the interviews, which I completed on my own in order to become more immersed with the results, was to begin reducing the text. I started reducing the text initially by working in the MaxQDA application only to find myself overloaded with tables and data that totally confused and overwhelmed me. After giving this several more attempts, I finally realized that I needed to regroup and go back to Seidman's (2013) guidelines that referenced the sequential process of crafting profiles. Using this sequential process, the profiles began to come together. One by one and over several days, I began to develop a story for each participant. Each story had a beginning, a middle, and an end. I could sense a connection to the participants because I was so involved in each aspect of developing the profiles from the interview, transcription, reduction, and finally the finished version. I believe this was the first time that I felt that I could really finish this study.

I printed out three copies of each interview. Next, one by one I began to put brackets around the statements that I felt drew my attention or that I thought were significant to my study. After bracketing the information, I pulled the document up in Word, saved it with a different name. I began to cut the information that I had not highlighted out of the document. Even though it was difficult to give up some of the interview data, I began to see a summarized version of the profile without all the extra

information.  I completed this task for each of the interviews, bracketing, saving with a new name, cutting out the extra interview material until I had my final version.

The purpose of this study was to tell the stories of AAFALs in order to inform others what to expect in regard to leadership in the academic arena of technical education.  When I was a very young girl, I used to fall asleep listening to the stories of my grandmother and aunts as they talked about how difficult it was to work in the cotton fields of Georgia.  How the owner of the cotton would work them for such long hours and barely give them any pay.  How some of the women in the field would pass out due to the heat.  They called it when "the bear" got to you.  In other words, heat exhaustion.  I never had to work in the cotton fields, but I sure worked in the tobacco, tomato, and the bean fields.  I know this was partly where I developed my work ethic and understanding that if you wanted to eat, you had to work.  The harder you worked, the more you produced. The more you produced, the more you got paid, particularly in the bean fields.  I have constructed the profiles to tell their stories like my grandmother used to tell people's stories.

The results of this study will also demonstrate storytelling in the form of the profiles of AAFALs.  Storytelling and narrative analysis are components of critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), which also informs this study.  The profiled AAFALs are Anna, Becky, Carla, Debra, and Eva.  The names are pseudonyms and chosen by the researcher and not the participants.  The locations, colleges and any other identifiable information has been changed to respect the confidential nature of the information and the privacy of the participant.  The words in italics are from me, the

researcher.  The words that are not italicized, are all direct quotes from the participants, with slight modifications made for ease of reading (Seidman, 2013).

<center>*Anna's Profile*</center>

*My first profile highlights Anna, a beautiful young lady in her mid to late forties. She is tall, slim, and has a very confident air about her.  Her hair is twisted in locks and rests on her shoulders.  She has a narrow face with high cheekbones and thin lips.  She prides herself in being considered a radical even though she admits that she hasn't participated in many sit-ins or protest.  She does, however, write and express her radical nature in her works.*

I am originally from the South.  My parents were first-generation college graduates. They earned bachelor's degrees.  I think my father did graduate work, but he didn't finish the master's degree.  My parents met in Alabama State University in the late 60s.  They were a part of the great migration of Southerners to the West.  Once my parents graduated college they applied for jobs in large cities.  My father tells the story that he applied for a job in Atlanta, and in Los Angeles.  He was not particular, . . . whoever gave him the job first.  That was where they were to relocate.  A company in Los Angeles hired him, and they [participant included] moved to Los Angeles.  I believe I was 2 years old.  It was in 1972 [when]they moved to Los Angeles.  I was raised in Los Angeles in a peculiar time—a good peculiar time—a watershed time in American history.  In the 70s, which was really post-Brown versus Board of Education, the South had not really desegregated schools yet, but the West had.  I attended integrated schools from the time I was a toddler all the way through my K-12 education.  When I was in elementary school in the early 70s, all of my teachers- yet hindsight is 20/20 I did not notice it at 5 years

<center>51</center>

old-all were hippies.  When they really got serious, they decided to get real jobs teaching

and thought that they could make the greatest difference in education.  So, I was educated

by radicals and revolutionaries mostly.  I was tested as a gifted child in kindergarten.  I

was the subject of research for about the next couple of years of my life.  My parents

agreed, you know, to help these graduate students from USC.  I went to USC magnet

university school and so I was the subject of all kinds of research.  I remember one of

those pivotal moments in education when I realized I had a different kind of education

than other people.  It was when Stevie Wonder was lobbying for the King holiday, I

believe that was 1979 through like 1982, and it finally became a holiday.  Well my White

teachers basically shut down the whole school system to allow weeks and weeks to the

study of nonviolent resistance.

I challenged everything, questioned everything.  No law is abideable unless it was

just so I felt like I was educated by Gandhi and King.  That set the stage for me being a

radical, and of course, I carried on that tradition as a freshman at the university.  I just

always happened to be at the right place at the right time educationally.  In my first

African Studies class that I took at UCR, my instructor happened to be the creator of

African studies, the creator of Kwanza, Dr. Maulana Karenga.  I didn't know this when I

registered for the class.  I did not know [recognize] that name .  I was 17 and so that just

continued the legacy and . . . fast forward to arriving in Atlanta.  When my parents were

close to retirement they decided to move back to the south and they couldn't go deep

South because they had spent their entire lives in Los Angeles, so they came to the

[urban] south.  I followed them and finished my education at a state college and

continued to study race, class, and gender in literary studies there.  Now I'm in a

doctorate program at the university learning leadership and organization development with that same radical zeal. I also continued to challenge the status quo and considered myself a radical.

My parents are not radical. They did not discourage my radicalizing "power to the people stuff", as my father used to call it. They didn't support it either. And my mother still tried to keep me quiet and I would always ask her, was King afraid of these people, was Malcolm X quiet, was Sojourner Truth quiet? Then I don't have the right to be quiet because I stand on their shoulders. That's why I'm able to do what I'm doing because they did it first. And of course, you know, in theory, she gets that, but she wants me to be quiet and not always challenge the status quo.

When I was at the state university as a graduate student, I sought out conferences and scholarship that really engaged race and gender classes through a radical lens. I taught that way. I was on a teaching fellowship at state and they always placed me in the rhetoric classes because that was my passion and purpose. My rhetoric classes were always themed classes. One of my themes was the American myth of meritocracy. That was one class I did [taught]. The other one was the gender class. I can't remember what I named it, but they were categorized under gender, and of course, I taught American lit classes after the social construction of race. My theses was about transgenerational trauma of African Americans in their bodies and in their psyche. My primary area was 19th century African American lit so that was all slave narratives. I spent 2 years reading slave narratives and writing about them and linking the trauma into the 20th century. We were barely in the 21st century, when I published a couple of things on transgenerational trauma. I called it transgenerational ghosting of slavery in the body of African American

lives today, since I left that area, a lot of social sciences have now codified the idea that trauma is ghosted in us psychologically. And of course, what could be more traumatic than the legacy of slavery. That was my radicalism there; then after grad school, I was recruited by Teach for America. So, I did 2 years with Teach for America because that was my passion to offset racial inequity with education for marginalized people of color. I taught 2 years in the saddest marginalized economically and socially disenfranchised schools and school systems, and I wrote about that too. I'm also a creative writer so I have a couple of short stories published. One of which was the high-stakes testing debacle in America and how it adversely affects African Americans.

Right now, my study is focused on under-represented students and how good professional development can impact their lives. So, I'm studying a little culturally relevant instruction. I did that in grad school, but it was called multiculturalism. That's a fancier term. So that's my purpose. People ask me all the time, you know, what are you going to do after grad school? Are you going to go to one of those top tiered universities and be a scholar? And I say, if I do, I will always have to serve marginalized students in some way. You know, you can't un-ring that bell. You know once you've accepted that responsibility, that's life, you can't go back. I don't know if I've earned the title of radicalized well enough, I haven't been in any real sit-ins, but I see my writing as my weapon, my scholarship my worldview . . . that is, I'm a purpose driven educator. My goal in life, however, was not always to be an educator.

My mom was a retired teacher after 32 years. I think I was fighting against her legacy to be something different. I've probably always been a teacher, you know, tutoring kids and teaching since I was probably four. I was a peer tutor in high school, so

I probably should've always been a teacher, but I'm also a writer, so I was trying to pursue writing, but of course, that's a very broke life. Most of us know that writers use academia to fund the writing, so my first major was journalism and creative writing; then I decided to be safer and put those things as minors and be an English major so that was my minor in my master's degree. I came to teach as my second life. Like I was in human resources for the first 8 years of my adult career.

I started my career in my 20s after getting an associate degree in Liberal Arts. I was drawn to, I don't even remember how it happened, but I had a niche for human resources. I stayed in human resources for about 7 to 8 years and then after a divorce, I decided to reinvent myself and went back to school and the rest is history-as they say. That is when I started teaching. I immediately started teaching for the technical college system as a general education development (GED) adult basic English teacher, and English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) teacher right after getting my bachelor's degree while I was in grad school. Then, I was approached by my faculty advisor for a teaching fellowship, so I did both. I was on a teaching fellowship, and I was working for the technical college as an ESOL GED teacher. I also did the Teach for America program, so I've been teaching ever since 2002, in some way. I taught as an adjunct instructor before I could get full-time employment as faculty at the master's degree at several different institutions. I then landed the position here and later back in 2010, I rose in the ranks of leadership and continue to keep one foot in the classroom. I teach online writing.

Right now, I'm at a crossroad about what I want to do when this doctorate is finished. I have two things in front of me-am I going to be a career academic and

basically take a very sweet life as the rest of my career or am I going to be a higher ed leader for the rest of my life, which is very stressful, as you might have gathered? So, I still have a decision to make and it depends on a lot of things. Which, I may do one for a while, and then retire as tenured faculty somewhere else. Although there is uncertainty about the end of my career, I remember very distinctly my beginning.

I was at my current college for one year when I was tapped by my dean to be a department chair. I was department chair for approximately 4 or 5 years, something like that, before I started getting the bug for higher leadership and so at that point, I started aggressively searching for dean roles inside the system or outside the system. I had the greatest dean, so I confided in her and told her what my career goals were as well as my educational goals. I let her know I can do it here [leadership] or someplace else. I had several African American female leaders. I was surrounded by them. Our college had been indicted for being women-heavy. At some point the president was female the vice president of academic affairs was female, and the vice president of student affairs was female. We were being scrutinized. It just happened that way, you know, and so I was blessed to have all those women around me in leadership positions with advanced degrees cheering me on and developing me.

When the first dean position came available, I had only been department chair for 2 years. My president pulled me aside and asked me why I had not applied. I was shocked that she even thought of me. I told her I'm just learning how to be a department chair. I just don't think I'm ready, and I can't jump into something that major not be ready and mess it up. She understood, and she told me the next time she needed to see my name in the applicants. So, it was another 3 or 4 years before the next time came, and she came to

me before she had even seen the applicants, and she said, "did you apply?"  I told her I

did, and I'm ready.  She said, "well that's good stuff."  This opened the door for me and

helped me to gain my current position.

Obtaining my current position took part drive and part mentor.  Mentoring played

the biggest part for me.  We had a guest speaker for a portion of our leadership course on

Black men in leadership roles, not just education, but just leadership roles.  For them it's

not that different than for Black women with some exceptionalities.  You really have to

have a tribe in your corner.  I have not ventured out into leadership roles at majority

White institutions yet, but I have worked as faculty in majority White institutions and as a

graduate student at majority White institutions.  You will be invisible if you do not have

some Black mentors, seasoned positive people in your corner to coach you, to advocate

for you, and to make moves for you behind the scenes.  I mean because let's face it, a lot

of leaders get that great opportunity because someone made a phone call and people don't

want to admit that, yes, a lot of it is based on merit but you know there are 500 people

with the same merit-based skill sets and CV that you have.  Sometimes it takes a phone

call, sometimes it takes networking, you know, a friend of a friend, somebody I went to

grad school with, somebody I was a colleague of at work-whatever, and so I think it's the

drive skill, but I think more than that it's having that mentor or group of mentors.

On my first day on the job, I was shaken but not stirred.  One of my, now,

subordinates had orchestrated a year-long coup to usurp me, and ultimately ensure her

place as the new dean.  She was unsuccessful.  I was selected regardless of her

machinations.  So, I had a target on my back from day one.  A routine day in my position

is chaos.  Very unpredictable.  Never a dull day.  I have that to-do-list habit of highly

effective people.  However, because my college is deeply steeped in a reactive, complaint culture, my attempts at organizing action items are often thwarted by last minute urgency. Nonetheless, I have learned to compartmentalize.  Also, I have enlisted the help of my "village" [husband, grown children, parents].  The village babysits the young children so that I can make visits to the library, have quiet reading and writing time, and go to class. Regarding my social life, my husband and I are no longer spontaneous.  We plan "date night" once or twice a month.  We usually stream movies at home, but occasionally, we actually make it to the movie theater.  Most of my friends are working professionals in graduate programs as well.  We manage to do lunch every couple of months.  Although I had great mentors, the college offered no leadership training.

Nonetheless, having a mentor in practice and in the field made every difference to me.  As I illustrated in the first interview, women of color cannot navigate the waters of leadership without good mentors.  Academically, my major professor and the professors that sit on my dissertation committee have truly been the best mentors for which I could have hoped.

I think our student population is 99% African American because we are right in the heart of the city.  As you probably know the data doesn't always say that the folks that are running those colleges are over 90% African American and do represent their student's racial makeup.  That's changing a little bit, we have a little bit more diversity among our senior staff team and in our deans, but a lot of those people are a part of disenfranchised groups.  We have a huge Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Questioning or Queer [LBGTQ] African American representation here on the campus both in the student body and as well as in the leadership faculty-a lot of women of color

and non-women of color.  Back in those days [of scrutinization], the entire senior staff were women and they were Black.  It's changed.  There might be, I think,  two non-people of color on senior staff.  There are two non-Black deans out of seven.  But this is a tough crowd.  Our students are the most economically disadvantaged students, I would say, in the state.  I looked at the data.  To be urban and poor is not the same as rural and poor and we are so densely populated.  It's a very densely urban populated community.  The exceptionalities, the challenges, that come with students who come here, a lot of non-people of color are not ready for that.  They don't stay long.  The ones that stay long, they're some good ones.  Some are executive staff, but others are middle management.

I consider myself middle management, you know.  Deans are not part of the president's cabinet we're the next level below that.  I'm in charge of approximately 60 full-time and part-time faculty.  It is a disproportionate number of full-time to part-time ratio.  Like 22 of those are full-time faculty staff.  My area is arts and sciences and the Academic Success Center--which is all of our tutoring and academic support as well as the first-year experience program.  So basically, my primary role is developing faculty to the extent that they can drive student success, retention, graduation, and enrollment.  That's what I do in a nutshell and because I'm [working in] arts and sciences, the general education unit is where the core of the college resides.  We are what makes the institution Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accredited.  So, a lot of reporting of benchmarks, it all rests here.  I've kind of taken professional development on as the focus of my dissertation and so I have allied myself here professionally with professional development.

I see myself as a transformational leader with servant leadership in there someplace. I'm purpose driven. I told you about my whole life and how I arrived at education. My goal is to, first of all, recruit and hire people who are also purpose driven. If I have to inherit teams, which I have done, I want to inspire them to find a purpose and if it is not higher education, then whatever he [God] is telling you, that is what you need to help you get there. Also, I really don't want people to be in education who are just feeling that I can't do anything else. It is not that kind of career, you know, you don't want a doctor who just fell into it. You want somebody who has passion, who has skill, who has all of those things combined to make an educator. That's what I'm about. I have high expectations, but reasonable. I just think that humility and flexibility—people who can accept constructive criticism, learn and grow are the key. You don't have to be the most brilliant educator in the world, but you have to be willing to learn. You have to understand that you are a work in progress and that learning is lifelong and just because you have a Ph.D. in this discipline or a doctorate in this discipline or masters, whatever, it doesn't mean that you're done learning. That's my philosophy and my style is transformational and collaborative. I really believe that my team thinks we are a team now, they understand that, you know, I will ultimately be the one with the decision-making power. Work generally gets hashed out together, and whatever decision to push forward, it's going to be one that everybody agrees upon. It is something that I have to sell because it is the organizational direction. I'm going to give them a whole educational-why-we-have-to-move-in-this-direction speech, and I'll have my team on my side, and buying into the decision by the end of it.

*Becky's Profile*

*I found it somewhat difficult to schedule a meeting with Becky. After finally*
*getting together through a Skype meeting, I learned that Becky had just had a baby and*
*only recently returned to work from maternity leave. Becky is about 37 years old and she*
*and her husband decided to start a family somewhat later in life. Becky has a 2-year old*
*son and now a 4-month old daughter to add to her responsibilities as an AAFAL.*

I was born in Honeyville, Georgia. I am the youngest of five children. Growing
up, my mom raised us all as a single mom. I am not only the youngest of all of the
children, but I was kind of the forgotten child, based on the fact that all of them are pretty
close together [in age] for the most part. My sister next to me is 11 years older than me.
Yes, I was the surprise child. So out of the five of us, all of us at one point have been
educators. All of my four sisters are K through middle school certified. They all taught
in the elementary school for the most part. One of them went back to school to become a
lawyer. I never taught K-12 at all. I've always been a teacher by nature, and I think that
has to do with my upbringing and all my sisters being teachers. We kind of act the same
in that respect, we have the same persona, as far as, we like to ask a lot of questions. We
like to explain things.

My mom was a nurse, and she's retired now. She was a nurse for over 40 years and
she really pushed education. She instilled in us the importance of getting an education
and being able to take care of ourselves. You know, really, really being our own
advocates, depending on others when necessary, but also being able to be self-sufficient.
My mom always explained things to us fully. Growing up we had to use correct
anatomical names for body parts. She made sure that we presented ourselves as educated

61

girls. So, she did not allow us to say [things like] my peepee [vagina] hurts or anything like that. We would have to say, for example, my vagina hurts. She was teaching us to not say things that were not real. So, that is the way she taught us, and we kind of flourished that way. She would explain our homework to us. She would tell us stories to help us remember things. So, like I can remember in science, right, we had to learn how our body parts were connected and she would say, "You know if you don't eat know your brain going to say 'Hey', I need some food in here." So, your stomach is signaling and your mouth waters. Therefore, on the test that was easy to recall, and we picked up a lot of her teaching styles even though she was never actually a certified teacher. I guess from the nursing standpoint that was the way that she taught us.

I wanted to be a pediatrician. You can look at all of my pictures for career day and tell that I want to be a pediatrician. I knew that was what I wanted to be. I went to a large university as an undergrad, and then on to another southern university. I stayed in the state. Now, when I got to college and took organic chemistry, I realized that it was not for me. So, I realize that I did not like where I was headed, and I started developing a passion for literature--postcolonial literature and English. I really started loving that [field]and I started gravitating [to that major]. My undergrad major was English, and my master's is in English, and then my doctorate is in higher education. That was how I got into on English. I taught English on the college level. I've always been interested in the college system, so that's kind of how it happened.

It has always been technical college for me. I started to do some adjunct work at first in teaching English, lower level English. At this, point, I think, I only had a bachelors in English and was an academic advisor. I did that for a few years. Then I

started teaching English full-time. I did that for about 7 to 9 years, and now I'm an academic dean. I really hadn't applied to any leadership positions at that point. I take that back, I may have applied, but I really wasn't looking to get the positions. I just wanted to put my hat in the ring. How this happened is that the current dean that was here when I came decided to retire, and the position was opened so I decided to apply. When I came here to this school, I held the same position as I held as an English instructor, it was a lateral transfer. All that experience came with me, those years of service came with me, so it was easier for me to transition a leadership position. I would attribute obtaining my current position as an academic leader to many factors . . . I've probably been moving toward this position for a very long time, but I just didn't know. Even when I was younger, I held leadership roles. In the church, in my community, I've held leadership roles so I would definitely say that it's a plan that has definitely been charted for me. In addition to that, I think my education plays a great factor in coming to this position. I think it was my next God-ordained step. I have been doing this for 2 years. My area is Gen Ed, but actually my job function just changed, so I'm over general education but also over professional services area such as culinary arts, hotel, restaurant tourism, and designing media as well. I also just got drafted or voluntold that I am the Quality Education Plan (QEP) director. So that's just an extra duty. Well, the good thing is I don't have to teach anymore. I don't have to carry any courses. I will completely work on administrative duties.

I would describe my style of leadership as very hands-on. It is a mix between servant leadership and transformative leadership. I'm very hands-on, and I like to get in the trenches as much as I can. I find that I can't do that as much as I would like to. I

actually was talking to one of our faculty about the classroom and found myself saying let me come in and teach something for you. Just because I do miss the student interaction on that level. Whereas, now interaction is mostly when the student is disgruntled, and I'm trying to calm them down. I don't like micro-managing. I'm a person that will equip you with what you need and then we will move from there. I believe in knowing who you manage, that you are leading. I also believe in equipping those that you manage to become leaders. One of my student navigators here, she's under me also, and she came in and said one day, "I want to sit in your seat so don't take this the wrong way, I'm not trying to take the job." I said that's not a problem. It doesn't bother me, actually you are telling me that means I can help you get here. The moment you take this seat, then I must have taken a bigger seat, a different seat so I really try to be open enough to push my people to opportunities that are bigger and better.

The first day on the job was easy because I did not know what I was doing. It was not what my job has become. It was seemingly simple, but overall that is grossly erroneous. While I was on maternity leave one of my faculty was appointed to be the contact person for the division. So, she went to the dean's meeting and assumed some of my roles. When I came back, she said I have a newfound respect for you because I thought that you sat in the office and didn't do as much as you talked about doing. Now, I see that you really are doing a lot, there is a lot of behind the scene work.

No two days are the same, but I try to come in and check emails–that's normally my first order of business. Right now, I'm getting an email saying that my voicemail is full. That's where I'm always lacking. I don't like voicemails. I don't like checking voicemails. Our voicemails come through our computers. So, I can check it through my

email, but I never delete the message.  I don't even check my voicemail on my personal phone.  I try to go with the most pressing issues first.  One thing that I've done recently is that I've created a whiteboard, out of my own money, and mounted to the wall.  That way I can see what I need to be focused on.  So, it's kind of divided up into things [tasks] that need me today, tomorrow, and so on.  I think that being assigned a good mentor would have made a difference in my leadership experience.  I was not assigned a mentor in my current position of leadership.  Well, actually my boss at that time, told me that she wanted to mentor me.  That was a travesty!  She is a Black female and she did everything she could to destroy me.  That's the only way I know to say that.  It was horrible.  I think that when I first got here as a teacher, I was assigned a mentor, but it was sort of like a trial by fire.  He was there when I needed help, but I can't say that it was a true mentor/mentee relationship.

I think that it's important to make changes, not just manage in leadership.  To always look for the things to change, for opportunities to create better success, to make things better, so I try to always look for what we can transform.  How can we make things better and transform the lives of our students?  How can I position myself to make a difference where I am.  I believe in actually helping my faculty so, I work to do that.  I try to have one department meeting per month.  I have missed some of those meetings because I was on maternity leave April and May.  I think that works [meetings].  Every fall I host a "SHIFT" workshop.  I call it a shift workshop.  Shift stands for strategy helping to ignite forward thinking.  We do, in-house professional development, or have a speaker come in.  I teach some of the sections and other associated best practices like, how to make vision boards that they display in their offices.  This year that will take the

place of our readings.  I did not do summer meetings and will have that in 2 weeks or less, on the 13th and 14th of August, but after that I will stop it.  I like staying engaged.  I get bored easily.  In doing this workshop, it all was to help my faculty to ensure student success, but it was also to challenge myself to do something else.  So, it is a catch 20-20.  Taking away the mundane part of what this job can become.  In the classroom when I got to the point where I could teach a lesson with no notes-that was a problem for me, so I had to try to revamp my lesson and find new ways to teach it, new ideas to keep myself engaged.

One of the major things that we are doing is having our research analyst coming on [to work at the college].  She works here so she could pull faculty data, passing rates, or what else are we pulling [retention, graduation, enrollment].  Retention, programs, graduation, placement-the theme of this year is looking in the mirror when looking at ourselves to see how we can create better student success.  Also, I don't want my faculty to be afraid of data or thinking that's just something we used to try to get you-not showing what you're not doing-but to create an atmosphere to use this data.  I want to equip you [faculty] to be able to use this data to better increase student success.  That's one part that we're doing.  One of the sessions that I'm doing is on student success.  How they [faculty] can create a right-to-succeed class instead of a right-to-fail class because sometimes unknowingly, they will [create a right-to-fail class].  You always have the right to fail but every student should have the right succeeded.  [It] is how you tailor your classroom.  These are pedagogy skills that you used to do that that.  There's another session where I have some of the faculty presenting their best practices.  English instructors present their best practice to teach online learning.  There's really good solid

history of hosting videos in Blackboard.  Then another one will present on the literary population.  She's had great success with them, so she's been presenting with her prospectuses.  Then all of our marketing instructors here present to the programs and teach them how to better marketing and recruitment programs to bring students in.  One of my faculty mentors from another [is presenting].  To know he's going to come down and do second day that will be geared more toward all the issues to make sure we are successful, preparing them for the fall semester.  We are bringing in some community partners who are committed to a mental health awareness, so we're going to look at how to deal with stress, the demands of the job, and the demands of home.

You know sometimes we, as women sometimes think that we're super women.  I would say that that is one of the flaws on the way that I was raised because we saw my mom do it all, she taught us to do it all, and I'm learning that it doesn't have to be that way.  I can say no.  That I don't have to be a super woman, you know, and now it's coming out more and more in articles where it seems that Black women are in this superwoman roll and we think that we have to be superwoman, you know.  And it's killing us.  We're dying of heart attacks, strokes, everything else, and I don't want that to be me.  So, I'm trying to learn to do better and let some things go.

My Mom stands out as a significant figure for me personally and professionally, if you have not figured that out yet.  I also had an unofficial mentor that I mentioned earlier, who is coming to speak.  He sparked my interest in literature; postcolonial literature, African American literature, and women's lit.  He is a professor at a southern university, but he also serves as the chair of their English department.  He does a lot of things through that position in addition to serving as the chair of African American studies.  He

influenced me but a lot of other people along the journey, of course my sisters are important to me.  The president here at the college now has shown me a new side of leadership and I pay a lot of attention to his leadership style.  I think that his leadership has influenced me particularly with the personal changes we have had.

There were some significant life-changing experiences that occurred along the way to becoming an academic leader.  For example, having two babies.  Actually, not so much my last baby because that was so recent, but definitely my first baby.  My husband and I had our daughter January 2017, she's 18 months old.  We had our son on April 2018, so he is going on 4 months old.  I am 33 and all my friends, except one-she just recently became married and she is a doctor-had their kids about 5 years before I did.  I'm pushing on the late side of having children.  And it was a culture shock for me because there wasn't really anything that challenged my drive for my career, you know, marriage fell into place.  We both worked so we worked hard, then came home, and we were together.  Adults understand that you have to work.  Both of my kids go to daycare on our campus with me.  We have early childhood daycare center where our students work basically.  We were discussing this yesterday, and I am not doing a good job right now [because I have too many things going on.]  My son has just thrown off the perfect storm that I had going on [unexpected second child], always juggling.  Now it's my personal things that I am dropping.  Like I forgot to write a check out for the water bill.  Now my husband and I talked about how to reorganize.  He's going to take certain chores, and I'm going continue to carry other things.  I've just been handling the household stuff, but now it's so much added for me at work and at home, I'm just having to juggle.  My motto is pretty much going with the most immediate need.  I even do this

with my children.  If both of them are crying, is one crying because he dropped his toy, is one crying because they're hungry, well let's get you fed.  I think that's working, but I'm just waiting to get back into a better routine.  It's coming, I just don't fully have it yet, so I've had to pull back on some of my responsibilities at church and other community things.  I'm learning to say no and try to take care of home and work.  Then once that is done, I feel that I will get back in the groove [routine] and start to expand and take on some of those other duties.

When I had my daughter, it was no more if I wanted to work, because if she is sick, I will call into work to take care of my baby.  It is really hard for me because I've never had to feel like choosing between my career and anything else.  If Mom was sick, yeah, I'd go down there and take care of her.  There were my sisters and she's grown so if something was wrong, I could say what can I do?  I'll see you after work.  But, when baby is sick, that's different or when the daycare calls, then I stop in lieu of everything. I'm going to go.  I just never had taken an extended period of time off until maternity leave.  I guess my greatest challenge is having to choose between my children and my job. This is an issue that I am confronted with as an African American and a woman in academic leadership.  When it started happening [choosing between work and family], I felt like I was being judged.  Why can't you be here?  My husband rarely takes off for the kids.  I'm the woman and I'm supposed to take care of the kids.  There were times when I really, really had to do some praying to navigate these waters, because I think age plays a part in it too.  A lot of my peers are older than me and have gone through what I went through, but are not at the level that I am now, and they seem to be less sympathetic sometimes.  Like they don't remember what they went through.  I would say that being

an African American woman, definitely, expectations are different and, I think, that the expectations of me [by other peers] are lower because I am and have higher expectations on myself. Because of that, you know, it is funny to me, when people underestimate me and think things are going to be this way but when I do whatever I do and "wow" everyone, [my peers] are in shock. Their expectations were too low for an African American woman. Had a White male been called to do the same thing would you have had higher expectations? So, I kind of see that, and I feel that a lot. I do not mean that it always comes from leadership at the top. I have a good president, and I think he understands some of the issues that African American women face. And he has often told me "you go do what you have to do," "why are you at work?" When I was pregnant, he would say "why are you here?" Well, because you may not be thinking along these lines, but other people are. Him [president] telling me to go home or to give me permission to go take care of my family, it shouldn't matter what anybody else thinks. So, it's not only leadership, it is probably less leadership, as far as he is concerned, because he is the top. But it is the middle leadership team, some of his senior staff, some of my peers. I think that it is mostly my peers. All of them have been here [during my maternity leave], and even though I'm still getting stuff done, I feel that the undertones are there.

One piece of advice that I would give based on my experience is don't lose yourself in the mist of leadership. This leadership thing can make you [pause] and I shouldn't say leadership, I should say this position, because I think leadership only makes better. This position can create stress, and you have to deal with people and change. Sometimes it will be for better or for worse. It's easy lose to yourself in the demands that people place

on you.  I believe that there are good African American women in leadership, in general.

There are other African American women who want to help push other African American

women into leadership, but I also think that there are very bad, insecure African

American women in leadership.  I mean, they are always afraid for their position and

thinking that the next one is going to take it.  And I am not that one.  I think that's also

partly because of my faith.  I just believe that what is for me is for me and that God has

me regardless of what position I'm in.  I don't worry about who is out to get me.  I don't

have time to worry about that.  I tried to push those that I lead to be leaders.  That if you

want and really believe that you want the position that I'm in, that tells me that I need to

be moving to the next level.

African American women face a lot of opposition from within and from without . . .

it makes us feel like we have to fight for what we have and sometimes we end up fighting

each other.  I don't know if it is necessarily on purpose but, I just think that because they

have to fight so hard, they sometimes end up fighting each other.

Advice that I would give to African American female academic leaders is to lead

out of your passion.  I am passionate for student success, passionate for education, and

finally, to insert my passion as I lead.  [I want] to help the leader find a way to insert our

passion so we can find a way to keep the passion alive.  Learn from what our leaders

share and then on to know who you are leading.  You have to know your folks in order to

lead them.  One of the things I learned as I was coming through the doctoral program was

about emotional intelligence and how important it is to read people especially those that

we lead to be sympathetic and empathetic to what they face outside of the classrooms.  I

try to keep that in mind too.  Other advice I would give is always be aware and watchful

of what you are dealing with but not enough to where it makes you scared to make a move to a higher position should it become available.

I hope to transition into a higher position or start consulting work. I feel good about my journey in academic leadership. I think there are things that I learned in a short amount of time and I will continue to learn for some time. I think that my greatest success professionally was earning my doctorate degree. I feel accomplished. I feel like I gained the respect of my peers, and I gained the credentials to match what I knew I had.

*Carley's profile*

*Carly was approximately 35 years of age and had worked in the education arena for a little over 10 years. She had short brownish-red hair, styled in a natural twist out. She was very articulate and seemed very serious about her job and about life in general. She seldom smiled but when she did, it was a very infectious smile.*

I was born in the southern portion of the United States. I was raised in a two-parent family along with two sisters—no brothers. When I was born, I only weighed 3 pounds. I was about 8 weeks premature. I had to remain in the hospital for 4 weeks before I could go home. Fortunately, however, I did not require oxygen or other equipment to keep me alive. I was just small. I would consider our family as upper middle class socioeconomically during that time. My dad is a blue-collar worker for the same company for over 30 years and my mother is an educator. One of the biggest lessons I learned as a child was the importance of hard work. My mom would always say "If you're going to take the time to do something, do it right." The highest level of education I have obtained is a doctorate degree. The highest level of education my father

received was a high school diploma; however, my mother earned her specialist degree. Growing up I always wanted to become a pediatrician.

I have worked for one company for the past 10 years with the same organization. In my pathway to academic leadership, I started out as an assistant teacher and was later promoted to the lead teacher in early childhood education and then to an administrative leadership position. I have been in this position for 2 years. I would attribute obtaining my current position as an academic leader to the fact that I believe that my work ethic and commitment to the mission of the organization helped me earn my position. Out of all of the faculty that started out at the same time that I did, I am the only one of two that are still working here.

My style of management is to lead by example. I try my best to do things the way I would want my subordinates to do things, and I also try my best to think about how they will perceive things that I do. I also try to keep in mind that I too am an employee and to treat them the way I would like to be treated by my boss. I also would describe myself as an "in the trenches type of leader" when things need to be done or my employees need assistance, I'm always there to help them, as well as, guide them to be more efficient. My area is primarily focused in the professional services area with such programs as early childhood care and education. If I wasn't in this position I am in now, I would be an entrepreneur. I would run my own type of business of some sort. I wouldn't work for anyone. I would work for myself.

My first day on the job, I was very nervous. I wondered how people would perceive me. I didn't want to come off overly eager, but I wanted the staff to see my passion for the job. I noticed that no one looked like me, which led to more pressure to

do the job exceedingly well.  Most days are very hectic.  I start out the morning by reading my email and catching up on things that were left from the day before.  I always try to make time to contact my faculty to make sure they don't need anything.  Of course, there are the occasional "putting out fires" and attending team meetings, and conference calls when needed.

Balancing work, family, and social activities is a constant struggle for me.  It's a daily struggle.  I try hard to separate them all.  When I'm at work, I focus on work.  I come from a loving family so when I go home, I have to make sure I make quality time for my family.

I think that I have remained in the profession by playing by the book, you know, following procedures and trying to make logical judgment calls.  Significant life-changing experiences that occurred along the way to becoming an academic leader are the fact that I got married, had two children and lost my dear grandmother during the process.  My children are 2 years old and 5 months old.  They are the joy of my life.

I think that the greatest challenge professionally is being a double minority in a majority-led field.  It is sometimes very difficult to earn respect as African American women in our field and it is sometimes difficult to be heard.  I would say the next greatest challenge is learning to deal with people.  That's the most difficult part of being a supervisor or leader, dealing with people on a daily basis.  As a supervisor you are forced to deal with peoples' personal life as well as their professional lives.  This is in addition to managing your own life and work responsibilities.  At times it can consume you.  It can be very challenging on a daily basis, but I think I have learned to cope with it.

I think the biggest issue that has confronted me as an AAFAL is gaining respect from your faculty. There's a misconception that women in general don't know much about anything. I think that this belief is expanded upon when dealing with African American women. I also feel that it is very difficult to not be the stereotypical angry Black woman when dealing with issues on a daily basis. The way that a Caucasian woman or male would respond is sometimes more acceptable than the way an African American woman respond in the same situation.

I did not have a mentor so I'm not sure how to answer the questions. I think that having a mentor would have been helpful depending on how they would have mentored. Significant people . . . I would say my mom stands out most to me personally. She is a big inspiration in the woman I am today. I learn to work hard and always stand my ground and be proud of who I am . . . I definitely would not be the leader I am today without her. Professionally, I would say people that stand out to me are other females in the same field or other fields that are also in leadership. It is a difficult job and most people don't understand it unless they are in it. As a woman in leadership, it is sometimes difficult to manage other people who don't respect you, and it is also difficult to not be the stereotypical emotional woman. Any woman that is able to exemplify this on a daily basis is an inspiration to me. My mother demonstrates the true strength of an African American woman and how hard we have to work in the professional world.

### Debra's Profile

*Debra is a 55 year old, tall, on the somewhat slim side with a cute bob-styled haircut that frames her face perfectly. She is very vocal, very outspoken and has a tremendous respect for education. Debra admits that she is dyslectic, which made her*

*very knowledgeable about the different learning styles of students when she was an instructor, as well as now that she is an AAFAL.*

I was born in a southern county in 1963. I was a premature baby that had to stay in the hospital according to my mom, about 3 months, before I could come home because I was so premature. I got to the birth weight that I needed to come home but after I got home, there were some complications. I had to go back to the hospital, so I had a really rough beginning, as I know now, because I am a medical person. My delivery and my first days of life were critical, but back then, they didn't know how critical it was. So, I was the second child out of seven children that my parents had so I'm the next to the oldest. I have six siblings currently still living.

I am the only college graduate of my family. I graduated from a southern county high school in 1981-went straight to college. I went to state university. I was there for only one semester, because I quickly realized that I was in all remedial classes. Remedial and core classes, but I thought I was in the program. Now I realize that a lot of students think that once they enroll with that major, they're actually in the program and they are not. I stayed there one semester because I started searching around and I found a technical college. I left state college. I started looking into technical education. I did not know anything about education in 1981-83. The junior college was only 40 miles from home. I found out the junior college had components of its programs that were technical. These programs were medical programs. I called the instructor, and he told me to come and do an interview. He accepted me into the program the same day. I started the program, finished one year later, and had a diploma. I graduated, passed my boards, started working in the hospital, and then I went back [to college] as I started to try to

climb up the career ladder in the hospital.  I was told, I had to have an associate degree to become a manager.  So, I found this online program that was a medical program that would allow me to take more classes to get my associate, the hospital paid for that, which allowed me to end up getting the credits to get the associate degree.  Then I got a manager position in a hospital over a medical department for several years.  Then, I found out about the opening for an instructor at the technical college.  I applied for that job, I got the job as an instructor.  Within a year being there, the instructor that was already there passed away from cancer, so I got promoted to program director in 1994.  Up until 2017 I was program director over the medical program.  I got promoted to leadership in 2017.  So that is where I am now.

So that is kind of my career growth through now.  During the time that I was the director of the medical program, the program advanced to an associate degree program, which required me to have my bachelor's degree.  Because I got divorced when my boys were in Kindergarten and first grade, and I was a single mom, I went back to school.  I was working [taking classes] full time and working in the hospital.  I earned my bachelor's degree, and I got my master's degree.  I  then went to another university to get my doctorate degree.  The reasons that I went to another university . . . I'm a little bit ashamed of it because I had to do something different because I have a problem . . . I'm dyslexic.  I have a problem with taking standardized tests.  I understand students who have a hard time with that.  I could never pass the GRE or the MAT.  I had to get special accommodations to take other standardized tests while I was at the university, but I could never pass those tests.  I found a college that did not require any standardized tests and they took my credits from another university, which allowed me to complete my

doctorate.  My doctorate is in Educational Leadership.  My leadership position is very

stressful.  Oh Lord, my first day on the job, I encountered a program with a lot of

classroom disorganization, just a lot of stuff going on.  That was my first day.  There was

chaos in the class from an instructor who did not know how to manage a class.  He was

doing a lot of unethical things in his class.  So that was my first day, and that went on for

a year.

I was not given any advice or any training.  I've had to learn everything on my

own.  I was just told what I needed to do mainly when it was time to do it and then I

figured it out.  You know, I am the type of person that when I need to do something, I

like to ask for help, but I don't learn well that way with someone saying, "You do this

and this and do it like this."  I have to practice and figure out for myself and then I can do

it.  One of the other deans, he was an instructor, so we knew each other very well as

instructors.  He's also an African American male.  On Fridays, we live around the corner,

he would come around and help me with Banner.  I'm better with being able to do it to

get that clear understanding in my mind, no matter how much you tell.

Well my greatest challenge is to try to get to that point again where I'm bored.  Just

organized to the point where it's just automatic.  To get things organized in the way it

will work and hopeful to the point that it works like a well-oiled machine at whatever

cost you know.  There are a lot of people who don't like change, so right now I've had a

lot of turnover.  I know that's because people who have been allowed to do things a way

so long, it didn't mean that it was correct, it's just that that's what they were doing.  A lot

of times people get upset, including us, when things change, even though it may be

wrong.  My biggest challenge is to get it organized, so that I can achieve those goals that

I need to do at the end of the day.  One of things that I struggle with in this position is never feeling like I have accomplished anything.  I feel like, every day, my list never goes down.  When you teach, you go into the classroom knowing that you have to cover these objectives and cover this topic.  You get that done and you feel like I did it.  In this role, however, nothing ever gets completed, so that keeps me very frustrated.  I don't like not being able to check things off my list.  That's the part that I do not like in this type of management.

As for my style of management, I would not even have a category for it, but I like to manage by example.  When I worked in the hospital, even as a manager, I wore scrubs, and I worked the floor, and I took the patient load, and I enjoyed that.  I'd probably say that my style of management is not being a manager over something that I didn't like.  I wanted to do something to which I can contribute.  So, I like to manage by example.  I've taught classes . . . even as being a dean I'm teaching a class this semester.  I like teaching so I like to teach instructors to see how teaching is supposed to be done, how you're supposed to manage your classroom, how you're supposed to relate to your students.  I hope that keeping that interaction will keep me grounded with working with them so when I say you need to get your grades in, they can't say "Well we have all this other stuff to do so we can't get our grades in."  I respond, "Yes you can because I do it," you know.

I love the allied health field.  I love to be able to learn about the different programs because I've learned a lot by sitting in the lecturers and listening to different things.  Even though I thought I was a little bit versatile about a lot of medical, as far as it relates to different programs, but sitting in with them and sitting down listening to things and

visiting classrooms, I'm beginning to learn a lot more and I love to learn.  I love to learn

things that I don't know so I think as a whole, just that eagerness to make things better

with the allied health because when I was an instructor, I saw a lot of things that I thought

that should not have been occurring, that over the years I have redesigned and made

things better.

In regard to my personal and professional life, the last year I haven't done very

well.  I've missed a lot of my grandkids' school activities such as plays, band concerts.

One of my grandsons is in the band.  I miss that . . . I missed a lot of just family things

that I could have done.  And looking back, I realize that there's a time to just say, "I'm

going to take off because you're never going to get done.  So, I'm going to handle that

this year, moving forward in that manner and just do things that I want to do.  I was

sitting at my desk all day on that computer because I kept saying that if I could just finish

this well, then you have something else to do.  Another thing that I have vowed to myself

is to get up from my desk at lunch and go to lunch because I eat at my desk a lot.  So, I

haven't done a very good job adjusting to this role, yet, as far as keeping things separate

from work.  I don't do that yet.  I think I am still trying to prove myself worthy.

In the case of being a Black woman, there is clearly a difference in how we're

treated.  I do think that I've seen that.  While personally I think that in my current role I

have it a little bit better compared to some because of the relationship that I have with my

supervisor.  We used to work on the same campus.  In my previous leadership role as a

director, I was clearly treated different because there were things that I found out later

that others got to do that I didn't get to do.  For instance, as a program director of medical

all of those years, now, as a dean I found out that all of those overages that I would teach

that I should have had an extra contract.  I found out that the other program directors were getting extra contracts, I never got .  I just assumed that because it was my program that it was my responsibility to take up the slack.  I had no idea that I was supposed to be getting paid if I took up the slack.  I have been taken advantage of, in that, when I look back at all those contracts that were written over the years if their hours were over 25 hours, they got overage contracts.  I never got an extra contract.

Well, there is a difference in people who do not like you versus people who are racist.  And yes, I have experienced that since I've taken this job.  The people who do not like me because I am making the changes, they seem to conform because they want their job.  The ones that I've noticed that are clear racist, did not want an African American woman to tell them what to do, they are the ones who have quit or moved on, and they're very defiant.  They're the ones that will email my supervisor and cc me or email me and cc my supervisor, or email about something that I have said no.  They go around me, and they would rather put papers in my box, rather than come to my office and give it to me.  So, I can clearly tell the difference in the racist versus the ones that do not like me. If I had a mentor maybe things would have been different.  I spoke of a mentor who was an instructor in the education arena . . . I have not had a mentor in this leadership position.  You know I've learned by trial and error.  I don't think that we have anyone who has been what we consider mentor to talk us through all of the administrative things that we should do.  I think that one of the things that we need a mentor for is to help us with consistency.  One thing that I've noticed is that one leader was doing things one way and they give you the instructions and you do it that way, then you learn that that should be done another way.  I think that, not that it was an attempt to set me up, I just think that

there is no consistency when it comes to leadership in this position. There has not been anything in this role that I have not learned by trial and error. Honestly, I think that the more I know, the worse it is getting. The changes that are made and made on the spur of the moment, which commands a lot out of people in order to get the things done that you want. I think, outside looking in, looking at leadership positions, I would always see the deans going out to lunch and going to Rotary and doing all those things. I thought that would be an ideal job to have but now looking back I realize that it really wasn't that way. There was a lot more work than they projected.

I think the role, the leadership role, is very disorganized. I see it continuously getting less organized. I don't think that it is ran as it should. I think that being the dean should be more of a dean's role and we're not, we are not deans . . . we're advisors. We spend a lot more time doing paperwork. We don't get a chance to really supervise our programs. That part, again, frustrates me. I don't have enough time to check the quality of medical programs, which are training people to take care of sick people. We lost an instructor and we had to replace him with an adjunct, so I'm working late this semester. I walk into the room on my way out to check on things and his wife sits in the back of his room while he lectures. We spend so much time doing administrative work. Like yesterday I spent all day writing contracts and I think that we should have somebody to do that. Then at the end of the day, here's my adjunct with his wife in the classroom. There was another instructor in the classroom, and he should have told him, you know, you can't bring your wife. That's why we don't let students bring their children or their husbands to class because they don't have a babysitter, because that's just setting a tone. So that is a problem and now I'm going to have a talk with this instructor and say, "You

cannot do this and maybe you cannot teach this semester." I know his wife is sick, so I'm sure he brought her so that he can watch her from 5:00 until 10:00, but we can't do that.

We were put into these positions without any training. We have people in the vice president positions that were put in those positions without any training so I think that in order for anything to work properly and efficient, that it has to trickle down from the top and when you put people in positions that are considered to be in positions of power, I think that makes things really, really bad. If I went to a college that was organized and had someone in the leadership position that knew how to lead, it would be better. I really do believe that the issues that we have are at the top, I really do, and you can see so many things that are wrong and so many that are taken personally, and people treated personally instead of professionally.

In my teacher position before leadership, I felt that I had an impact. It was a job where I was respected as the expert in that field. I do not feel that way in this leadership position. I feel like they see us as deans, but they don't respect us in our area of expertise. So, I can't do my job efficiently. When a vice president has degrees in computers who tries to manage allied health, which is not their area of expertise, the struggle is always there. That's the struggle that I have with this part of my job. If I had the chance to go back to teaching, I would. I think that the main struggle is not been respected for your area of expertise and I don't like having to try to explain everything. For example, I had a question about some cardiopulmonary resuscitation manikins that I ordered [and questioned] about what are you going to do with them and I almost said, "I'm going to take them home." I think everyone has that frustration about not being able to do what you feel. Hindsight, I would have stayed where I was in teaching.

My advice for African American women entering the leadership field, I don't know if I would sit down and tell them all of the things that I've experienced. I wouldn't want to discourage them because it has been pretty rough. I will probably tell them that it's going to be a hard row and to seek people they trust for guidance. You know because you can't trust everyone to ask for help and to show them your weakness. That to me is a big thing, you know, there are things that we don't know that we have to ask for help, but I have figured out the people that I can't ask twice for help because then they automatically think that you can't do the job. You have to find people that you can trust, that you feel comfortable with, that . . . okay, I know you showed me this last semester, but I don't remember doing it, so I guess I would say find someone that you can trust that won't think that you're stupid because you ask them questions over and over until you get it.

I would say if you want it, I think the positions are out there. I think that there is a quota they have to meet. I feel like there is a certain quota that they must have in that mixture of Black and White. So, I think if you meet the criteria, you can get the job too; just know that you will have to do what you need to do to stand strong because it is a struggle, it's very much a struggle.

## Eva's Profile

*Eva was in her early sixties and had the most experience as an AAFAL of all of the participants interviewed. She was average sized, naturally curly hair, stern and very professional woman. She was articulate but seemed somewhat shy or hesitant to discuss certain topics. Ultimately, she opened up and began to share.*

I was born in a very small town in the South. The population was approximately 35,000, which provided for a nice close-knit community. My birth mother lived in an even smaller town about 10 miles away, which did not have a hospital. My birth mother was 19 years old when she gave birth to me. I have little knowledge of my biological mother nor my biological father because they were not involved in my life once I left the hospital. That's because I was taken home from the hospital but by an older couple, probably late 30s, with two adult children. This was not a formal adoption, just an exchange between strangers with a common goal in mind which was to provide a good home for a new baby, fulfill an older woman's desire to still nurture, and assist a young mother who could not provide for a child. I was the third child for this young mother. One sibling was being raised by the father's mother, the other had been adopted by another family. Although I have minimal memory of my childhood, I have feelings of love and warmth and comfort when it comes to my adopted mother. When others speak of her, they always say what a Christian-like woman she was and how loving she was to everyone. I remember her hand sewing me frilly dresses, the kind with the itchy undershirt. I remember her calling me to try it on and how anxious I was to get out of the dress and get back to my cousins who were playing outside. We lived on a dirt road and we would play marbles, hop scotch, bull in the pin, or some other game. Sometimes we would play church and my cousin John would always be the preacher, with cousin Alma as the missionary. We would sing, shout, and have fun for hours on end. I don't recall eating a whole lot of meals, but I also don't recall ever going hungry. My biological father would plow the fields all day, tending corn, peas, sugarcane, sweet potatoes, or whatever was in season. He also tended animals like pigs and chickens. They were

mainly grown for slaughter for meals.  There was a tree in our yard that all the fishermen would come by and buy the worms that grew on it.  That tree was my living nightmare and I hated each year when it started to bloom.  I believe they called it a Catawba worm tree.

Regarding our socioeconomic status, I am certain that we would be classified as poor.  I mean other than the fact that we had no electricity, and our water came from an old pump that one would have to prime by pouring a little water in it, I personally thought that we were pretty well off.  My adopted dad had an old car, owned our home, and grew our food.  What more could you ask for?  My life was beautiful until the day my adopted mother died.  I believe I was 6 or 7 years old-too young to know anything about a brain tumor or surgery or death.

After my adopted mother passed away, my adopted father did his best to try to take care of me.  While I sat with my elderly grandmother during the day he would work.  He would work all day harvesting pine trees or what they call pulp wood industry.  He would also work with pine tar.  My adopted father worked very hard.  Slowly he began to drink alcohol a lot.  His brother, my uncle Jay, lived in the town where I was born and had a wife and had six children.  Three of their children were grown so he offered for me to come and live with his family.  My other mother was my aunt S.  She was beautiful and very tenacious.  She was touted as being the first black female dental assistant in the town.  That was a big deal back then.  My uncle worked at the local mill and made good money.  I would define them as middle-class working family.  I lived with them for a year before my adopted brother and his wife took me in to live with them in another state.  They had two little boys.  I helped out with babysitting and chores.

My sister-in-law, she was very tough on me she made me scrub the gum from the floors, scrub the spots out of the carpet, and fold clothes on Saturday morning, you name it. Occasionally, she would allow me to visit a friend for a couple of hours. Although she was very tough on me, I appreciate it because she instilled in me a tremendous work ethic that would carry me through life. The city we lived in had a really large school. There were fights, especially on Fridays when we had intramural day. Once a student who sat behind me was slashed with a razor. When I was 13 years old, and on a visit, back home, I convinced my brother that I wanted to stay. My adopted dad had remarried, and everyone felt it was okay for me to stay.

When I was younger, approximately 10 or 11, I always thought that I wanted to be a singer. I wanted to be a pop star and I copied people like Michael Jackson. I thought that I emulated him very well. I would often sing at school for my classmates. I thought I had the skills to become a pop star however there was one problem and that was stage fright. Although I had a nice voice, I was very shy about singing in front of people. I used to love to sing and dance in front of my brother and sister-in-law and their friends. When their friends came over, they would ask me to sing and dance, and I would do it but somewhere along the line I became very shy about singing and dancing in large groups. I sang with the choir and some people even equated my voice with that of Mahalia Jackson. I never really had any aspiration to do anything else other than sing, but eventually over the years I began to realize that the rural area that I lived in was not a good place to become a popstar and reality sank into my life.

As an academic leader, I am a results-driven manager. My group knows what to expect when they're around me, which, I think, puts employees at ease. I have a place

for everything, and they appreciate everything being in its place. I take a disciplined approach to managing our team. As long as people do what they say they're going to do, by the time they are supposed to, all is right in the world. The specific programs that I manage are numerous. If I were not an academic leader, I think I would still be teaching because that was my initial passion for getting into the academic arena.

My very first day on the job is somewhat fuzzy but I do remember feeling excited about the new position. I recall a tremendous sense of responsibility to fulfilling all of the duties of the position, even though I wasn't sure exactly what all that entailed. I also felt a sense of frustration and isolation. In the meantime, I was also still teaching an evening course until I could find a replacement. With the pressure of a new job, it did not take me long to advertise for the position and find a qualified adjunct instructor to teach the course. This allowed me more time to focus on the duties of academic leadership.

What I liked most about the leadership position was that there was no daily routine. It was not like you would come in and teach a course at 8:00 and then others alternately throughout the day. This position involved supervision of multiple academic programs and supervision of multiple faculty members in each program. There are numerous deadline requirements from my executive supervisors. Sometimes this information needs to come from the faculty in our division. This sometimes put me in the position of being the mediator between the executive staff and faculty. It is a very demanding position in that you cannot plan for every task or every activity. There is no lesson plan to follow. The position involves a lot of decision making.

Time management is an essential skill to have in academic leadership. I've learned to stay on top of all tasks daily, to be very diligent in reading and responding to

communications in a timely manner. In the first few years of working in an academic leadership position, I took a lot of work home with me in order to stay on top. In addition, I was finishing up an Education Specialist degree at the time. I'd always have my work laptop with me on vacations, doctor's visits, you name it. In time, however, I learned to better manage my time and how to create documents that I could use more than one time and would only require data updates rather than creating a whole new document. I learned how to organize my files in an order that related to the organization for easy retrieval. My social life consisted mostly of church activities like singing in the choir and working with other organizations.

Everyone has always told me that they thought I was a teacher before I became a teacher. They would tease me and say it was because I thought I knew everything. I believe that I have remained in the profession as faculty and in leadership, by taking advantage of my tremendous work ethic, which was instilled in me at a very young age. I also believe that I have remained in the profession because of my passion for education and the fact that I understand and can truly relate to how higher education can free you from a life of poverty, and my desire is to share this belief with others.

There are many people who stand out to me personally including my adopted mother who loved me first and foremost without condition, my adopted family who continued to love me and helped to raise me after my adopted mother passed away, my hard-working husband, my three beautiful daughters, and my loving grandchildren. I believe that love is a powerful tool that can give one the willpower and motivation to go above and beyond things that the world has made you feel were impossible to accomplish. I thank God for my faith and for believing in me and helping me to believe

in myself.  I recall a time when I was in one of my undergraduate classes and I was truly

not feeling like going on.  I was very tired from working all day, driving 40 or more miles

one way to attend class and then sitting in a class listening to a lecture for 4 hours.  There

was an empty seat beside me, and a young lady sat beside me.  She seemed to be

struggling with the class as well.  During the lecture, I looked down at her pad and saw

the following that she had scribbled "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens

me" (Philippians, 4:13, KJV).  This scripture gave me much motivation and strangely, I

never saw that student in class again.  I felt as though that was a prophetic sign telling me

to hang in there.  I never saw the student again in school or class . . . ever.

I believe that my greatest challenge professionally is the overwhelming sense that

I have reached my highest potential in my career in this particular college.  I do not

believe that this is because I do not have the knowledge or the education, but I believe

that I do not fit the mold of what is required to obtain an executive leadership position.

Maybe it's the way I wear my hair, or my southern dialect, I can't quite put my hands on

it.

I have applied for two executive positions and both times I was the second runner

up for the position; but ultimately, the position was given to someone else.  The first time

it was a Black man who got the position.  The second time it was a White younger

female.  The challenges have made me question if I should ever try again or just quietly

retire in my current position.  My resilience has been challenged to the point where I no

longer have the willpower to continue to fight.

The insights I have gained about African American women in academic

leadership is that sometimes location makes all the difference in the world.  We will have

better opportunity of advancement in the larger metropolitan areas and fewer opportunities in the small rural areas. Sometimes as an African American woman, I feel more like an ornament to make it appear as if the college is diverse, but my thoughts and opinions are not taken seriously. Another insight is the sometimes muffled feeling I get where if I speak out in opposition, I become the angry Black women. I would suggest to African American women to choose your battles wisely and know when to fight and what is worth the battle.

The changes that I have seen in the system throughout my tenure are too numerous to mention them all. There are always new initiatives and a more creative way to developed and recruit and retain students and qualified faculty to teach. We are always striving for improvement as it relates to graduation rates, placement rates, and retention. Change is inevitable in this arena and adaptability to change is a critical skill for any academic leader.

I am very fortunate that change has always been a part of my culture since working in the information technology arena has afforded me the skill to adapt to change rapidly. I also contribute the ability to adapt to change rapidly to my childhood where growing up changed a lot for me without notice or warning. I believe that being able to adapt to change at a rapid pace or even at a not-so-rapid pace is what helps to sustain me and helps to build my resilience in my personal life and my career.

The advice that I would give to future Black academic leaders is that although you may be a very hard worker, one needs to learn to work with other colleagues and develop relationships with people in the executive branch. You have to make yourself known by getting involved in community projects in addition to work-related projects. Take

initiative to take on additional tasks and make yourself indispensable to your supervisor. I believe it is great to have a servant leadership mindset. Although I would not say that is my leadership style, I do admire leaders who demonstrate this style of leadership.

If you were to ask me what my next career step is, I guess that would depend on what day you ask me this question. Some days I would confess to you that my next step is retirement. Of course, during those initial retirement days, I would probably do absolutely nothing or whatever I chose to do. Most days I would say that I believe God has other purposes for my life that includes something in the academic leadership field. I hope to complete my research and dissertation one day in the near future. I know I can do it, but I'm not sure what is holding me back other than my fear of succeeding at this task. I think that when I was turned down for the promotion to vice-president, I lost a lot of momentum. I felt that there was nowhere to go to progress further in my career but that has all changed and I realize that there are many options out there for me if I desire to pursue them. It may not be with the same organization, but that is okay too.

Overall, I feel warm, happy, and content with the majority of my journey in academic leadership. I have touched a lot of lives and helped a lot of people achieve their dreams and hopes of having a better career. I have helped students work through some of the academic technical difficulties that may have hindered their success. I have encouraged students to return to college and finish where they left off and had them to thank me later for the words of encouragement. My mission has always been for the economic empowerment of all of the individuals in our organization to include faculty and students. I never planned for a life in academic leadership, it just simply worked out that way. I suppose it was my destiny, but I never realized it. Everything happens for a

reason and everything that has happened in my life has helped to prepare me for this career.  I have a tremendous work ethic, which was instilled in me by my othermothers in life; a resilience to survive when times are tough, and when the future looks bleak,  I believe that was the result of the pain suffered by the loss of both my biological mother and my adopted mother.  Certainly, the intersectionality of being both a woman and African American has contributed to my outlook on life as well.

I have had many great successes professionally, however, the ones that stand out the most to me are the awards presented by my supervisors.  They include the Outstanding Leadership in Instruction Award, the President's Steady-Eddie Award, and the President's Hero Award.  In addition, I consider earning a bachelor's degree while working a fulltime job, being a mother of three daughters, a wife and attending night and weekend school in various cities my greatest accomplishments.  This opened the door for many more accomplishments and higher-level degrees such as a master's degree and a specialist degree.  Each success encouraged me to reach for higher goals and gave me the self-esteem to accomplish those goals.

I would recommend to future AAFALs to beware of that invisible ceiling that one may or may not bump into.  As invisible as it may seem to others, it is there, it is real, and it hurts like hell when you reach it.  Particularly when you've exhausted every ounce of your energy to an organization that no longer is willing to acknowledge your ability to intelligently manage beyond your current position.  I would warn them not to try to fight against the system but to invoke small changes along the way when given the opportunity.  As a Black academic leader, I did not want to be stereotyped as the "angry Black women" and therefore I learned to choose my battles wisely and not to try to fight

every policy or procedure that I did not agree with wholeheartedly.  I think of it as a

balancing act with a lot of give and take.

*In summary, all of the participants were accomplished women who were very*

*passionate about their careers.  They all welcomed the opportunity to be interviewed,*

*unlike several other AAFALs who were asked to participant but either did not respond or*

*declined the interview.  I'm really grateful to all the participants knowing what I know*

*now about how busy their personal and professional lives are at this time.  In the next*

*chapter we will discover the various themes included in this study.*

Chapter V

THEMES

This study explored the experiences of AAFALs in technical colleges in a
southern state.  The purpose of the study was also to increase the understanding of the
personal and professional backgrounds, the career experiences, and the skills attitudes,
and strategies perceived as most beneficial in academic leadership for African American
women.  Data collected was guided by the following research questions:

What are the personal and professional backgrounds of five AAFALs in the
technical college system of a southern state?

What are the career experiences of five AAFALs in the technical college system?

What skills, attitudes, and strategies are perceived by five AAFALs as most
beneficial in academic leadership for African American women?

In order to gain an understanding of the experiences of AAFALs and to answer
the research questions, a qualitative phenomenological design (Seidman, 2013) was used.
In this chapter, I present the various themes that I discovered while analyzing these
women's stories.  I share profile documentation to demonstrate the connectedness of the
themes.  In this chapter, I present three tables of themes.  Each table is also associated
with a research question.  Each table displays the themes related to a particular research
question which is displayed at the top of the table.  The themes are arranged on the left
side of the table with the corresponding statement from each participant displayed in the

right columns of the table.  Table 2 indicates the different themes that were constructed

from the profiles of AAFALs related to their personal and professional backgrounds.

Table 2

*The Personal and Professional Backgrounds*

| Themes | Anna | Becky | Carley | Debra | Eva |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1.  What are the personal and professional backgrounds of five AAFALs in the technical college system in a southern state? | | | | | |
| Family background | My parents met in ASU in the late 60s. | Mom raised us all as a single mom. | I was raised in a two-parent family. | I was the second child out of seven that my parents had. | [raised by two adoptive parents]. |
| Early childhood school system | The South had not really desegregated schools yet, but the West had. | [Integrated school based on age and location – deep South]. | [Integrated school based on age and location – deep South]. | [Segregated school based on age and location – deep South]. | [Segregated school based on age and location – deep South]. |
| Initial career goals | I was trying to pursue writing. | Pediatrician. | Pediatrician. | A physician assistant or nurse anesthetist. | I always thought that I wanted to be a [famous] singer. |
| Professional background. | I had a niche for human resources. | I started to do some adjunct work at first. | I started out as an assistant teacher. | I started working in the hospital. | I worked a fulltime job [administrative assistant]. |
| Personal challenges early in life. | N/A | Raised by a single parent. | Medical complications. | Medical complications. | Poor and adopted. |

Note.  Themes derived from data analysis of participants

Family Background

One of the initial themes deducted from the research of the five AAFALs from a southern technical college system is that four out of five of them grew up in a household with both parents present. One AAFAL grew up in a household with the mother as the head of the household. Although she was raised in a single-parent household, this did not prevent her from achieving a leadership position. Her mother was a strong, caring Black woman who instilled in her children the value of education. All of the AAFALs shared that they had strong family values and by whom those values were instilled.

*Anna*

As I reflect on my memos of Anna, I recall that she had an aura of a very dignified person who felt a lot of pride in her story. Anna is a beautiful young lady in her mid to late forties. She is tall, slim, and has a very confident air about her. Her hair is twisted in locks and rests on her shoulders. She has a narrow face with high cheekbones, thin lips, and a very narrow nose. She prides herself in being considered a radical even though she admits that she hasn't participated in many sit-ins or protests. She does, however, write and express her radical nature in her works.

In her family background, she shares that she is originally from the South. She was an only child. Her parents were first-generation college graduates. They earned bachelor's degrees and her father did work on his masters, but didn't finish it. A company in Los Angeles hired him and they moved to Los Angeles. She was 2 years old at the time.

*Becky*

As Becky shares her story with me, she gently touches her curly, highlighted hair with her fingers.  She tells me that she was born in the south.  "I am the youngest of five children raised by a single mom."  She tells me that she was kind of the forgotten child, based on the fact that all of her sisters are pretty close together in age.  "My sister next to me is 11 years older than me."  I was the surprise child, she says laughingly.  She tells me that her mom really pushed education.  She instilled in them the importance of getting an education and being able to take care of themselves.  All of her four sisters are educators in kindergarten through middle school.  One of them even went back to school to become a lawyer.

*Carley*

I was born in the southern portion of the United States.  I was raised in a two-parent family along with two sisters—no brothers.  I would consider our family as upper middle class socioeconomically during that time.  My dad is a blue-collar worker for the same company for over 30 years and my mother is an educator.

*Debra*

I was born in a southern county.  I was the second child out of seven children that my parents had.  I'm the next to the oldest.  I have six siblings currently still living.

*Eva*

I have little knowledge of my biological mother nor my biological father because they were not involved in my life.  I was adopted by another family.  Although I have minimal memory of my childhood, I have feelings of love and warmth and comfort when it comes to my adopted mother.  My life was beautiful until the day my adopted mother

died.  I believe I was 6 or 7 years old—too young to know anything about a brain tumor or surgery or death.

Four out of five of these AAFALs were raised in a two-parent family.  One of the participants was raised by her adopted parents.  She shares that she never had a relationship with her biological parents.  One participant was raised by a single mother.  All of the participants were able to exceed to the academic leadership level.

Early Childhood School Systems

Critical race theory informs this study with the assumption of interest convergence.  Interest convergence indicates "there is little incentive to eradicate racism because it advances the material and psychological interest of the dominant society " (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).  The law that ended segregation was passed in 1954 and is titled Brown versus Board of Education.  The theme of early childhood school systems simply makes note of the type of school system each AAFAL attended and how that could have impacted their outlook on race in an educational setting.

*Anna*

The participant distinctly recalls the era and what was going on with integration in different regions of the nation.  Anna states "I was raised . . . in the 70s which was really post-Brown versus Board of Education, the South had not really desegregated schools yet, but the West had."  Anna's early childhood education was very different from the other participants.

*Becky*

Becky appears to be in her mid to late thirties.  She has just recently returned to work after having her second child.  Becky manages the early childhood education

program at her college and is able to send her children to the school at her job.  Although Becky does not directly indicate her own childhood education.  She does state that her mother was very adamant about her children learning proper terminology.  However, based on Becky's age and where she grew up, we can infer that she was educated in an integrated school system.  Carley's story has a lot of similarities at Becky's.

### Carley

This participant is in her early thirties and also has had two children in the past 2 years.  Carley was educated in an integrated school system in a southern state.  She has a warm, gentle nature with a hint of "just don't go there!" She is the total opposite of Debra.

### Debra

This mature woman was definitely not shy.  She was eager to tell her story and did not mince words.  Based on Debra's age and where she grew up, her early childhood education was in segregated schools of the deep south.  The same was true for our next participant but with much more detail.

### Eva

My uncle decided that he did not want to bus his children to the Black school which was ten miles away in the next town, when there was a predominantly White school right in our small town.  He entered two of his middle-school aged daughters in the school.  Of course, this enraged some locals in the community.  One night while we were all sitting in our living room, we heard shots rang out from a speeding car on our dirt lane.  The vehicle continued racing and shooting past our house, which was next door.  By the grace of God, no one in our house or my uncle's house was injured.  The

next day, there were a lot of local and federal agents mainly at my uncle's house. That was one of the first instances of violence due to desegregation in our little community. The next school year, all African Americans and European Americans attended one school.

Because of this study, I am better informed that this change [integration] was based more on the interest convergence assumption than the goodness of the hearts of others. Later in this study we will research to see if there is a connection between the type of early childhood education school system the participants attended had any effect on the leadership styles of the AAFALs.

<div align="center">Initial Career Goal</div>

Each of the AAFALs in this study had a career goal initially for several different careers. Not one of which was an educator, an administrator in an educational facility, or anything to do with education. What we think and believe we want to accomplish early in life soon disappears as reality steps into the picture. In the next sections, we will share what each participant believed their careers would begin.

<div align="center">*Anna*</div>

I was trying to pursue writing, but of course, that's a very broke life. Most of us know that writers use academia to fund the writing so my first major was journalism and creative writing and then I decided to be safer and put those things as minors be an English major so that was my minor in my master's degree. I came to teach as my second life.

*Becky*

I wanted to be a pediatrician.  I realized that it was not for me when I got to college and took organic chemistry.  I started developing a passion for literature-postcolonial literature.  That was how I got into English.  I've always been a teacher by nature, and I think that has to do with my upbringing and all my sisters being teachers.

*Carley*

Growing up I always wanted to become a pediatrician.

*Debra*

I would have pursued a physician's assistant [career] or nurse anesthetist [career.] I did not necessarily want to be a nurse, but I always wanted to do something in the medical field.  If I could do [work] as a nurse anesthetist, I would love that.

*Eva*

When I was younger, approximately 10 or 11, I always thought that I wanted to be a singer.  I wanted to be a famous pop star.  I thought that I emulated them very well. I would often sing at school for my classmates.  I thought I had the skills to become a pop star however there was one problem and that was stage fright.  Although I had a nice voice, I was very shy about singing in front of people.  I used to love to sing and dance in front of my brother and sister-in-law and their friends.  When their friends came over, they would ask me to sing and dance and I would do it but somewhere along the line I became very shy about singing and dancing in large groups.  I sang with the choir and some people even equated my voice with that of Mahalia Jackson.  I never really had any aspiration to do anything else other than sing, but eventually over the years I began to

realize that the rural area that I lived in was not a good place to become a pop star and reality sank into my life.

The participant's responses to the theme initial career goals vary and also differ in the actual careers they initially worked, as well as, the careers in which these AAFALs eventually worked. Next, we discuss the actual first job these AAFALs had prior to becoming an academic leader. In the theme professional backgrounds, participants shared with me the type job they first worked for pay.

## Professional Background

The theme extracted related to the participant's professional background has enabled me to know where each AAFAL started out professionally. I wanted to know if their professional backgrounds were similar or if they varied. The research showed that these women had very different beginnings professionally. In the end, however, they all evolved into the AAFALs they are now.

### Anna

I had a niche for human resources. I stayed in human resources for about 7 to 8 years and then after a divorce I decided to reinvent myself and went back to school and the rest is history-as they say. That is when I started teaching.

### Becky

I started to do some adjunct work at first in teaching English, lower level English, then I started teaching English full-time. I did that for about 7 to 9 years.

*Carley*

I started out as an assistant teacher and was later promoted to the lead teacher in early childhood education. Out of all of the faculty that started out at the same time that I did, I am the only one of two that still work here.

*Debra*

I started working in the hospital, and then I went back [to school] as I started to try to climb up the career ladder in the hospital. I was told that I had to have an associate degree to become a manager. So, I found this online program that was a program that would allow me to take more classes to get my associate and the hospital paid for that [tuition] which allowed me to end up getting the credits to get the associate degree. Then I got a manager position in a hospital over a department for several years. Then I found out about the opening for an instructor.

*Eva*

I consider earning a bachelor's degree while working a fulltime job [as an administrative assistant], being a mother of three daughters, a wife and, attending night and weekend school in various cities my greatest accomplishment. This opened the door for many more accomplishments and higher-level degrees such as a master's degree and a Specialist Degree. Each success encouraged me to reach for higher goals and gave me the self-esteem to accomplish those goals.

Personal Challenges Early in Life

After hearing the stories of each participant, I realized that each had personal challenges early in life. From being poor to sharing time between divorced parents who were too busy to care, all five women were challenged early in life but found strength to

survive and find a successful place in life. What follows is a brief description of each participants personal challenges early in life for the purpose of demonstrating the data that led to the theme. Their personal challenges early in life were used as inspiration to achieve great things.

*Anna*

[Anna was the only one of the five participants that did not share any instances of personal challenges early in life.] My parents were first-generation college graduates. They earned bachelor's degrees. I think my father did work [on his masters] but he didn't finish. A company in Los Angeles hired him and we moved to Los Angeles. I believe I was 2 years old at the time.

*Becky*

I was born in the south, . . . raised by a single mom. I was kind of the forgotten child, based on the fact that all of them are pretty close together in age. My sister next to me is 11 years older. I was the surprise child.

*Carley*

When I was born, I only weighed 3 pounds. I was about 8 weeks premature. I had to remain in the hospital for 4 weeks before I could go home. Fortunately, however, I did not require any oxygen or other equipment to keep me alive. I was just small.

*Debra*

I was a premature baby that had to stay in hospital according to my mom. After I got home, there were some complications and I had to go back to the hospital. I had a really rough beginning.

*Eva*

I was born in a very small town in the South. I have little knowledge of my biological mother nor my biological father because they were not involved in my life. I was adopted by another family. Our socioeconomic status would be classified as poor. My life was beautiful until the day my adopted mother died. I believe I was 6 or 7 years old—too young to know anything about a brain tumor or surgery or death.

The participant's themes related to personal challenges early in life varied from economic setbacks, medical issues, and personal family issues. These issues, although difficult, did not hinder these women from striving diligently and succeeding into leadership positions. The themes derived from the question, what are the personal and professional backgrounds of five AAFALs in the technical college system, varied as well. The next section gives additional insight into the themes that each of the women shared as they worked their way up through the system from the bottom.

Table 3

*Career Experiences*

| Themes | Anna | Becky | Carley | Debra | Eva |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1. What are the career experiences of five AAFALs in the technical college system in a southern state? | | | | | |
| Climbing the ladder | Started as a basic English and ESOL teacher. | Started to do some adjunct work at first. | Started out as an assistant teacher. | Got the job as an instructor. | Started as an instructor. |
| It's complicated | I had a target on my back from day one. | Voluntold that I am the new QEP director. | Balancing work, family, and social activities is a constant struggle for me. | I struggle with . . . never feeling like I've accomplished anything. | Numerous deadline requirements from my executive supervisors. |
| Mentoring. What's the big deal? | You will be invisible if you do not have some Black, seasoned positive people in your corner. | I think that when I first got here, I was assigned a mentor, but it was sort of like a trial by fire. | I think that having a mentor would have been helpful. | I've learned by trial and error. I was not given any advice or any training. I've had to learn everything on my own. | I wasn't sure exactly what all that [job] entailed. |
| Career challenges | Challenge is leading from the middle-- not having the ear of the top. | Expectations of me [by other peers] are lower [undervalued]. | Double minority -- gaining respect from your faculty. | Some seem racist, do not want a Black woman to tell them what to do. | Feeling I get if I speak out in opposition, I become the angry Black women. |

Note. Themes derived from data analysis of participants

Climbing the Ladder

The stories shared indicated that each African American female academic leader in this study started out at entry level or in some cases teaching as an adjunct instruction. They worked their way up the ranks to earn a leadership position. This enabled then to learn the procedures of the organization and paved the way for their success and promotion. What follows is a brief description of each participant's rise to leadership from their teaching position.

*Anna*

I immediately started teaching for the technical college system as a GED adult basic English teacher and ESOL teacher right after getting my bachelor's degree and while I was in grad school. I've taught as an adjunct instructor before I could get full-time employment as faculty at the master's degree at several different institutions. I then landed the position here and later back in 2010. 1 was at my current college for one year when I was tapped by my dean to be a department chair. I was department chair for approximately 4 years 5 years something like that before I started getting the bug for higher leadership. I started aggressively searching for dean roles—inside the system, outside the system. I had the greatest dean; I confided in her and told her what my career goals were as well as my educational goals and I let her know I can do it here (leadership) or someplace else. I had only been department chair for 2 years and my president pulled me aside and asked me why I had not applied, and I was shocked that she even thought of me. I told her I'm just learning how to be a department chair. I just don't think I'm ready, and I can't jump into something that major not ready and mess it up. She understood, and she told me the next time she needed to see my name in the applicants.

So, it was another 3 or 4 years before the next time came and she came to me before she had even seen the applicants, and she said, "Did you apply?" And I told her I did, and I'm ready. And she said, well that's good stuff.

*Becky*

I've always been a teacher by nature, and I think that has to do with my upbringing and all my sisters being teachers. I never taught K-12 at all I taught English on the college level. I started to do some adjunct work at first in teaching English, lower level English, then I started teaching English full-time. I did that for about 7 to 9 years or something and now I'm an academic dean. If I were not an academic leader, I think I would do consulting in education. If I were not in education, I do not know what I would be doing.

*Carley*

In my pathway to academic leadership I started out as an assistant teacher and was later promoted to the lead teacher in early childhood education and then to an administrative leadership position. I have been in this position for 2 years. I would attribute obtaining my current position as an academic leader to the fact that I believe that my work ethic and commitment to the mission of the organization helped me earn my position. Out of all of the faculty that started out at the same time that I did, I am the only one of two that are still working here.

*Debra*

I found out about the opening for an instructor at the technical college. I applied for it and I got a job as an instructor. Within a year being there the instructor that was already there passed away from cancer, so I got promoted to program director. During

the time that I was the director of the program, the program advanced to an associate

degree program, which required me to have my bachelor's degree.

I had gotten divorced when my boys were in Kindergarten and first grade, so as a

single mom, I went back to school while I was working full time and working in the

hospital. I got my bachelor's degree then I got my degree from State U. I then went to

The University to get my doctorate degree. The reasons that I went to The University,

and you know, I'm a little bit ashamed of it because I had to do something different but, I

have a problem, I'm dyslexic so I have a problem with taking standardized tests. I

understand students who have a hard time with that. I could never pass the GRE or the

MAT. I had to get special accommodations to take other standardized tests while I was at

the state college, but I could never pass those tests. I found that The University did not

require any standardized tests and they took my credits from the state college, which

allowed me to do my doctorate. My doctorate is in educational leadership.

*Eva*

Everyone has always told me that thought I was a teacher before I became a

teacher. They would tease me and say it was because I thought I knew everything. I

believe that I have remained in the profession as faculty and in leadership, by taking

advantage of my tremendous work ethic which was instilled in me at a very young age. I

also believe that I have remained in the profession because of my passion for education

and the fact that I understand and can truly relate to how higher education can free you

from a life of poverty, and my desire is to share this belief with others.

The participants all started from the bottom of the academic totem pole and

climbed the ladder to leadership. I would suspect that these women were promoted based

on their hard work and demonstration of the ability to lead in the organization. Although this may be the case with other races as well, this theme was prevalent with all participants in this study. The next section gives additional insight into what were those career experiences.

## It's Complicated

The theme "It's Complicated" helps to answers research question 2: What are the career experiences of five AAFALs in the technical college system? Participants shared their most complicated experiences while working in the academic leadership position at the technical college in a southern state. Each participant had a different experience with some similarities, but not much. As you read about each participants experience, you can begin to understand and acknowledge the frustration for each participant.

### *Anna*

I was shaken but not stirred. One of my, now, subordinates had orchestrated a year-long coup to usurp me, and ultimately ensure her place as the new dean. She was unsuccessful. I was selected regardless of her machinations. So, I had a target on my back from day one.

### *Becky*

What has my job has become? It was seemingly simple in the beginning, but overall that is grossly erroneous. No 2 days are the same. I have recently had additional programs add to the programs that I currently supervise. I have also been voluntold that I am the new QEP director.

*Carley*

I noticed that no one looked like me, which led to more pressure to do the job exceedingly well. Most days are very hectic. Of course, there are the occasional "putting out fires," attending team meetings, and conference calls, when needed. Balancing work, family, and social activities is a constant struggle for me. It's a daily struggle. I try hard to separate them all. When I'm at work, I focus on work. I come from a loving family so when I go home, I have to make sure I make quality time for my family.

*Debra*

I encountered a program with a lot of classroom disorganization, just a lot of stuff going on. There was chaos in the class from an instructor who did not know how to manage a class. He was doing a lot of unethical things in his class. One of things that I struggle with in this (position) is never feeling like I've accomplished anything. I feel like, every day, my list never goes down. When you teach, you go into the classroom knowing that you have to cover these objectives and cover this topic. You get that done and you feel like "I did it." A dean's role, however, nothing ever gets completed so that keeps me very frustrated. I don't like not being able to check things off my list. That's the part that I do not like in this type of management.

*Eva*

This position involved supervision of multiple academic programs and supervision of multiple faculty members in each program. There are numerous deadline requirements from my executive supervisors. This puts me in the position of being the mediator between the executive staff and faculty. It is a very demanding position. The position involves a lot of decision making.

112

Each participant's experience seemed either a career worse-case scenario, or a rose-colored glasses scenario. Some experiences were far from the reality of what the position encompassed. The participants shared stories of the uncertainty of the job and feelings of isolation. The next section addresses what the participants felt they needed the most but did not get . . . an effective mentor for leaders.

<center>Mentor. What's the Big Deal?</center>

A recurring theme that appears in my stories of AAFALs is the lack of effective mentors. Mentors that were assigned to my participants were way too busy to be effective, and only responded on an as-needed basis. Only one of the AAFALs indicated that she had a strong, effective mentor to guide her through the leadership process. Eighty percent of participants stated they had no one to go to for guidance, or if they had someone, they were already overwhelmed themselves.

<center>*Anna*</center>

I had access to several African American female leaders. They surrounded me. I attribute obtaining this [AAFAL] job to part drive and part mentor. You will be invisible if you do not have some Black mentors, seasoned positive people in your comer to coach you to advocate for you, and to make moves for you behind the scenes. I mean because, let's face it, a lot of leaders get their stab at that great opportunity because someone made a phone call. Some people don't want to admit that, yes, a lot of it is based on merit, but there are 500 people with the same merit-based skill sets and CV that you have. Sometimes it takes a phone call; sometimes it takes networking, a friend of a friend, somebody I went to grad school with, somebody I was a colleague of at work with— whatever. I think it's the drive skill, but I think more than that it's having that mentor or

<center>113</center>

group of mentors. Although Anna valued her mentor experience, Becky's did not seem to be as valuable to her.

<center>*Becky*</center>

I was assigned a mentor in a former position. That was a travesty. She is a Black female, and she did everything she could to destroy me. That's the only way I know to say that. It was horrible. I think that when I first got here [current position], I was assigned a mentor, but it was sort of like a trial by fire. He was there when I needed help, but I can't say that it was a true mentor/mentee relationship.

<center>*Carley*</center>

I did not have a mentor so I'm not sure how to answer the questions. I think that having a mentor would have been helpful depending on how they would have mentored. Significant people . . . I would say my mom stands out most to me personally. She is a big inspiration in the woman I am today. I learn to work hard and always stand my ground and be proud of who I am . . . I definitely would not be the leader I am today without her. Professionally I would say people that stand out to me are other females in the same field or other fields that are also in leadership.

<center>*Debra*</center>

I spoke of a mentor who was an instructor in the education arena and mentored me as an instructor. I have not had a mentor in this leadership position. You know, I've learned by trial and error. I was not given any advice or any training. I've had to learn everything on my own. I would figure it out. I am the type of person that when I need to do something, I like to ask for help but, I don't learn well that way, with someone saying "You do this and this and do it like this," but I have to practice and figure out for myself

<center>114</center>

and then I can do it.  I don't think that we have anyone who has been what we consider

mentor to talk us through all of the administrative things that we should do.  I think that

one of the things that we need a mentor for is to help us with consistency.

*Eva*

I recall a tremendous sense of responsibility to fulfilling all of the duties of the

position, even though I wasn't sure exactly what all that entailed.  I also felt a sense of

frustration and isolation.  When I earned my teaching degree, I had a full term of what is

referred to as student teaching.  It involves several weeks of working as a teacher,

learning how to develop lessons, classroom management, learning what is acceptable and

what is not acceptable.  I had a preceptor who came to my class, evaluated my

performance, and gave me adequate feedback.

In this section, the AAFALs express how critical mentoring would have been to

their assimilation to the academic leadership position.  Only one of the participants

indicated that she had strong Black women as mentors.  She expressed how instrumental

they were to here in adjusting in the position.  Others express how difficult it was and

frustrating it was not having a mentor in the position.  In the next section, we will

continue to search for answers to the question "What are the career experiences of five

AAFALs in the technical college in a southern state?"  The participants in the next

section share their stories of additional challenges in their careers.

Challenges

What are the challenges these AAFALs faced during their positions in academic

leadership in a technical college system?  What specifically made them wonder if they

were in the right line of work and profession?  In this section, we will explore the challenges that were faced by five Black women in academia.

*Anna*

One of my challenges is leading from the middle and not having the ear of the top has made me feel undervalued.  I have been given lots of advice.  Prior to starting the doctorate, most of that advice came from a top-down, command-and-control perspective.  Most Americans seem to espouse the "great man" theories of leadership, and these just don't apply to me.

*Becky*

My challenges as an African American female academic leader are there were times when I really, really had to do some praying to navigate these waters.  I would say that being an African American woman, expectations are definitely different and that I think that the expectations of me [by other peers] are lower because I am and have higher expectations of myself.  Because of that, you know, it is funny to me when people underestimate me and think things are going to be this way but when I do whatever I do and "wow" everyone, [my peers] are in shock when your expectations were too low for an African American woman.  Had a White male been called to do the same thing would you have had higher expectations?  So, I kind of see that and I feel that a lot.  This position can create stress, and you have to deal with people and change.  Some time it will be for better or for worse.  It is easy to lose yourself in the demands that people place on you.

*Carley*

I think the biggest issue that has confronted me as an AAFAL is gaining respect from your faculty. There's a misconception that women in general don't know much about anything. I think that this belief is expanded upon when dealing with African American women. I also feel that it is very difficult to not be the stereotypical angry Black woman when dealing with issues on a daily basis. The way that a Caucasian woman or male would respond is sometimes more acceptable than the way an African American woman responds in the same situation.

*Debra*

My greatest challenge is to try to get to that point again where I'm bored. Just organized to the point where it's just automatic. To get things organized in the way it will work and hopefully, to the point that it works like a well-oiled machine at whatever cost. There are a lot of people who don't like change, so right now I've had a lot of turnover. I know that's because people who have been allowed to do things a way so long, it didn't mean that it was correct, it's just that that's what they were doing. A lot of times people get upset including us when things change, even though it may be wrong . . . so my biggest challenge is to get it organized so that I can achieve those goals that I need to do at the end of the day. In my teacher position before leadership, I felt that I had an impact. It was a job that I was respected as the expert in that field. I do not feel that way in this leadership position. I feel like they see us as deans, but they don't respect us in our area of expertise. So, I can't do my job efficiently . . . yes, I have experienced that [racism] since I've taken this job. The people who do not like me because I am making the changes, they seem to conform because they want their job. The ones that I've

noticed that are clear racist, do not want an African American woman to tell them what to do, they are the ones who have quit or moved on, and they're very defiant. They're the ones that will email my supervisor and cc me or email me and cc my supervisor, or email about something that I have said no. They go around me, and they would rather put papers in my box, rather than come to my office and give it to me.

*Eva*

I believe that my greatest challenge professionally is the overwhelming sense that I have reached my highest potential in my career in this particular college. I do not believe that this is because I do not have the knowledge or the education, but I believe that I do not fit the mold of what is required to obtain an executive leadership position. Maybe it's the way I wear my hair or my southern dialect, I can't quite put my hands on it. Also, the sometimes muffled feeling I get if I speak out in opposition, I become the angry Black women. I would suggest to AAFALs to choose your battles wisely and know when to fight and what is worth the battle.

The challenges that AAFALs faced varied. Some participants stated they had feelings of being undervalued. Others recognized different expectations from their White peers. Yet others shared they received little or no respect from their direct reports. The stories that these women shared tell that it took a lot of resilience for these women to remain in these leadership positions. In the next section, we will address the skills, attitudes and strategies that these AAFALs found most valuable.

Table 4

*Skills, Attitudes and Strategies*

| Themes | Anna | Becky | Carley | Debra | Eva |
|--------|------|-------|--------|-------|-----|

Q1. What skills, attitudes, and strategies are perceived by 5 AAFALs as most beneficial in academic leadership for AA women?

| Themes | Anna | Becky | Carley | Debra | Eva |
|--------|------|-------|--------|-------|-----|
| Passion | I will always serve marginalized students in some way. | I am passionate for student success, passionate for education. | I wanted the staff to see my passion for the job. | I love the allied health field. I love to be able to learn about the different programs. | I feel warm, happy, and content with the majority of my journey in academic leadership. |
| Leadership skills | A transformational leader with servant leadership. Purpose driven. | My management style is very hands-on… a mix between servant leadership and transformative leadership. | My style of management is to lead by example; I try my best to do things the way I would want my subordinates to do things. | It's going to be a hard row and to seek people they trust for guidance. | I am a results-driven manager. |
| Value Education | Enrolled in Doctoral. | Doctorate is in higher education. | Doctorate. | Doctorate is in higher education. | Doctoral candidate. |
| Resilience | I have enlisted the help of my "village." | There were times when I really had to do some praying. | Make logical judgment calls | You have to find people that you can trust | "I can do all things through Christ." |

*Note.* Themes derived from data analysis of participants

Passion for Students

In this section, themes are deducted based on the participants description of what they felt were the most valuable skills, knowledge, and attributes. AAFALs will share their stories and address the third research question: What skills, attitudes, and strategies are perceived by five AAFALs as most beneficial in academic leadership for African American women? One of the participants attributes her resilience to remain in the profession to having great mentors who she could go to if necessary. Unfortunately, this was not the case for all AAFALs. The majority were left to struggle on their own and figure it out themselves. These women exceeded to this level of academic leadership without mentoring. These women were strong and capable, in spite of what they endured. Each AAFAL discussed her passion for her job and student success.

*Anna*

And I say, if I do, I will always have to serve marginalized students in some way. You know, you can't un-ring that bell. You know once you've accepted that responsibility, that's life, you can't go back.

*Becky*

I am passionate for student success, passionate for education, and finally insert my passion as I lead. In order to help other leaders, find a way to insert their passion so we can find a way to keep the passion alive. You have to know your folks in order to lead them. One of the things I learned as I was coming through the doctoral program was about emotional intelligence and how important it is to read people especially those that we lead to be sympathetic and empathetic to what they face outside of the classroom, so I try to keep that in mind too. I feel good about my journey in academic leadership. I

think there are a lot of things that I learned in a short amount of time and you continue to learn for some time.

<p align="center"><em>Carley</em></p>

I would attribute obtaining my current position as an academic leader to the fact that I believe that my work ethic and commitment to the mission of the organization helped me earn my position . . . I wanted the staff to see my passion for the job. . . [however], I think that I have remained in the profession by playing by the book, you know, following procedures and trying to make logical judgment calls.

<p align="center"><em>Debra</em></p>

I love the allied health field. I love to be able to learn about the different programs because I've learned a lot by sitting in on the lecturers and listening to different things. Even though I thought I was a little bit versatile about a lot of medical topics, as far as it relates to different programs, but sitting in with them and sitting down listening to things and visiting classrooms, I'm beginning to learn a lot more and I love to learn. I love to learn things that I don't know so I think as a whole just that eagerness to make things better with the allied health because when I was an instructor, I saw a lot of things that I thought that should not have been occurring, that over the years I have redesigned and made things better.

<p align="center"><em>Eva</em></p>

I feel warm, happy, and content with the majority of my journey in academic leadership. I have touched a lot of lives and helped a lot of people achieve their dreams and hopes of having a better career. I have helped students work through some of the academic technical difficulties that may have hindered their success. I have encouraged

students to return to college and finish where they left off and had them to thank me later for the words of encouragement. My mission has always been for the economic empowerment of all of the individuals in our organization to include faculty and students. I never planned for a life in academic leadership, it just simply worked out that way. I suppose it was my destiny.

Most participants attribute their skills, attitude, and attributes in the field of academic leadership to a passion for the job and student success. Some expressed the desire to see students succeed academically, and professionally. By staying involved in the procedural and policy-making processes, this enabled them to touch the lives of others in an indirect way and gave the participants a feeling of achievement.

## Leadership Skills

Each participant will share what additional skills, attitudes and strategies helped them to survive. Some participants shared that what helped them most were their leadership skills. All participants expressed that organization is a crucial skill to have in your toolbox. Others will share that being organized with what they believed benefited them most. All participants give suggestions on how prepare for a position in academic leadership. They also share their particular styles of management.

### *Anna*

I see myself as a transformational leader with servant leadership in there someplace. I'm purpose driven, you know, I told you about my whole life and how I arrived at education. My goal is to, first of all, recruit and hire people who are also purpose driven. If I have to inherit teams, which I have done, I want to inspire them to

find a purpose and if it is not higher education, then whatever he [God]is telling you, that is that is what you need to help you get there.

You don't have to be the most brilliant educator in the world, but you have to be willing to learn. You have to understand that you are a work in progress and that learning is lifelong and just because you have a Ph.D. in this discipline or a doctorate in this discipline or masters, whatever, it doesn't mean that you're done learning. That's my philosophy and my style is transformational and collaborative.

*Becky*

My management style is very hands-on . . . a mix between servant leadership and transformative leadership. I like to get in the trenches as much as I can. I don't like micromanaging. I'm a person that I will equip you with what you need and then we will move from there. I also believe in equipping those that I managed to become leaders. I am really trying to be open enough to push my people to opportunities that are bigger and better. I think that it's important to make changes not just manage leadership. To be always looking for the things to change, for opportunities to create better success, to make things better, so I try to always look for what can we transform. How can we make things better and transform the lives of our students? How can I position myself to make a difference where I am. I believe in actually helping my faculty so, I work to do that.

I try to go with the most pressing issues first. One thing that I've done recently is that I've created a whiteboard out of my own money and mounted to the wall. That way I can see what I need to be focused on. So it's kind of divided up into these that need me today, tomorrow and so on. I think I have stayed in the profession by staying engaged.

*Carley*

My style of management is to lead by example; I try my best to do things the way I would want my subordinates to do things and I also try my best to think about how they will perceive things that I do. I also try to keep in mind that I too am an employee and to treat them the way I would like to be treated by my boss. I also would describe myself as an "in the trenches type of leader "when things need to be done or my employees need assistance, I'm always there to help them as well as guide them to be more efficient. My area in primarily focused in the professional services area with such programs as early childhood care and education.

*Debra*

My advice for African American women entering the leadership field, I don't know if I would sit down and tell them all of the things that I've experienced. I wouldn't want to discourage them because it has been pretty rough. I will probably tell them that it's going to be a hard row and to seek people they trust for guidance. You can't trust everyone to ask for help and to show them your weakness. That to me is a big thing. There are things that we don't know that we have to ask for help, but I have figured out the people that I can't ask twice for help, because then they automatically think that you can't do the job. You have to find people that you can trust with whom you feel comfortable.

*Eva*

As an African American female academic leader, I am a results-driven manager. My group knows what to expect when they're around me, which, I think, puts employees at ease. I have a place for everything, and you appreciate everything being in its place. I

124

take a disciplined approach to managing our team. As long as people do what they say they're going to do, by the time they are supposed to, all is right in the world.

I would recommend to future AAFALs to beware of that invisible ceiling that one may or may not bump into. As invisible as it may seem to others, it is there, it is real, and it hurts like hell when you reach it. Particularly when you've exhausted every ounce of your energy to an organization that no longer is willing to acknowledge your ability to intelligently manage beyond your current position. I would warn them not to try to fight against the system but to invoke small changes along the way when given the opportunity. As an AAFALs, I did not want to be stereotyped as the "angry Black women" and therefore I learned to choose my battles wisely and not to try to fight everything policy or procedure that I did not agree with wholeheartedly. I think of it as a balancing act with a lot of give and take.

Leadership skills shared by the participants include helping their faculty members to succeed, good communication skills, organization skills, and participating in conferences that drew their interests. One participant shares a warning of reaching the invisible ceiling. In the next chapter, we will learn the stories these AAFALs shared about the value of education.

<center>Value Education</center>

The participants in this study not only worked in academic leadership, but they also understood how valuable a good education was to their climb up the technical college ladder of success. Some have shared earlier the impoverished life they lived as a young girl, some have discussed how the single mom instilled in them how important education is for them to become independent. The theme, value education, demonstrates

<center>125</center>

to the reader how much these AAFALs valued education and indicates the highest level of education these women achieved.

*Anna*

I followed them [parents] and finished my education at a state college and continued to study race, class, and gender in literary studies there and now I'm in a doctorate program at the university and learning leadership and organization development with that same radical zeal. I also continued to challenge the status quo and considered myself a radical.

*Becky*

I hope to transition into a higher position or start consulting work. I feel good about my journey in academic leadership. I think there are things that I learned a lot about in a short amount of time and you continue to learn for some time. I think that my greatest success professional was earning my doctorate degree. I feel accomplished. I feel like I gained the respect of my peers and I gained the credentials to match what I knew I had.

*Carley*

The highest level of education I have obtained is a doctorate degree. The highest level of education my father received was a high school diploma; however, my mother earned her specialist degree.

*Debra*

I understand students who have a hard time with that. I could never pass the GRE or the MAT. I had to get special accommodations to take other standardized tests while I was at the university, but I could never pass those tests. I found a college that did not

require any standardized tests and they took my credits from another university, which allowed me to complete my doctorate. My doctorate is in Educational Leadership. I was the first in my family to graduate with a post-secondary degree.

*Eva*

I hope to complete my research and dissertation one day in the near future. I know I can do it, but I'm not sure what is holding me back other than my fear of succeeding at this task.

Each of these women either earned doctorate degrees or are currently enrolled in a doctoral program. Information in their profiles reveal that Eva attended school while working fulltime, raising three kids, taking care of a home, and a husband. Debra was going through a divorce and raising her two boys while working on her degree. Anna is also working on her doctorate while raising kids, taking care of a home and a marriage. The two other AAFALs finished their education prior to beginning their families and careers. The next theme we will share is related to resilience, a profound attitude developed by each one of these AAFALs.

Resilience

The resilience theme was constructed based on the fact that these women have remained in the field despite the challenges they face each day. They have each shared their challenges in the career. They have also shared some of their personal challenges early in life. Despite the fact that the majority of them had no mentors, they have reached the status of academic leader. These women are strong, capable women who were willing to share their stories.

*Anna*

Nonetheless, I have learned to compartmentalize.  Also, I have enlisted the help of my "village" [husband, grown children, parents].  The village babysits the young children so that I can make visits to the library, have quiet reading and writing time, and go to class . . . I want to inspire them to find a purpose and if it is not higher education, then whatever he [God] is telling you, that is what you need to help you get there.

*Becky*

I think it was my next God-ordained step.  I have been doing this for 2 years.  My area is Gen Ed, but actually my job function just changed so I'm over general education but also over professional services area such as culinary arts, hotel, restaurant tourism, and designing media as well . . . there were times when I really, really had to do some praying to navigate these waters . . . I think that's also partly because of my faith.  I just believe that what is for me is for me and that God has me regardless of what position I'm in.  I don't worry about who is out to get me.  I don't have time to worry about that.

*Carley*

I think that I have remained in the profession by playing by the book, you know, following procedures and trying to make logical judgment calls.  Significant life-changing experiences that occurred along the way to becoming an academic leader are the fact that I got married, had two children and lost my dear grandmother during the process.  My children are 2 years old and 5 months old.  They are the joy of my life.

*Debra*

My advice for African American women entering the leadership field, I don't know if I would sit down and tell them all of the things that I've experienced.  I wouldn't

want to discourage them because it has been pretty rough.  I will probably tell them that it's going to be a hard row and to seek people they trust for guidance . . . You have to find people that you can trust, [with whom] you feel comfortable.

*Eva*

I thank God for my faith and for believing in me and helping me to believe in myself.  I recall a time when I was in one of my undergraduate classes and I was truly not feeling like going on.  I was very tired from working all day, driving 40 or more miles one way to attend class and then sitting in a class listening to a lecture for 4 hours.  There was an empty seat beside me, and a young lady sat beside me.  She seemed to be struggling with the class as well.  During the lecture, I looked down at her pad and saw the following that she had scribbled "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."  This scripture gave me much motivation and strangely, I never saw that student in class again.  I felt as though that was a prophetic sign telling me to hang in there.  I never saw the student again in school or class . . . ever.

In this section, the themes relate to the skills, attitudes, and strategies most beneficial to African American academic leaders in the technical college system. Themes include the passion these women have for their career field, the faculty, and students as well.  Leadership skills, the value of education, and resilience to remain in the field despite the challenges were also emphasized.  Next, I will review the results of study and address my conclusions, as well as, make recommendations for future research and administrators.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to tell the stories of women who blazed the trail into higher education administration, and to inform others what to expect and thereby prepare them to move in that direction. The study provided information rich stories that can serve as a resource for African American females who seek leadership positions in the technical college system and fill the gap of no mentorship or preparatory guide for such a position. In the study, I investigated African American female academic leader's stories, experiences, and perceptions to discover how they developed strategies that were instrumental in their overall success. It was my hope to find information that could assist with the recruitment and retention of more African American females in leadership positions in the technical college system by sharing experiences, lessons learned, and how each participant became an academic leader.

A concise summary of key findings revealed their personal and professional backgrounds relative to their family and early childhood education. They also revealed how each of them had different career goals early in life that did not involve education; nor did some of their initial careers began in education. They all had personal challenges early in life which made each of them proud and appreciative of the opportunity for promotion and leadership.

Each AAFAL shared stories about their career experiences since becoming an academic leader. Themes of how they started up the career ladder in the technical college

were shared.  The complications and challenges of working in the system were commonalities among these women.  Challenges during their experience varied in nature but served to make each woman stronger.  An essential tool that was not prominent in four of the five AAFALs careers was mentoring.  Only one of the women had mentors for the leadership position.  She elaborates on how mentors were a key to success for her.  The five women revealed the skills, attributes, and strategies that they determined are the most beneficial for success.  I discovered each had a deep passion for students and the field of education as being consistent in all of the participants.  Each AAFAL displayed strong leadership skills, indicated how they valued education and the difference it had made in their lives.  The resilience theme of spirituality was resoundingly clear in each of the participants.

I thank God for this journey, so that I could find out "who" I really am and what I stand for in this world.  A stark realization has occurred to me and I know that race is bigger than any of us.  We all tend to lean in favor of our own being and existence.  With that in mind, the minority, most likely, will always be the minority due to interest convergence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).  Otherwise there would be disturbance in the stability of the world as we know it.  My hope in the beginning of this study was to add to literature about African American female academic leaders, and I believe that has been accomplished.  Unfortunately, it appears the outcome of my research has not changed much historically.  Black women still struggle to be heard, to be taken seriously, and to be given credit for our work.

The women in this study were courageous women who worked hard despite the odds to become leaders in their field.  Even though they may have overcome challenges

early in life, they pulled themselves up by their bootstraps and fought to recognize by their dedication to the field of education. The women all expressed their pride in working in the technical college. Overall, I have to presume that they would not have had it any other way.

Technical colleges have two major responsibilities, which are to put people to work as soon as possible, if that is what they desire; but it has also morphed into the place to attend to obtain your core curriculum that will transfer to major college and universities. Although most still see technical education as the vocational school we were 20 years ago, some people recognize that our faculty are credentialed at the highest level in their discipline and that the curriculum is standardized to match other colleges and universities.

I am grateful to these women who opened their lives and were willing to share their stories. Their time is invaluable. A tremendous "thank you" to helping the reader to discover what our leadership positions currently demand. I believe that I have accomplished a great deal during this study. Most of all, I have gained new friendships in addition to peers that I can reach out to and who should feel comfortable reaching out to me. In the next section, I will discuss and interpret the findings of this study.

*Interpretation of the Findings*

Through this dissertation process, I have had an opportunity to share many stories and learned some things along the way. In this section, I will compare my findings in the study with findings from peer-reviewed literature that was included in Chapter 2 of this dissertation: critical race theory, resilience, and othermothering. I will further attempt to analyze and interpret the findings in the context of my theoretical framework. The

information is derived from five African American female academic leaders. They range in age from 30 years old to 60 years old.

The range of experience also varies from parents of the participants, who were first-generation college graduates to the participants themselves who are first-generation college graduates. Each participant went as far as earning a doctorate degree or being actively enrolled in a doctoral program. Each participant's desire to become socio-economically advantaged instead of desiring to become socio-economically disadvantaged is a resounding element of their stories. One participant told the story of being raised in a single-parent household and how her mother instilled in her at an early age, the value of education. The fact that she and her siblings all earned post-secondary degrees is evidence of how this value was passed down by a woman raising five children on her own.

Two of the participants stated that they had serious health problems at birth. One participant was born weighing only three pounds; while, another was born premature and with additional complications resulted in more hospital stays. These participants had very rough beginnings at birth. I believe, that perhaps, they may have built up a tolerance to fight in the very beginning days of their lives. One participant tells the story of being given up at birth, and a few years later, the death of her adopted mother. The difficulty of her father raising her alone led to changes in her location and home. The participant shared the story of how her adopted relatives stepped up to help care and raise her. She grew up to marry, have a family of her own, earn three post-secondary degrees and is currently enrolled in a doctoral program.

These findings confirm what was found in the literature related to resilience theory (Polidore, 2004; Taylor, 2013). The theory is that some people demonstrate characteristics of high resilience when confronted with adversity. Polidore (2004) found these characteristics in her study and I found some of the same characteristics in participants in my study. One characteristic referred to the extent that individuals felt they had control in their lives. The participants in this study felt some sense of control once they reached post-secondary age. Resilience theory also posits that individuals with the ability to see the positive side of adversity are more likely to succeed. It appears that each of the participants in this study were endowed with this ability. They also demonstrated a dedication to the cause of working in the field of education; and, they all had positive role models in their lives growing up as a child, if only for a brief period of time.

I did not find othermothering (Collins, 2000) to be relevant in four of the five participants. The majority were raised in two-parent families or had a strong mother in their lives. Potential othermothers could have been sisters, aunts, or other relatives, but there was no elaboration on others.

One participant stated that she had a lot of African American mentors in her profession, and that these women were also considered an othermother to the participant. One of the tasks of being an othermother is mentoring. Four out of the five participants stated that they did not have any formal mentoring to prepare them for the leadership position. They all stated that having a mentor in their current leadership position, would have made a tremendous difference in their experience. They also felt that having a mentor would have made a tremendous difference in some of the challenges they faced

and how they would have been able to deal with the challenges.  The literature related to mentoring indicates that mentoring makes a positive impact on the experiences of new leaders; but mentoring is rarely provided (Patton, 2009; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Terry, 2013).

The consequences of not having a mentor are demonstrated in the challenges these AAFALs faced.  The challenge of learning by trial and error was stated by one of the participants.  Another challenge indicated by one of the participants was the expectations for her seemed lower than for her White counterparts, particularly White male counterparts.  She stated that she felt as if her leader and peers did not believe she was capable.  One of the assets of mentorship is the building of self-esteem, which she thought would have helped her tremendously.

The challenge of gaining respect from the faculty the leaders supervised was also indicated stated by participants to be an issue.  This is understandable as all of the participants indicated that they were previous faculty members.  It was evident from some of the participants' challenges that being promoted from peer to one's supervisor, imposed friction in the case of leadership, especially as a Black female supervising a former White peer.  One participant indicated that she had an unusually high turnover in her White colleagues once she was promoted.  The participant suggests  that this may be due to racism.  Delgado and Stefancic (2001) posited that racism is normal and that it is easy for individuals to focus on what is different rather than what is the same.

Participants shared feelings of being undervalued in their organization as well as being underestimated regarding their abilities to lead.  The women stated feelings of being respected less due to their intersectionality of race and gender.  One participant

spoke about the glass ceiling in her position, which would hinder her from further promotion and progress.  Participants stated that they were less eager to speak out or speak against an idea because they would be stereotyped as the angry Black woman. These women discussed several tenets of critical race theory (Bell, 2004; Stefancic & Delgado, 2001) that they had been exposed to because of their leadership positions, including interest convergence, social constructivism, and now they too are a voice of color.  There were limitations to my study, which are addressed in the next section.

*Limitations*

One of the limitations of this study is the sample size.  Patton (2002) informed that there are no rules regarding number of participants needed in a qualitative study as the number is less important than the depth and richness of the data.  I would have liked to have more participants.  During my search for participants, I found that many of the African American female academic leaders were reluctant to participate.  Most of the participants did not respond to my email initially, nor did they respond after other attempts.  The criteria for participation was limited, therefore I only had five participants. The profiles from the participants provided ample material for a beginning exploration into AAFALs.  I believe that the participants were genuine in all of their responses. Although the sample was not representative of AAFALs in general being that all of the women worked in the southern portion of the U.S., their stories are valuable because they all worked in similar institutions.

*Recommendations for Future Research*

Although I find the stories of these women of great value, I would recommend future research with a larger sample and in a variety of geographic areas.  I would like to

know if the themes of this study are similar to AAFALs all over America. In addition to having a larger sample, I would recommend that retired AAFALs be included in the study. I believe the retirees would be more willing to participate and would be more willing to go into much deeper details regarding their experiences. I also believe that a study that compares the experiences of African American females to the experiences of European American females would also provide more insight.

*Implications*

The participants in this study shared relevant information that appears to have the potential to have a positive impact on change in southern technical colleges. Stories of how much of a difference mentoring would have made for new AAFALs, suggested by its absence, could alleviate a lot of the challenges expressed by the participants. Quality mentoring would help new AAFALs with their self-confidence and other leadership skills. In addition, the pure knowledge of what these women have shared could encourage institutions to value these individuals more for the leadership they provide to faculty and students.

One suggestion shared by the women in the study is that AAFALs should continuously seek out conferences to increase their leadership skills. All of the women emphasized how important education was to their success and promotion to leadership. Each woman recommended the new AAFALs seek positive role models and learn to embrace change. As one participant stated, "without strong positive role model's support and guidance in the organization, you will become invisible."

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

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

## PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

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**PROTOCOL NUMBER:**   03363-2016                          **INVESTIGATOR:**   Patsy Wilkerson

**PROJECT TITLE:**   A Phenomenological Study on the Journeys of African American Female Academic Leaders in Technical Colleges

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**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:**

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under Exemption Category **2**.  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.

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**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:

☐   *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.*

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*Elizabeth W. Olphie*          *06/20/2016*              ***Thank you for submitting an IRB application.***

Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator          Date          ***Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.***

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*Revised:  06.02.16*

144

Appendix B

Informed Consent Script

*This script will be read at the first meeting with each participant. No questions or information will be gathered from the participant until after the script has been read and the participant has agreed to remain a part of the study.*

## VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

### Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled "A Phenomenological Study on the Journeys of African American Female Academic Leaders in Technical Colleges." This research project is being conducted by Patsy Wilkerson, a graduate student in Educational Leadership at Valdosta State University. The researcher has explained to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask the researcher any questions you have to help you understand this project and your possible participation in it. A basic explanation of the research is given below. Please read this carefully and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have.

**Purpose of the Research:** The purpose of this study is to tell the stories of female academic leaders in the technical college system in a southern state who blazed the trail and inform others as to what to expect and thereby prepare them to move in that direction. The study will provide information rich stories that can serve as a resource for African American females who seek leadership positions in the technical college system and fill the gap of no mentorship or preparatory guide for such a position. In the study I will investigate African American female academic leader's stories, experiences, and perceptions to discover if they developed strategies that were instrumental in their overall success. I hope to find information that can assist with the recruitment and retention of more African American females in leadership positions in the technical college system by sharing experiences, lessons learned, and how each participant became an academic leader.

**Procedures:** Participation will include collection of data through a series of three interviews per person and approximately 90 minutes in length. The interviews will include in-depth, open-ended questions. The researcher will ask you a series of questions about your personal, professional, and educational experiences. The audio of the interview will be recorded. The interviews will be scheduled at a time that is convenient to you and workable within the researcher's schedule.

**Possible Risks or Discomfort:** Although there are no known risks associated with these research procedures, it is not always possible to identify all potential risks of participating in a research study. However, the University has taken reasonable safeguards to minimize potential but unknown risks.

146

By agreeing to participate in this research project, you are not waiving any rights that you may have against Valdosta State University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or its researchers.

**Potential Benefits:** Although you may not benefit directly from this research, your participation will help the researcher gain additional understanding of the experiences of African American female academic leaders in the technical college system.  Knowledge gained may contribute to addressing how to better recruit and retain African American women in academic leadership positions in the technical colleges setting.

**Costs and Compensation:** There are no costs to you and there is no compensation (no money, gifts, or services) for your participation in this research project.

**Assurance of Confidentiality:**  Valdosta State University and the researcher will keep your information confidential to the extent allowed by law.  Members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a university committee charged with reviewing research to ensure the rights and welfare of research participants, may be given access to your confidential information.

The researcher will perform data collection and analysis.  The email addresses, names and locations of the participants will not be recorded on the voice recorder or in notes. Participants will be labeled with a number assigned by the order they were interviewed. All recording and notes will be saved based on their assigned number (Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.)  Transcriptions will be stored using word processing software on a password-protected computer using a password-protected file.  Email addresses will be stored on a password-protected computer. The researcher will be the only person with access to the laptop and the files.  A backup of the file will be stored in a locked file cabinet that only the researcher will have access.  All information will be deleted three years after the conclusion of this project.

**Voluntary Participation:**  Your decision to participate in this research project is entirely voluntary.  If you agree now to participate and change your mind later, you are free to leave the study.  Your decision not to participate at all or to stop participating at any time in the future will not have any effect on any rights you have or any services you are otherwise entitled to from Valdosta State University.

During the interview process, you may skip any questions that you do not want to answer.  Should you decide to withdraw after data collection is complete, your information will be deleted and will not be included in research results.

**Information Contacts**:  Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Patsy Wilkerson at 912-278-1185 or pgwilkerson@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 the IRB Administrator at 229-333-7837 or irb@valdosta.edu.

**<u>Agreement to Participate:</u>** The research project and my role in it have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study by allowing the researcher to move forward with the interview process. The researcher has also provided a copy of the consent script to me for my review. I have also informed the researcher how best to send me a copy of the dissertation.

Appendix C

Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

My data collection method follows an open-ended interview process. The questions below serve to provide the general nature of the questions that will be asked; however, additional questions may be asked as the conversation evolves.

Interview #1

1.  Please tell me a little bit about yourself?
    a. Birthplace
    b. Your family (what was your mother like? Father? Siblings? Relationship with?
    c. Your upbringing (socio-economic status, living environment)
    d. What lessons did you learn as child?
    e. Your education
    f. Parent's educational background
2.  What were your career goals growing up?
3.  Describe your work history
4.  Describe your pathway to academic leadership
5.  To what would you attribute obtaining your current position as an academic leader?
6.  Please describe your current academic leader position?
7.  How long have you held a position in academic leadership?
8.  Describe your style of management.
9.  Describe the specific academic programs that you manage.
10. If you were not an academic leader what do you think you would be doing?


Interview #2

11. Tell me about how you felt on the first day of the job.
12. How does a routine day in your workweek play out?
13. How do you juggle work/family/social activities?
14. How have you remained in the profession?
15. What significant people stand out to you personally? Professionally? Why?
16. Were there any significant life-changing experiences that occurred along the way to becoming an academic leader?
17. What are your greatest challenges professionally? How did the challenges make you feel?
18. What issues, if any, are you confronted with as an African American and a woman in academic leadership?
19. Were you given advice? If so what kind of advice were you given?
20. Describe the impact of having a mentor or not having a mentor has made on your leadership abilities.


Interview #3

21. What insights have you gained about African American women in leadership?

22. What changes have you seen in the system throughout your tenure?
23. How have you adjusted to the changes?
24. How did the changes impact you?
25. Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give African American female academic leaders?
26. Where do you see yourself going in the future?
27. How do you feel about your journey in academic leadership?
28. What are your greatest successes professionally? How did the successes make you feel?
29. What warning would you give to future AAFALs?
30. Would you like to add something to the discussion that has not been addressed?