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Institutional Factors Contributing to the Under-representation of African American Women in Higher Education: Perceptions of Women in Leadership Positions

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INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE UNDER-
REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

by

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(Under the Direction of Brenda Marina)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the lived experiences of African

American women who have obtained senior leadership positions in Predominantly White Higher

Education Institutions. Data were collected through open-ended, phenomenological-oriented

interviews with 12 African American women holding senior level positions in both academic and

student affairs in the north and southeast parts of the United States. This study focused on the

perceived institutional barriers that have contributed to the under-representation of African

American women in higher education senior administration and strategies that were used to

overcome perceived barriers. Critical Race Theory was used as a lens to explore the perceived

barriers and experiences of African American women in academe. The qualitative data from this

study yielded the concepts of leadership preparation, perception of race and gender, institutional

challenges, and personal strategies for success. Ultimately, this study will further discussions

regarding how higher education institutions can be more proactive in preparing and promoting

qualified African American women in senior administrative positions.

INDEX WORDS: Under-Representation, Educational Leadership, Critical Race Theory, Race,
Gender

1

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IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Lennis and Susie Williams. Especially to my mother who has always been the bedrock of our family and my biggest inspiration as a child and young girl. You instilled within me the spirit of perseverance and faith. It is because of you, I am the strong woman I am today. Because of your unfailing love and spiritual example, I am assured of who I am and whose I am in Christ Jesus.

I also want to acknowledge my spiritual father, Bishop Virgil L. Badie Sr. for your prayers, love, encouragement, and believing in me when I didn't believe in myself. It is through your teaching that I have been able to build upon the foundation and hold fast to all the promises of God.

I want to express sincere appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Brenda Marina, my "guardian angel" who has taken me under her wings and guided me through this process that I could have never realized on my own. You took a frightened young woman, scared of the process that lie before her, and guided her into accomplishing something great and teaching her something about herself in the process. You took a dream that I had and helped it to become a reality. To, Dr. Marian Tabi, my friend, thank you for your time, support, encouragement, and warm smiles that made me feel like this task was possible. You have been a great inspiration and your knowledge and presence has made this process much more bearable. I also want to thank Dr. Hsiu-Lien Lu, a great asset to anyone's dissertation committee. Your insight into methodology has taught me much about the process. Thank you for your time and advice in helping me produce the best study possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

8

APPENDICES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In a U.S. News and World Report (2009) article, "Investing in Diversity," a Harvard Business School professor, David Thomas, stated that minorities have a smaller chance, over a 20 year period, in obtaining the upper echelon as compared to an equivalent White person who began at the same time in any field of choice. This is grim news for the countless minorities entering higher education institutions and seeking to obtain a piece of the "American Pie." Similarly, higher education institutions are viewed as a microcosm of society, reflecting the larger world in which we live (Burke et al., 2000; Zamani, 2003). Even the institutions that promote equal access to education have failed to diversify their own senior administrative structure to reflect the changing face of a global society by creating a more diverse workforce representative of the entire student body population (Crawford & Smith, 2005).

There is a gross underrepresentation of women of color, particularly African American women, holding senior administrative positions in higher education (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). If African American women are gauging their success and mobility by the faces that they see at the top, they soon become discouraged and less loyal to the institution as their hopes of ascension are diminished. Although all women of color in the academy may face some of the same barriers of inclusion and lack of support, African American women in particular will be the focus of this research. African American women have a history of struggle and perseverance for education and

opportunity; however their earning potential and opportunities for senior leadership positions have been a slow climb.

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the phenomenon of African American women who rise to executive levels of leadership in higher education. In this study, African American women who currently hold senior administrative titles in predominantly White institutions (PWI's), in both academic and student affairs, were interviewed. Focus was given to senior administrators in academic affairs because they are typically considered more influential, holding the greatest political power, for the most part, and where there is the greatest under-representation of African American women (Patton et al., 2007). Insight gained from these women was helpful in providing effective strategies for success for other African American women who aspire to senior level positions while assisting their efforts in navigating the institutional factors which may impede their success in higher education. Consequently, universities striving to create more inclusive and diverse campus cultures can continue systemic and long-term change to overcome historical and institutional barriers through diversifying their senior administration structure.

Background

Women of all walks of life have faced some of the same barriers of marginality and discrimination which seems to be the thread that binds them all as one. Historically, educating women was met with strong resistance by White men, specifically early on in America's colleges and university systems (Holmes et al., 2007). Gender discrimination was rampant which created barriers for all women in their pursuit of equality. In

proportion to men, women are likely to be hired less frequently, promoted at a slower

pace, disproportionate in lower ranked positions in higher education and are more likely

to be the lowest paid (August & Waltman, 2004). Similarly, women faculty view

themselves, more often than not, as "outsiders," being sensitive to the isolation and

constraints placed upon them by the current structure of academe or because of

responsibilities held within their own personal environments (Gibson, 2006). Despite

these barriers to inclusion, White women have made significant gains in academia,

coming only second to their White male counterparts holding specific academic ranks

(Holmes et al., 2007).

On the other hand, even after over fifty years have passed since the most

important legislation, Brown v. Board of Education of 1954, that attempted to level the

playing field for African Americans as a whole, African American women continue to

face racial inequities beyond the barrier of gender (Nichols & Tanksley, 2004). African

American women, as a separate group, face both racial and gender disparity which posits

a different dynamic in their quest to succeed in higher education as their legitimacy as a

"professional scholar" is questioned by other faculty members (Mahtani, 2004).

The landmark decision of Brown v. Board of Education of 1954 changed the way public

education was structured in the United States and outlawed racial segregation during a

time where separate but equal dominated (Jean-Marie, 2006). These were very harsh

years for people of color, in particular, African Americans. African Americans persisted,

however, despite the cruel treatment they endured to prevail over social injustices and

discrimination, while fighting against the institutionalized practices and structure that

created barriers to their advancement (Jean-Marie, 2006). They saw educating themselves as a way to uplift their race, for they believed that if they could gain knowledge, they would have access to power needed to gain respect and wealth (Crocco & Waite, 2007; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Education was viewed as the ideal for achieving parity both socially and economically (Mabokela & Green, 2001). Considering the broad view of all people of color, African American women had a different level of experiences and historical oppression that they had to overcome, both gender and race (Jean-Marie, 2006).

The history of African American women details a past of struggles and oppression that resulted from a history of slavery and denial of access to education (Mabokela & Green, 2001). African American women were not seen as a means to contribute financially to their households but as a supporter for the family (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). As a consequence, the women were taught to be domesticated and caretakers of their children and husbands (Mabokela & Green, 2001). Despite the education that she would obtain, her primary profession was to be solely dedicated to raising her family (Crocco & Waite, 2007). Thus, professional success placed an undue burden on the backs of African American women as they were wedged between their responsibilities to their families and their own personal success and desire for leadership (Crocco & Waite, 2007). Despite the steady gains that African Americans have made, as well as their struggles to be accepted in society, their voices are still not heard within the sometimes-cold nature of the academy (Holmes et al., 2007; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001; Valverde, 2003). According to Valverde (2003), African American women

16

administrators are constantly challenged because they are viewed as inferior; are over scrutinized by peers, superiors, and students; are assumed to be affirmative action hires and thus are less qualified; are considered tokens; have to work harder than others in order to gain respect; and are denied access to sources typically given to someone in that position (p. 108).

In looking at the current state of affairs for African American women in academe, they continue to face opposition in attaining equity in university administration, isolation, and often demoralization (Holmes et al., 2007). Institutional Factors in Higher Education for African American Women Black and Rothman (1998) stated, "Representation is the foundation of American democracy, so issues of who acquires and maintains power in politics and society are fundamental" (p. 116). In higher education, governance boards (Valverde, 2003) and senior administrators are considered key players in determining the institution's policies and programs (Williams, 1989). Not only do they drive policies, but they also help create the image we see of the academic culture through the promotion of their institution. Governance boards help set the culture as the way things are done in higher education institutions (Bolman & Deal, 2003). In examining representation in higher education, the majority of leaders in administration are both White and male (Black & Rothman, 1998; Trower, 2002). University organizational structures must seek out new opportunities to establish a new vision of institutional leadership that focuses on making connections that exist within their organizational culture and allocate influence and power more equitably (Patton et al., 2007). In order for institutional policies and programs to be reflective of the entire student body, there must be an equitable

representation of African American women in positions of power where policies and programs are being created.

African American women have cited the dominant mainstream institutional culture of higher education as being a major barrier to the lack of upward mobility. Mabokela (2003) characterized culture as the "norms, values, and beliefs that have strongly influenced how 'minority-status' groups are treated by their majority counterparts" (p. 132). The author also asserted that since the majority is instrumental in creating and modeling work norms, behaviors, and the climate of the organization, women of color have limited opportunities to affirm their own beliefs. As a result, African American women find themselves assimilating in order to discover support systems and not feel isolated or ostracized by the majority culture on predominantly white campuses (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). These women experience hardships because senior administration held primarily by the majority does not acknowledge the progression of their culture that is taking place within the institution when minority professionals are included (Alfred, 2001). Alfred (2001) also noted that "Black women's entry into White academic institutions result in new patterns of interactions as a result of their different values, assumptions, and cultural orientations" (p. 110). Problems arise when the values that these women share are not seen as significant and when they feel compelled to adopt the culture of the majority while denying their own culture (Alfred, 2001). Generally, African American women have tried to avoid controversial topics and would only talk about what they perceived as conversations of interest to White people (Prosper, 2004). A report done by Charisse

18

Jones and Kumea Gooden (2003) demonstrated that 79% of the African American women that were surveyed felt that in order to gain acceptance by Whites, their mannerisms had to be toned down or they had to alter the way in which they spoke. African American women confronting the traditions of higher education institutions would often have to hide their "inner selves" while displaying a carefully measured frame of "position, responses, and personae" (Crocco & Waite, 2007). Therefore, African American women must confront the power of the institution by engaging in reflection and dialogue on their experiences within the academy.

Factors Leading to Advancement and Success

Significant barriers are often faced by African American faculty and administrators on predominantly White campuses (Crawford & Smith, 2005). The authors asserted that barriers such as "isolation, loneliness, and racially motivated victimization inhibit their academic success and tenure" (p. 52). Research has revealed that mentoring is a factor leading to advancement and mobility in personal development, employment and success in education (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Holmes et al., 2007). However, it is not enough to just recruit more qualified African Americans in administrative positions without substantive programs in place to retain them. The concept of mentoring in the educational area was first introduced through the research of Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978). A longitudinal study conducted by these researchers demonstrating the significance of the mentoring connection in young men's adulthood findings lead to the following conclusions:

- Mentoring was viewed as crucial for enhancing an individual's skills and intellectual development;

- Using influence to facilitate an individual's entry and advancement

- Welcoming the individual into a new occupational and social world and acquainting the individual with its values, customs, resources, and role players;

- Providing role modeling behavior (Levinson et. al, 1978).

The study also revealed that the most essential role of a mentoring/mentee relationship was to;

support and facilitate the realization of the Dream…believing in him, sharing the youthful Dream and giving it his blessing, helping to define the newly emerging self…and creating a place in which the young man can work on the Dream (pp. 98-99).

Extant literature has suggested a direct correlation between mentoring African American women in academe and their success in higher education (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Holmes et. al, 2007; Patton, 2009; Nichols & Tanksley, 2004). Conclusions were drawn from studies conducted by Mabokela and Green, 2005; Holmes and Terrell, 2004; and Danley, 2003, attributing a major benefit of mentoring being career advancement and mobility (Holmes et al., 2007; Patton, 2009). A study conducted by Dixon-Reeves (2003) examined the experiences of recently graduated African American doctorate recipients who had experienced some form of mentoring positively correlated it with career enhancement.

Another study, investigated African American women who had not been "mentored" by an administrator in higher education (Crawford & Smith, 2005). The qualitative study revealed that respondents felt that their leadership ability was not cultivated through nurturing relationships rather only educated and trained and thus their respective higher education institutions had not capitalized on their talents. And, while there is overwhelming research that supports the positive correlation of mentoring for African American women's success in obtaining leadership roles, barriers exist with regards to the number of mentors available to meet the demands African American women desiring this relational tool.

Theoretical Framework for Exploring the Experiences of African American Women Administrators in Higher Education

Although most traditional theories were created by the dominant majority and do not take into account the environmental, societal, and developmental factors of African American women, one theoretical construct has been identified that addresses the specific experiences of African American women. This theory is addressed for its plausible utility in helping to re-shape the organizational culture within academe. Critical Race Theory (CRT) was explored as a lens in which to capture the experiences of African American women in higher education. Black, Latino, and Asian legal scholars created CRT to examine the connection between law and race and to further clarify issues within society such as the failure of civil rights legislation and have since been extended to address areas in education and woman's studies (Patton et al., 2007). This theory emphasizes that "there should be an overt color-conscious effort to reduce racist acts in

our society" (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 22). The methods used in critical race theory raise the level of awareness of marginalized groups to their exposure to microaggressions, creation of counterstories, and development of counterspaces (Patton et al., 2007). It is important to explore the methodology of critical race theory as well as its significance to the formulation in the creation of institutional policies that is conducive to a more inclusive organizational culture in higher education.

Exposure to microaggressions are pervasive for African American women, they consist of "conscious, unconscious, verbal, nonverbal, and visual forms of insults directed toward people of color" (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 23). The author noted that these types of covert racial acts are very hard to investigate in institutional settings but can be a great deal of anxiety for those who experience this type of racial oppression. Critical race theory also examines the internal factors affecting educational organizations and how institutional policies have adversely impacted the hiring, retention, and promotion of women of color in senior level administration.

The problems that African American women face in the larger society with equal representation in senior administrative positions also remain true in higher education. However, the responsiveness to change or challenge traditional roles within their own organizational system, by providing opportunities for qualified African American women, are far from progressive. The higher education institutional system, in its most basic form, is set up to provide quality education and open doors of opportunity for all students who desire to serve, lead, and achieve success. Today, diversity remains an important issue in academe as Colleges and Universities are recruiting and retaining a

more diverse student body. Therefore, an absence of African American women in senior level administration could pose a problem for colleges and universities seeking to diversify their student bodies.

Problem Statement

This study will add to the scarce body of research detailing how African American senior administrators have been able to navigate the obstacles faced in academe, as well as prevailed, using Critical Race Theory as a framework for identifying institutional contributors in higher education. Identifying institutional factors that lend to the under-representation as described by African American senior administrators should pose as valuable information for rising African American women desiring to hold these positions. Because African American women are more underrepresented in leadership positions than any other group, their voice remains unheard when it comes to carrying out or formulating policy that can create sustainable organizational change (Crawford & Smith, 2005).

Strategies given by African American women on their success in attaining and maintaining leadership positions could prove valuable for higher education organizations. Although mentoring has been cited as one useful strategy in facilitating upward mobility and success for African American women, research indicated that there are not enough mentors for every African American female to help guide their career path (Patton, 2009). Additional approaches are needed to inform aspiring African American middle managers in higher education and students in graduate preparation programs of potential pitfalls as well as successful strategies for achieving and thriving in leadership positions.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the institutional barriers, as observed and experienced by African American women in higher education, that have impeded the success and mobility in obtaining senior administrative positions while providing useful strategies that inform aspiring African American women who desire senior administrative positions in higher education.

Research Questions

The research questions have been developed to mirror the Critical Race theoretical framework by utilizing the methodology of this theory to give voice to this specific marginalized group of African American women through their narratives of perceived barriers to advancement in higher education as well as strategies used to overcome perceived barriers. To gain a deeper insight into the challenges that African American women face in higher education, this study has one overarching research question and two sub-questions: What perceived institutional barriers contribute to the under-representation of African American women in higher education administration?

- How has perceived barriers impeded successful advancement in obtaining leadership positions?

- What strategies have been used to overcome perceived barriers to higher education administration?

Gaining insight into the experiences that African American women senior administrators have faced in their quest to obtain leadership positions in higher education gives special meaning to the researcher as the aspirations of the researcher is to one day obtain a leadership position in higher education.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study to the environment of higher education and society in general would prove useful for African American women who desire leadership positions. In addition to addressing the lived experiences of African American Women, the researcher attempts to contribute to the extant literature by examining the perceptions these women attribute as institutional barriers within higher education and successful strategies that were used to plot a course for leadership attainment as it relates to perceived institutional barriers. The research may generate a broad scope of strategies utilized beyond that of mentoring as research is already clear as to both the success and limitations of this approach (Mabokela & Green, 2001; Holmes et al., 2007; Patton, 2009).

Information obtained in this study has provided invaluable tools that may help all women of color, in general, and African American women specifically in middle management roles or graduate preparation programs persist in their pursuit of leadership positions in academe. The strategies generated by African American women currently in leadership positions will assist women in navigating the barriers in higher education through the use of meaningful accounts of lived experiences.

This study has personal significance to the researcher as well. The researcher has previously worked in a predominantly white higher education institution in a middle management position with the aspiration of attaining a leadership position. Furthermore, the non-existence of African American women in leadership positions have impeded the researcher's desire for a supportive professional network or mentor conducive to

providing strategies to overcome barriers to higher education leadership that go beyond the scope of advanced education and job experience.

Method

The researcher intends to employ a basic qualitative research design that will add to the limited qualitative data to strengthen and support recommendations for African American women's success in higher education. According to Patton (2009), additional research needs to be conducted within the realm of higher education to better ascertain African American women's obstacles as well as their aspirations. A one-size-fits-all approach for addressing the challenges that affect African American women in higher education will only intensify the problems of underrepresentation (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Qualitative data will be used to obtain a deeper phenomenological view of participants' experiences (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). This will allow the researcher to gain in-depth insight, in the participants own words, describing the perceived barriers as well as the strategies used by the participants to overcome obstacles and obtain success.

Participants

A sample of African American women in predominantly White higher education institutions holding senior level titles (i.e., Dean and higher) in both academic and student affairs will be interviewed. Only women who have held these titles for at least 3-5 years were interviewed as they were considered well enough established in their positions to contribute information relevant to the research. Participants who are affiliated with the Association of Black Women in Higher Education (ABWHE) were identified to participate in the study. ABWHE has been an advocate for and celebrant of the

accomplishments of Black women in higher education for more than two decades. Part

of the mission of the Association of Black Women in Higher Education (ABWHE) is to

promote the intellectual growth and educational development of Black women in higher

education and to seek to eliminate social barriers that impede Black women in higher

education achieve their human potential (www.abwhe.org). The Association of Black

Women in Higher Education (ABWHE) consists of both a National and a Regional level.

The National level seeks to provide a set of networks and a variety of resources that

promote professional development and advocacy for a greater presence in the academy.

Currently, the association has six chapters nationwide that serves as a forum to help

develop strategies targeted at meeting the needs of their constituency. Other National

organizations such as the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), which

is the nation's premiere non-profit organization devoted to furthering the academic

success for the nation's children - particularly children of African descent- will be

utilized to provide a listserv of potential participants for this study as well

(www.nabse.org). The NABSE organization has an outreach of more than 10,000

educators which include teachers, administrators, superintendents, as well as institutional

and corporate members. Participants were also identified through various networking

groups outside of NABSE and ABWHE who meet the sampling criteria, however, can

provide relevant information for the purpose of this research. According to Gall, Gall, &

Borg (2007), purposive sampling was used to select the African American women

available to participate in this study. The sampling provided the researcher with leaders

at predominantly White higher education institutions who can provide pertinent

information about the underrepresentation of African American women while generating

strategies used to assist their professional advancement in higher education (Gay &

Airasian, 2000). These participants were selected based on their positions at higher

education institutions and willingness and ability to participate in the study.

Participants were selected by voluntary participation. A letter was sent to the

President of the selected associations introducing my research and requests for consent to

utilize participants affiliated with the association in my data collection. The first

interviewee was selected based on their willingness and capacity to participate in the

study. Based on the criteria given, additional participants were solicited through a

snowball sampling method, in which each subject interviewed were asked to suggest

additional women who meet the sampling criteria for interviewing. The snowball

sampling method is based on the idea that members of a particular population, who might

be particularly difficult to locate, know one another, and therefore can provide the

researcher with additional members of that target population (Creswell, 2009). As Patton

(2002) describes, "the chain of recommended informants typically diverge initially as

many possible sources are recommended, then converge as a few key names get

mentioned over and over" (Patton, 2002, p. 237). A qualitative sample of at least 12

senior level African American women who hold administrative positions from Dean level

and higher in both Academic and Student Affairs were interviewed. Given the purpose

of the study and in an effort to adequately answer the research questions, Merriam (2009)

suggests that the minimum size of the sample provides for "reasonable coverage of the

phenomenon" (p. 80). Therefore, by purposeful sampling using the snowball technique,

the cases that are selected would prove both "information rich and illuminative" (Patton, 2002, p. 40).

Data Collection

To understand how the participants make meaning of the institutional barriers that they face, a basic interpretive qualitative study was utilized. According to Merriam (2009), the data collected through interviews were analyzed to determine themes and patterns that intersect the data. The selected organizations as well as the snowball sampling criteria were used to identify 12 executive leaders to voluntarily participate in the interviews. The organizations selected, ABWHE and NABSE, boast that part of its mission is to develop African American professionals to assume leadership positions as well as increase their own aspirations and presence in education leadership. Therefore, this research will strengthen participants' willingness to participate in this study as part of the researchers' intent is to identify strategies that will assist African American women in their quest for higher education leadership positions. The format for the interviews were one-on-one via telephone and semi-structured allowing the interviewee the ability to go into depth with explanations of questions being asked. The researcher's guided questions (see Appendix D) were used to structure the interview followed by questioning more deeply with open-ended questions to gather additional information. Interviews took place at the interviewee office or another closed, private space that the interviewee authorized. The interviews were no more than two hours in length and each session was tape recorded. The interviews were transcribed by a trained third-party, analyzed, and

coded by the researcher. Coding allows the researcher to be systematic and creative in

identifying, developing, and relating concepts (Creswell, 2009).

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2009), "the process of data analysis involves making

sense out of text" (p. 183). The researcher reviewed the data transcribed from the

interviews to identify themes and patterns between participants. In an effort to validate

the data, the researcher went through a series of ongoing interactive processes in an effort

to interpret the "bigger picture" of the data. It also will allow the researcher to identify

conditions, interactions, consequences, inter-related connections, and/or linkages between

concepts. These concepts were used to assist in answering the research question and sub-

questions.

Delimitations and Limitations

For purposes of this study, the researcher utilized the women through personal

contacts created through networking opportunities as interview participants. Even though

the organizations include a wide array of African American women in various capacities

in higher education, some women may have been excluded due to their non-affiliation in

the organization or being unknown to the researcher. The information obtained in the

interviews will not be generalizable to the target population; however, the results may be

transferrable to populations comparable to the demographic profiles of the sample.

A limitation of this study was that all of the women who were interviewed held

Doctoral degrees in Education. Therefore women from other disciplines were not

included in the study to provide their perceptions through their lived experiences into the

barriers faced and strategies used to overcome perceived barriers. The women that were chosen and agreed to participate in the study were located on the East coast region of the United States. Thus, the use of a sample from other regions or geographical locations was not included to participate in this study which may limit the personal experiences recorded. Future research is also needed to expand upon the under-representation of African American women holding leadership positions in PWI's and how critical race theory informs this phenomenon.

Definition of Terms

Black or African American: American of African or Black descent.

Critical Race Theory: Theoretical framework that was generated by scholars of color who study law and legal policies and who are concerned about racial subjugation in society. Research by these scholars revealed that persons in power designed laws and policies that were supposed to be race-neutral but still perpetuated racial and ethnic oppression (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Higher Education Senior Administration: For the purpose of this study, Higher Education positions such as Dean, Vice President, Associate Provost, Provost or President titles will be considered.

Mentoring: Factors leading to upward mobility in employment, success in education, and personal development (Crawford & Smith, 2005).

Organizational Barriers: Issues such as racism, sexism, homophobia, climate, isolation, salary issues, coping strategies, and institutional ethos, and the impact of these and other

issues on the lives and work of African American women will be considered (Patitu &
Hinton, 2003).

Predominantly White college or university: An institution that has been historically,
traditionally, and predominantly White and where the majority of the faculty and
administration are white, even if the student body has a large number of people of color
(Williams, 1989).

Under Representation: Inadequately depicted or portrayed in senior level
administration in higher education institutions.

Summary

The gross under-representation of African American women in senior leadership
positions in higher education is very apparent today. Although there has been a small
increase of African American women administrators in higher education, the literature
suggests that both race and gender are formidable forces in the lives of these women. In
looking at the issues surrounding racial and gendered stereotypes, an understanding of the
variables that persist in organizations that restrict the upward mobility of African
American women in leadership can be ascertained. Only through an understanding of the
barriers can effective strategies be developed and implemented to prepare aspiring
African American women to obtain leadership positions in higher education.
According to Collins (2000), the understanding of the interconnectivity of both gender
and race must resound from the voices of the lived experiences of these women. Critical
Race Theory will provide a platform in which African American women can begin to
make their voices heard through the use of sharing their stories and experiences in

academe. This creation of counter-stories is significant in understanding both the

struggles and the triumphs of navigating the higher education institutional system.

However, the gap in the literature resides in the scarce body of literature that explores the

institutional barriers which contribute to the under-representation of African American in

leadership positions while exploring the strategies used to obtain successful leadership

positions.

This study employed a basic qualitative design examining the lived experiences of

African American women holding senior administrative leadership positions. A sample

of 12 African American women were selected through purposive sampling techniques

with data being collected through semi-structured interviews utilizing open-ended

questions. Data was reviewed using a basic interpretive model and went through a series

of coding to allow for the identification of concepts in an effort to answer the research

and sub-questions. The following chapters will provide an introduction to the history of

African American women in higher education with progression to theoretical

applications, perceived barriers to advancement, and factors impacting success in higher

education advancement.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of the literature relates to the experiences of African-American women senior administrators at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) of higher education and examines the institutional contributors that impact their advancement. The purpose of this literature review is to contribute to the answer of the overall research question, "What perceived organizational barriers contribute to the under-representation of African American Females in higher education administration?"

Much of the literature on African American women in higher education focuses on the challenges and experiences they face within the realm of academe. The first section is a discussion of the history of African American women as it pertains to their quest for social progression through education. This is followed, respectively, by a comprehensive look at the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory as a lens to explore the African American women's exposure to microaggressions that lend to their under-representation. Additionally, how institutional factors adversely impact their success of obtaining leadership positions in higher education will also be discussed. The chapter concludes with detailed accounts of institutional barriers African American women have faced which have impeded their success in higher education advancement.

History of African American Women in Higher Education

Reviewing the historical perspective of the oppression that African American women have faced both in society and education is paramount in understanding their struggle. African Americans have always placed a high value on obtaining an education

(Zamani, 2003). In particular, Black women have been participating in higher education for over a century (Mabokela & Green, 2001). However, the African American woman's place has been traditionally preceded by "White men, White women, and African American men" in standing and importance (Zamani, 2003). For their struggle to achieve proper parity was supreme for the realization of the ideal of the American dream. Although the African American woman's role in academia has been increasingly significant, since Mary Jane Patterson was the first black woman to receive her baccalaureate degree in 1862 from Oberlin College, they have rarely received recognition for their accomplishments and contributions to the realm of higher education (Patton, 2009; Sealey-Ruiz, 2007). This has sadly been the plight for most African American woman; accomplishments without recognition. However, indisputably, African American women have been an integral part of the progress and racial uplift during the Jim Crow era.

Oppression is generally viewed in the context of how it affects the oppressed (Blauner, 1972). African American women have faced oppression both socially and racially. Social oppression is a dynamic during the twentieth century which primarily affected finances, opportunity, and entry; however the black community continued to pursue education and schooling as high priorities of importance (Crocco & Waite, 2007). During the time of racial segregation, known as Jim Crow, Black women generally entered spaces designated, "for the public", only to serve Whites (Cardwell, 2010). Yet, they persisted as they saw education as a means of advancement. The feeling of inferiority forced upon them by slavery merely birthed an intense desire to propel themselves out of their condition through receiving an education (Crocco & Waite,

2007). The 1950s and 1960s were witnessed by expanding opportunities and upward

social mobility for Black women, however, those opportunities weren't without a price

(Higginbotham, 2001). While, "access, opportunity, and funding" were tremendously

limited, "education and schooling" continued to be a high priority into the twentieth

century (Crocco & Waite, 2007, p. 71).

In much of the historical literature and texts, Black women was notably absent

from the narrative of women's higher education (Crocco & Waite, 2007; Jean-Marie,

2006; Mabokela & Green, 2001). Mabokela and Green (2001) went on to assert that to

effectively examine the Black woman's role in higher education, the traditional and

historical role of the academy must be examined as a place of scholarly dialogue.

Higginbotham (2001) noted that in the area of education, "for much of the twentieth

century, racist ideologies were the rationale for policies and practices of exclusion" (p.

12). The author also contended that within these settings, gender primarily influenced

both the treatment and educational options for black men and women. For the most part,

the Black man had better access to higher education than the Black woman

(Higginbotham, 2001).

Educational expectations for Black women were for thinly prescribed roles and

responsibilities, "ones in which the opportunities for professional and communal

leadership were circumscribed" (Crocco & Waite, 2007, p. 71). Black women were

taught a curriculum which tended to focus on "moral development, home economics, and

training Black women in ladylike behaviors" (Mabokela & Green, 2001, p. 33). Their

belief was that the mantle they carried was to "ameliorate" the effects of racism, as they

saw the future of the Black race as the primary responsibility of the Black woman

36

(Crocco & Waite, 2007, p. 73). The social responsible mantra was placed on the shoulders of African American women and their fight was to be deeply rooted in the expectations of the community and the race thus constraining the sphere of her aspirations and narrowly defining the parameters of her success and potential.

Historically, academia excluded a Black woman's entry. Despite the confinement their race and society had placed upon them, African American women fervently sought to enter the realm of higher education (Crocco & Waite, 2007). Education was seen as the key to both social and economic gain and the Black community was much more interested in educating the Black woman than the Black man (Mabokela & Green, 2001). Coleman-Burns (1989) identified multiple reasons for this assertion:

1. Historically for the Black child, it was the mother who determined the status. Education of the Black woman would raise the status of the Black child.

2. Community emphasis was on the Black woman's education because the type of employment that she could gain beyond being a domestic would more likely be of a higher and more prestigious character than that of the Black male.

3. Black women, have been viewed as the carriers of the culture. An educated woman/mother was viewed by the Black community as an asset (p. 153).

This dual role as both social change agent and scholar suggests a fundamental broadening of both personal roles and professional responsibilities. The term social change is broadly defined as, "alteration of social structures or culture over time" (Mabokela &

Green, 2001, p. 83). Based on the definition stated previously, this is what African

American women were historically commissioned to do through educational attainment.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2004) forecasted projections for the year

2050 reveal that the White, non-Hispanic, population of the United States is likely to

increase by 7 percent while the Black population is projected to increase by 71 percent.

Although the nation's population will grow increasingly diverse over the next 50 years,

educational administrators and schoolteachers are becoming progressively more White

(Young & Brooks, 2008). The nation's demographics are not only growing increasingly

diverse but African Americans are making great strides in the realm of education

attainment as well. The American Council on Education (2003, 2005) revealed that

between 1997 and 2001 college enrollment for African Americans increased to nearly 1.8

million, which grew 37 percent over that 4-year period of time with the bulk of students

being Black women. The council's report also indicated that this increase means that

there are now twice as many Black women in college as Black men. The data also

indicates that there has been a modest increase in enrollment for African American

women in graduate preparation programs and first professional programs (Zamani, 2003).

While more African American women are obtaining post-secondary and advanced

degrees at higher rates than their male counterparts, the data regarding university faculty

and administrators' advancement and growth is not so encouraging.

According to Schwarz and Hill (2010) in 1980 Blacks made up 4.3 percent of

full-time faculty within universities in the United States, and by 2003, that figure had

only risen to 5.5 percent. This means that in more than two decades (23 years) the

numbers had only gone up by 1.2 percent. But, this minute figure is illusory. Hughes

and Howard-Hamilton (2003) noted that although African Americans as a whole made up only 4.5 percent of the professoriate, Blacks made up approximately 1 percent of the faculty by predominantly white colleges and universities; historically black colleges and universities comprised the other 3.5 percent. The researcher also asserted that 27.3 percent of all faculty members in higher education institutions are women. However, 2.2 percent of that number is represented by African American women holding full-time faculty positions at higher education institutions (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). There is little debate over the fact that the number of African American women administrators have increased over the past twenty years, however, there is still a clarion call for greater inclusion of African American women in higher education administrative positions at the executive level (Simmons, 1997).

Surprisingly, greater progress has not been made for African American women in higher education administration with the steady increase of higher education attainment by these women. According to Cook and Cordova (2007), African American women earned 8 percent of associate degrees, 5.8 percent of bachelor's degrees, 6 percent of master's degrees, and 4 percent of all professional degrees. They also earned 3 percent of all doctoral degrees (Hoffer et al., 2007). Although the proportion of African American students enrolling in higher education is increasing, debates continue to persist as to the access to opportunities for persistence to graduation as African American students are not as likely to complete their degree as compared with White students (Zamani, 2003). Therefore, while progress has been made, there is continued work to be done.

African American women have had to "hurdle double barriers of gender and race" (Williams, 1989, p. 100; Mabokela & Green, 2001; Crocco & Waite, 2007). According

39

to Crawford and Smith (2005), their status in higher education can be viewed as "members of the larger society, and second, as members within their own group" (p.54). African American women appear to be at the lowest base of the social order, which enormously disadvantage them in the job market (Crawford & Smith, 2005). The author also asserted that African American women "are more underrepresented in leadership positions than any other group, especially in positions that lead to university presidential appointments" (pp. 54-55). For the most part, predominantly White higher education institutions have not been very successful in recruiting and retaining Black faculty, women or men (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). And while there has been increased attention paid to women and minority faculty regarding their advancement or employment, they appear to only be clustered in part-time temporary positions, lower ranks in the academy, or in disciplines considered feminine or traditional in nature (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Fortunately, African Americans can no longer be denied access to education; however, their struggle is now within the hard, cold, majority dominated walls of the educational system (Mabokela & Green, 2001; Valverde, 2003).

As African American women continue to make gains in advancing their education as well as headway into professional roles previously dominated by White men and women, they will continue to have a positive and substantial impact on the representation of all African American women (Jean-Marie, 2006). As Collins (2000) have cited, the means to understanding the experiences in school leadership that African American women have faced is to gain insight into the "multiplicative impact" of gender and race (p. 91) and as a result, how these obstacles impact their opportunities. Higginbotham (2001), also asserted, "as Black women enter positions of power they can foster

40

institutional changes so that future generations do not have to pay so dearly in their quest for education and occupational success" (p. 232).

There is a growing body of research surrounding the impact of African American faculty members being positively correlated to the admission and retention of African American students in higher education institutions (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Patitu and Hinton (2003) asserted that there is indeed a linkage between African American students' enrollment and persistence to degree completion and the number of African American faculty and administrators current on predominantly White campuses. Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003) also indicated that the number of African American women on campuses is extremely instrumental for the success and retention of Black women; students, faculty, and staff. The authors also asserted in their research indicating the success of Black students who attend predominantly White universities is greatly influenced by "relationships, faculty, administrators, and students" and the mere visibility of African American faculty may encourage African American students' retention. When African American and other minority faculty are seen on campus by minority students, they also believe that they can succeed and hold professional positions (Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

According to the Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003), "a major source of frustration for African American students is the lack of African American role models in visible leadership positions" (p. 97). The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) report in 2010 indicated that the representation of underrepresented groups both ethnically and racially, is disproportionately low compared with the demographics of both the undergraduates and graduate populations, some of whom are being trained for careers in

higher education. Increased educational attainment has been progressive for African American female students. However, the lack of African American women faculty and administrators still conveys a saddening message for the university's ability to hire, retain, and promote a diverse group of leaders.

Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003) maintained, higher education must be attentive to the issues that African American women face on college campuses and should not be placed into a "one-size-fits-all" approach of "black people" without giving credence to the "within-group" differences that impact them (p. 95). Although we have crossed the brink of the 21st Century, profound and lasting change is needed by stakeholders and policies created for lasting change. Guiffrida and Douthit (2010) posit that Black students are hesitant to seek help from White faculty on predominantly White campuses because they perceive the faculty to be culturally insensitive or unrealistic role models. The academy must be cognizant of the environment associated with the institution for African American women as well as their needs and experiences that they bring with them (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

According to the research, connections made between Black students and Black role models, "who have been successful in higher education can increase the self-efficacy of Black students and lead to academic success" (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010, p. 312). Young and McLeod (2001) maintained "women, more so than men, require encouragement to pursue careers in administration" (p. 484). The fervency that has been evidenced by increased enrollment at institutions of Higher Education is not maintained by African American women who persist in leadership positions. And while there has been notable "firsts" for African American women holding leadership positions, they

continue to be underrepresented in higher education leadership roles (Jackson & Harris, 2007). When higher education neglects the issues that are faced by African American women in the academy, problems are only exacerbated. These problems can stifle conversations and delay progress in the empowering and uplifting of African American women for progressive growth (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Critical Race Theoretical Framework

This study used critical race theory as a lens to explore the potential barriers and experiences of African American women in higher education and show its correlation with race and gender. Through exploring the lived experiences of African American women senior administrators, the researcher was able to capture their voices recounting their perceptions of barriers as well as strategies. The framework of critical race theory assisted the researcher in drawing conclusions associated with the under-representation of African American women in senior leadership positions by critically examining the role of race based on their experiences. Through a review of the literature, the researcher will define critical race theory, explore its historical development, and establish the application of the framework to the current inequitable representation of African American women in higher education. In addition this study will address implications for change through the shared experiences of African American women and their perceptions of barriers identified in the higher education institution.

Critical race theory is an innovative and scholarly perspective created by Black, Latino, and Asian legal scholars to address societal issues and the relationship between race and the law. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), "the critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and

transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (p. 3). Considering that racism is rooted in our everyday cultural, political, and societal structure, it is easily unidentifiable (Patton, et al., 2007). In an effort to understand the lens of critical race theory, critical pedagogy is a model which lays the theoretical framework by which social injustices are critically assessed. Critical pedagogy "is an instructional approach to teaching that employs a theoretical framework by which social injustices are critiqued" (McKay, 2010). Paulo Freire's work with the disenfranchised poor of Brazil raised awareness of societal concerns within the learner's community. Freire's usage of the critical pedagogical model mirrors the instructional teachings of CRT which act in concert to give voice to the learner. Freire encourage:

- Social action by the learner against those oppressive elements that impact the civil liberation of people,

- The learner to question the status quo, and

- Employment of the learner's voice in articulating reflection and liberatory social action. (Friere, 2000)

All of these elements are used in CRT to confront systematic forms of oppression while encouraging the learner to share their experiences and lives through meaningful conversation.

Historical Development. Critical Race Theory surfaced during the 1970s, comprised of both activists and lawyers and other scholars frustrated over the slow-moving progress of the 1960s civil rights movement. Concern was increasingly growing as the strides made in the 1960s were beginning to wane. Some of the early scholars actively engaged in the movement include the late Alan Freeman (1995), Derrick Bell

44

(1995c), Kimberly Crenshaw (1995) Richard Delgado (1995), and Patricia Williams (1992). In 1989, these scholars held the first organized conference in Madison, Wisconsin (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Critical race theory was first introduced in education in 1995 by Ladson-Billings and Tate as they sought to create a critical standpoint that parallels CRT in the legal field (Patton et. al., 2007; Yosso et al., 2004). Critical race theory (CRT) thus tries to highlight both the subjective and relational aspects of race-based oppression, as well as the structural economic conditions shaping race-based experience and possibilities. I define the original concept of critical race theory, for the purpose of this research, using Blauner's social scientists perspective to mean an examination of the "character of our society, the role of racism, and the workings of basic institutions" (Blauner, 2001, p. 13). This definition rests on four basic models by which race relations have been challenged according to Blauner (2001), and thus a CRT framework imperative.

According to Blauner (2001), the approach to the study of race relations is guided by four main thoughts. First, racial and ethnic groups are viewed in modern society as neither fundamental nor persistent elements. Second, the premise that both racism and racial oppression are not independent in and of themselves but rather have other possible determinants either economic or psychological that triggers a response. The third position is that White Americans attitudes and prejudices are the most important elements with regards to race relations. The fourth and final thought is the assumption that there are essentially no long-term disparities between Europeans and racial minorities. However, Blauner (2001) asserted that quality of entry and labor status had the most

significant impact on the cultural dynamics of minority people as every new group that entered America experienced cultural conflict.

Over time, race relations have been given considerable attention as life conditions and problems of racial minorities became a phenomenon of social structure and change. As Blacks were becoming more alert to their systematic oppression throughout the 1960s-their past history as well as their present lives, the parameters of their existence were marked by the institutional character of racism (Blauner, 2001). Feagin et al (2001) emphasized that the concern was not only with how Whites see Blacks but also how Whites see themselves. Thus, fundamental social change was beginning to threaten Whites' own interests. According to Blauner (2001), the White majority took the view of neutrality by minimizing their own color privileges and denying their own personal prejudices rather than accepting the reality of racism.

Consequently, an alternative framework was developed as European theory in an attempt to keep the study of race relations as a secondary phenomenon. Thus, the dominant perspective, within the subfield of race was discussed as: assimilation and ethnic groups, the caste-class model, the analysis of prejudice and discrimination, and the immigrant analogy, which had to be dispelled so that the thrust of social change and the movement during the 1950s and 1960s could give rise to theoretical constructs of race and race relations. According to Blauner (2001) these were the four key assumptions that denied the connection between the American racial experience and social oppression:

1. *The Assimilationist Bias.* In this view, African Americans were viewed as assimilating more often than Europeans because of the thought that they had no ethnic culture for themselves. It has since been noted that the assumption

46

of the nonexistence of culture of people of color has been repressive in its ideological point of view. Most scholars didn't consider the likelihood that rather than choose incorporation into the dominant mainstream environment, racial minorities would prefer the opportunity to create their own community institutions and cultures.

2. *Caste and Class.* The idea of this system is structured around the "castelike nature of the color line separating white and black" as well as the structure of each racial class group and their relationship. Further, there was an assumption in this approach that first, "the rigid racial order was a peculiarly rural phenomenon; second, that there was a fundamental disparity between northern and southern social structure; and third; that the North would be the spearhead of democratic racial change" (p. 18).

3. *The focus on prejudice.* The primary goal for Southern blacks during the civil rights movement was integration and equality. During this time racism was so pervasive in society; and, equality was met with enormous resistance by Whites to maintain the status quo. Social Science experts believed that reducing prejudice depended mainly on the consciousness of white majority rather than the actions of the oppressed group. However, even men with good intentions would advance racists acts and profit from it as well because of the premise that racism is institutionalized. "The processes that maintain domination-control of whites over nonwhites-are built into the major social institutions" (pp. 9-10), therefore, racial groups are restricted in participating by institutions whose procedures have become part of the bureaucracy.

4. *The Immigrant Analogy and Economic Reductionism.* This system posits that there is a similarity between European ethnic groups and the current condition of racial minorities. It discounts the impact of racism and racial oppression but rather assert that society can solve its problems internally through opportunity and progress. Economic class and poverty becomes the focus as race relations are diminished as an obstacle for oppressed groups.

According to Feagin (2001), racism is spread throughout the social fabric and a fundamental part of the culture of the United States. Using a critical race perspective acknowledges that a normal and recurring aspect that shapes our society is indeed racism (Patton et al., 2007). Race and racism must not be viewed as a figment of our imagination, but fundamental to the culture, economics, and politics of our nation (Blauner, 2001). It can also be understood that all blacks may suffer from the lingering material effects of historically institutionalized racism as Whites literally own the vast majority (nearly all) of US wealth (Jackson, 2008). In addition, the very notion of "whiteness" can be understood in this environment as synonymous with merit, goodness, and social value or cultural capital (Jackson, 2008). This kind of institutionalized racism will continue in higher education and elsewhere if there are not any official affirmative sanctions in place to level the playing field. Consequently, the prevalence of racism is felt almost on a daily basis for most people of color, which largely makes it invisible (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Furthermore, other class and gender-based theories do not account for the myriad of differences in educational achievement (Patton et al., 2007). However, because of the everyday presence of racism, the difficulty lies in the concrete attempts to address or heal the problem.

In the field of education, scholars in areas such as social sciences, humanities, and education have "theorized, examined, and challenged the ways in which race and racism shape schooling structures, practices, and discourses" (Yosso et al., 2004). Five tenets of critical race theory have been identified by Solórzano which will guide the basis of this research.

1. *Intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination*: CRT starts from the premise that race and racism are central, endemic, permanent, and a fundamental part of defining and explaining how U.S. society functions.

2. *Challenge to dominant ideology*: CRT challenges White privilege and refutes the claims that educational institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity.

3. *Commitment to social justice*: CRT's social and racial justice research agenda exposes the "interest convergence" of civil rights gains in education and works toward the elimination of racism, sexism, and poverty, as well as the empowerment of people of color and other subordinated groups.

4. *Centrality of experiential knowledge*: CRT recognizes the experiential knowledge of people of color as legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination. CRT draws explicitly on the lived experiences of people of color by

49

including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, chronicles, and narratives.

5. *Transdisciplinary perspective*: CRT extends beyond disciplinary boundaries to analyze race and racism within both historical and contemporary contexts (Yosso et al., 2004, pp. 3-4).

The concept of *centrality of experiential knowledge* is one of the primary tenets that will be linked in this study through exploring the lived experiences of African American women in higher education. The ideology of critical race theory recognizes that the detailed accounts that these women have experienced are fundamental to both the understanding of race relations and how they impact marginalized groups. The purpose of this literature review was to examine what has been written about the phenomenon of African American women being under-represented in senior administrative positions in higher education and how institutional contributors lend to their under-representation. Therefore, the research questions were developed to further understand and explore the African American women's perspective of the experiences of their journey to obtaining a leadership position in predominantly White institutions.

Researchers have also made the argument that the stories come from a different frame of reference for persons of color. These voices, so dissimilar from those of the dominant mainstream culture, should be heard and shared (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Tate, 1996). However, the experiences of African American women have all too often been viewed through the lens of Black men or White women (Patton, 2009). Patton (2009) purported that while they do share commonalities in experiences with both their male counterpart and White women, they hold an individualized, yet shared viewpoint

50

with other African American women that separates them from the other two groups. This "membership in an oppressed racial group means confronting ideological and structural limitations throughout their lives to achieve specific goals. If they did not accept these external limitations, then it was incumbent upon them to develop a perspective to challenge the dominant cultural influences that shaped those limitations" (Higginbotham, 2001, p. 232).

Patton et al. (2007) asserted that CRT could prove helpful in uncovering and exposing racism in its multiple variations in the realm of higher education. CRT is used in this research to critically examine the role of race and racism as it is applied to the experiences of African American women administrators. Therefore the research questions were developed through an extensive review of the literature, using critical race theory as a framework to investigate the effects of both race and gender on the under-representation of African American women in higher education administration. CRT dispels the myth of meritocracy which assumes that all individuals are on an even playing field and has access to the same opportunities and success (Zamudio et al., 2011). It moves beyond an individualistic focal point, minimizes the hierarchical power structures within society, and respects the realized socio-political struggles of marginalized groups (Patton et al., 2007). By adding voice to experiences, African American women begin to regain power as their perspectives are largely omitted or misrepresented from the context of scripted history.

Regardless of the inequalities in our society, education has always been viewed as the great equalizer. However, what has not been taken into account was that increased education, strong work ethic, intelligence, drive, and aptitude did not necessarily translate

in increased opportunity for advancement and success. The problems of inclusion and access continue to be prevalent for African American women as they pursue professional advancement in higher education institutions. CRT challenges the dominant mainstream constructs of race in our society perpetuated by White-dominated cultures and offers an alternative model for African American women through exploring the challenges and barriers they face in Academe.

These women are also given the opportunity to articulate their experiences through safe spaces where they articulate their stories in their own words which allows them to redefine self while rejecting external definitions as African American women. As Mabokela and Green (2001) asserted, "higher education requires self-discipline and awareness not only of their academic environment but of their social environment" (p. 94). Through CRT, African American women have challenged the institutional culture through counter storytelling of their lived experiences.

Institutional Barriers – African American Women Experiences at PWI's

Although African American women have made substantial gains in educational achievement since the US Supreme Court ruling of Brown vs. Board of Education (1954), they continue to be far less likely to hold senior administrative positions in Higher Education (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). While the existing literature details various barriers to representation in higher education leadership, missing from this discourse are the lived experiences and perspectives of African American women as well as strategies utilized to navigate the barriers they face (Collins, 2000).

Barriers have been identified by researchers that contribute to the under-representation in Higher Education leadership positions. According to Rossman (2000),

barriers are variables that obstruct the progression of women into leadership positions. For change to occur, the barriers that have been identified must be deemed intolerable and something has to be done to remedy the situation. Schwarz and Hill (2010) purported that minority college educators affirm that barriers such as student resistance and a difficult or biased administration as attributing to the under-representation of minority college professors.

In addition, the number of African American women on college campuses maintains a critical importance for the success and retention of "black female students, faculty, and staff" (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 98). There is also a growing body of research which indicates that African American women cite a lower level of job satisfaction due to isolation when there are few or no other fellow faculty members which caused them to feel singled out or alone in their departments (American Federation of Teachers, 2010). Consequently, Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003) cited that African American women employees feel less stressful on college campuses where there is a critical mass of other African American women. Another major barrier affecting the retention and subsequently the promotion to leadership positions for African American women is their inability to connect with mentors in their departments or disciplines (American Federation of Teachers, 2010). They cited that the connection with mentors would assist them in navigating the institutional culture and the rigorous demands that their departments or disciplines may require of them (American Federation of Teachers, 2010).

Although African American women in academe have made significant strides in obtaining limited leadership positions, the majority of those who are both qualified and

capable remain underrepresented in the education field (Jackson & Harris, 2007). While there is limited research on obstacles that African American women face in acquiring leadership roles such as the "glass ceiling and gender and race discrimination", fewer studies have investigated the institutional contributors which produce barriers to advancement (Jackson & Harris, 2007). Subsequently, women who desire leadership positions often surrender their aspirations due to the overwhelming obstacles, visible or invisible, that they face (Jackson & Harris, 2007). Therefore, it is extremely imperative for administrators and educators on college campuses to be aware of how both race and gender produces inequities.

African American women experience a double hurdle of both race and gender discrimination and are often overlooked during the selection process. In terms of institutional contributors lending to the underrepresentation of African American women in higher education, Jackson and Harris (2007) coined the term calling these "organizational barriers" as they are weaved through the fabric of the higher education structure and organization culture of academe (p. 123). These barriers include: "power within the system, hiring and promotion practices, lack of professional development, tracking women in stereotypical areas, lack of available information, attitudes toward and stereotypes of administrators, perceptions of peers and administrators, family issues, and the 'old boy network'" (p. 123).

According to Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003), African American women have to overcome significant barriers in higher education to ascend to leadership positions. The authors also asserted that their problems may arise long before they begin working toward charting a path to senior administration. They noted that scholars in

educational policy revealed that African American women must address their most important challenge of the recruitment and retention process in academe. Their concept of "critical mass" is viewed of utmost importance in addressing the recruitment and retaining of African American women in higher education.

Critical mass is defined as sufficient numbers of people from a particular group that they feel a certain comfortability level in participating in dialogue and their numbers are so that others see them as individuals and not representatives for their race (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Research conducted by Patitu and Hinton (2003) revealed that African Americans tend to be eliminated, through the use of filters, during the administrative search process which constricts the hiring pool. Unfortunately, the number of African American women faculty and in senior leadership positions continues to be very small (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). It is evident that colleges and universities must begin examining these problems to effectively recruit and retain qualified African American women in positions that are visible to other African American women aspiring to achievement and advancement in academe.

Several studies conducted by researchers have generated a list of barriers to higher education senior leadership positions as experienced and perceived by African American women. First, Williams (1989) conducted a study of the women holding administrative positions of assistant level and higher. Barriers to advancement encountered by the women surveyed comprised the institution's lack of inclusion into supportive networks and the exclusion of information. The study also revealed that the overwhelmingly majority or sixty-one percent of the respondents stated that they did not

have a mentor which appeared to be directly correlated with ambivalence toward their future (Williams, 1989).

Another study conducted by Lindsay (1994) examined barriers that hinder African American women in higher education leadership positions such as associate deans and higher focused on the perceptions of women surveyed which overwhelmingly agreed that both race and sex were influential in obstructing participation in informal networks, thus impeding their progress in obtaining executive level leadership positions. Ramey (1995) also critically examined barriers encountered by African American women senior level administrators in higher education. Factors such as racism, sexism, family issues and perception of incompetence were sighted as major contributors to the lack of progress for African American women in executive-level positions.

Another study conducted over a decade ago by Lindsay (1999) provided the perspective of four African American women executives in higher education on the climate of colleges and universities in America. Respondents stated that sexism, racism, and socioeconomic disparities were areas of alarm. Nichols and Tanksley (2004) conducted a study using thirty-nine African American women administrators who acknowledged factors such as racism and sexism as barriers to advancement. Also cited in the study was the discouragement from achieving their goals by "friends, coworkers, past employees, and other professors" (p. 178).

Patitu and Hinton's (2001) study of African American women holding administrative positions' experiences in higher education, detailed barriers and issues affecting "retention, promotion and tenure, and job performance" for those holding middle to senior-level roles (p. 79). Issues were identified such as: "racism, sexism,

homophobia, climate, isolation, salary issues, coping strategies, and institutional ethos, and the impact of these and other issues on the lives and work of African American women" (p. 79). The authors also noted that peripheral to these themes brought forth subthemes that help to define how the African American woman was affected during everyday life and work. Some of the women felt as if their presence was marginalized and thus was not part of the decision-making process within their organizations.

A fairly recent study conducted by Jackson and Harris (2007) investigated barriers to the presidency, including those institutional in the context of higher education, experienced by African American woman college presidents. The study consisted of 43 African American women presidents from 2002. These women presided over two and four year colleges and universities in both the private and public sector of traditionally White two and four year university systems and historically Black institutions. The premise of the study asserted that part of the reason that there are few women holding administrative positions in higher education in the United States can be attributed to the stereotypical attitudes society holds toward women and the idea that men are more competent than women (Jackson & Harris, 2007). The fact remains that from the previous studies, there are alarming trends in the continued under-representation of African American women in higher education senior leadership.

Mabokela and Green (2001) asserted that although African American women have made considerable gains in the academy, she continues to have hurdles and barriers that affect her development and growth within academe. In addition to the issues previously stated, Mabokela and Green (2001) also identified institutional barriers African American women have faced in higher education. These include: "curricular

issues, the climate of the environment, the need for a supportive peer culture, mentorship, role models, financial support, retention, and tenure" (p. 37). The potential fallout from the barriers that these women face is that they are compelling some Black women to exit the academy and search for opportunities elsewhere (Mabokela & Green, 2001). This saddening fact still holds true today as it did over two decades earlier when one of the earliest researchers found that out of the Black women administrators currently in the field, only a few had plans to continue to pursue senior administrative roles. Most wanted to leave higher education altogether and pursue other professional routes (Williams, 1989). According to August and Waltman (2004), "women have higher rates of attrition from the academy than men" and the rate in which women voluntarily left their position prior to tenure review was greater than two times that of men (August & Waltman, 2004, p. 178). Similarly, African American women faculty "have been part of a revolving door in higher education" (Patitu & Hinton, 2003, p. 85), as their overall level of satisfaction is very minimal. August and Waltman (2004) noted that satisfaction level was directly correlated to retention. Therefore, women who aspire to leadership positions often surrender their hopes and desire as a result of the overwhelming barriers, either visible or invisible, that they must face (Jackson & Harris, 2007).

Not only do African American women face significant barriers to success in higher education but higher education loses a viable and diverse group which brings a unique set of experiences and dialogue conducive for intellectual growth of its' students. Instead subordinate groups are pressured to conform to the White dominant culture in an effort to assimilate into mainstream society (Mabokela & Green, 2001).

Factors Impacting Success in Higher Education Advancement

While African American women have faced challenges with regard to advancement in higher education, there have also been successes that have helped to pave the road for other African American women aspiring to leadership positions in academe. Although there are a minimal number of studies detailing barriers that African American women administrators face in academe, we continue to learn increasingly more and more about the challenges that these women have faced. Despite this enlightenment of lived experiences voiced by African American women in higher education, the lack of strategies and effective responses in addressing these barriers continue to exacerbate the problem of obtaining successful leadership opportunities (Jackson & Harris, 2007). In order for African American women to have a voice in predominantly White Institutions, they must have a presence and in order to have a presence, higher education must increase its efforts to changing practices and policies to include an understanding and acceptance of both cultural and gender differences.

In an effort to increase opportunities for women who aspire to leadership positions, problems that African American women face must be identified (Harris et al., 2002). Kezar et al. (2008) noted that challenging assumptions usually forms the foundational assertion for creating equity as it is unlikely that most people knowingly treat others in discriminatory ways. Therefore, higher education must first listen to the voices and challenge its own institutional system that creates barriers and that hampers success and advancement among African American women who have historically been treated unfairly. Studies have shown that African American women have identified experiences within the academy through detailed accounts of counterstorytelling based on

59

their perceptions of the unequal treatment they have received (Williams, 1989; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Jackson & Harris). However, for the few African American women who have obtained leadership positions in higher education, their stories have also included how they coped and persisted to ascendency.

Although African American women have been largely invisible and marginalized in colleges and universities primarily holding peripheral supervisory or managerial positions, few have not allowed this to deter their interest in acquiring senior level leadership positions. Furthermore, many of them have experienced significant barriers but have learned to survive and cope in a higher education environment that has resisted their progression. This persistence has been documented by several researchers detailing accounts of their dogmatic determination to overcome both racialized and gendered barriers to leadership positions in higher education.

Impact of Mentoring. The most overwhelming strategy asserted by African American women has been the effects of mentoring being positively correlated with successful outcomes in higher education advancement. According to Crawford and Smith (2005) mentoring has been identified as "a factor leading to upward mobility in employment, success in education, and personal development" (p.52). African American women have overwhelmingly established that forming a mentoring relationship helped them achieve their career goals in higher education administration (Nichols & Tanksley, 2004). However, Patton (2009) asserted that interaction between Black students and White professors as being inadequate or having little significance.   Thus, African American mentors serve multiple purposes including providing advocacy, positive reinforcement, constructive criticism, and assistance with understanding the unwritten

60

rules of an institution, and with negotiating skills and the confidence needed to be successful (Nichols & Tanksley, 2004). Mentoring would allow African American women administrators both increased visibility and responsibility while encouraging younger African American's interest in higher education as a career path (Crawford & Smith, 2005).

The benefits of Mentoring have been linked to job satisfaction, increased pay, and career advancement as well as positive psychosocial benefits (Patton, 2009). Holmes et al., (2007) purported those aspiring administrators that partake of mentoring opportunities, either formal or informal, are more apt to persist and be successful in obtaining higher education leadership. Mentoring also plays a significant role, according to the authors, of:

> "having an institutional role model; gaining a deeper understanding of role expectations; being privy to insider information such as grant funding, research, and writing opportunities; receiving entry into networking circles; as well as simply have someone to assist with career decisions" (p. 105).

Traditionally mentoring has been framed from a hierarchical viewpoint as the person considered to be of superior rank instructs or guides the lesser experienced person. Although strong preference is given to obtaining a mentor of the same race or ethnicity, this desire is improbable for new professionals in predominantly White institutions as the number of faculty who are non-White is limited (Holmes et al., 2007). Consequently, research on career academics has shown that African Americans are less likely to experience support or helpful mentoring relationships than their White counterparts with senior colleagues (Mabokela & Green, 2001; Patton, 2009). The authors asserted that

African American women faced a major challenge of establishing a mentoring relationship or finding a faculty member who was willing to work with them even though mentoring is considered the best way to fill the knowledge gap in understanding the process conducive for success in higher education. This is due largely in part to the lack of mentoring opportunities available to African American women. For African American women, finding a mentor is difficult because it can be very time-consuming for the already limited African American faculty in higher education.

Creation of Safe Spaces. It is important for African American women to create safe spaces on predominantly White campuses to endorse their racial identities. For it allows them the opportunity to retreat to a space that they feel safe to escape the forces of repression widespread in the dominant society (Mabokela & Green, 2001). According to the authors, it is in this safe space that Black women can recreate her image that has been threatened due to her exchanges in predominantly White institutions. Burke et al. (2000) articulated that it is important for Black women to identify who they are while seeking supportive relationships in an atmosphere conducive for discussion of ideas and experiences is essential. Through the process of sharing experiences and ideas, strategies to address or challenge the oppressive affects in the academy can be formulated resulting in building confidence in the lives of African American women.

Summary

Through this literature review, the reader has been exposed to the challenges and experiences that minorities, particularly African American women, face in pursuing advancement opportunities in higher education. African American women are more under-represented in positions such as dean, vice-president, and provost in senior-level

administration (ACE, 2004). Research has revealed that African American women are concentrated more in the areas of student services, academic support, and diversity with regards to administrative positions held. As a result, these women have had to face more challenging obstacles in achieving high ranking positions in predominantly White institutions. Still, research has not been clear about how African American women (those who were successful in obtaining senior administrative positions) were able to achieve and realize their goals in spite of the barriers they faced in the academy. Through this review, mentoring has been identified as a conduit whereby some African American women positively benefited through obtaining advancement opportunities in higher education. However, the literature has also been clear as to the challenges associated with mentoring to include the lack of mentoring opportunities and time-consumption for limited and over-extended African American faculty. Critical Race Theory highlighted the societal issues while using the relationship between race and gender to provide perspective on the lived experiences of African American women who have faced barriers in the institution that have contributed to their under-representation. Through their perception, African American women have been able to share their stories as implications for change within higher education institutions. After reviewing the barriers that impeded successful ascension to leadership positions, the researcher examined strategies utilized to navigate institutional barriers to progression. This section of the literature examined the factors impacting success in higher education advancement. Through the voices of African American women who have shared their stories of perseverance, strategies such as mentoring and creation of safe spaces were identified as essential components to navigating the culture of academe. Both the benefits as well as

63

the limitations of these strategies were discussed through the lens of the literature which addressed the need for expanding existing opportunities while generating additional strategies to leadership attainment as it relates to perceived institutional barriers. The following chapter will discuss the methodology used and design employed to generate findings for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this qualitative study, the researcher explored the perceptions of African American women in leadership positions in higher education and their under-representation in senior administrative positions (i.e. Dean level and higher) while providing strategies used to navigate institutional barriers to higher education leadership. The purpose of this study was to explore the barriers that African American women have faced while aspiring to leadership positions in higher education that lends to their under-representation at predominantly White institutions. Chapter One succinctly explored the experiences of African American women in higher education and society. Also noted in Chapter One were the challenges that African American women faced in obtaining leadership positions in higher education made apparent through existing research (Alfred, 2001; Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Crawford & Smith, 2005); however, strategies that are conducive to achievement and advancement were not obvious.

Patitu and Hinton (2003) have cited factors such as institutional climate, racism, and isolation as currently impacting the African American woman's ability to navigate the education pipeline. Therefore, exploring the institutional factors that contribute to the under-representation of African American women in higher education as well as strategies used for successful advancement is vital for the upward mobility for other women of color desiring leadership positions. According to Patton (2009), there is a paucity of literature detailing the experiences of African American women in higher education and is often told

through the views of either White women or Black men, thus the African American

woman's experiences in higher education are void therefore of both race and gender.

As a result, an in-depth examination of women in higher education, chapter two is a

review of the literature from the following perspectives: (1) history of African American

women in higher education, (2) critical race theoretical framework, (3) experiences of

African American women in higher education, and (4) factors impacting success in higher

education advancement. Understanding the perspectives of African American women in

higher education leadership is crucial to gaining insight into the dynamics in which the

perceptions of barriers exist in obtaining senior leadership positions. Included in this

chapter is a discussion of the following: (1) research questions, (2) research design, (3)

participant selection, (4) data collection, and (5) data analysis. This study has one

overarching research question and two sub-questions. The overarching question for this

study is: What perceived institutional barriers contribute to the under-representation of

African American women in higher education administration? The following sub questions

will guide this study:

- How has perceived barriers impeded successful advancement in obtaining leadership positions?

- What strategies have been used to overcome perceived barriers to higher education administration?

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the institutional factors that contribute to

the underrepresentation of African American women in leadership positions, while

providing strategies used to achieve successful advancement in higher education. This study

explored the perceptions of African American women through their lived experiences in

both aspiring and obtaining senior administrative positions in predominantly White

institutions. The focus of qualitative research is on understanding the significance people

have created based on their lived experience. Qualitative research seeks to explore the

relationship between what is being studied and the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Participants' perspectives are captured by the qualitative researcher through using

techniques such as observation and interviewing while quantitative research focuses on

measuring and analyzing variables (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Answers such as how the

experience occurred and what meaning does the experience denote are sought by qualitative

researchers. Qualitative research provides a description of social phenomena as it occurs in

a natural setting.

Jackson (2004) cited that higher education literature is filled with recommendations

that provide strategies to retain and advance students as well as faculty of color, however,

there is a paucity of empirical research with practice based information for attracting,

retaining, and advancing African-American administrators of color. Thus, a void exists in

the literature that explores the phenomena of the under-representation of African American

women senior administrators and useful strategies used to obtain successful leadership

positions in higher education. This study has viewed this phenomenon through the lived

experiences of African American women senior administrators in higher education. The

phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study as the "conscious experience" of

African American women and their day-to- day life and interactions were explored

(Merriam, 2009).   In this study, the phenomenon was the under-representation of African American women in leadership positions. Thus, this study aimed to emphasize the experiences these women faced through their complete descriptions in navigating the perceived barriers to successful advancement in higher education administration. The qualitative design and phenomenological approach were appropriate for the purpose of this study as they both endeavored to focus on the perceptions of several individuals rather than a life story on one particular subject matter.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), when little is known about a phenomenon, a qualitative methods approach can be used to gain a better understanding. Qualitative research endeavors to seek out new insights by uncovering findings through lived experiences and not to verify a predetermined idea (Sherman & Webb, 2001). Additionally, phenomenology is useful in describing and understanding the lived experiences through the lens of the participant of a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). The phenomenological approach aims to define the meaning of a particular experience through the eyes of the persons who have lived the experience and moreover, are able to provide a complete description. Accordingly, transference can be applied to other individuals who have experienced a similar phenomenon parallel to the participants' experiences through the meaning and understanding that the participants have shared (Moustakas, 1994).

Participants

The participants selected for this study were African American women who are currently holding senior level positions (i.e., Dean, Provost, Vice President, and higher) in predominantly White higher education institutions in both academic and student affairs were

interviewed. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2005) reported, of the 196,324

executive, administrative and managerial staff in the nation's degree-granting institutions,

more than half, or approximately 101,101, were female. However, African Americans

comprised less than ten percent of that number or approximately 10,000 African Americans

in executive, administrative or managerial positions. Additionally, out of the 101,101

executive, administrative and managerial women in higher education, only eleven percent

was African American (*Digest of educational statistics*, 2006). For the purpose of this study

a sample size of 12 African American women holding these positions were selected due to

the in-depth nature of this study. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), no more than

14 participants should be used in qualitative studies that have an expectation of acquiring in-

depth knowledge. Although the number of African American women holding senior

administrative positions is small, participants who were affiliated with the Association of

Black Women in Higher Education (ABWHE) or the National Alliance of Black School

Educators (NABSE) were primary to be interviewed. Moreover, selected networking groups

as recommended by women from these organizations that met the sampling criteria were

also considered for interview. Only those women who have held a leadership position for at

least 3-5 years were interviewed.

The Association of Black Women in Higher Education (ABWHE) consists of both a

national membership as well as affiliation to one of the six chapters nationwide comprised of

over 300 members of scholars, staff, and students in academe. Part of ABWHE's mission is

to: "promote the intellectual growth and educational development of Black women in higher

education as they strive to eliminate racism, sexism, classism, and other social barriers that

hinder Black women in higher education from achieving their full potential"

(www.abwhe.org, 2011). Similarly, the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) was chosen for the purpose of participant selection as the NABSE's organization is devoted to creating strategies for African American professionals to assume leadership positions and influence educational policy. The NABSE organization reaches more than 10,000 distinguished educators consisting of a vast array of teachers, administrators, superintendents, corporate and institutional members (www.nabse.org). The researcher initially contacted the ABWHE and NABSE organization and was given clearance to interview potential participants who met the sampling criteria. However, once the researcher gained approval through IRB from Georgia Southern University to conduct the study, the ABWHE and NABSE associations were not accepting any requests as they were re-visiting their policies due to the large demand of research inquiries. Therefore, the researcher utilized the snowball sampling method through various networking groups recommended by higher education faculty or administrators. All of the participants met the sampling criteria and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

The participants selected for this study were considered, the experts, as they had been exposed to the institutional climate and culture of academe and had successfully navigated the obstacles to obtain senior administrative positions in higher education having held their position for at least three years. Such information from these women allowed the researcher the ability to follow the knowledge of the women's accounts from the beginning to the end of the experience. Again, the participants were selected based on their positions in their respective higher education institutions as well as their willingness and availability to participate in this study.

Instrumentation

For the purpose of this research, the researcher served as the dominant instrument for this study. Merriam (2009) asserted that one of the characteristics of qualitative research is the researcher being used as the principal instrument to help understand the phenomenon through the perception of the participant. Accordingly, the author also purported that the use of the researcher as the human instrument is ideal by means of both collecting and analyzing the data since the primary goal of qualitative research is on understanding the phenomena. An in-depth interviewing technique was used by this researcher to unveil findings leading to insights to a selected population of African American women senior administrators. Seidman (2006) purported that the purpose of in-depth interviewing is not "to test a hypothesis or to get answers to questions", but rather to garner an "interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p.3). According to Sherman and Webb (2001), in-depth interviews allow researchers to realize a complete understanding of an incident(s). Darlington and Scott (2002) asserted that in-depth interviews, through the use of qualitative research, purports that in their own experiences, people are the experts and have the ability to report how a particular phenomena or event affected them. Additionally, the authors suggested that the usage of in-depth interviews are an exceptional tool to discover how people feel or think as it relates to a given topic while enabling people to discuss events that happened previously *or have yet to occur*. As phenomenological interviews, exploring the perceptions of African American women holding leadership positions in higher education, were selected for this study, Glesne and Peshkin (1992) referenced that this type of interview would allow for more in-depth

71

data. In-depth interviewing based on the phenomenology approach uses primarily open-ended questions as the interviewers assignment is to explore the participants' responses and build upon the accounts of their experiences. Ultimately, the goal of this interviewing technique is to allow the participant to reconstruct their experience within the confines of the phenomena being studied (Seidman, 2006).

The interview questions were developed from an extensive review of the literature (see Appendix D). Through the extensive review of literature, the semi-structured interview questions were developed and tailored to answer the overarching question and the two sub-questions (see Appendix E). The interview (see Appendix D) began with tailored questions that allowed for probing questions corresponding with the participants' responses to gain a better understanding. Thus, the semi-structured interviews employed open ended questions to allow the participants the opportunity to delve deeper into their experiences. According to Patton (2002), this form of interviewing allows the interviewer the freedom to probe, explore, and ask questions over topics and subject areas that will enlighten the particular subject matter. In the previous studies conducted by Danley (2003), Dixon-Reeves (2003), Nichols and Tanksley (2004), Crawford and Smith (2005), Mabokela and Green (2005), Holmes et al. (2007), and Patton (2009) which examined the experiences of African American women in higher education, recommendations were made for future research needed to call attention to challenges faced by these women as well as their successful accomplishments in higher education. A semi-structured interview protocol was created by the researcher based on the extensive review of the literature as well as common challenges identified in the literature (See Appendix D). A demographic questionnaire preceded the

interview allowing for neutral yet descriptive data from the respondents (See Appendix C). According to Merriam (2009), it is generally a good idea to gather neutral information prior to the interview as it helps to record the history of the respondents to the phenomena being studied. Information obtained from the demographic questionnaire was used to create profiles of the individual participants for the purpose of organizing and keeping track of the participants. Seidman (2006) asserted that a primary goal of keeping track of participants through information forms aid the researchers' ability to trail the interview data to the original source as well as the ability to readily contact the participant for follow-up. The interviews were conducted during the spring and summer semester of the 2011/2012 traditional academic calendar.

The interviews began with a set of questions that allowed for probing questions to follow as it related to the participants' responses. This process provided better understanding and clarification of the information gathered in the interviews. Thus, semi-structured interviews were the format for this study as it allowed the interviewee to delve deeper into their experiences by providing descriptive accounts of the phenomenon. Interview questions that are open-ended and produce data that are descriptive in nature, generating stories about the experience are good interview questions (Merriam, 2009). The questions were developed by the researcher to address the lived experiences of African American women senior administrators and their under-representation in higher education based on the exhaustive review of literature (see Appendix D). The goal of the research questions was to gain first-hand detailed accounts of African American women detailing their experiences through a course of dialogue set primarily by the participant. According to Thompson et al.

(1989), "the ideal interview format occurs when the interview's short descriptive questions and/or clarifying statements provide an opening for a respondent's lengthier and detailed descriptions" (p. 139). To ensure that the questions used in the interview guide generated data valuable for the study, the extensive review of the literature was used to link the research questions with the interview questions (See Appendix E). The questions were designed to address the meaning of a concept, the perception of African American women experiences in higher education that are shared by the participants of the study.

Procedures

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the University Institutional Review Board (IRB) through Georgia Southern University and the required Human Subjects Protocol Request was submitted and approved (See Appendix F). Additionally, consent was secured from the participants via email sent to the African American women in leadership positions (See Appendix A). The initial request was sent to African American women in leadership positions who had been identified through the Association of Black Women in Higher Education (ABWHE) or the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) instructing those who are willing to participate to respond within seven days.

However, according to communication received from these organizations, their policies had changed after receiving IRB approval and they were no longer accepting outside research requests due to the large volume being received. Therefore, the researcher used the purposeful sampling technique through the use of networking to identify potential participants who were willing to volunteer to participate in the research. After the participants had been identified, the email request for participation along with the letter of

74

informed consent detailing the purpose of the study was sent to the participants (See Appendix B). According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling seeks "information rich and illuminative" cases which can be examined in-depth (p. 40). Since purposeful sampling is used to find prospective participants with specific characteristics, it was ideal for this study. Types of purposeful sampling include, but are not limited to, typical case sampling, convenience sampling, extreme or deviant case sampling, maximum variation sampling and chain or snowball sampling (Patton, 1990).

Through the use of purposeful sampling, the first 12 respondents who met the criteria of the selection process became participants for the study. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is the central strategy and was the method used to select participants for this study (Patton, 1990). Snowball sampling was used for this study to locate participants available to participate in the interview process. The snowball sampling approach was used in this study in which one participant who had already been identified leads to another (Seidman, 2006). Through the snowball sampling technique, participants who were willing to participate in the study were asked to refer other participants meeting sampling criteria and willing to participate in the study. Patton (2002) asserted, "by asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases" (p. 237).

Once the selected participants agreed to be a part of the study, each received a letter of informed consent denoting the purpose of the study while informing the participant of the researcher's relationship with the College of Graduate Studies at Georgia Southern University. The letters were emailed to each participant. Prior to the interviews, the

participants were asked to return the form via email giving consent to the researcher for participation in the study. Participants who had volunteered to participate in the study were asked to provide a preference of phone interview or interview via Skype by the researcher. All of the participants consented to the interview via telephone. Prior to the interview session, the researcher emailed the questions to the participants to allow time for reflection upon their experiences within academe before replying. Additionally, transferability of data which involves the use of purposeful sampling was also used for this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The participants represented a purposeful sample based on holding a senior administrative position in higher education.

Data for this study were obtained from twelve participants utilizing open ended semi-structured interviews. The interviews lasted approximately two hours and were conducted via phone interview at a time of the participants' convenience. The researcher attempted to create a warm atmosphere by being friendly, interested, and attentive so that the participant felt that she could engage in open dialogue about her experiences in obtaining a leadership position in higher education. During the interview the researcher endeavored to build rapport through collegial efforts of using common courtesies and showing respect to the participant. The researcher guided the participant through the interview guide, asking probing questions to obtain rich data for the study. In-depth phenomenological interviewing guidelines provided by Seidman (2006) were used to conduct the interviews (see Appendix D). The interviews were audio taped and transcribed for accuracy. Findings for this study were derived with data taken from the transcribed interviews that were placed into chart form to locate initial codes or themes. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a

qualitative researcher should show regularities in the data during this process to ensure the credibility of the findings. This researcher has excavated data for that purpose and has indicated regularities from participants that are the themes for the study.

Flick (1998) asserted qualitative interviewing largely refers to loosely or semi-structured, in-depth interviews which are used to encourage an interviewee to discuss a specific issue or varying topics. Kvale (1996) asserted that understanding the meaning of what the participants reveal during the interview is the primary task in interviewing. Additionally, McNamara (1999) stated that interviews are useful in an effort to retrieve the story behind the participant's experiences. The interviews were conducted in three phases as noted by Seidman (2006). The first phase allowed the researcher to focus primarily on the context and background of the participant. Participants were asked to reconstruct their experiences while allowing the researcher to better understand how their professional journey was interwoven within the context of their lives. The second phase of the interview concentrated on the details of the experiences presently lived by the participants. This phase allowed the participants to discuss their experiences as it related to their perceptions of barriers faced in academe as well as strategies they used to overcome perceived barriers for successful leadership attainment. In the third phase, participants were encouraged to reflect upon the meaning of their experiences. Allowing the participants to make meaning of their experiences gave them the opportunity to interconnect how their experiences had led them to their present status.

According to Seidman (2006), the combination of descriptive accounts of their past experiences that steered the participants to their current position, as well as giving

descriptive accounts of their present experiences, creates conditions for them to reflect upon what their present day lives. Seidman (2006) also noted that in each phase of the interview process, the participant is making meaning. During the interview process, the researcher informed the participant of the answers given and followed-up as necessary with probing questions to obtain a deeper explanation. This allowed the researcher to clarify the meaning behind the themes and concepts to minimize any misrepresentation of information made by the researcher. The researcher utilized a digital recording device to capture the participants' own words with an intentional focus to analyze the data as well as checking during the semi-structured interview to allow for clarification of meaning. The interviews were transcribed verbatim using a professional transcriptionist to maintain the accuracy and integrity of the data as well as avoiding any misinterpretation. However, analytic notes were also taken immediately after the interview sessions by the researcher for emerging concepts and themes. Tai (1999) asserted that analytic notation, a type of data analysis, lends to the process of identifying problems, the development of questions, as well as the understanding of themes and patterns in studies.

The respondents received copies of the transcript to check for accuracy two days after the transcript had been received by the researcher via the professional transcriptionist, which is also known as member checking. This allowed the participants the opportunity to review and express concerns regarding the researcher's interpretations or any potential misrepresentation of the data provided by the participants. The transcript was sent via an email attachment for convenience of the participant. Once the participant received the transcript, the researcher requested that the participants confirm their responses within one

week of receipt. The researcher corrected any misrepresentations noted by the participant prior to the next stage of the data analysis process. Due to the influential nature of the intended sample and the location throughout the United States in which they may reside, it did not afford a realistic opportunity to meet with the participants in person. Therefore, follow-up questions were asked during the interview and the participants consented to allowing the researcher the opportunity to follow-up with additional questions or clarification via email within one week of the interview.

Ethics and Validity

According to Patton (2002), in the qualitative research paradigm, trustworthiness is parallel to validity, reliability, and objectivity found in qualitative research. In measuring trustworthiness, credibility is defined as the probability that "credible findings and interpretations will be produced" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.301). Thus, the use of member checking was used to affirm that the data were credible. After the researcher conducted the participant interviews and the interviews were transcribed verbatim, the transcript was submitted to the participant to review for accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), inquiry is confirmed when participants assist in reviewing the data and clarify assertions and categories that were developed as part of the analysis of data.

Due to the nature of this qualitative study, the researcher ensured that the participant's information was kept confidential. During the interview process, as participants' divulged sensitive information about a previous or current employer or specific people, pseudonyms were used at all times. Additionally, no information is provided that will allow for the identification of the university or universities being discussed. Because

revisiting past or present experiences could cause stress, participants were made aware that any time during the process, they could terminate their participation without cause or explanation.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis involved a review of the data from the interview transcripts and identifying the emerging themes. According to Atkinson (1998), recommendations are made for researchers to suspend their theoretical assumptions and pay attention to whether the theory emerges from the participants' story expressed during the interview. The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. A basic interpretive process was employed by this researcher. Additionally, three iterations of coding were utilized for the purpose of this phenomenological study. First, the researcher analyzed the data for commonalities or patterns, from the exact words of the participants, recorded during the interview. Second, the researcher reviewed the commonalities or patterns and grouped the data into themes. Thirdly, the themes were analyzed and the dominant concepts from the data were interpreted. The participants along with the demographic questionnaire were the sources of data for the study. To ensure ethics and truthfulness of the study, participants received a transcript of their interview as a member check two days after the transcript was received.

Through the use of imaginative variation to study the phenomenon, the researcher was able to analyze the data and reach conclusions from the perspective of the participant. According to Merriam (2009), imaginative variation seeks to ascertain possible meanings through the use of the imagination. The intent of this approach is to try to obtain meaning

by looking at different roles, functions, or positions in addition to the underlying or precipitating factors which could account for reasons to what is being experienced. According to Glasner (1992), based on the researcher's insight, he or she must give meaning to the data obtained. The researcher must also aid in deciding which data are meaningful and which are not based on the professional judgment of the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Insights from this researcher were obtained through the detailed accounts of the lived experiences given by the women interviewed and their perceptions of both the barriers they faced and strategies they account for their success in academe.

Once the transcribed data had been affirmed by the participant a synopsis was created for each. A synopsis for each participant has been added to this chapter to shed insight into the experiences of the women through their journey to leadership. The researcher has employed a basic interpretive strategy with three iterations of coding for this phenomenological study. The first iteration began with the researcher analyzing the data for patterns or commonalities between participants. The transcripts were read only at first. Then the researcher read the transcripts and made notes from each participant as well as reviewed the analytic notes taken immediately after the interview. The notes consisted of statements that could later form patterns. For instance, the researcher noted when a participated stated how they felt or an occurrence that transpired on their journey in obtaining a leadership position. In the second iteration, the researcher reviewed the patterns and separated the data into themes. This process involved taking the notes from the first iteration and placing them into categories of like patterns of comments. Additionally, the researcher indicated which themes were connected to particular participants (see Table 20).

During the third iteration of coding, the researcher analyzed the themes and interpreted the dominate concepts from the data. This involved analyzing the thematic categories and condensing the data into one dominate concepts that were all inclusive in the title. The concepts identified from the data analysis were "Leadership Preparation," "Perception of Race and Gender," "Institutional Support," and "Success Strategies." These concepts will be further discussed within the chapter. The researcher again indicated the connection to the participants during this iteration of coding (see Table 21).

Summary

This study attempted to examine the perceptions of institutional barriers experienced by African American women in higher education that lends to the under-representation in senior administration at PWI's. A qualitative methodology was used for this study. The participants for this study were 12 African American women senior administrators. Permission to conduct the study was solicited from the University IRB and consent was acquired from the participants. The participants initial interview via telephone was recorded which included semi-structured interview questions. The interviews were transcribed and the data analyzed. Prior to the data analysis, follow-ups were made within two weeks of the initial interview to check for accuracy of answers given as well as the intended meaning and clarity of the responses. After having followed all the procedures, the researcher gained insight into the perceptions of African American women as well as strategies proposed for success in academe.

CHAPTER FOUR

Report of Data and Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to explore the institutional factors contributing to the under-representation of African American women in leadership positions at predominantly White higher education institutions. This chapter will discuss the concepts that emerged through the qualitative data collected during the interviews and an analysis of the data obtained from the participants in the study described in Chapter Three. As the researcher analyzed the data, information was divided into emerging themes that were combined to form major concepts. These concepts form the framework for the heart of the analysis in efforts to answer the research question and sub-questions: (1) What perceived institutional barriers contribute to the under-representation of African American women in higher education?; (a) How has perceived barriers impeded successful advancement in obtaining leadership positions?; (b) What strategies have been used to overcome perceived barriers to higher education administration? This section begins with an identification of participant characteristics (see Tables 1-8).

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 expresses the demographic characteristics of the participants of the study. The participants were selected through a purposeful selection process. Participants meeting the criteria of the study were emailed a request for participation and the first twelve respondents were included in the study. The participants in this study included twelve African American women holding leadership positions in higher education. Table 1

describes the participants' as it relate to demographics such as: age, marital status, number of children, rearing parent(s), highest educational level of male parental figure, highest educational level of female parental figure, social class while growing up, and the type of community reared in as a youth.

Table 1 shows eight of the participants in the study were between the ages of 40 to 59, two were between the ages of 30 to 39 and two were over 60 years old. Additionally it reveals that the immediate family structure of the participants that include the following: eight participants are married, three participants are divorced and one participant is widowed. It describes nine of the participants as having one or two children, while three participants have three to four children. Therefore, most of the participants have had families the majority of their educational career and had to learn how to balance the demands of the career with the needs of the home.

Furthermore, Table 1 shows seven of the participants coming from families with married parents, four were reared by their mothers only and one was raised by an aunt. It also reveals the highest level of education achieved by any of the participants' parents, both male and female was a Masters degree and the lowest recorded level of education completed by any of the participants' parents was high school. A limitation of the demographic questionnaire was that it did not list any educational attainment choice less than high school and as a result, one of the participants did not answer this question for highest educational level of male parental figure. Finally, the table shows that one of the participants considered her family class while growing up to be upper-middle class and eleven of the participants considered their family class to be middle class. It also denotes that four of the participants

were reared in an urban community, six in a rural community, and two in a suburban

community.

Table 1.
Participant's Demographics

Demographic Characteristics of African American Women Administrators		
	Demographic	Number
Age		
	29 or less	0
	30-39	2
	40-49	5
	50-59	3
	60 or over	2
Marital/Relationship Status		
	Single/Never Married	0
	Married	8
	Separated	0
	Divorced	3
	Widowed	1
Number of Children		
	1-2	9
	3-4	3
	Over 4	0
	No Children	0
Rearing Parents		
	Mother and Father	7
	Mother	4
	Father	0
	Other	1
Highest Level of Education		
(Male)	High School	9
	Associates	2
	Bachelors	0
	Masters	0
	Doctorate	0
(Female)	High School	9
	Associates	2
	Bachelors	0
	Masters	1
	Doctorate	0

Table 1. Con't
Participant's Demographics

Demographic Characteristics of African American Women Administrators		
	Demographic	Number
Family Class		
	Upper Class	0
	Upper Middle Class	1
	Middle Class	11
	Lower Class	0
Home Community Type		
	Urban	4
	Rural	6
	Suburban	2
	Other	0

Table 2 displays the highest level of education achieved by the participants. Considering education attainment, two participants hold a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree, eight of the participants hold a Doctor of Education (EdD) degree, and two participants hold a Master's level degree. It also reveals that at the undergraduate level, two of the participants attended a Historically Black Public College of University (HBCU), one attended a Predominantly White Private Institution (PWI-Private), and nine attended a Predominantly White Public Institution (PWI-Public).

At the doctoral level, all of the participant majors' were in the field of education and two had not completed their doctoral degree. Table 2 also reveals that all of the participants attended a Predominantly White Public Institution with ten of the participants completing their Masters study in the area of Education. The "other" two participants completed their Masters study in Educational Psychology and Psychology. Furthermore, the table shows that nine of the participants completed their doctoral degrees at Predominantly White Institution with one participant completing her degree at a Predominantly Black Institution-Public. Two of the participants had not completed their doctoral degrees but stated that they were in the process of returning to school to complete their doctoral programs in Education. Both of the women expressed the importance of obtaining academic credentials in maintaining success and mobility in higher education leadership. The questionnaire also revealed that all of the women that had received doctoral degrees were in the area of education.

Seven of the participants have between 10 to 20 years of higher education experience including their current position in senior administration. Five of the participants have greater than 20 years of experience. Additionally, five of the participants worked at greater than four higher education institutions. However, the majority of the participants (7) had worked at fewer than four higher education institutions. Table 2 also shows that only two participants have been in their current leadership position for three years. Ten of the participants have been in their current leadership position for three to nine years. However, none of the participants had been in their position for greater than nine years.

Most of the participants stated that it took them a long time to obtain their leadership position which may account for the participants only holding their current leadership position for three to nine years. The table also reveals the previous positions held by the participants prior to their current leadership position held in higher education. From the table, most of the participants (4) had held the title of Associate Dean prior to moving into senior administration. Seven of the participants rose to the ranks in higher education leadership through previous positions being held in a student affairs related area.

Table 2.
Educational Characteristics

Educational Characteristics of African American Women Administrators		
	Demographic	Number
Highest Level of Education		
	PhD	2
	EdD	8
	Masters	2
	Other	0
Type of Undergraduate Institution Attended		
	Historically Black (Public)	2
	Historically Black (Private)	0
	Predominantly White (Public)	9
	Predominantly White (Private)	1
	Other	0
Area of Undergraduate Study		
	Education	9
	Business	0
	Technology	0
	Other	3
Type of Masters Institution Attended		
	Historically Black (Public)	0
	Historically Black (Private)	0
	Predominantly White (Public)	12
	Predominantly White (Private)	0
	Other	0
Area of Masters Study		
	Education	10
	Business	0
	Technology	0
	Other	2
Type of Doctoral Institution Attended		
	Historically Black (Public)	0
	Historically Black (Private)	0
	Predominantly White (Public)	9
	Predominantly White (Private)	0
	Other	1

Table 2. Con't
Educational Characteristics

Educational Characteristics of African American Women Administrators		
	Demographic	Number
Area of Doctoral Study		
	Education	10
	Business	0
	Technology	0
	Other	0
Years of Higher Education Experience		
	Less than 10	0
	10-15	3
	15-20	4
	20-25	2
	25 or more	3
Number of Institutions Worked		
	1 to 2	2
	3 to 4	5
	4 to 5	4
	5 to 6	0
	More than 6	1
Current Years in Position		
	1 to 3	2
	3 to 6	4
	6 to 9	6
	More than 9	0
Previous Position Held		
	Associate Dean	4
	Dir. Of Multicultural Programs	2
	Dir. Of Developmental Ed	1
	Student Success Coordinator	1
	Provost	1
	Dir. Of Admissions	1
	VP for Student Affairs	1
	Associate Provost/ Chief Diversity Officer	1

Table 2. Con't
Educational Characteristics

Educational Characteristics of African American Women Administrators		
	Demographic	Number
Current Position Held		
	President	3
	Academic Dean	5
	Dean of Students	2
	Associate VP for Student Affairs	1
	Associate VP and Dean of Students	1

<center>**Findings**</center>

Participant 1

Participant 1 indicated that she had several experiences in her quest to obtain a leadership position in higher education. She has taught in higher education for ten years and went back to get her Doctorate and when she finished, that same month was offered an administrative position in higher education. The participant indicated that she has served in various progressive leadership positions in higher education including Provost at one institution and then later moved and was offered the Presidency at a smaller predominantly White higher education institution in the Northeast. Altogether, the participant indicated that she has a total of twenty-seven years in higher education and that experience along with the political piece of being involved in various governance cabinets have prepared her for her leadership role today. She also indicated that contributing to her role in obtaining leadership positions was the fact that she was either the first woman or first minority woman during a time when affirmative action was still in practice and institutions were actively seeking qualified persons who could fill those two spots-both being a woman and a minority.

Challenges. With regards to the perceived institutional factors contributing to the under-representation of African American women in higher education, the participant indicated that she considered herself to be very blessed. She has interviewed for every job for which she has applied, however, her disclaimer was that she did not apply for jobs that she did not think were out of probable range based on her skills. She graduated from reputable institutions and established solid work experience. However, the participant indicated that, in her opinion, one big institutional barrier in higher education is the

<center>92</center>

governance structure. She added, *"When you have a homogenous board who's not accustomed to diversity then it makes it very difficult for a diverse person to move into a leadership position."*

Perceptions. Another factor the participant indicated is the perception of people who believe that leaders are supposed to be men. This is true, she indicated, especially in higher education where leadership is very much male dominated and when you have men making decisions about the hiring and you have men who are going to have to work with you, a lot of them may feel a little uncomfortable working for a woman. Although she feels that she has noticed a change in this perception over the years, it still remains a concern for women trying to move up in higher education administration. Another institutional barrier, the participant indicated is that women have not often had the types of preparatory experiences to make them competitive for many institutions. Her example was in those institutions that had very large athletic programs. Men understand that sports mentality and they are coming in with skills from literally playing sports all of their lives and a lot of people say, *"Well, you've got that familiarity so you'll be able to understand what's going on here, when this lady won't."*

Although, the participant indicated that none of the barriers have impeded her personal success in obtaining leadership positions as she has been fortunate enough to get the jobs that she has gotten, she also stated that institutions could play a more proactive role in advancing African American women in leadership positions. She indicated that the first thing higher education institutions could do is to be receptive to diverse thinking and a more active role taken by the board in supporting the person they hire. She stated, *"They have to*

believe in them or they shouldn't have hired them in the first place." The participant did not condone hiring an individual based on race, gender, religion, height, or anything, however, she asserted that if higher education institutions are going to hire somebody who is different than anybody else they have ever hired in the institution, then they had better be willing to go to bat for them when the going gets tough.

Strategies. Participant one also indicated several strategies African American women can use as a guide to obtaining leadership positions in higher education as well as assisting them in their efforts to persist in leadership positions. One strategy the participant indicated was securing an advocate, someone to help you personally and professionally. She added, *"For me, that's the role of a mentor and so the first thing you need to do is to get a mentor."* Secondly, she emphatically indicated that obtaining a doctorate degree is essential to opening up doors to leadership obtainment through your academic preparation. A third strategy she added was to get as much experience outside of your own area as you can. She stated, *"Get on committees that are on the academic or finance side of the house, not just to have all of your experiences in one area."* Another strategy that most people do not think about is deciding in what part of the country you want to go and in what segment of higher education want to work and finding people who can tell you what that institution is all about. She added, *"What are the problems that they're not advertising in that job ad? Is there an internal candidate that you're going to have to beat out? All those kinds of things."* Additionally, she suggested looking at the community in which you are planning to live and not assuming that communities are not going to be good places to go just because of things you heard about them. Lastly, the participant indicated that having a well-rounded support

94

system both inside and outside of your job. She suggested joining groups of people who look like you and were experiencing the same things that could be called if you needed advice. Also, having a support system for the personal side of you and trying to live a well-balanced life.

Leadership preparation. In the end, the participant indicated that if you have prepared yourself academically, if you have a variety of experiences within an institution, if you have somebody to help move you and your career forward in the form of mentors and not just one person but it could be many different people, the opportunities of obtaining a leadership position in higher education is possible. She added, *"Let folks know what you want and what you want to be when you grow up. None of us are mind readers. We have no idea to what you're aspiring. So find people who are in positions to help you and let them know of your career goals and see if they can do something to help put you out there."* She also added that she realized that it is very scary going into environments that are new and different and especially if you feel like you are the only there, but it is even more important to have that support group someplace else. When asked, if she would do anything differently in her journey to obtaining a leadership position in higher education, she added that the only thing she might have done differently was to get started earlier.

Participant 2

Participant 2 has over thirty years as a veteran teacher and administrator who currently serve as dean of Liberal Arts in small predominantly White institution in the northeast. She indicates that she could have been a vice-president, however, she chose to

95

teach for a long time prior to going into administration. She has taught in higher education for twenty-five years.

Challenges. The participant shared some insight on how institutions can be more supportive of African American women desiring leadership positions. One problem, she stated is that many institutions have excellent succession plans on paper, but they will not put them into practice. She stated, *"There are a lot of qualified African American women out there, and they are not hired because they are black. Race is still a barrier."* However, she noted that racism has become very subtle. Institutions may use the terminology, *"She's not a good fit or she may not be a good fit with our organization."* But, what they really may be saying is that we do not want this person because she is an African American. So, it is very important that institutions that have succession plans have a clear vision of who they want to hire and be able to cultivate those skills in that person so that they can have a better organization.

Perceptions. The participant also gave insight into her perceptions stating that institutions cannot deal with strong, aggressive, Black women. They want somebody who is going to be very calm, not meek. She indicated that balancing skills were very important and knowing how to manage well. Additionally, she indicated that Black woman must make their health and wellness a priority to overcoming barriers and obtaining success in leadership as well. Health is important, she noted, because African American women have to always give 125%. African American women must make sure that they have the credentials and know what they plan to do with those credentials. The participant also went on to stress the importance of having a mentor to talk to, even if it is just once a year. *"If*

you are going into higher education leadership", she stated, *"you need to understand the culture, the processes, how to put together a budget, and continuously educate yourself and sharpen your skillset."*

Strategies. The participant also offered several strategies that she has used to overcome some of the perceived barriers as she journeyed to leadership attainment. One strategy is having good people skills. You really have to understand what people skills they want you to have and know how to disarm people when you are faced with a difficult situation. You have to be able to hold your ground, yet remain very calm. The participant stated that she feels race and gender has impacted her in a positive way because she learned early on how to get along with most people. However, she describes a current situation where she would love to apply for the Vice President position in her College, but she feels that she will not get it because the acting VP is a White woman and she is Black. She indicated that she felt that she would not get the position because the person holding the VP before the interim was an African American woman who was very difficult to get along with so the institution may not want to take a chance on another African American woman. She stated, *"They just kind of lump you all together."*

Leadership Preparation. Her preparation for her leadership role in higher education began with the help of her mentor who she stated was a White woman. The participant also indicated that she developed other social and professional networks with people that have helped her along in her quest to obtaining a leadership position in higher education. She stressed that receiving her doctorate and participating in leadership programs were equally as important. When asked about her experiences related to her pursuit of

leadership attainment, she indicated that the institution has so many expectations of African

American women. Therefore, African American women must know how to balance and

manage their lives/families/relationships so that it won't interfere with work. The balancing

act has a lot to do with how you are perceived at work. She indicated that another barrier

contributing to the under-representation of African American women is being able to

maintain and not fall into the stereotypes that society has of black women of being too

strong, too aggressive, or too loud. She stated, *"It's unfortunate that you have to watch*

basically everything that you do until you get to that level where you can relax, but it's a

tough decision for any Black woman to be in, an upward position."

When asked if the participant would do anything differently knowing what she

knows now. The participant replied, *"I probably would have tried to get into administration*

sooner." She stated that although she has been in higher education for over twenty-five

years, she still feels a little behind. However, she feels really good that she can talk to

people and other African American women who are aspiring to leadership attainment in

higher education to help circumvent some challenges and issues that she has faced over the

years.

Participant 3

Participant 3 has over ten years of experience in higher education, primarily

concentrated in student affairs as Dean of Students for a small predominantly White

institution in the Northeast. The participant stated that she has prepared for her leadership

role by going outside of her comfort zone or area to learn all facets of student services. She

indicated that she would ask for special assignments or to serve on committees outside of her

current work role in order to expand her skill set and knowledge. This would allow her to gain exposure working with diverse members on campus who she could utilize as support systems if she needed them.

Challenges. She stated that she credits her leadership attainment success to her mentor whom she feels has helped to cultivate her knowledge and skills through being able to observe and watch how they manage and modeling some of those same behaviors. Obtaining her leadership position, she feels was the easy part as she had made so many connections through her interaction with both faculty and staff across campus which had cross-trained herself in all areas of student affairs. However, maintaining the position has not gone without its' many challenges. One of her biggest barriers, she stated, *"Feeling like I have to do more and go beyond just to prove myself and my worth as a leader."* You will find that many will not believe you are capable of doing your job or you are inadequate so you have to make sure you know your stuff at all times and you stay a step ahead of the game. She indicated, *"People buying into your ability to do the position assigned and looking beyond my race or gender has been the biggest hurdle."*

Perceptions. According to the participant, as an African American woman they expect you to act a certain way because they tend to think that we are aggressive, we fly off the handle, and are very emotional people. The participant recalled an incident where she was in a meeting with faculty and one of the faculty members was being very rude and irate. She stated that she remained calmed and told the faculty member that she would be more than willing to discuss his issues in private after the meeting. She indicated that the faculty member was very shocked because he was trying to pull her into an open confrontation in

front of other colleagues. She stated, *"He wanted to take it to the mat right in the meeting but you can't allow them to take you there, you have to stay calm and keep your composure."*

Strategies. The participant has maintained her position using her ability in cultivating relationships with people. She stated, *"Even if you know that a person may not like you, you have to understand that they have skills and you have to look beyond your personal feelings to work toward the greater good."* Knowing how to negotiate and communicate effectively are essential in overcoming the negative issues that may try to hinder your worth. Also, knowing how to listen effectively as you will get many views and opinions from students, staff, and faculty. You have to be diplomatic and have a sense of humor. The participant chuckled a little when she indicated that a sense of humor and thick skin are integral in withstanding a lot of the pressure that comes along with being a Black woman and a leader. Remaining calm is also very important. You cannot take everything personal.

Leadership Preparation. The participant also indicated that it was important for African American women to state their goals and aspirations for leadership attainment to people she knows can help her get there. She must be proactive in asking to be on committees and extra assignments so that the institution will know what she can do and the value she can bring to the organization. African American women cannot just sit back and wait for an opportunity to land in their lap. They must actively search for opportunities and create opportunities when the institution will not.

When asked if there was anything she would do differently knowing what she knows now, she replied, *"I would have gone on to finish my doctorate degree early."* After she received her master's, she had a family and was so busy honing her skillsets that she took time off from receiving her degree. However she stated, *"I know I'm going to need it because it is essential, especially for an African American woman seeking to get into leadership."* Having those credentials will not alleviate the challenges you will face but it does carry some weight in both you and them knowing that you are credible.

Participant 4

Participant 4 has been in her current position for five years and is a dean at a small university in the southeast. Her journey in education started over ten years ago when she became a professor at a small predominantly White university in the south. In preparation for her leadership position, she thought it necessary to obtain her terminal degree as well as participate in leadership programs and trainings. The participant stated that she was well aware that she needed to have the credentials in place as well as the necessary skill set in order to obtain a leadership position in higher education. She also indicated that even with those credentials, it was not easy as she transitioned from the classroom into administration.

Challenges. The participant indicated that her primary influence to go into leadership was her family. She stated, *"They were the deciding factor and my biggest supporters as I didn't think I had what it took to go into higher education leadership."* She went on to state, *"I didn't have that support system in the environment in which I worked, being in the minority sometimes causes you to second guess your own abilities and can stifle your growth."* One of the major barriers the participant indicated she faced on her journey

upward into administration was the perception from her senior counterparts that she didn't have the ability to lead. She indicated that she had to be persistent and not allow their reasons to become her reasons to impede her advancement. She maintained that she has always been a spiritual person and believed that if it was for her, then no one could stop her from getting it except for herself.

Perceptions. Another major hurdle she faced and states that she continues to face today is the notion that she is not as "*educated*" as her White counterparts. The participant indicated that it saddens her that she constantly has to prove that she is on equal par to her counterparts in order to gain the respect and support that White administrators would automatically get. *"I've seen it time and time again,"* she stated, *"my decisions questioned, my authority questioned."* However, she indicated that you have to stand your ground and be persistent. There is no doubt that you will have to work harder and do more than your White counterparts may have to do, but you do it and you stay on top of your game.

Strategies. The participant stated that one of her biggest strategies in overcoming some of the challenges or barriers is to just be persistent. Buying into the stereotypes and reasons why you cannot do something is not an option. She also stressed that being solution oriented and focusing on strategies for improving has helped her in not allowing the challenges to become insurmountable. She stated, *"You are always going to have problems, whether they be real or fictional, don't spend your time worrying, use your time wisely and search out ways to improve yourself and your organization."*

Leadership Preparation. The participant stated that sometimes she felt left out and isolated but she used her time being proactive with her faculty to find common ground,

interests, and other ways to engage them. No man is an island. You are going to need people so you should not allow your differences to impede your progress. She also stated that you must always maintain a high level of decorum. They are expecting more from you, so you must not just meet their expectations, but exceed them.

The participant responded, when asked what she would do differently, knowing what she knows now, she replied, *"I would have gotten into administration sooner."* She stated, *"I didn't think it would take me as long as it did to obtain a leadership position."* She indicated that she has seen several of her White colleagues get positions very quickly and move up rather fast. However, it has not been the same for her, she has had to put in more time and effort just to get to the level where she is now. She responded, *"I'm not adverse to work, I just didn't think it would be this hard."*

Participant 5

Participant 5 is a dean of a small predominantly White college and has over twenty years of combined experience of teaching and progressive leadership positions with three of those years in her current position. She stated that her journey into obtaining a leadership position was not an easy one. Prior to becoming a dean, she was an associate dean for a number of years. The participant indicated that she was the associate dean at several schools and felt that she was ready to move into the dean position. She stated that some of her male White counterparts that she knew who had less experience than she had were moving into leadership roles very quickly, however, she was not being offered any leadership positions. She stated, *"I had the credentials, I had both the teaching and progressive leadership experience, but I could not obtain a leadership position and I did not know why."* Once she

realized that she could not break the barriers in her current institution in obtaining a leadership position she decided to move her family to another location in an effort to move up the ladder.

Challenges. The major barrier she faced was being a strong Black woman. She stated, *"They don't like when you are strong and you speak your mind."* The participant expressed anger at the fact that she watched colleagues move into higher positions and roles that she was denied, yet had more experience for. Being in a leadership position is not without its share of struggles. She stated that in her current position, she feels that a major barrier is not receiving the support needed from her boss. The participant indicated that because she is African American, many of the African American students feel comfortable in coming to discuss things with her. However, faculty perceives that she is showing favoritism simply because she is Black and the students are Black. She indicated that while the Black students do identify with her, she does not treat them any differently than any other student. She stated, *"I don't give them a free pass because life won't give them a free pass, but I will listen to them because they feel comfortable in discussing their concerns with me, but I never take sides."* She also added, *"If these were White kids talking to a White dean, there would not be a problem."*

Perceptions. You have to be fully aware of your actions and behaviors because they have consequences and those consequences could impact your career mobility. Another major struggle for her is with the faculty. She indicated the resistance she had from those in leadership roles who did not want her in a position of leadership were believed to be racial. The participant noticed that while she was in the Assistant Dean position, she was always

104

praised for her strength, however, she was always denied the Dean's position when one became available.

Strategies. The participant indicated that she is aware that they see her as a Black woman first; therefore she makes sure that she does not put a barrier in place where there should not be one. She also stated that she makes sure she looks the part. Every day, she dresses the part from her hair down to her shoes. Another strategy she lives by is keeping her business life and personal life separate. She indicated that many of her colleagues go out together and have drinks or hang-out. However, she does not have that luxury because anything she says or does could be used against her.

Leadership Preparation. In preparation for her current position the participant stated that she learned strategies early on to help guide her through the process. She stressed that she had to learn how to work hard early on. You may not have a big cheering section so you have to be your biggest cheerleader. You have to work harder than anybody else. She also stated that she read a lot about policy, governance, managing and so forth. She indicated, *"In most cases, they are not going to tell you what they want you to know, you have to be resourceful and find out what they want and how you are going to get it."*

Participant 6

Participant 6 has twenty-three years of experience teaching and seven years of leadership experience with three of those years as an academic dean. Her experience has spanned over three institutions with her current institution being located in the south.

Challenges. When discussing barriers or institutional contributors to leadership attainment, the participant affirmed that she did not experience barriers to success, however, she did experience barriers to maintaining the position she has held for the last three years. At the point of becoming a leader, it was as if the support that she had before had waned. She no longer felt *"the love"* especially when it came to making administrative decisions that would not be warmly received. Not only did it feel like she was losing faculty support, she felt as though support from the VP was non-existent. However, she was able to rally the faculty's support by always keeping the students as the primary goal and focus for her decisions.

Perceptions. The participant indicated that the biggest challenge for her was the constant questioning of her decisions especially regarding budgetary expenditures from her supervisors. She noted that even if she detailed her expenditures clearly and provided a detailed proposal with supporting data, there were still questions regarding *"why"* she needed to implement a certain program or needed a certain item. According to the participant, this was not the usual behavior of the VP as she had noticed, as the Associate Dean, how the Dean before her, who was a White woman, did not have to go through the same challenges. The participant also recalled another challenge which confused her because it involved the support staff, that were primarily Black. She indicated that she noticed a difference in how the support staff treated her as opposed to the Dean before her. She stated, *"It was amazing to me that my own people would have such a negative attitude and disposition toward me and I called them on it."* They did not treat their White

supervisors with such disrespect and she informed them that she wanted to be treated with the same respect and work ethic as her White counterpart.

Strategies. She credits her most successful strategy to standing her ground. According to the participant, she recalled an incident where her supervisors questioned a program that she initiated in her college. However, the student oriented program was so well received that other colleges adopted it and began doing it as well. *"I didn't get any credit for initiating it, but I did receive the self-satisfaction of knowing that I stood my ground, carried out the program and it was a huge success."* She noted that you have to be willing to take risks but your risks have to be grounded on sound research and data. You have to be willing to do your homework and think outside of the box and be creative. It goes without saying that you will have to work harder than anyone else. But, even with working harder, you have to be smart and knowledgeable about your decisions and willing to accept the consequences of those decisions and actions. If you do not believe in your capability to lead, no one else will. Another strategy she shared was having a strong network of people who you could talk with and bounce ideas off of. The participant indicated that she had a colleague who is a Black male dean that she would often call to vent or for advice or to share ideas. She noted that it would be more helpful if the person were not at the same institution that you are working at.

Leadership Preparation. The participant indicated that her journey to obtaining a leadership position was not as difficult as other women may have been. She indicated that, although she has always been a hard worker, her upward mobility primarily came from her colleagues who were White, recommending her for leadership positions. She stated, *"I did*

not initially want to be an associate dean and definitely not a dean, however, I decided to apply when my peers encouraged me and told me that I would be good for the job." The participant indicated that she had always asked for extra assignments and tried to learn what she could on the job to make her more marketable.

Participant 7

Participant 7 has been in higher education for twenty years with ten of those years being in progressive leadership positions. The last five years the participant has held the position of Dean of Students. According to the participant, her journey to leadership has been one of many ups and downs. She indicated that she began her tenure in education working in student affairs and adjunct teaching for many years before transitioning primarily into the student affairs area. She seemed to light up over the phone with her voice getting higher and higher as she talked about her niche being in providing programs and opportunities for students that would enhance the academic side.

Challenges. The participant stated that as a teacher, her problems stemmed primarily from students who seemed to question her credentials and knowledge of the subject area taught. She stated that she perceived that the students were not convinced that she could actually teach them something that they did not already know. According to the participant, this perception of her teaching ability did not last the entire semester as she eventually proved her worth and gained their support. However, during the first few weeks, she would get these looks and stares, some of astonishment that she could speak so articulately and some of disbelief regardless of what she would say. She laughs at this experience now because she states that her challenges are much more complex today.

Perceptions. As she journeyed up the higher education ladder, she stated that she always felt like her position was the *"token position."* She indicated that she had applied for an academic dean position but was not offered the job even after being encouraged to apply. After a few failed attempts she realized that they only wanted her to apply to fill their quota of having a qualified pool of African Americans who had applied for the position. She stated, *"It saddened me and then it angered me that I was being used as a pawn when these people were not really interested in me or my ability."* She then decided to only apply for those positions that she felt she would be truly qualified for and the best candidate for that position.

She stated that her struggles are in obtaining support and being recognized as being a credible leader along with her counterparts who are all White and male. The participant indicated that they only really consider her when they want her to implement a program. However, she noted, if the program is a success, they take all of the credit. Consequently, if it is not, well, we know who gets the blame. She stated, *"It's sad when you are always having to prove your worth…you are never considered equal."*

She noted that racism is still prevalent and as an African American woman, you need to know how to deal with it. She recalled an incident with one of her staff who was a White male. She had scheduled a meeting with him due to some issues she had involving him and his treatment of students. The participant stated, *"When he came into my office, he did not even sit down and he looked toward the door the entire time I was talking to him."* *"I was determined that he was going to look me in the face before he left and so at the end of the meeting, I went to the door and stood where he had to look at me on my way out."* *"He*

acted as if I wasn't even there." The participant reiterated over and over again that you have to be able to stand your ground but you have to do it with tact because they are expecting you to be this aggressive Black woman who will get in your face. She noted, if it were a White woman, she would be described as strong and firm. However, we are characterized as angry and bitter. There is an unfortunate double standard but you cannot allow it to hinder your progress.

Strategies. Despite the many challenges, the participant has noted several successful strategies that have contributed to her longevity in senior administration. She noted, after getting your terminal degree, even though family situations hindered her terminal degree attainment, she asserted, you must always continue learning. Staying on top of research and current literature will be your best friend as well as sharpening your skills through conferences, leadership programs, workshops, and seminars. You need to have the lifelong learner mindset. Along with the credentialing piece, she noted that you need to be persistent and speak up for the causes that you truly believe in. They may not like it but they will respect you for it.

Leadership Preparation. The participant concluded by stating that she documents everything and she believes in having a paper trail so that you can be accountable for your actions and ready to defend your positions. You have got to be persistent. You cannot give up. While in her current position that she states she loves, she is considering retiring due to political stressors that she encounters. Her last statement was concerning what she would do differently knowing what she knows now. She stated that she would have started sooner. However, she had family situations that caused her to delay some of her decisions.

Nevertheless, she felt that starting sooner would have given her the stamina needed to persist and pursue higher leadership attainment. Although she enjoys working with students, the political climate has her leaning towards either going back to teaching or retiring altogether.

Participant 8

Participant 8 decided to go back to school and get her terminal degree after she went through a divorce. She started out as a professor and had taught for about 15 years prior to going into administration. She is currently the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs at a mid-sized university in the south. Her journey into leadership began while teaching and becoming very involved in the university.

Challenges. While discussing some of the challenges she has faced in obtaining a leadership role in higher education, the participant's tone of voice seemed to become more passionate about her experiences. One of the challenges she states is that of gaining respect from her colleagues. Another challenge the participant has faced is feeling like she is left out of the loop of leadership opportunities. The participant stated that she applied for multiple positions and did not get them. She went on to say that even some of her colleagues would be shocked that she did not get the position.

Furthermore, the participant stated that when she would inquire about the position, that many times it would be given to White candidates who had lesser credentials or experience than she had. She stated, *"I feel like there is still a glass ceiling for women and a double glass ceiling for Black women."*

Perceptions. Lastly, the participant stated that another challenge she has faced in obtaining a position in higher education is a barrier of ambiguity. The participant indicated that she believed that both White men and women are being groomed early on and having conversations both in the professional and personal arena that gives them an edge over a Black candidate. She stated that it seems that they know firsthand who is getting ready to leave a particular position, what the position requires and so forth and has time to prepare for that position. The participant felt that by the time the position became available, the institution had already decided on who they wanted to fill that position.

Strategies. Despite the many challenges the participant faced in obtaining a leadership position, she endured and persisted and finally obtained a leadership position in higher education. The participant noted several strategies that she has found useful in her quest to leadership attainment. Her advice is to be persistent, be diligent, and interact with others outside of your race so that you can gain knowledge that is not taught in the classroom but is useful for your success and longevity in higher education. A primary piece of advice she gave was to present yourself as open to talking to others because as she noted, *"They are watching you, more than they are watching anybody else and you have to be aware of that all times."* Other beneficial strategies include gaining the preparation needed to succeed and compete with those around you. Staying ahead of the game and standing your ground is also very important.

In terms of asking the participant what she would have done differently knowing what she knows now, she states that she probably would have started her graduate education sooner. However, she encountered personal situations that needed attending to first. The

participant stated that she didn't realize that it would take her so long to move into leadership roles. She stated that she has seen colleagues and some younger than she, move into positions of leadership very quickly. Although she has taken much longer to move into leadership roles she maintains that it has all worked out and she will continue to persist until she has reached the level that she is preparing for in academe.

Leadership Preparation. In terms of preparing for her leadership role, she indicated that she would participate on committees and involve herself with other programs and activities around campus. The participant stated that she would do things that would help her build her resume because she always knew that she wanted to go into a leadership role in student affairs. Due to her maintaining a good relationship with her previous boss, she was recommended to participate in a leadership program to allow her to build her skills. She stated, "*This was a good opportunity due to the fact that the university would occasionally pull from this pool of individuals when looking for people to fill leadership positions.*"

She credits her aunt and primarily her family that really influenced her to pursue a leadership position in higher education. Some of the characteristics that she ascribes to a leader is a person who is confident and persistent and not afraid to let others know what your goals are. The participant stated that she let it be known that, although she was starting out in the classroom, she didn't want to stay there. She also asked for greater responsibilities in an effort to learn new things and meet new people.

Participant 9

Participant 9 is the Associate Vice President and Dean of Students at a mid-sized university in the south. Although she is in the process of obtaining her doctorate degree she primarily credits her journey to gaining valuable progressive experience in multiple institutions and assistance through her mentor.

Challenges. With regards to the institutional challenges that have created barriers, although not insurmountable, the participant has stated that the perceptions that competent leaders are only White and male. As you move up the ladder, higher education becomes much more of a gendered organization which would create a barrier for someone other than the status quo. She indicated that she is well aware that there are not a lot of leaders in senior administration who look like her. Although more women are becoming presidents of higher education institutions, there are still a very small number of African American women. She stated, *"Although an institution may say that diversity is valued, it may not play out that way when it comes to leadership."*

The participant recounts an experience that came up as she inquired about a position opening at her alma mater that she had both the qualifications and experience for as well it being a good move up for her. She stated that she called the person who she needed to talk to about it who was a White male just to inquire about the position. The participant indicated that the male basically told her that they had already decided to give the position to another White male, even though they hadn't started the interview process yet. The participant stated that it was very disheartening for her and she told herself that some things

114

would never change, especially in the south. However, she did not allow that experience to stifle her will to succeed.

A second challenge she perceives as a barrier is that most women who are presidents have an academic background, so most of them have served as faculty. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of women with both the academic and student affairs background, so for those who don't have the classroom experience, it is a perceived institutional barrier that they do not have the experience to lead an institution. She was encouraged by a colleague to at least become an adjunct faculty so that she will at least have some teaching experience under her belt because faculty want to know that you have classroom experience.

Perceptions. During the early part of her career, the participant stated that she quit working full-time to finish up her master's degree. However, in retrospect, she feels that if she could do it all over again she would have continued to work full-time. She has noticed that some of her colleagues who continued to go to work while pursuing their master's degree appear to have moved up faster. Although she had the graduate education, she did not have the number of years of professional work experience that many of the employers were looking for. She also stated that it is important, especially for an African American woman to take the time early on in her institution to learn the culture of the institution. She stated, *"It may make the difference in you moving up faster or slower than you wanted to."*

Strategies. When questioned about strategies that she has employed to help boost her quest in leadership attainment, she credits her mentor, who was actually her supervisor at the time. She stated, *"When the opportunity for promotion came up, he was able to bring me on as second in command because he had helped me greatly hone my skillset."* She

115

believes that having mentors and particular men in your corner who can speak up for you is a great asset to have. She has also had female supervisors. However, she was unsure if there was a greater challenge for a woman speaking up for another woman.

The participant also suggested that African American women should prepare themselves both academically and professionally and build those social paths to move up and not be afraid to do that. She also indicated that African American women should not be afraid nor doubt themselves when going after challenging positions that may stretch their skill set or ability. She should possess a level of confidence and not be afraid to put that confidence into action. Additionally, going to conferences and presenting at conferences are a good way to get your name out there and get to know people that you might not otherwise meet. The participant stated, *"People admire hard work, but if no one knows that you are doing it, then you won't be recognized for the work you do so don't be afraid to expose yourself."*

Leadership Preparation. The participant has indicated that she was involved in professional associations early on in her career and she would always keep up with the trends and best practices as it related to the area of Student Services. She has been in the area of Student Affairs for fourteen years and has been in her most current position for the last three. The participant has indicated that she is interested in continuing to pursue greater leadership roles in higher education however she realizes that most Vice Presidents and Presidents in higher education come from primarily the academic services side.

Participant 10

Participant 10 is the President of a small predominantly White liberal arts college in the northeast. She has been in higher education over thirty years and has always been involved in administrative positions. The journey began for this participant with her starting out in financial aid and from there she has moved up through the ranks on the student affairs side, however, she has been involved in other areas on the campus such as curriculum committees, college wide committees, retention committees, diversity, and the list goes on and on and eventually to the presidency.

The participant stated that she always has been willing to step up in areas to lead or learn in areas where she might not have had the expertise. The participant learned early on just from her large family how to work with teams, delegate, and she brought those skills with her in her professional life. She has always gravitated toward people who held leadership positions or a spirit of excellence, positivity, and moving in directions that would help facilitate her goals in academe.

Challenges. In describing the institutional challenges that she has faced in her quest to obtain a leadership position in academe, the participant stated that when she started out, she was generally the first of *"something."* The first African American woman president, it has always been a matter of hard work and being willing to step outside of herself. She shared her perceptions of women coming behind her. The participant stated that one of the barriers that she perceives today from the women she mentors and works with is the issue of balance. She stated that many African American women feel, *"I'm going to work, but I'm*

going to have a life too." She stated that most women state that they are not going to be consumed by their work.

However, the participant stated that she has never felt consumed by her work. She indicated that she has always had a family and worked full-time, went to school, and ascended to the presidency. The problem she sees is when women fail to plan for the times when there is downtime. When she hear women say that they are not going to kill themselves for the job, in essence they are saying that they are satisfied where they are now. In order for women to move up in the organization, they have got to be seen as willing to do the work necessary to move the organization forward. Senior management is not a 9 to 5 job. There will be certain times when you will have to be up early or work late and there are times when nothing will interfere. Some days you will be required to do more and this whole issue of balance can hinder you if you do not understand it early on. Another barrier the participant indicated is one of African American women wanting to get ahead quickly.

She stated that nowadays African American women want to *"run before they crawl or walk."* Women feel that because they have the credentials, it automatically qualifies them for the leadership position. However, they need to realize that they must develop their leadership and management styles to gain increased experience in areas that their specific job assignments may not afford them. This allows people to know you but also allow you to know how to work with other people. The participant stated that you need all kinds of people to help build you. She feels that some younger African American women today are saying that they want to get to the top but not willing to do the work that it takes to get there.

Perceptions. Another area of concern that she has noted contributing to possible barriers of leadership attainment for African American women is how they present themselves. It is important for them to know how to speak professionally and correctly. Women should know how to speak and write and present themselves in front of an audience or when conducting a staff meeting. Personal appearance is another area that women must be cognizant of when desiring to ascend to leadership. The participant stated, *"They will see you before they ever hear you."* It is important for women to understand the culture of the organization, whether it be conservative or otherwise and present themselves accordingly. The participant has indicated that she is fairly conservative. However, she has observed that for other women who desire to move up the ladder, they need to learn how to adapt to the style of the organization. It is not a matter of them losing themselves, but rather as you move up the ladder, you may not be able to look the same as you did in an entry level position.

Strategies. In terms of strategies, the participant stated that it is a given to have the necessary credentials. She also stated that mentoring is absolutely necessary to help inform, guide, and lead younger women aspiring to higher education leadership. However, she does stress that the mentoring relationship should be authentic and should address both the professional and personal characteristics needed to successfully advance to senior administration. The participant stated that many of her contemporaries are considering retiring, however, it saddens her that she could not see any African American woman in her organization ready to ascend to the presidency. In her opinion, they have not committed

themselves in terms of getting the necessary preparation and experience to ascend to leadership.

Leadership Preparation. The participant also felt that attending leadership institutes are beneficial in helping younger leaders understand the process as well as themselves and their leadership styles and areas for improvements. According to the participant, leadership institutes can be great ways to find out what higher education institutions are looking for in potential applicants or leaders. Although she feels that many schools are implementing succession plans, she continues to feel strongly about external leadership institutes that will allow you to think outside of the box among people whom you can develop lasting relationships and bring something new to the table. The participant also stated that she had people around her that would take her to breakfast and talk to her so she could learn the culture of the organization early on. She also had people around her that would give her some constructive criticism so that she could learn and grow from.

The participant stated that if she had done anything differently she probably would have fast tracked herself a little more. She felt that she could have been a college president at least five or six years ago but felt that she was not prepared mentally for the challenges. She had some tough family situations that played a part in her decisions so she does not regret her decision. However, she is always re-examining what is important at this point in her life and feels that she has had a great career and continues to have great friends and mentors that she can call to vent her frustrations to. So, in the end, she stated, *"It all works."*

Participant 11

Participant 11 is the dean of her college located in the southwest part of the state. She has been in her current position for three years and served as an associate dean for the previous five. Prior to moving into administration, the participant was a math professor where she has taught for ten years. The participant indicated that she has felt blessed in her obtainment of her leadership role as she has had mentors and supervisors who noticed her ability and hard work ethic and groomed her early on in participating in administrative tasks. However, the participant noted that she had applied for the dean position and did not get it and waited about a year to apply for another dean position and got that position at another university. She stated that this is her fourth university system she has worked at and the first in her current leadership role.

Challenges. Although the participant stated that she has not had any particular barriers that have impeded her success in obtaining a leadership position, she feels, from seeing her colleagues who are African American women, is a matter of who you know. She stated, *"I did not notice it before I was in administration, but I notice more White male and female colleagues move into administration at a faster rate with the minimal experience and credentials required."* On the other hand, she has noticed that some of her African American friends and colleagues have had difficulty in moving into leadership roles with doctoral level credentials and experience in administrative areas as well. She did not want to say for certain it was due to race or gender, however, she did state that who they knew played a big part in the obtaining a leadership position. Another barrier, the participant expressed contributing to the under-representation of African American women in leadership roles is the perception that they cannot lead, especially in organizations where the

121

majority is predominantly White. The participant indicated that she was the only African

American female at her university in a leadership position.

Perceptions. The participant stated that institutions should have a more diverse

structure in their senior administrative roles. It is important for students to see African

American women holding leadership roles. She stated that it is not enough for students to

see African American women concentrated in minority affairs areas, custodial positions,

cooks, and a few faculty sprinkled throughout the university. They need to see African

American women in leadership positions and their presence should be reflective of the

student body population.

Strategies. However, she credits her success to her mentors she has had early on in

her career in obtaining success in leadership. These were people in leadership roles who

were able to help develop her skills as a leader as well as teach her about the culture of the

institution and how best to succeed and progress in leadership. The participant stated, *"They*

saw the leader in me even before I saw it or knew that I wanted it." She also indicated that

it is important for African American women aspiring to leadership positions in academe to

volunteer to be on committees and to look for leadership opportunities within their own

departments and programs.

Leadership Preparation. The participant stated that getting your feet wet, in

leadership opportunities, prior to holding an administrative position is a good way to tell if

you really want to be in an administrative role. It allows you the opportunity to work with

different types of people from all over campus and in different scenarios so you can see if

leadership is where your passion lies. She indicated that you have to be passionate in what

you do because the hours are long, the work can sometimes be stressful, and the responsibilities are great, but in the end, the participant continues to assert that she loves what she does.

Participant 12

Participant 12 is the President of a small liberal arts college located in the north. She indicated that she rose through the ranks with her early beginnings working as a professor and after she received tenure, she began looking for administrative positions. She went from being Director to Vice President of Academic Affairs of both undergraduate and graduate programs over a satellite program for a large PWI. She then went on to become Associate Provost and Chief Diversity Office working in the President's Cabinet.

Challenges. The participant stated that the primary obstacle contributing to the under-representation of African American women in higher education is the lack of persons willing to mentor African American women in leadership positions. She stated, *"depending on the kind of institution, coming from the majority, I think people like to mentor people who look like them or who have something in common with them."* She feels that higher education institutions could have remedied this by having programs in place for those who possess leadership ability, however, are unsure as to the trajectory to take to get there. An extrovert by nature, she feels that this characteristic has helped her in her quest to leadership. She stated, *"I asked other President's to mentor me in different ways as well as some of the people on my previous campus to prepare me in areas that I wasn't familiar with- fundraising and advancement for example."*

123

Strategies. With regards to the personal characteristics that have been successful in her advancement into senior administration have been her charisma, drive, persistence, and self-confidence. The participant indicated that leaders, especially in the President's role, must like to be around people. However, she stressed that it is a very lonely seat that you sit in because you have to be able to make tough decisions and you can't gather everyone around you to make those tough decisions. Parallel to her feelings of isolation and loneliness, the participant felt that her White counterparts had an unfair advantage with regards to obtaining information about position openings, leadership opportunities, and the like through their tight knit network of colleagues.

Perceptions. The participant indicated that we, as Black women, often assume that our merits alone will propel us to the next level, however, that is not true most of the time. The participant stated, *"I began to talk to people and let them know that I was interested in being President down the road and I think that helped open up other opportunities."* The participant indicated that you must know yourself better than anyone else and always keep yourself in check. You must know your own weaknesses and idiosyncrasies and how do you manage them. She stated that sometimes it is okay to be called the three A's, *"assertive, aggressive, and arrogant-because I think you've got to be a little bit of all of those."* It is also important for a leader to have patience and be visible and doing some things that you may not want to do with regards to the job.

She indicated that higher education institutions should make more of a commitment in providing leadership programs that are inclusive of diversity and improving diversity relations on campus. We do so much with regards to diversity for our students but have very

124

limited programs for our staff, faculty, and administrators. According to the participant, it is important that university systems instill a culture of unity across the campus as everyone has worth and no one should be made to feel like their voices do not matter. *"I do this for students' everyday as their advocate and liaison between them and the university."* The efforts we put into our commitment to students in ensuring that our minority population is well served and heard should be the same efforts we put into our leadership structure. According to the participant, leaders set the tone for the institution and should lead by example and an institutions' example is evidenced through its policies and practices.

Leadership Preparation. In order to prepare for her current leadership position, the participant stated that she went to multiple leadership institutes including women of color leadership trainings and women leadership training programs. From these programs she stated that she began listening to the journeys of other African American female leaders. From there she went on to become President of her current institution. She indicated that she always knew she wanted to be in leadership, it was more at what level did she want to lead in the academy.

Patterns and Themes from Initial Coding

Data for this study were derived from the review of transcripts of interviews from the twelve participants. This researcher has employed a basic interpretive strategy with three iterations of coding for this phenomenological study. The first iteration began with the researcher analyzing the data for patterns or commonalities between participants. In the second iteration the researcher reviewed the patterns and separated the data into themes.

During the third iteration of coding, the researcher analyzed the themes and interpreted the dominant concepts from the data.

After receiving the transcriptions from the transcription service, the researcher began the process of analyzing the data. The transcripts were reviewed and field notes were created for each participant. The notes formed the data base for the content in the two tables that are following in the chapter. The researcher placed the notes from the sessions into like categories, which are shown in Table 3. The categories were then analyzed for similarities in the notes that could be formed into concepts. Table 4 expresses the concepts that were grouped together to form the dominate themes the researcher extracted from the data.

Level One and Level Two Coding. Table 3 is a thematic code map that indicates the patterns the researcher identified in the first two phases of coding. The chart is aligned in columns according to similar categories identified during the first and second phase of coding. Table 3 displays seven categories that emerged through connections made after excerpts of the transcripts were organized. The patterns are grouped into categories representing themes from the interview data. Each pattern in Table 3 is referenced with its data source thereby providing triangulation of results. Patton (2001) asserts that using triangulation can strengthen a study by combining several methods or data. Table 3 indicates which participants specified similar data to show regularities that formed the concepts for this study.

Table 3.

Common Characteristics of Challenges and Strategies used to Leadership Attainment

Challenges	Relationships	Preparation for position	Sustainability	Leadership qualities	Societal stereotypes	Strategies
doing more to prove myself/worth (P3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9,11,12) Subtle racist acts (P2, 4, 5,11,12)	Well rounded support system inside and outside of the job (P1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10,12)	Getting a doctorate (P1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12) Networking (P1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)	Love of students /passion (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,10) Self-confidence (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9,10,12)	hard work (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 , 8, 9, 10,12) being persistent (P4, 5, 6, 7, 8,11,12)	Being too strong, aggressive and loud (P2, 3, 7, 8) Culture barrier (P8, 10)	Committees/ leadership programs (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12) Securing an advocate/me ntor (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5,6,7, 8,9,10,11,12)
governance structure being mostly White and male (P1, 9,11,12) Expectations of African American women (P2, 3 4) isolation (P4, 8,12)	-balancing family/relation ships/career (P2, 5, 9, 10) Cultivating relationships with people even if they don't like you (P3, 9, 10,11)	Getting into administration sooner (P1,2,3,4, 8, 9,10,11) -Participating in leadership programs (P4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12)	Proactive support of diverse leaders (P1, 8, 11, 12)	Holding your ground (P2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11) Maintaining a level of decorum/pro fessionalism (P3, 5, 8, 9, 10,11) People skills (P1, 2 , 9, 10, 12)	Not competent (P4) Not educated (P4)	Keeping business and personal life separate (P5, 8, 10, 11) asking to be on committees or special assignments (P2, 8, 9, 10)
Succession plans not authentic to diversity (P2, 9,12) constantly questioning decisions/auth ority made (P5, 6, 8)	Family was my biggest influence as I did not have support in my work environment (P4, 5, 8, 9)	Stating your goals/aspiratio ns (P1, 3, 8, 11) haven't received a doctorate (P3, 9)	Speaking up and helping other AA about opportunities/ paying it forward (P8, 9,11)	Your appearance and dressing appropriatel y is essential (P5, 8, 10, 11) Negotiate and communicat ion skills (P3, 6, 11)	Not capable of teaching (P7) credentials not weighted the same (P9	cross-training (P2, 9, 10)

Note. '*P' followed by a number indicates a participant making a similar comment*

Table 3 continued.
Common Characteristics of Challenges and Strategies used to Leadership Attainment

Challenges	Relationships	Preparation for position	Sustainability	Leadership Qualities	Societal Stereotypes	Strategies
Used as token placeholder for position (P5,7, 9) Lack of support from supervisor (P5, 6,) understanding the institution culture (P2,9)	Create dialogue amongst other African Americans through safe spaces (P8,11,12) Change of attitudes from own race (P6)	-obtaining a leadership position taking longer than expected (P3,4)	Exposure (P9, 10,12)	Authentic (P9, 10, 12) Effective listening skills (P3, 10) extrovert characteristic (P9,12) Making expectations clear (P10)	Difficult to work with (P8) contributes to glass ceiling (P8) Angry and bitter (P7)	Reading, keeping up with trends continuously learning (P5, 7, 8, 9) Take calculated risks based on sound research (P6, 7, 8, 10)
student affairs background (P9) lack of teaching experience (P9) questioning authority (P7		Being intentional about experiences/learning opportunities (P9)	maintaining self-health and wellness (P2, 9) Documentation (P5)	Self-learner (P9, 10,12) Solution oriented (P4, 12) Positive (P8,11)		Not going after positions you are not qualified for (P1, 3, 9) What type of HE institution (P1, 9)
using AA women to fill a quota for application purposes (P7)		Being Competitive for all institutions (P1)		Remaining calm (P3) Ethics/integrity (P10)		knowing policy (P10) Male mentor (P9)
lumping all AA women together (P2) -Not receiving credit for successful outcomes (P						Deciding what part of country you want to be in (P1)

Note. '*P' followed by a number indicates a participant making a similar comment*

Dominant Themes from Level Three Coding

Table 4 indicates the dominate themes of this study. After the second phase of coding, where the themes were organized into categories, clusters of themes were identified as dominate concepts and displayed in the table. Table 4 displays four dominate themes of this study. During the process of conducting this study to explore the institutional factors contributing to the under-representation of African American women in higher education and strategies that were used to overcome perceived barriers, four major concepts became apparent. These concepts are "leadership preparation," "perception of race and gender," "institutional challenges," "success strategies." The concepts first emerged as themes identified by the participants as they were interviewed. These themes were analyzed for overlap and commonalities. The final step required the researcher to form concepts from the combined themes that are the findings of this study.

Table 4.
Dominant Themes identified during Third Phase of Coding.

Leadership Preparation	Perception of Race and Gender	Institutional Challenges	Personal Strategies for Success
hard work (P1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 , 8, 9,10, 11, 12) Asking to be on committees or for special assignments (P1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11) Obtaining a doctoral degree (P1,2,4,5,6,7,8, 10,11,12) Networking/Exposing yourself (P1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,12)	AA women having to do more to prove their worth (P3,4,5,7,8,9,11,12) Unequal expectations of AA women (P2,3,4, 8,9)	Governance structure mostly White and male(P1,9,11,12) Succession plans not authentic to diversity (P2,9,11,12) Subtle racist acts (P2,4,5,11) obtaining a leadership position taking longer than expected (P3,4,6,11)	Important to secure an advocate/mentor (P1,2,3,4,5,6, 7,8,9,10,11, 12) Love of students/passionate (P1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,11) Self-Confidence (P1,2,3,4,5,6,9,11,12)
being persistent (P4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12)	Being too strong, aggressive and loud (P1,2,3,7,8)	AA Woman not understanding the culture of the institution (P2, 9, 10)	Well rounded support system inside and outside of the job (P1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9,11) Maintaining a level of decorum/professionalism (P3, 5, 8, 9, 10,11)
Participation in leadership programs (P4,5,7,8, 10,11)	Wanted as a token or placeholder for the position (P5,7,9)	Lack of support from supervisor (P5,6)	Take calculated risks based on sound research (P6, 7, 8, 10, 12)
Holding your ground (P2, 4, 5, 7, 8)		Feelings of isolation (P4,8)	Reading, keeping up with trends continuously learning(P5, 7, 8, 9,10)

Note. *'P' followed by a number indicates a participant making a similar comment*

Table 4 Con't.
*Dominant Themes identified during Third Phase of Coding*

Leadership Preparation	Perception of Race and Gender	Institutional Challenges	Personal strategies for Success
Self-learner (P9,10,11) Stating your goals and aspirations (P1,3,8)	Change of attitudes from own race (P6)	Not receiving credit for successful outcomes (P7)	Family was my biggest influence as I did not have support in my work environment (P4, 5, 8, 9)
being intentional about experiences/learning opportunities (P9)	credentials not weighted the same (P9)	Students questioning authority (P7)	Not going after positions you are not qualified for (P1, 3, 11)
Deciding what type of HE institution you want to work in (P1)	Angry and bitter (P7)	Culture barrier (P8) -contributes to glass ceiling (P8)	Your appearance and dressing appropriately is essential (P5, 8, 10)
Deciding what part of the country you want to be in(P1)	Not competent/educated (P4)	having a student affairs background (P9)	paying it forward (P8,11)
	being used to fill minority application quota(P7)	-lack of teaching experience (P9)	maintaining self-health and wellness (P2, 9)
	Difficult to work with (P8)	Not having balance (P10)	Create dialogue amongst other African Americans through safe spaces (P8) -

Note. '*P' followed by a number indicates a participant making a similar comment*

Concepts Development

Figure 1 displays the four dominant themes of this study: institutional challenges, success strategies, leadership preparation, and perception of race and gender. The themes associated with the corresponding concepts are linked in the diagram below to show how the concepts were grouped together based on participants' responses and overlap of commonalities. These categories are represented by the participants that made like statements by the number associated with the participant following.

Figure 1.

Dominant Themes
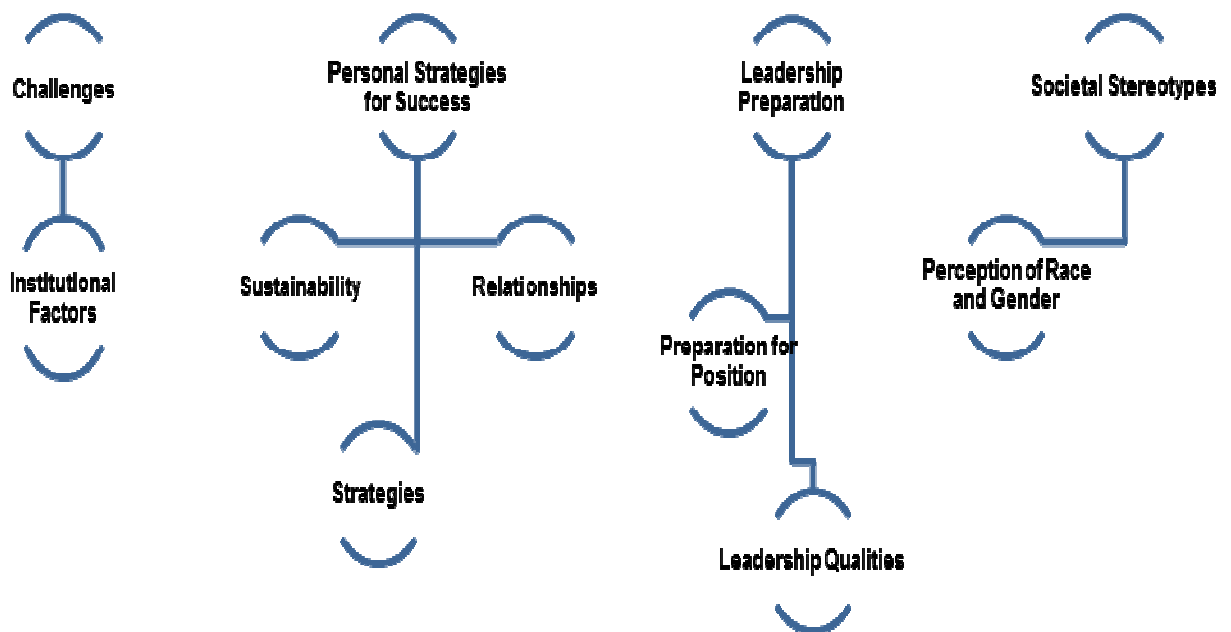
Institutional Challenges

After each woman detailed their journey to leadership attainment, the actual challenges they faced were explored to get a better picture of their lived experiences while navigating the terrain to higher education administration. Two of the women felt as though they did not have any challenges in obtaining a leadership position in higher education. However, this advancement was primarily credited to the help of great mentors, good solid experience, and affirmative action sanctions. Two of the women stated that they were the first of their kind in their leadership position-African American women Presidents. The women saw the challenges they faced as two-fold. Some of the challenges were encountered on their journey to leadership attainment and other challenges faced within academe were while they were in their respective leadership positions. Two of the women also shared insight into what they see, as more seasoned administrators, as challenges for younger African American women aspiring to leadership attainment in higher education.

All of the women agreed that their governance structure was mostly White and male dominated and there seems to be an ongoing perception that leaders are supposed to be men. This is especially true in higher education. Therefore, it makes it more difficult for an African American woman to move into a leadership position because the board may not be receptive to diversifying its core structure. One of the participants stated, *"When you get into higher education senior administration, men primarily make the decisions regarding hiring and advancement. Therefore, they may feel uncomfortable hiring a woman leader or working for a woman, and especially an African American woman."*

Another challenge at least six of the women faced in their quest for leadership attainment was their lack of preparatory experiences needed to make them competitive for various types of higher education institutions. They believed that there was a sense of ambiguity in knowing what the expectations of the higher education institutions were. One of the women indicated that she believed that both her male and female counterparts were being groomed early on and having conversations with each other which gives them an edge in moving up the ladder faster. She called these conversations, *"the good ole boy network."* Another of the women stated, *"As you move up the ladder, it appears that higher education becomes much more of a gendered organization which creates barriers for someone other than the status quo."* Another perceived barrier to leadership attainment that the women expressed that is parallel to lack of preparatory experiences is the notion that only women in academic affairs are qualified enough to lead an institution. Seven of the women leaders were concentrated in student affairs and had experienced challenges in obtaining senior administrative positions.

After the women had obtained senior administrative positions in higher education institutions, they continued to face challenges which created barriers to maintaining leadership positions. While holding leadership positions in academe, several of the women felt isolated and have always had to go out of their way to engage faculty or colleagues. The women believed that they would need the support of their colleagues and faculty to advance their agenda. Therefore, they would have to spend much of their time building relationships and finding common ground in order to garner support for their programs and decisions made.

The women also felt left out of the loop when decisions were made by their board or supervisor without their input. Simply stated by one of the women, *"the decision is made and you implement it, it's just as simple as that."* It was apparent from the women's point of view that many of them felt as if their voices were not heard with respect to decisions being made by the board or administrative leaders on their behalf. Subtle racist acts were also noted by the women as challenges faced in higher education. The women expressed anger as their male and female White counterparts, who had lower credentials and less experience, were advancing at faster rates into leadership positions.

Many of the women indicated that they did not understand why it would take them so long to ascend to leadership positions even possessing the academic preparation and experience required to advance. Two of the women stated that when they did not obtain a progressive leadership position that they had applied for, they did not seek a response from the institution as to why they were not chosen. For the two that did seek a response from the institution, they were told that they were not a good fit or that they did not have a specific kind of experience that was not noted in the list of stated qualifications required for the position. These kinds of experiences have led the women to believe that either their race, gender, or both have played a part in their denial of the position applied for. There was an overwhelming belief from the majority of the women that they lacked support from their supervisors or colleagues. Negative attitudes and experiences were also encountered by subordinates in their own race which created challenges in their leadership experience. The women noted that institutions needed to be more proactive in its support for the leaders they choose regardless of their color or gender.

Despite having the credentials, sound work experience, hard work ethic, and ability, the women overwhelmingly agreed that knowing what they know now, they would have pursued getting into administration sooner rather than later. They were under the idea that the skills and preparation that they acquired would translate into job advancement and growth. However, many of them were not able to advance as quickly as their White male and female counterparts after controlling for credentials, leadership preparation, and experience. The women felt that they were being overlooked and their skills and abilities were not being capitalized on. One of the women stated, *"Even when we* [Higher Education] *say diversity is valued, sometimes it doesn't play out when it comes to leadership, and so yeah, I would definitely say that my race, and my gender have impacted my ability to move up."* This led the women to feel that their race and gender had to be a factor in the slow pace of job advancement. Several of the women felt as if they could have moved into administration sooner, however, they didn't feel emotionally prepared to take on the unbalanced mental challenges for the expectations that would be placed on them by the higher education institution. Although these women had the necessary credentials and experience, the undue expectations as an African American woman in leadership was a source of disenchantment with the institution and the position.

For those women who felt that they did not have challenges in obtaining a leadership position in higher education, they encountered hardships with regards to garnering support and assistance from the board or their senior supervisors. This lack of support, the women believed, was primarily due to the institution not being receptive to diverse thinking. Therefore, the women felt that they had a more difficult time both operationally and fiscally

for the development and implementation of their programs. Not only did they feel that they had a lack of backing from leadership, they also felt as though much of their time was spent cultivating relationships with their subordinates and colleagues to support programs and initiatives that would enhance the institution. However, when the women did implement initiatives and programs with successful outcomes for the institution, they felt that they did not receive credit for their work and contributions. This lack of support created feelings of isolation and loneliness for the women as they persisted in their desires to succeed in senior administration.

Critical race theory allowed the researcher to raise awareness to the visual forms of microaggressions the women faced in the institution. All of the women consented that there are a majority of White men in higher ranking positions in their respective institutions. For African American women, these types of covert racial acts are very hard to investigate in institutional settings but can result in a great deal of anxiety for those aspiring to leadership positions because they do not always feel welcome. Microaggressions can occur in institutions as conscious and unconscious visual stimuli directed toward people of color (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). One woman stated, *"so far, I've only worked at predominantly White institutions and at those institutions, I've always had to set one corner or another, and lay out my resume with my colleagues, because they want to know, oh well, what's different about you, how did you get to the table."* She indicated that these stereotypes have impacted her and affected her leadership style in some ways because she has always had to justify her role. Another overt microaggression experienced by one of the women was their denial of a position and being told that a White male had already been selected even prior to beginning

the interview process. This experience is compelling evidence where the critical race perspective challenges White privilege by refuting the claim that higher education institutions are objective and provide equal opportunity in the hiring and selection process. Experiencing this type of blatant racism is disheartening for the women as they began to feel that some things will never change. As one of the other women stated, *"I think it is a mindset that they have always had a White male in that position, and I don't think they thought twice about a White male not being in that position."*

Success Strategies

After discussing the challenges to leadership attainment and challenges experienced within the institution, the women indicated that they persisted despite the challenges and presented strategies used for success. The most successful strategy noted by all of the women was to secure a mentor. Although it is important to establish a mentoring relationship with people in whom you can trust, it is also important that the relationship be authentic. For the women interviewed, their mentoring relationships not only helped them professionally but personally as well. One of the women stated, "*Even if you talk to that person once a year, you know just, or you could email that person. You know, you really need to do that. And you really need to observe people and watch people, how they manage."* Many of the women felt as though they would not have obtained the leadership position they held if it were not for their mentors. Their mentors, who in several cases were also their supervisors, were able to not only train them but recommend them for positions that would advance them professionally. All of the women indicated that they were *"paying it forward"* by mentoring other young women desiring leadership positions in academe.

Next to networking and mentoring opportunities, the women felt it necessary to have stable and supportive relationships with people that you can trust whether it is family or close friends. As five of the women stated, they did not feel comfortable hanging out with colleagues, however, it was important for them to have some down time to just rest and relax. Most did not even feel comfortable in going out in the community or town that their university was located. Family was very important to each of these women and their success and growth in higher education weighted on balancing both family and career as many of the women did not feel supported within the university.

Equally as important to the women administrators was being passionate about students and education. One of the women stated, *"If you are not passionate for what you do, you are going to be miserable and make everyone around you miserable in the process. So it is important to know where your passion lies early on in your career."* The leaders assumed it was a given that an aspiring leader would have the academic credentials in the form of a doctoral degree for any position desired beyond the associate level. All of the women considered themselves as lifelong learners. They stressed the importance of keeping up with the trends and best practices in higher education, participating in professional organizations, and becoming experts in their fields.

Eight of the women agreed that it is important to have a well-rounded support system both inside and outside of the job. One of the women stated, *"I had folks at my institution that would say let's go to breakfast/lunch, let's meet so you can understand politically what happens here."* This information allowed her the opportunity to understand the culture and climate of the organization and what the implications were behind the operational dynamics.

It was noted that being in a leadership position can get stressful at times and it is important that women take time to rest and relax. However, seven of the women agreed that they do not mix personal pleasure with their contemporaries or staff. They stressed that it is essential to not mix pleasure with business as you have to be watchful of what you do and how you behave at all times. Additionally, maintaining a level of professionalism is important in your ascension to higher education leadership. All of the women felt at some point in their career that they had to go above and beyond what their male *and female* counterparts were doing because there was an expectation that they had do more in every area just to be comparable to their counterparts.

Parallel to maintaining high standards of professionalism, four of the women stated that they had to be aware of how they dressed and spoke around their colleagues and subordinates. They emphasized that because they were under so much scrutiny, they could not allow their appearances to become a distraction. The women needed to be aware of the smallest details of their appearance even down to the color of fingernail polish they chose to wear. One of the women stated, *"When you are on vacation, you can wear the acrylic nails as long as you want and any color that you want but you have to make sure that before you go back to work, the nails are off and at an appropriate length and in a neutral shade."*

Nine of the women stressed how crucial and vitally important that self-confidence and persistence was to the success of them both attaining and maintaining a leadership position in higher education. Self-confidence allowed them to believe in themselves and their abilities as a leader. Their persistence would not allow them to give up in the face of resistance and adversity. All of the women shared a general consensus that their challenges

140

were not of their making, however, they believed that they possessed both the credentials and solid work experience which qualified them to hold a leadership position. Therefore, they had to stay positive and focused on their goals and what they had prepared themselves for. One of the women attributed her confidence from her early upbringing stating, *"And I have always had a sense of confidence that I could do it, I grew up in the Civil Rights Era and I went to a traditionally White institution and there were things heard there that in my estimation that nobody was going to tell me that I couldn't do it because I knew better and if nothing else I was going to prove them wrong."*

All twelve of the women have demonstrated such great strength of character through their willingness to work hard, stayed focused on their goals, and persistent in their quest to obtain a leadership position in higher education and maintain their current position as a leader. One of the women put it best by saying, *"If you do not believe in yourself and your capability to lead, no one else will."* Several of the women discussed how much of their patience comes from their reliance on their spiritual beliefs. One of the women stated that when she was repeatedly turned down for positions, that she felt she qualified for, *"You know, maybe this isn't the time for it. And I do believe – I'm very spiritual. And I'm just thinking that, you know, God has another plan for me."*

Leadership Preparation

The participants overwhelmingly agreed that obtaining credentials through receiving a doctoral degree were very important and necessary in ascending to leadership positions in higher education. Thus, the concept identified, within this study, by the researcher was labeled leadership preparation. This concept was identified through the themes that emerged

from the interviews with the participants. In contrast, those that had not obtained a doctorate were either in graduate school or preparing to return as they thought it necessary to have a terminal degree when preparing for senior leadership attainment in academe.

There was also a consensus, among the women interviewed, as to the importance of networking and exposing oneself and one's abilities both in and out of the university. There was a concern, however, that African American women were not privy to the informal networks that existed among their White counterparts and thus information was not shared which was conducive to professional growth and leadership attainment. The women often felt isolated and left out of the "know" when it came to leadership opportunities becoming available and the skills required to obtain the position. One of the women stated, "*It has taken me longer to get where I am because I felt like I was always the last to know about things. Their (White males/females) are being groomed early on but we (African American women) are left out of the conversation.*"

After the women had obtained the necessary credentials and began to expose themselves through the art of networking, it was imperative that they participated in leadership programs both within their institution, if available, and other programs located throughout the country. The women observed that most of the institutions either did not have leadership programs in place or the programs were not authentic in its commitment to diversity. Therefore, they would have to pay to attend credible leadership programs out of their own pockets. However, participation, in leadership programs, was necessary in establishing well-rounded skill sets to expand the knowledge and opportunities in higher education. All of the women agreed that African American women should get as much

142

experience outside of their area through participating on committees or special assignments. This exposure would allow them to learn about all facets of higher education and meet people who may be able to assist them in their career advancement goals.

Mentoring. In preparing for leadership positions in academe, eleven of the women reported that securing an advocate or finding a mentor was very vital in their quest in obtaining a senior administrative position. A mentor is someone who can help you both professionally and personally. One of the women stated, *"It is important that you decide early on what type of mentoring relationship you need and who can meet those needs for you."* A mentor should not just be a person who validates you or strokes your ego, but also a person who can challenge you and provide constructive criticism. The women who have successfully navigated the tumultuous terrain into senior administration have had the assistance of a mentor. Five of the mentoring relationships were with immediate supervisors who were more hands on in honing their skill sets and potential as well as recommending them for positions as they became available. There were others who had mentoring relationships with previous faculty members and colleagues who were able to provide a listening ear, sound advice, as well as a broader perspective of the situation.

Once the women had obtained the credentialing through their academic preparation in obtaining a doctoral degree, participated in leadership programs, and secured an advocate or mentor, other personal characteristics became apparent in their quest for leadership attainment. Characteristics such as hard work, being persistent, standing your ground, and being a self-learner were necessary preparatory skills to have for leadership attainment. One of the women stated, *"I've had some of the most difficult situations with faculty and I*

was scared to death, but you know, I just held my ground, and I was very calm, you know,

you can't fly off the handle." In order to be competitive and viable to persist to leadership

attainment, African American women must not be afraid to let people know what their

aspirations are. It is imperative that they speak up and state their goals and future plans in

higher education so that they can begin the networking process and be very intentional about

the strategies they will employ to reach those milestones.

It is equally important for African American women to obtain some type of

leadership preparation whether it is at their own university or through other preparation

programs. According to one of the women, *"Women have not often had the types of*

preparatory experiences to make them competitive for many institutions." A leadership

program offers the opportunity to hone their leadership abilities and develop skills

conducive for growth and advancement in higher education. For example, one of the

women, who is now a President, asserted, *"I went to a number of leadership institutes*

sponsored by ACE, women leadership trainings, women of color leadership trainings, MLI

(Millenium Leadership Institute) where its total goal is to prepare individuals for the

pipeline to the Presidency." However, one challenge for African American women desiring

to participate in leadership programs offered within their university is that they may not be

authentic to diversity. One of the women stated, *"They may be excellent succession plans*

on paper but they do little to advance African American women into leadership positions."

Three of the women have noted that they have funded their participation in leadership

programs themselves in order to gain relevant training and knowledge to become leaders

within their institutions.

Ten of the women felt it necessary to express their desires for leadership attainment. One of the women indicated, *"It is important to let others, who may be able to help you, know what your plans are."* This is especially true as it has taken many of the women longer to obtain a senior administrative position than they originally planned. According to Jackson and Harris (2007), women administrators must develop a cooperative spirit and be willing to hear others ideas as well as being receptive to those ideas. The women have found it necessary to network with people both inside and outside of their institution through attending conferences and workshops. This has allowed them the opportunity to make lasting relationships with people who may be able to support them personally and professionally. As a result, lifelong relationships have been developed with other women with whom they can identify. One of the women stated, *"I have other women outside of my institution in which I talk to, bounce ideas off of, and listen to. They are not part of the President's cabinet but I call them my kitchen cabinet because I am able to let my hair down and really discuss issues that bother me."* The women have been able to use these connections to brainstorm ideas, solve problems within their own institutions, and to provide moral support and encouragement in dealing with the challenges they face in academe.

Perception of Race and Gender

All of the women shared their perceptions that there were still unequal expectations for African American women. The background of this study illustrated the problems African American women face in the larger society and higher education. However, their persistence to overcome both race and gender barriers has provided a unique perspective through their lived experiences to achieve higher education advancement. There was

145

consensus that both race and gender had impacted all of the women some positively and some negatively. One of the senior administrators stated, *"There is still some gender bias and some old fashioned sexism as to whether or not women should be in these roles, can they do this."*

For those that were impacted in a positive way, they were usually "firsts" in their positions during times when affirmative action was still in practice. During those times, higher education institutions were looking for qualified people but also those who could fill two other spots of being a woman and a minority. Although none of the women condoned hiring practices based solely on a person's race or gender, they did feel like institutions or boards were not as receptive to diverse thinking and should take more of an active role in supporting the person that they hired. One of the women stated, "*The other thing that I think also played a contributory role was the fact that in many of those positions I was either the first woman or the first minority.*"

The women felt as if racism or gender differences were still very much a part of the culture of academe, however, it has become very subtle. Much of the subtlety has been experienced through the perceptions of others with regards to their race and gender. One woman stated, "*There are some concerns that there still is some gender bias, and just you know old fashioned sexism lead to whether or not women should be in these roles. Can they do this? Can they juggle? Can they manage? Can they make tough decisions? I think a lot of it is the gender as well.*" Eight of the women felt as if they had to prove their worth and work harder than their counterparts. Although ten of the women had the academic credentials in terms of a doctoral degree, they still believed that there was a culture barrier

which contributed to what they referred to as a double glass ceiling. One glass ceiling was for their race and the other for their gender. One participant stated, *"It's not always negating the African American woman but I think that sometimes we're dismissed as not even thought of, I don't think it's taken serious that I have aspirations to be a President, but I did see other people being groomed."*

Zamudio et al. (2011) asserted that the critical race theory framework dismisses the idea that all individuals have access to the same opportunities and success. For example, one of the women stated, "T*hey [Whites] seem to think that we are difficult to work with because we're firm. And to me, African American women are perceived as different because there is such a culture barrier-that race is still there. That glass ceiling is still there-there's a glass ceiling for women and then there, to me, is another glass ceiling where it divides White women and Black women."* Half or six of the women felt they were denied positions of leadership because they were viewed as less competent or overly aggressive. As another one of the women stated, *"you have to work harder to prove your worth, you are never considered equal."* Thus, these women were being racialized in ways that allowed some domination from their White counterparts to coexist. Therefore, it was imperative of them to stand their ground and command respect so that their identity would not be lost in their race.

Overall, the consensus of the women felt that their authority as a credible leader was unfairly questioned time and time again. One of the women stated, *"I had requested funds to implement a program to benefit students but was denied even after I submitted a detailed proposal which detailed both benefits of the program and justification of the costs. I was*

disheartened because, as an Assistant Dean, I had experienced first-hand the Dean before me, who was a White woman having no problems with requesting funds and being approved to implement her programs for the students.'' Additionally, they did not feel as though they received the same level of respect and support that a White administrator would receive.

Although the women believed that buying into the stereotypes of others were not an option, many felt hurt and slighted that their knowledge and ability were not capitalized on. Again, making the women feel that they were hired for token positions and were not as capable as their White counterparts. Four of the women felt that although they had the necessary credentials and the progressive leadership experience, they continued to be less likely hired in an administrative position. Three of the women have had to make geographic moves in order to progress to leadership attainment. As one administrator put it, *"I knew when I got the job as President that some of my colleagues would not like me because I was black and some because I was a woman and some because I was younger than some of my faculty, but the reality is that I was there and I wasn't going anywhere so they may have well get used to it."*

Another challenge four of the women dealt with involved the perception of their academic credentials. This would be the difference between students and faculty questioning their knowledge and authority or supporting their leadership. One of the women stated, *"I've had some of the most difficult situations with faculty, you know, since I've been here. And I was scared to death, but you know, I just held my ground."* Feeding the tension in this scenario, eight of women believed that they were always trying to prove their self-worth.

The women were also disturbed by the barriers their culture would place on their advancement in academe. According to one of the women, *"Well, for African Americans, as long as I've known, we have to – we always have to do, you know, not 100 percent, but 125 percent."* They believed that they were being perceived as incompetent and not able to lead as effectively as their White male and female counterparts. One of the women observed that this caused a feeling of disrespect; however, she maintained an attitude of persistence despite the way she was being unfairly depicted. Eight of the women believed that they were overlooked for certain leadership positions in which they both qualified and applied for, but did not get. Either White men or women would be selected for the position with some possessing less credentials or leadership experience than they. Those that had obtained leadership positions were sometimes made to feel as if they were tokens or placeholders in the position due to their lack of support and limited authority.

While maintaining their positions, four of the administrators felt that the way in which they led became a double standard. This caused undue strain on these women who were wedged between preserving their leadership style and standing their ground or being perceived as too aggressive, angry, or bitter. Whereas four of the women indicated that they noticed that their White female counterparts would be viewed as a firm leader while they were portrayed as an angry Black woman who was difficult to work with simply because of their race and gender. One participant stated, *"You could say the same thing or address the same issue that the Caucasian woman has addressed but it, it is perceived differently because it is coming from an African American."*

Additionally, one of the women felt as though they were being lumped together as an entire race of women and not being viewed on their own individual merits and academic credentials. Therefore, they had to always be aware of their mannerisms and behavior and how it could be negatively viewed by others. Eight of the participants also felt that some of the perceptions with regards to their race and gender were more stereotypical attacks at their personal characteristics and mannerisms. Although, these items that emerged in the sea of themes were overwhelmingly cited by the women as a collective group at some point during the interviews. Negative characteristics such as being too loud, too strong, or too aggressive became dominant repetitions of how others perceived them to be even before they got to know them or learned their leadership style.

The women also felt that there was a double standard. When an African American woman stands her ground and is firm in her tone, she is considered angry or bitter or difficult to work with. On the other hand, when a White woman administrator stands her ground, she is considered to be firm and strong. One of the women stated, *"they can't deal – you know, they cannot deal with the strong, aggressive, um, black woman"*. Therefore, one of the women felt that it was necessary to document accounts or encounters in order to be accountable for their actions and to defend their position. These administrators always felt the need to have to explain their reasoning for the decisions that they made. They believed that if the institution would have stood behind them and supported their efforts and decisions, the challenges they faced solely because of their race and gender would not have been so controversial. Overall, the women constantly felt scrutinized for their actions and accountable for the whole race of African American women. One of the women indicated

that she would be overlooked for a position in which she qualified for because of the institution's previous negative encounter with an African American woman leader. The participant stated that she oftentimes jokes about that encounter with another colleague stating, *"she just messed it up for all of us."*

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the institutional challenges that contribute to the under-representation of African American women in senior administrative positions and strategies employed to leadership attainment in higher education. This chapter discussed concepts that emerged while the qualitative data were analyzed. The data revealed four core concepts relevant to African American women holding senior administrative positions in academe. A synopsis was provided for each participant to provide insight regarding the origins of the concepts. The researcher felt this was necessary to accurately portray the women's perceptions, challenges, and strategies. The concepts that were revealed by the data were expounded upon using statements from each administrator to give a truer sense of the experience.

Through the analysis of data, gained from the participant interviews, the researcher was able to answer the research question and sub-questions. Based on the findings of this study, the overarching question was answered: What perceived institutional barriers contribute to the under-representation of African American women in higher education administration? The most commonly cited barriers by the women included: the culture of the organization, unequal expectations of African American women, lack of support from constituents and supervisors, subtle racist acts, negative perceptions of race and gender,

151

administrative structure being mostly White and male, and feelings of isolation. These barriers were attributed to the institution as being contributory to under-representation of African American women in senior administration. They were also instrumental in their slow climb to obtaining an administrative position in higher education.

The women also answered the following sub-question: How has perceived barriers impeded successful advancement in obtaining leadership positions? It was evident that the persistence of all of the women interviewed resulted in leadership attainment in academe despite the barriers they faced. However, due to the barriers they encountered, four of the women cited that obtaining a leadership position in academe took longer than expected. Two of the women expressed that they were considering early retirement as the expectations placed upon them by their administrators went above and beyond the call of duty. One of these women expressed concerns that while she was considering retiring, the lack of African American women being mentored or trained to step into a leadership role was dismal. This lack of African American women being prepared to obtain leadership positions perpetuates their under-representation in senior administrative roles.

The second sub-question also answered by the women administrators: What strategies have been used to overcome perceived barriers to higher education administration? Chapter 4 details strategies used by the women to overcome perceived barriers to advancement to obtain an administrative position in higher education. Having a mentor or an advocate was the most overwhelmingly cited strategy in terms of importance indicated by all of the women interviewed. Ten of the women interviewed believed that having a love for students and being passionate about your job/career was also conducive to not only

obtaining a leadership role in higher education but also being sustainable in that position. Nine of the women agreed that being confident in oneself and one's leadership ability were integral in having both the strength to pursue leadership roles and persist despite the barriers faced to impede them. Other strategies were also identified to assist the women in successfully navigating perceived barriers to obtain administrative positions in higher education.

By answering the research questions, the women were able to provide insight into their journey in higher education which included a detailed account of the barriers they faced and the strategies used to overcome perceived barriers. These findings drive the conclusions and implications that will be discussed in chapter five of the study. Chapter 5 will shape the conclusions made by the researcher. Additionally, the researcher will discuss the implications of the findings for women of color who desire leadership roles in the higher education.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I have drawn my conclusions through the lens of critical race theory (CRT). Critical race theory shares four main assumptions: (a) issues of power are fundamentally involved with research; (b) the research report is authored by gendered, classed, raced, and politically oriented individual and is not transparent; (c) among other social identities, race, class, and gender are crucial for understanding experience; and (d) historically, traditional research has silenced members of marginalized and oppressed groups (Pasque & Nicholson, 2011). Through this study, I, the researcher have realized that women of color were often confronted with compounded effects of both sexism and racism, which may make their experiences at any type of predominantly White institution different from those experienced by White women and men of color.

Although these women's stories were analyzed within the CRT framework of the existing theoretical assumptions, the categorizations are not intended to place the women into finite and unchanging categories. In essence, it was one way in which the theoretical framework allowed me, the researcher, to best comprehend the trends and patterns in the women's lived experiences. Thus, considering 4 of the 5 tenets of CRT, this study yielded four major conclusions: (a) the women had to tolerate certain negative perceptions of their race and gender, (b) institutional challenges created barriers to advancement and leadership attainment, (c) leadership preparation was foundational for the advancement and growth of African American women in senior administrative positions, (d) personal strategies were

used to circumvent perceived barriers to obtain success in leadership attainment. I discuss these conclusions will be discussed in the following sections.

Solorzano identified 5 tenets of CRT which was used as a lens to help me see similarities among all of the women interviewed and how their experiences shaped their perceptions. These tenets are: Intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination, challenge to dominant ideology, commitment to social justice, centrality of experiential knowledge, and transdisciplinary (Yosso et al., 2004) perspective has shaped the perceptions of women in this study. I was able to see and understand the tenets of CRT through the stories of race and how race relations affect marginalized groups. I now understand that these women had a common desire to invest in themselves and their ability to obtain success in leadership attainment.

Perceptions of Race and Gender

According to Jackson and Harris (2007), there have been notable "firsts" for African American women holding leadership positions. Additionally, African American women have made great strides in both educational attainment and achievement. However, race and gender discrimination continues to be widespread which creates barriers for these women desiring equality in leadership attainment in higher education institutions. Most of the women I interviewed believed that there was a perception, by their institution, that those in leadership were supposed to be men. Therefore, it is not a stretch of the imagination to understand that African American women would experience negative perceptions in their quest to enter the majority dominated senior administrative structure. Given the emerging demands in educational administration, university systems that do not address the issues of

155

race both systematically and holistically will continue to have a narrow focus, ill-informed, and continue to perpetuate inequality (Young & Brooks, 2008).

According to Pasque and Nicholson (2011), many women of color experience campus climates that are hostile, alienating, or unsupportive. The women felt that the color of their skin denied them access in obtaining a leadership position in higher education in which they were qualified for. Patton et al. (2007) asserted that racism is a normal and recurring aspect that shapes our society. However, the women perceived that their gender was just as central of a factor in their lack of progression to leadership as race. They believed that their strength and firmness in their leadership style was viewed by their White counterparts as overly aggressive, angry, and bitter. Therefore, they believed that they were not on a level playing field as their White counterparts as their opportunities were limited based upon their race and gender.

The CRT tenet of *intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination* intersects racism with other forms of subservience. This tenet is interwoven in the stories the women recount based on their experiences of race and gender. The women believed that they had to work harder just to be considered equal to their White counterparts. Their stories detailed accounts of being overlooked for leadership positions in which they qualified for and retained the necessary credentials. There is a level of race consciousness that is evident when an African American woman's quest for leadership attainment takes significantly longer to achieve than their White counterparts holding lesser degrees and experience. In the experiences of these women, their race consciousness extends beyond mere awareness of the color of their skin but can be attributed to their gender as well. It

156

becomes evident that racial stereotypes are a fundamental part of social relations. Race is never divorced from gender due to the distinctive ways Black women experience their race and gender (Pasque & Nicholson, 2011).

As I listened intently to each of the women's stories, their words pierced my soul as their tone changed to one of disillusionment when discussing societal stereotypes of their race and gender. Instead of being gratified by the qualifications and credentials they had persisted to achieve, they felt demoralized. Their joy and fulfillment would be short lived, as the reality of what they looked like, seem to take precedence. As for me, an African American woman beginning my quest to leadership attainment; I began to reflect on my own journey and visualize how my hard work and perseverance could very well turn into years of struggle and disappointment. From a historical perspective, African American women have always had to climb harder and pursue longer to rise to the top. However, what inspires me most about these twelve women is the fact that they did not allow negative perceptions, of the way they were born, define their destiny in which they were created achieve.

Institutional Challenges to Advancement and Leadership Attainment

The women in this study have faced challenges in the institution that have attempted to impede their growth, progress, and successful advancement in senior administration. This study has revealed an agreement among the women that senior administrators in predominantly White higher education institutions are largely White and male dominated. There was also general agreement that there seemed to be a perception in higher education where people believe that leaders are supposed to be men. This lack of diversity structure in

higher education governance, many of the women believed, contributes to the challenges they face in advancing in academe.

The CRT tenet, *challenge to dominant ideology,* is used to explore the challenges or factors that African American women have faced in their quest for leadership attainment. This tenet challenges White privilege and counter claims made by higher education institutions that they are indeed equal opportunity providers. After talking to the women in this study, this claim appears to be hard to substantiate as their experiences look far differently from the disclaimers of race and gender neutrality. However, not all of the challenges experienced by the women surfaced as overt racism or sexism. The women experienced subtle undertones of rejection justified by reasons of not being a good fit for the organization or simply not being privy to informal networks of information sharing. Thus the feeling of isolation, loneliness, and a sliver of despair perpetuated by the institutional climate towards African American women made it difficult but not impossible. Climbing the ladder of success to achieve a leadership position in higher education did not necessarily come with a road map for these women. Nevertheless, they did not allow the twists, turns, and roadblocks they encountered to impede their successful advancement in academe.

If I could be brutally honest, hearing their stories, of the challenges and barriers that these women faced in their quest to succeed, caused me to be a little fearful. I began to ask myself; how do I enter into the ivory tower doors of opportunity and promise when the keys of education and experience are not enough to unlock them? The revelations from these women caused me to take an introspective look at what this all means for my journey. After careful consideration, I finally realized that, although I may not be privy to all of the

158

shortcuts to leadership attainment, their stories have shed some light on the path to leadership success. I understand that I may encounter struggles in my climb. However, those that have gone before me have provided a compass to help guide my route through their experiences. Therefore, I would be slighting my goals and dreams if I allowed the institutional barriers to negatively influence my resolve to succeed.

Leadership Preparation Contributing to Advancement and Growth

Preparing for a position implies that increased opportunities for growth are evident. This holds true for many of the African American women seeking advancement in higher education. The woman agreed that getting the necessary credentials through obtaining the doctorate was imperative for their success and advancement in academe. Thus, they prided themselves on receiving their terminal degree and much more so having obtained it through life and family changes and challenges.

Using the CRT tenet of *commitment to social justice,* critical race theory allowed me to see differences in women's racial identity as well as their corresponding motivations, sense of empowerment, and self-esteem. This tenet works toward eliminating racism and sexism by empowering minorities through authentic gains in education once initiated through civil rights legislation. Thus, the idea of these women investing in their own value was significant to persist in overcoming the institutional barriers that attempted to impede their advancement.

Higher education must challenge its White dominated leadership structure by offering an alternative model for African American women to obtain success through

159

leadership attainment. One area is through leadership preparation programs where African American women can receive the training and skills needed to obtain professional expertise. African American women who have participated in professional leadership training programs or women's leadership trainings were able to meet other women and women of color holding leadership positions. They were able to hear their stories as well as their challenges and opportunities on their journey as well as specific information about what education institutions are looking for in leadership candidates.

African American women must also be proactive in seeking out opportunities to lead. In order for African American women to be competitive in today's institutional climate, she must be intentional about her goals and aspirations and the methods used to achieve them. This study has been very intentional for me as my goal is to one day become a senior administrator in higher education. Having faced barriers to advancement in an educational institution myself and not knowing how to circumvent them, this study would have been a great asset in guiding me through the rough spots by enlightening me on how to stay focused on my goals.   As a young woman with dreams of leading in higher education, I faltered when I believed my career path had stagnated. However, my motivation has been renewed and my dream revived with a sense of empowerment to deal with an unwelcoming climate in higher education.

Personal Strategies to Achieve Success

Despite the obstacles and challenges each woman faced in either obtaining a leadership position or maintaining an administrative position in higher education, they have utilized personal strategies that have assisted their efforts to achieve advancement and

160

success. As previously stated in the research, mentoring is positively correlated to success and achievement in advancement. Gibson (2006) asserted that mentoring may be more beneficial for women than men because women's development and learning is more rooted in the relationships they hold. Therefore, women may be better advantaged in using these mentoring relationships to succeed in leadership roles. This also holds true for the women in this study. The women stressed the importance of securing an advocate or mentor with whom one can connect. Their mentors were helpful in guiding the women as well as grooming them for advancement in academe. Not only were they a source of professional growth, but personal as well, providing insight into the culture and climate of the organization and their own inner selves, strengths, and weaknesses.

Other useful strategies were also used by the women while working in higher education and desiring advancement to senior level administration. All of the women cross-trained themselves and acquired skills and knowledge through requesting to participate on committees or special assignments. This would allow the women the opportunity meet other people from various sectors across campus and learn about areas that they may not be familiar with otherwise. Since being left out of informal networks was cited in creating barriers to advancement, it is important for African American women to stay in the "know" and to be privy to what is going on within the university instead of just one particular area of expertise. Having these connections would provide the opportunity to work with different types of people, to improve upon communication and negotiating skills, as well as creating networks that would assist in leadership attainment.

Centrality of experiential knowledge was the CRT tenet used as a lens to explore the strategies used for successful advancement in the academy. The premise of this tenet recognizes that the lived experiences of people of color are indeed legitimate and critical to understanding racial subordination. These women refused to accept their inferiority status among their majority counterparts and thus found safe spaces where they could express themselves, provide support to each other, and regain power by redefining themselves and their worth. They believe that their stories have merit and are worth sharing.

Thus, instead of feeling devalued, they allowed their hopes and dreams to sustain them through their journey. Their dreams appeared to be rooted and grounded in the construction of their faith in God and support of their family. If the education institution would not invest in their abilities, they concluded through their persistence and perseverance in obtaining a leadership position, to invest in themselves. It was encouraging to see that these women had succeeded despite the challenges they faced. Each woman, so unique in their own individuality, yet, with stories so similar has shown me that we are not an island. Other women have gone before us and are now *"paying it forward"* through their stories and experiences inspiring all women in their quest to succeed.

I beam with pride when I recount their stories detailing the strategies that were used to obtain advancement in higher education. I felt that their advancement was a victory for me as each woman was willing to share insight into their life's journey in an effort to accelerate my success and support my goals. Not only have I come away with tangible strategies for success but with a stronger commitment and resolve as an African American

woman to persist despite the resistance. My voice has power and is important. My experiences have merit and are valid. My goals are possible and obtainable.

My intention for this study was never to promote racism or sexism or to cast a dark shadow on the institution of higher education. As an aspiring administrator in higher education who has experienced challenges in my own quest for leadership attainment, I needed to hear the voices of women who looked like me. I needed to listen to their struggles and hear their successes and understand how higher education institutions contribute to those challenges. Education institutions must realize that it is not enough for them to provide the knowledge through teaching and learning but model their mission through diversity in advancement. Thus, my resolve is; although education provides the opportunity, God is the great equalizer.

Implications

Because critical race perspective draws explicitly on the lived experiences of people of color, it is imperative that the voices of these twelve African American women are heard in their own words in an effort to strengthen the dialogue on race and race relations in higher education institutions. Although all of the women came from an education background, the last tenet of CRT, *transdisciplinary perspective,* allows expansion beyond disciplinary boundaries. CRT can be used to analyze race and racism using both the historical and contemporary perspective in all disciplines because it takes into account the experiences being told through the lens of oppressed groups.

Detailed accounts of the barriers faced as well as the strategies used to circumvent perceived barriers to obtain success have been explored by African American women administrators. These women were given the opportunity to articulate their lived experiences in a safe space detailing how they have challenged the dominant mainstream institutional system. However, their persistence to achieve their ultimate goals of senior administration prevailed. All of the women rejected the stereotypical perceptions of their character assumed by their White counterparts as being angry and bitter, and in turn, redefined themselves on their own terms as being persistent, confident, and capable of leading.

Awareness has been identified as a major implication of this study. The findings of this study have raised the level of awareness this researcher believes will be instrumental in her own efforts to persist in obtaining an administrative position in higher education. The CRT framework used as a lens to explore the dominant themes of this study enlightens the researcher as to the effects of both race and gender on the pace of advancement. Barriers generated by these women have provided insight into the challenges that may be faced by the researcher in her quest to succeed. Additionally, strategies used for successful leadership attainment are articulated for the researcher's use to navigate perceived barriers and persist to senior administration.

Further research should be pursued that expands such studies across other regions and various demographics and disciplines as the participants in this study were primarily located along the east coast and held doctoral degrees in Education. Increased representation in administrative positions and on governance boards would allow African

American women the opportunity to drive policy and best practices to meet the needs of other minority women aspiring to leadership roles in academe. This would ensure that the voices of these women are considered in the policy making process at the institutional level. One suggestion is that higher education institutions and governance boards seek out venues to discuss and evaluate needs and concerns of aspiring African American women in senior administration.

The conscience experience of African American women can uncover insights into the challenges they face in obtaining and advancing in higher education administration. This study has unearthed items that higher education institutions and African American women should consider when advancing or retaining women in leadership positions. Higher education institutions must be receptive to diversifying its senior administrative structure. Change can only occur when institutions challenge the perception that leaders are both White and male. In this case, African American women had obtained senior leadership positions in higher education. However, their advancement was a slow climb laden with challenges unrelated to their credentials and experience. For those institutions, that ventured into unchartered waters in hiring "firsts" failed in its commitment of providing support needed to produce legitimate authority. Having the position, without support in the decisions made and programs initiated, causes many hardships, including the feeling of isolation, loneliness, and racial tensions. Additionally, the expectations for African American women holding senior administrative positions are forcing some women to consider an early retirement.

Another cause for concern was the indication that the women were constantly exploring ways to balance their careers and family. The results indicate that African American women believe that they must work harder and give greater than 100% to prove their worth is an issue that should be visited by higher education institutions. This has implications for maintaining their health, wellness, and supportive relationships they feel are vital for their personal strength and mental health. Most of the women feel that they must keep their business and personal lives separate, however, finding time for their personal lives was disconcerting as the expectations of their administrative position were double than that of their White male and female counterparts.

This study calls for change within the higher education institution with regards to providing authentic leadership programs for African American women possessing demonstrated leadership ability. This means that higher education will need to make a solid commitment in providing leadership preparation programs that reflect the needs of African American women while supporting them in their quest for leadership attainment. However, only having reputable leadership programs in place will not alleviate the under-representation of African American women in higher education if they are not given a chance to lead. Therefore, African American women must be made aware of growth opportunities that present itself within academe.

A true commitment to diversity will be reflected in the university's senior administrative structure as well as in its student body population. Equally important in providing leadership programs that are inclusive of African American women's desire for leadership attainment is the support of a mentor and advocate. The findings of this study

indicated that those women who have mentors are supported and more prepared for their leadership position. Having the necessary preparation and support, they are also able to advance at a much faster rate with the least amount of barriers to constrain them.

The women believe that it is necessary for their growth and success in academe for them to receive information about the institutional culture and climate so they will not sabotage their own success. Not only will higher education institutions be successful in attracting qualified African American women in leadership positions but also instrumental in the success and retention of other African American women as well as students. This will add to the university's commitment to retention efforts and improve campus morale among its diverse population.

Recommendations

Based on the insight gained in this study, I make the following recommendations:

1. The information provided by the administrators should be considered only a starting point of dialogue. More research is needed to examine African American senior administrators in other types of higher education institutions for comparison data with regards to barriers experienced and strategies utilized to obtain success in leadership. Using the critical race approach, this study continues to further the discussion on the lived experiences of African American women in higher education who currently hold leadership positions and how race and gender affects that process. Additionally, it provides useful strategies that have been used by African American women in their quest for leadership attainment.

2. In order to analyze data from a larger sample, a quantitative sample over time could be used to assess how higher education institutions are diversifying its senior administrative structure and what types of supports and strategies have been implemented to aid in the success of African American women in leadership.

3. Higher education institutions would do well to have a diversity board, if they do not exist or only exist in name only, made up of African American women and other minorities to periodically check in and see what suggestions they might have on improving the climate of the university. This committee could disseminate surveys, make recommendations, and create plans to increase receptiveness to diversity initiatives.

4. Governance boards need to be cognizant of the essential administrative supports that African American women holding leadership positions need to create sustainability among its minority leaders and decrease levels of isolation while improving relationships among subordinates and colleagues.

5. It may benefit higher education institutions to implement authentic leadership preparation programs with a mentoring component that would allow the university to promote and retain qualified African American women in leadership positions. This would assist the university's efforts in attracting and retaining more qualified students and faculty ultimately boosting the overall image of the university.

Dissemination

There are several groups who may be interested in the findings of this study. First, I am an aspiring African American woman desiring a leadership program in academe will be able to use the information first hand. In addition, I plan to share the results of this study at conferences to inform other women of color of the strategies that have been useful for leadership attainment. Higher education institutions may be interested in the results of this study and begin to examine its practices and policies to create authentic and sustainable change within it senior administrative structure. I plan to submit multiple perspectives of the voice I heard to journals in the higher education domain, the women's studies arena, and other journals whose readership seeks new and authentic research about issues of diversity and equity. Finally, the study will be available through the database found in the Georgia Southern University Zach S. Henderson Library.

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APPENDIX A

Greetings! Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Kimberly Robinson and I am a Doctoral student at Georgia Southern University located in Statesboro, Georgia. I am currently pursuing a degree in Educational Leadership with an emphasis in Higher Education Administration. The purpose for this email is to humbly request your participation in my dissertation research exploring the Institutional Contributors which lend to the Under-representation of African American women in Senior Leadership positions in Higher Education. This qualitative study intends to examine the lived experiences of African American women who have obtained senior leadership positions in Predominantly White Higher Education Institutions.   This study will focus on the perceived institutional barriers that have contributed to the under-representation of African American women in higher education senior administration and strategies that were used to overcome perceived barriers.

Based on your bio, you have served in this role and I am confident that your story can prove helpful to aspiring women desiring leadership roles in academe. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this study, accompanying this email is a formal letter of Informed Consent requesting your assistance. Again, your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, however, I hope you will agree to participate as the information you can provide will be invaluable other women of color desiring leadership roles in higher education. Thank you for your attention and response regarding this request.
Best,

Kimberly Robinson

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION

The title of the study is: Institutional factors Contributing to the Under-Representation of

African American Women in Higher Education: Perceptions of Women in Leadership Programs.

The research is being conducted by Kimberly A. Robinson, a doctoral candidate in the College of

Education, at Georgia Southern University. I am conducting this study in order to meet the

dissertation requirements for a degree in Higher Education Administration and to address key gaps in

the literature concerning leadership in higher education and both barriers and successful strategies

used by African American Women in obtaining senior leadership positions in higher education. The

chief aim of the study is to explore the perceived institutional barriers that have contributed to the

under-representation of African American women in higher education senior administration and

strategies that were used to overcome perceived barriers.

Participation in this research will include either a phone interview or interview using Skype,

a software application that allows users to make voice calls over the internet. Prior to the interview

session, the researcher will email the questions to the participants to allow time for reflection upon

their experiences within academe before replying. The interview will consist of semi-structured

questions that revolve around the lived experiences of African American women who have obtained

senior leadership positions in predominantly White higher education institutions. To be eligible to

participate, you must be an African American women who has currently held a senior level position

(i.e., Dean, Provost, Vice President, and higher) in predominantly White higher education institutions in both academic and student affairs for at least 3-5 years. There are not any known psychological, physical or emotional risks or discomforts expected beyond your normal daily routine for participating in the study. Any results of the study will be reported as African American women's perceptions only and no names will be used in the study. Although there is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study, this study will provide a clearer picture of the barriers that have impeded the success and mobility in obtaining senior administrative positions in higher education while also gathering useful strategies that were used to overcome perceived barriers to advancement. You are asked to respond within seven days of the receipt of the interview guide. The interview guide consists of two sections, a demographic questionnaire and the interview questions. The interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete. Obviously, participation in this study is voluntary.

As a research participant, information you provide will be kept confidential. No names will be collected and you are asked to avoid any references that could be used to identify you or your institution. Data will be maintained in a secure location following completion of the study and all data will be destroyed after three years. If you have questions about this study, you may contact me (Kimberly Robinson) at (912) 690-3242, or you may contact Dr. Brenda Marina, Dissertation Committee Chairperson at (912) 478-0510. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-0843.

Your consent to participate in this research is strictly voluntary and you may decline to participate, refuse to answer any question(s), or withdraw anytime during the study without penalty or retribution. Please note that your signature will serve as your consent to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records. This project has been

reviewed and approved by the GSU Institutional Review Board under tracking

number___H12192_____.

Title of Project: Institutional Factors contributing to the under-representation of African American women in Higher Education: Perceptions of Women in Leadership Programs
Principal Investigator: Kimberly A. Robinson, 1841 Nottingham Road, Statesboro, GA 30461, 912-690-3242, kr02198@georgiasouthern.edu
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Brenda Marina, 3105 College of Education Building, Statesboro, GA 30460, 912-478-0510, bmarina@georgiasouthern.edu

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

_____   _____
Investigator Signature   Date

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE UNDER-REPRESENTATION

OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PERCEPTIONS OF

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

SECTION A- PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Participant's Pseudonym: _____

2. What is your age?

    a. 29 or less   b. 30-39   c. 40-49   d. 50-59   e. 60 or over

3. Highest Degree earned:
    a. Ph.D.   b. Ed.D.   c. Masters   d. Other (please list)
        _____

4. Marital/Relationship Status
    a. Single/never married   b. married   c. separated   d. divorced   e.
        widowed

5. Number of Children
    a. 1-2   b. 3-4   c. over 4   d. no children

SECTION B- EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

1. Type of undergraduate institution attended:
    a. Historically Black Institution (Public)
    b. Historically Black Institution (Private)
    c. Predominantly White Institution (Public)
    d. Predominantly White Institution (Private)

2. Area of Study for Undergraduate institution
    a. Education   b. Business   c. Technology   d. Other_____

3. Type of Masters institution attended
    a. Historically Black institution (Public)
    b. Historically Black institution (Private)
    c. Predominantly White institution (Public)
    d. Predominantly White institution (Private)

4. Area of Study for Master's institution
    a. Education   b. Business   c. Technology   d. Other_____

5. Type of Doctoral institution attended:
    a. Historically Black Institution (Public)
    b. Historically Black Institution (Private)
    c. Predominantly White Institution (Public)
    d. Predominantly White Institution (Private)

6. Area of Study for Doctoral Institution:
    a. Education   b. Business   c. Technology   d. Other_____

SECTION C- EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

1. How many years of higher education experience do you have?
    a. less than 10 years
    b. 10-15 years
    c. 15-20 years
    d. 20-25 years
    e. 25 or more

2. During your career, how many institutions have you worked at?

    a. 1 to 2   b. 3 to 4   c. 4 to 5   d. 5 to 6   e. more than 6

3. How many years have you been in your current position?

    a. 1 to 3   b. 3-6   c. 6-9   d. more than 9

4. What position did you hold before you were a senior administrator?

    _____

SECTION D- PARENT/FAMILY HISTORY

1. Who did you live with as a youth (ages 0-18)?

   a. mother and father   b. mother   c. father   d. Other_____

2. Highest level of education of male parental figure:

   a. high school
   b. Associates
   c. bachelor's degree
   d. masters
   e.doctorate

3. Highest level of education of female parental figure:

   a. high school
   b. Associates
   c. bachelor's degree
   d. masters
   e.doctorate

4. In your opinion, what class was your family when you were a youth?

   a. upper class b. upper middle class c. middle class d. lower class

5. What kind of community were you reared in?

   a. urban   b. rural   c. suburban

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE

RQ is a notation for Research Question and the alphabet refers to sub-question

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

2. How did you prepare for your current position?

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

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

5. What perceived institutional barriers contribute to the under-representation of African American women in higher education administration? (RQ A)

6. How has perceived barriers impeded success in obtaining leadership positions? (RQ A,B)

7. What strategies were used to overcome perceived barriers to higher education administration?(RQ B)

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

9. What advice do you have for aspiring Black women college administrators? (RQ B)

10. Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently in your quest to obtain a leadership position in higher education? (RQ A,B)

APPENDIX E

LITERATURE MATRIX

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this investigation is to explore the phenomenon of African American women who rise to executive levels of leadership in higher education.

Research Questions

1. What perceived institutional barriers contribute to the under-representation of African American women in higher education administration?

A. How has perceived barriers impeded success in obtaining leadership positions?

B. What strategies were used to overcome perceived barriers to higher education administration?

Chapters of Literature Review

Critical Race Theory(CRT): This chapter explores the historical development, application of the framework, and correlation to race and gender through the shared experiences of African American women and their perceptions of barriers identified in higher education.

African American Woman Experience-Institutional Barriers: This chapter identifies barriers that have contributed to the under-representation through lived experiences and perspectives of African American women in academe.

Factors Impacting Success in Higher Education: This chapter explores the successes African American women have made in obtaining leadership positions in higher education including the strategies used to help overcome perceived barriers to advancement.

Correlation of Interview Guide to Research Questions and Literature

Research Question	Correlation to Interview Guide Question	Major Chapters in Literature
1.What perceived institutional barriers contribute to the under-representation of African American women in higher education administration?	5,6,7,9,10	CRT African American Woman Experience-Institutional Barriers
A.How has perceived barriers impeded success in obtaining leadership positions?	5,6,10	CRT African American Woman Experience-Institutional Barriers
B.What strategies were used to overcome perceived barriers to higher education administration?	6,7,9,10	CRT Factors Impacting Success in Higher Education

APPENDIX E Con't. Literature Matrix

Research Question	Researcher	Contribution
1,a,b (Critical Race Theory)	Patton et al., (2007); Nichols and Tanksley (2004); Collins (2000)	-Race based oppression through shared experiences -Under-representation of African American women in leadership positions -Establishing new vision for institutional leadership -multiplicative impact of race and gender
	Delgado and Stefancic (2001); Tate (1996); Howard-Hamilton (2003); Patton et al., (2007); Yosso et al., (2004)	-Early scholars of CRT -connection between law and race
	McKay (2010)	-Critically assessing social injustices -Social oppression
	Friere (2000)	confront systematic forms of oppressions through sharing experiences
	Blauner (2001); Blauner (1972) U.S. News and World Report (200(); Black and Rothman (1998); Valverde (2003); Williams (1989)	-Challenges race relations -oppression through race relations regardless of education/experience -Representation as power (governance, senior administrators) -Creation of policies & programs
	Yosso et al., (2004)	Five tenets of CRT
	Patton (2009)	-Mentoring Experiences -Limitations of mentoring
	Higginbotham (2001)	-Institutional change/access through increased leadership positions for African American women -Racist ideologies
	Burke et al., (2000); Zamani (20003) Crawford and Smith (2005) Patitu and Hinton (2003); Holmes et al., (2007); Thomas and Hollenshead (2001); Valverde (2003)	-Higher Education institutions as a microcosm of society -Role of Higher Education -Under-representation in leadership position for minorities -Current state of African American women in Academe

APPENDIX E Con't. Literature Matrix

Research Question	Researcher	Contribution
	Holmes et al., (2007) August and Waltman (2004); Gibson (2006); Mahtani (2004); Jean-Marie (2006); Mabokela and Green (2001); Howard-Hamilton (2003); Crocco and Waite (2007); Sealey-Ruiz (2007); Cardwell (2010)	-History of Higher Education -Gender discrimination -African American women face both racial and gender discrimination in higher education -Race and gender based oppression -Role of African American women
	Crocco and Waite (2007); Howard-Hamilton (2003); Mabokela and Green (2001); Jean-Marie (2006)	-Education as access to social and economic parity - Legislation outlawing segregation
	Bolman and Deal (2003); Trower (2002); Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003); Alfred (2001); Prosper (2004); Crocco and Waite (200)	-Culture of Higher Education -Organizational structure in administration -African American women assimilating into culture of academe -Confronting Institutional culture
1,a (African American Woman experience-Institutional Barriers)	Patitu and Hinton (2003); Gibson (2006); August and Waltman (2004); Valverde (2003); Holmes et al., (2007); Mabokela (2003)	-Experiences of African American women and faculty -status of African American women in workplace -barriers to inclusion -unheard voices of African American women in academe -Institutional culture as barrier
	Collins (2000)	Impact of race and gender on experiences in higher education
	Rossman (2000)	
	Schwarz and Hill (2010) American Counsel on Education (2003 & 2005); Holmes et al., (2007); U.S. Census Bureau (2004); Young and Brooks (2008); Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003); Cook and Cordova (2007)	-Statistical data on Blacks within universities -Global demographic shifts in ethnicity

APPENDIX E Con't. Literature Matrix

Research Question	Researcher	Contribution
	Hughes and Howard-Hamilton	Linkages between retention and barriers of African American women on college campuses
	Young and Brooks	Future demographics of nation's population and educational systems
	Holmes et al., (2007) Mabokela and Green (2001) Patton (2009)	Lack of African American mentors in higher education
	Lindsay (1994); Williams (1989); Ramey (1995); Lindsay (1999); Nichols and Tanksley (2004); Patitu and Hinton's (2001); Jackson and Harris (200)	-Studies which examined barriers that hinder African American women in leadership positions -Racism and sexism found as major contributor to lack of advancement -stereotypical attitudes society holds toward African American women
1,b (Factors impacting success in Higher Education Advancement)	Jackson and Harris (2007); Young and McLeod (2001)	-Women require encouragement pursue leadership roles
	Harris et al., (2002) Kezar et al., (2008)	-Challenging assumptions as strategy for creating equity -Concrete efforts made by higher education institutions to increase leadership opportunities for African American women
	Levinson et al., (1978)	-Historical concept of mentoring
	Crawford and Smith (2005) Nichols and Tanksley (2004) Patton (2009) Holmes et al., (2007); Dixon-Reeves (2003); Danley (2003);	-Effect of mentoring on higher education advancement -mentoring relationships in academe cited as instrumental in advancement -mentoring linked to positive psychosocial benefits
	Coleman-Burns (1989)	Education as social change agent

Literature Matrix Con't

Research Question	Researcher	Contribution
1,b (Creation of Safe Spaces)	Mabokela and Green (2001) Burke et al., (2000)	-opportunity for African American women to express themselves freely -allows for support relationships in a safe atmosphere for self-identification

APPENDIX F

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs	
Institutional Review Board (IRB)	
Phone: 912-478-0843	Veazey Hall 2021
	P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-478-0719 IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Kimberly Robinson
Dr. Brenda Marina

CC: Charles E. Patterson
Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Initial Approval Date: 01/04/12

Expiration Date: 12/31/12

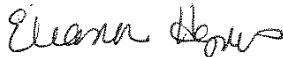**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

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After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H12192** and titled **"Institutional Factors Contributing to the Under-Representation of African American Women in Higher Education: Perceptions of Women in Leadership Positions,"** it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable. You are authorized to enroll up to a maximum of ___14___ subjects.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

If at the end of this approval period there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period. Total project approval on this application may not exceed 36 months. If additional time is required, a new application may be submitted for continuing work. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Haynes

Eleanor Haynes