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NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES ENDURED
AND STRATEGIES EMPLOYED TO SECURE A COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENCY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

IN

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

BY

LOIS M. BRITTON

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Community College Presidency

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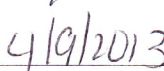
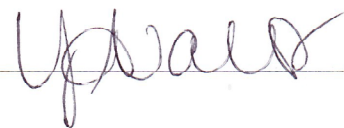
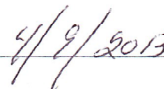
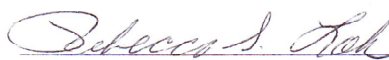
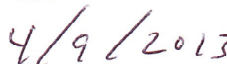
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We certify this dissertation, submitted by the above named candidate, is fully adequate in scope and quality to satisfactorily meet the dissertation requirement for attaining the Doctor of Education degree in the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program.

Signature

Date



DEDICATION

For My Parents, I love and miss you every day.

For Brittany, Mommy loves you. May God continue to bless you and may you always respect, trust, worship, and praise Him.

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My Heavenly Father

To my Heavenly Father, you deserve all the praise, honor, and glory. Thank you for your infinite love, guidance, and strength. I love you and will forever be grateful you cared enough about me to place the right people in my life at the right time to assist me with completing this journey.

Morris and Alice Britton

There are no words to describe how much I miss and love you. Although I only had you in my life for a brief time, I am very thankful God chose you to be my earthly parents. You were wonderful parents and sacrificed so much for your children. The morals, values, and work ethic you instilled in me will never be forgotten and I will make every effort possible to instill the same morals, values, and work ethics in my daughter.

Brittany

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore challenges experienced and successful strategies employed by African American women currently serving as community college presidents. Studies show 35% of community college presidents are expected to retire by the year 2015 (Schultz, 2001), thus opening opportunities for aspiring African American women to secure a community college presidency. However, some of the literature reviewed for this study suggests that if efforts are not made to support the upward mobility of these women, there is a possibility that the number of African American women who are able to secure a future presidency could decrease (Lane, 2004).

This qualitative case study searches for insights from four African American women who served as community college presidents in order to gain an understanding of their perspectives concerning career challenges endured and strategies used to achieve their career goals. These individuals were purposefully selected as participants because their race, gender, and current professional position qualified them to provide important insights into the phenomenon of interest. Three methods of data collection were used in this study: (a) demographic questionnaire, (b) semi-structured interview questions, and (c) field notes.

Using both Critical Race and Black Feminist theories as a basis of analysis, the findings of this study suggest that many of the challenges some African American women experience during their journeys towards a community college presidency are more closely associated with gender as opposed to race. Nonetheless, the study suggests that these challenges have limited the career opportunities for some African American women and contributed to the small increase in their numbers as community college presidents. However, learning from the successes of current female African American community college presidents may encourage other African American

women to not only pursue a community college presidency, but also obtain the position and experience success during their presidency.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Community colleges have been in existence for more than one hundred years, beginning with the inception of the first community college, Joliet Junior College, located in Joliet, Illinois. Originally, this college served as a post-graduate high school, designed to accommodate students who wanted the convenience of remaining in their communities while enrolling in college courses. Although Joliet Junior College was founded in 1901, most community colleges were not established until the 1960s and 1970s (Evelyn, 2001). During this era, America built nearly one community college a week for a decade (Palmer, 1996).

Today, community colleges have developed from operating as post-graduate high schools to functioning as post-secondary institutions, offering associate degrees and professional certificate programs and functioning as sources of empowerment and encouragement for the millions of students who have enrolled. In addition to providing a variety of educational, professional, and personal development opportunities for students, community colleges are known for being affordable institutions of higher learning that operate with an open-admissions policy. The philosophy of being an affordable, open-door institution has directly enabled higher education access for the millions of students who have walked through the doors of community colleges.

When examining the demographic breakdown of administrators at community colleges, a 2006 study by the American Council on Education (2007) determined that 86% of college presidents were Caucasian, and 77% of that 86% was male. The study also discovered that over the past 20 years, there was a minimal 2% increase in the number of African Americans who served as presidents. Finally, the study noted that women of color comprised a mere 9.6% of the total number of community college presidents.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore challenges experienced and successful strategies employed by African American women currently serving as community college presidents. Information shared by the study participants can assist aspiring African American women in creating a career and educational strategy that would enhance their qualifications, credentials, and pursuit of this leadership role. This study is timely, as 35% of community college presidents are expected to retire by the year 2015 (Schultz, 2001), thus opening opportunities for upward mobility to the presidency. Yet, if an effort is not made to support the upward mobility of African American women who are community college professionals, there is a possibility that the number of women from this group who secure a future presidency could decrease (Lane, 2004).

Research Questions

This study was guided by four research questions:

1. What are the personal and professional attributes that African American women community college presidents identify as paramount in obtaining the position?
2. What are some of the commonalities and differences among each president's journey to success?
3. How does the culture of an institution promote or influence the advancement of African American women in community colleges?
4. What external and internal factors contribute to upward mobility within an institution?

These four questions were addressed by mapping the interview questions (Appendix D) to ensure the guiding questions were, in fact, answered.

Significance to the field

Although women have made significant inroads in the field of higher education, the disparity in the number of African American women who will serve as community college presidents is expected to continue (American Council on Education, 2007). The disparity in the number of women serving as presidents is a huge concern because the number of African American women who replaced the 48% of community college presidents who retired by 2011 was very minimal. For example, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) noted 49 community college presidents retired in 2011. Additional data collected by the researcher shows that only three African American women served as replacements for the 49 retiring presidents.

This study will provide further insight into challenges experienced by African American women during the journeys towards the community college presidency, and strategies that community colleges might use to increase the number of female African American presidents. Additionally, this study will fill some of the gaps in the literature regarding female African American community college presidents.

Methodology

The research design used a qualitative research design and case study methodology situated in an interpretive paradigm. Additionally, purposeful sampling was used in this study and participants were matched to specified criteria. Three methods of data collection were used in this study: (a) demographic questionnaire which was completed by each participant prior to the interview and handed to the researcher at the interview, (b) semi-structured interview questions, and (c) field notes. This study used Merriam's data management system and Creswell's data analysis spiral to assist with data analysis.

Site Selection

Purposeful sampling was used in this study and participants were matched to specified criteria. The researcher sought to incorporate colleges in the study that were (a) close to an urban area, (b) close to multi-campus community college districts, and (c) located within the Midwest. Urban community colleges were selected to increase the probability of securing schools that would reflect diversity among administration and students.

Participant Selection

The participants themselves had to be (a) African Americans, (b) females, and (c) community college presidents. The sampling procedure did not control for (a) length of time working in higher education, (b) internal and external applicants, or (c) length of time in the presidency.

After conducting an online search for prospective participants who met the established criteria, the researcher was able to identify three African American female community college presidents, and one African American female chancellor of a community college system who served as a president of a community college immediately before her chancellor appointment.

Conceptual Framework

Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Theory are theoretical pipelines that allowed the researcher to understand some of the challenges African American women experience during their journeys towards a community college presidency. Both theories create a platform for Black women to use their own voices to tell their experiences, and allow the researcher to better understand how race and gender influence their journey toward a community college presidency.

Assumptions

There are two assumptions relevant to this study. First, all presidents would be truthful and honest when providing their responses and sharing their perceptions of challenges they encountered during their journeys towards the community college presidency. Second, the data collected would provide a thorough and detailed depiction of some challenges that aspiring African American women interested in the community college presidency may encounter during their upward mobility, as well as some suggested strategies that may assist them in reaching their career goal.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction into the study, which details the background of the problem, significance of the study, assumptions, role of the researcher, and organization of the dissertation, as well as definitions and acronyms used throughout the study. Chapter 2, the review of literature, outlines the historical development of community colleges, presents a review of leadership development theories, discusses gender and leadership in higher education, and provides a historical perspective of African American women in higher education and some of the challenges African American women experienced during their journeys towards a community college presidency, as well as the theoretical framework used for this study. Chapter 3 provides explanations for the purpose of the study, the qualitative methodology used, the site selection, and the participant selection, and discusses the researcher as an instrument. This chapter also details the data collection processed used, provides the data analysis, and addresses trustworthiness and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 presents the qualitative data collected for this study through data display and analysis. The final section,

Chapter 5, restates the purpose of the study, and research questions provide discussion, implications for each research question, and recommendations for future research.

Definition of Terms

Attribute: that which causes something; a quality or characteristic belonging to a group.

Black Feminist Theory: “Black feminist theory incorporates ideas produced by Black women who clarify a standpoint of and for Black women” (Collins, 2004, p. 103). Black Feminist Theory contains observations and interpretations about African American womanhood that describe and explain the oppression and different expressions of common themes (Collins, 2004).

Community College: an institution of higher education offering associate degrees, diplomas and certificates, career and workforce development, vocational and technical training, remedial studies, and continuing education classes (Vaughn, 2000).

Critical Race Theory: focuses on the various ways in which the law adversely affects people of color as a group. This theory suggests institutional racism exists in the dominant culture and power structures are based on white privilege and white supremacy, which contributes to the marginalization of people of color (Bell, 1995).

Feminism: a movement to end sexism, sexist population, and oppression (Hooks, 2000).

Gender: refers to socially constructed roles of behavior and activities that society deems appropriate for male and female behavior (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 1997).

Gender Stereotypes: “describe stereotyped beliefs about the attributes of women and men and prescribe how men and women ought to be” (Northouse, 2007, p. 76). Preconceived ideas that lead to gender stereotyping of how individuals treat, behave towards, and value women based on preconceived ideas (Northouse, 2007).

Grow Your Own Leadership Development Programs: college-based leadership development programs emphasizing personal growth through the development and application of leadership skills. Participants are in the programs to professionally improve and master standard leadership approaches (Jeandron, 2006).

HBCU: refers to Historically Black College and Universities, institutions that historically serve the needs of African Americans in higher education.

Leadership Development: the knowledge and skill acquisition that happens thorough jobs, personal experiences, activities, and so forth that enhances one's perspective, expands their vision, and integrates information and experience to shape the course of institutions (Green, 1998).

Race: a social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997).

Sexism: the belief that men are superior to women (Hooks, 1994).

Acronyms

AA: African American

AACC: American Association of Community Colleges

CC: Community Colleges

CRT: Critical Race Theory

BFT: Black Feminist Theory

HBCU: Historically Black College or University

ICCB: Illinois Community College Board

IBHE: Illinois Board of Higher Education

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction as to the purpose of this qualitative research study. This chapter also provided an explanation of the significance to the field as well as the methodology used in this study. The methodology was qualitative research situated in an interpretive paradigm. Additionally, this chapter provided an overview of the site selection and participant selection. The conceptual framework used in this study consisted of Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Theory. Finally, this chapter included assumptions, organization of the study, definition of terms, and acronyms. Many of the acronyms are unique to this study and are defined under the definition of terms.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature related to this research study. The literature will examine several theories of leadership as it relates to women and the community college presidency, as well as discuss the impact that race and gender differences have on the career paths of African American women in community colleges. Finally, the literature will support the argument that African American women experience unique challenges when seeking a community college presidency.

Brief Overview of Community Colleges

Community colleges opened its doors more than one hundred years ago, beginning with the inception of the first community college, Joliet Junior College, located in Joliet, Illinois. Originally, this college served as a post-graduate high school, designed to accommodate students who wanted the convenience of remaining in their communities while enrolling in college courses. However, many instances in American history such as the Great Depression and World War II resulted in the original intent of the community college being amended to accommodate the needs of a changing society (AACC, 2007).

The Great Depression of 1929 resulted in community colleges shifting their focus from offering the first two years of liberal arts education to concentrating on decreasing the unemployment rate and training a growing immigrant population. In 1944, the dynamics of community colleges again changed due to the GI Bill of Rights. This bill provided the first large-scale financial assistance program to veterans of World War II. The availability of funds resulted in a significant number of veterans opting to enroll in community colleges. Shortly after the GI Bill of Rights was established, community colleges were again significantly changed due to the Truman Commission (1947). As World War II was ending, President Harry S. Truman charged

community colleges with the responsibility of offering accessible and affordable education to individuals in the community. At this time community colleges were also charged with the responsibility of expanding course offerings to teach skills to help individuals secure employment. The 1960s was another era that greatly impacted community colleges due to the baby boomers. During this decade, more than 457 public community colleges opened. This number of community colleges was more than total the number of colleges that were in existence before that decade. The 1980s proved to be another decade that changed the face of community colleges. During this era, community colleges heavily concentrated on developing partnerships with high schools in efforts to prepare students for vocational and two year programs.

Today, community colleges have developed from operating as post-graduate high schools to functioning as post-secondary institutions, offering associate degrees and professional certificate programs and functioning as sources of empowerment and encouragement for the millions of students who have entered one of the 1,132 community colleges in the United States (AACC, 2010). In addition to providing a variety of educational, professional, and personal development opportunities for students, community colleges are known for being affordable institutions of higher learning that operate with an open-admissions policy. The philosophy of being a cost-effective, open-door institution has directly enabled higher education access for the 11.6 million enrolled students that walk through the doors of community colleges (AACC, 2007). Community colleges yield the largest number of women who are full-time faculty (51%). At institutions that award only bachelor's degrees, approximately 42% of full-time faculty are women; at institutions that award master's degrees, again, approximately 42% of full-time faculty are women; and at institutions that award doctoral degrees, only 34% of full-time faculty are women (King & Gomez, 2008). Not only have community colleges proved to have the

largest number of women in full-time faculty positions, but in comparison to four-year institutions, community colleges have more women in senior-level positions (King & Gomez, 2008). King and Gomez (2008) also report that women hold more than 52% of senior-level positions at community colleges and only 34% of senior-level positions at institutions that award doctoral degrees.

Although women have high visibility in senior-level and faculty positions in community colleges, they are not as visible when examining the office of the president. The American Council on Education ACE (ACE, 2007), reports that only 23% of people who have served as college presidents were women. This percentage is an increase compared to the data examined two decades earlier, showing only 9.5% of college presidents were women. ACE also reports that in 2006, only 19% of women who were college presidents were women of color and of that percentage, only 8.1% were African American.

Illinois Community Colleges

Illinois has significantly contributed to the history and development of community colleges in the United States. The first community college in the nation (Joliet Community College) was founded in Illinois. Additionally, Illinois has the third largest community college system in the nation. In 1931, Illinois adopted its first junior college legislation. This legislation included incorporating the junior college system as part of the public school system.

In efforts to support the operations of community colleges within the state of Illinois, the General Assembly enacted legislation to allow referendums to establish tax rates for both education and building funds. However, state funding for the operation of community colleges was not appropriated until 1955. The legislation for these community colleges was adopted in 1961 and resulted in the development of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). In

1965, additional legislation created the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), which now serves as the state coordinating board for community colleges in Illinois. The primary responsibilities of the ICCB are to “administer the Public Community College Act in a manner that maximizes the ability of the community colleges to serve their communities, promote collaboration within the system, and accommodate those state initiatives that are appropriate for community colleges” (ICCB, 2010, para. 5).

According to the ICCB (2013), there are 39 public community college districts in Illinois. These 39 districts compose a total of 48 community colleges and one multi-community college center. Throughout the state of Illinois, community colleges are located in rural, suburban, and urban areas. These colleges have a student enrollment that exceeds more than one million students each year for students enrolled in credit and non-credit courses. Additionally, Illinois community colleges account for more than half of all undergraduate students enrolled in the Illinois higher education system (ICCB, 2013).

Historical Perspectives of Leadership Development Theories and Associated Challenges

This section examines six leadership theories: (a) Great Man, (b) Trait, (c) Situational Contingency, (d) Path-Goal, (e) Behavioral, and (f) Transformational. Black Feminist and Critical Race theories are also explored in efforts to discuss any social and environmental factors that impede African American women aspiring for the community college presidency. Thus, this section will discuss the influence of race and gender in higher education and the impact they have on the career ascension of African American women.

According to Bass and Stogdill (1990), leadership is one of the world’s oldest preoccupations, and there are as many different definitions of leadership as there are people attempting to define the term. The authors note the word *leader* initially appeared in the English

language as early as 1300 A.D. However, the term *leadership* did not appear until around 1800. Additionally, Bass and Stogdill noted multiple scholars such as Morris and Seeman (1950), Shartle (1951, 1956), Carter (1953), and Gibb (1954, 1969) have used various definitions to define the word leadership. Some of the more commonly shared terms these authors have used when defining leadership include *the focus of group process, personality, compliance, the exercise of influence, form of persuasion, and behaviors*.

Great Man Theory

Bass and Stogdill (1991) suggest that leadership can be best examined when categorizing it according to the era of influence. Among some of the early categories of leadership theory is that of the Great Man. Thomas Carlyle conducted a considerable amount of research on this theory during the 1840s. According to Carlyle, the Great Man theory of leadership states that some people are born with the necessary attributes that distinguish them from others, and these traits are responsible for their assuming positions of power and authority. Carlyle also suggests a leader is a hero capable of arising in times of need, and possesses the ability to accomplish goals in contrary circumstances for his followers. Furthermore, Carlyle contends that all great leaders share these characteristics, regardless of when and where they lived or the precise role in the history they fulfilled.

Challenges of the Great Man Theory

One of the major challenges of Great Man Theory involves the exclusion of women because the theory examines masculine traits. The examination of mostly male traits may be contributed to the idea that during the era in which this theory was formed, leadership mostly involved males. Some of the traits include being independent, objective, non-emotional, assertive, and active (Kellerman and Rhode, 2007). Another challenge of this theory formulated from sociologist Herbert Spencer who suggested leaders were products of the society in which

they lived. Thus, individuals from lower status communities would have less of an opportunity to exercise leadership skills. Gray and Starke (1980) also thought this theory was problematic because it excluded women and defeated the purpose of leadership development programs, due to the practice of waiting for an emerging leader to arise during a time of crisis. Hollander and Offerman (1990) also found flaws in this theory because the effectiveness of the leader's performance was seldom considered or evaluated.

Trait Theory

Further development of the Great Man Theory led to the Trait Theory of leadership. According to Yulk (1994), traits are considered to be human characteristics such as beliefs, values, and temperament, whereas skills are considered to be the ability to get certain tasks accomplished. Trait leadership dominated the 1930s and mirrored several characteristics of those associated with the Great Man Theory of leadership, thus supporting the idea that leaders are born and not made (Wren, 2005). Over time, the Trait Theory evolved to include qualities such as honesty, integrity, confidence, motivation, and an understanding of business as essential to this leadership style (Kilpatrick and Locke, 1991). Other researchers such as Bryman and Stephens (1992) state that leaders who exercise Trait Theory are driven and have the ability to influence and persuade others. Yulk (1994) further elaborates on this theory by stating "the trait approach emphasizes personal attributes of leaders. Underlying this approach was the assumption that some people are natural leaders endowed with certain traits not possessed by other people" (p. 12).

Bass (1990) suggests that if there are certain people who have exceptional innate leadership skills, the skill should be measurable. Therefore, Bass poses two questions that should be asked in efforts to measure innate trait leadership skills. These questions are: (1) What

traits characterize leaders but not other individuals? and (2) What is the magnitude of the variance? Additionally, Bass suggests that the following five methods can further be used to identify the trait leadership skills of individuals:

1. Observation of behavior in group situations
2. Choice by association (voting)
3. Nomination of rating by observers
4. Selection (rating) of people serving in leadership positions
5. Analysis of biographical and case history data

In 1974, Stogdill reviewed 124 trait studies that were conducted between 1904 and 1948, as well as 163 trait studies conducted between 1949 and 1970. Based on the data from the studies, Yukl (1994) concluded that the certain traits and skills are commonly associated with effective leaders.

Table 1 depicts some of the traits and skills associated with Trait Theory of Leadership.

Table 1. Traits and Skills of Successful Leaders

Traits	Skills
Adaptable to situations	Intelligent
Alert to social environment	Conceptually skilled
Ambitious and achievement oriented	Creative
Assertive	Diplomatic and tactful
Cooperative	Verbally fluent
Decisive	Knowledgeable about effectiveness of group work
Dependable	Organized
Dominant	Persuasive
Energetic	Socially skilled

Challenges of Trait Theory

One major challenge of the Trait Theory involves individuals not being able to learn skills and behaviors that are essential in successful leadership because the theorists believe trait leadership skills are innate. Second, this theory does not identify specific traits that separate

leaders from followers (Jennings, 1961). The third criticism of this theory involves the lack of an instrument to measure a leader's success or failure in various situations. The final challenge of Trait Theory suggests that this approach to leadership minimally describes how the leader's traits affect the outcomes of groups and teams.

Behavioral Approach Theory

Although Trait Theory dominated research in the leadership era during the 1930s, the Behavior Approach to leadership was heavily concentrated on during the 1940s. Unlike with Trait Theory, many researchers believed that leadership could be a learned behavior. Researchers such as Landy and Trumbo (1980) believed a behavioral approach to leadership allows for an examination of what leaders do, as opposed to ascertaining their personal characteristics. With this new thought, researchers shifted their focus from learning how to select a leader to concentrating on how to train leaders. Hollander and Julian (1969) also believed that leadership is a learned skill and argued that, unlike Trait Theory, the Behavioral Approach permitted an opportunity for individuals to endure a process to learning essential leadership skills.

The Ohio State Leadership Studies further investigated behaviors of individuals in leadership roles (Hershey, 1996). The researchers at the universities compiled a list of approximately 1,800 leadership behaviors that would be later identified as the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire. The questionnaire was eventually condensed to 150 characteristics of leadership and then further divided into ten larger categories of leadership behavior. The questionnaire was disseminated to subordinates who described the behaviors of their supervisor in certain situations (Yulk, 1994). Based on the data provided for the ten categories, researchers

determined behavior-based leadership was either driven by consideration of others or the structure in which a leader and subordinates operated within an organization.

Consideration based leadership behavior involves the existence of trust, understanding, respect, and open communication between a supervisor and his or her subordinates. In instances where this type of leadership is present, a supervisor will listen and attempt to understand the needs of staff, as well as permit for staff to be equally involved in the decision-making process (Landy and Trumbo, 1980).

Structure based leadership behavior has definite distinctions between the role of the leader and subordinate. Earlier research in structure behavior suggested leaders exercised consideration and implemented structure within the group. However, research that was later conducted suggested that the relationship between those in leadership roles and their subordinates changed in certain situations. Gray and Starke (1980) argue against this theory, and believe it is not feasible to suggest that individuals are capable of amending their leadership style for each situation they experience, but contend that an individual's leadership style remains consistent, indifferent to the situation or circumstances that arise.

An additional behavior based leadership study was conducted at the University of Michigan. The focus of this study attempted to identify patterns in leadership based behavior that distinguished effective leaders from ineffective supervisors based on overall group performance. The results of the data collected from this study suggested that behavior based leadership could be categorized as either job-centered or employee-centered.

Job-centered behavior based leadership is primarily interested in the work productivity and efficiency of the group, whereas employee-centered behavior based leadership involves a more humanistic approach towards employees in attempts to achieve high levels of work

productivity and performance (Likert, 1961). Hershey (1996) believes job-centered leaders are very technical, and use their employees as intricate tools that contribute to accomplishing the goals of an organization. When considering employee-centered behavior, Hershey believed these leaders felt every employee was critical to the operation of an organization, and accepted the diversity in work styles among staff members.

Vroom (1976) concluded that the University of Michigan study suggests three critical aspects are present in behavior based leadership: (1) healthy, supportive relationships exist between supervisors and subordinates; (2) group decision making is utilized and individual supervision is minimized; and (3) performance goals are usually higher for more effective leaders.

Challenges of Behavioral Approach Leadership

Researchers such as Yulk (1994) argue that unlike other leadership styles, behavior based leadership studies fail to explore how leaders exercise various leadership behaviors in diverse work settings. Yulk also argues that this type of leadership style is typically exercised in situations of crisis, when a leader feels the need to take aggressive steps to correct a situation. Thus, typically only displaying leadership skills in times of crisis does not permit for this type of leader to have a steady, active role among staff.

Situational Contingency Theory

During the 1950s and 1960s, situational contingency based leadership evolved. This theory of leadership sought to examine an overall approach to understanding leadership. Contingency theorists believed leadership could be learned and there is more than one ideal leadership style. Thus, different situations require different leadership styles (Gray and Starke, 1980). These theorists argue that leaders will lead the same group of people differently by

changing their leadership styles to adapt to the demands of the current situation (Williams and Huber, 1996).

Fred Fiedler (1967) developed two models of Situational Contingency Theory. Fiedler developed the Least Preferred Co-Worker (LPC) Scale that initially measured similarities and differences in relationships between therapists and patients. Fiedler concluded therapists were more productive and successful working with clients they perceived as having similar characteristics as themselves. Fiedler extended his research to include individuals working in other group settings. Fiedler asked study participants to describe their most and least preferred co-worker, as opposed to the original study which focused on similarities and differences. Favor, as defined by Fiedler, is the amount of control a leader exercises over a subordinate in a given situation. The amended version of the study suggested that leaders who favor the most preferred co-worker were categorized as being relationship oriented. These leaders are concerned about their subordinates and forming positive relationships with them. Leaders who favored the least preferred co-worker were characterized as task oriented leaders. Overall, the study concluded that leaders were more successful in situations where the work environment could be amended to fit the leadership style of an individual, as opposed to attempting to change the leadership style of an individual to accommodate the work environment.

Challenges of Situational Contingency Theory

Challenges associated with Situation Contingency Theory include (a) the validity of the LPC scale when considering the possibility of the scores declining over time, (b) it is not clearly stated what the LPC scale measures, and (c) existing research studies do not support this theory (Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Landy & Trumbo, 1980).

Path-Goal Theory

The Path-Goal Theory of leadership evolved from Situational Contingency Theory and combines theories of leadership behavior and situational favorableness (Hoy & Miskel, 1991). In Path-Goal Theory, the leader attempts to identify the roles of subordinates and clearly defines a path (hard work) to accomplishing the goals (rewards). Path-Goal oriented leaders attempt to influence the performance of employees by identifying behaviors (paths) that lead to rewards (goals). This theory suggests that a leader's behavior is motivating or satisfying only to the extent in which it increases the goal attainment of subordinates and clearly identifies the paths to the goals. Theorists such as House and Mitchel (1974) state that individuals with this leadership style are effective because of their impact to motivation, satisfaction, and performance.

House and Mitchel believe there are four types of behavior associated with this theory: (a) directive leadership, which is leader behavior that involves leaders providing subordinates with detailed instruction on how to complete a task and informing them what is expected of them; (b) supportive leadership, which is leader behavior that exemplifies concern and well-being of subordinates; (c) participative leadership, which is leader behavior that takes into consideration the input of subordinates before making decisions; and (d) achievement oriented leadership, which is leader behavior that encourages subordinates to achieve excellence by setting challenging goals and high performance standards.

Challenges of Path-Goal Theory

Some challenges of the Path-Goal Leadership Theory involve conceptual problems and inconsistent results that place limitations on the usefulness of this leadership behavior (Bryman and Stephens, 1996). However, theorists such as Yulk (1994) argue that this leadership behavior is only intended to be a temporary explanation of the motivational effects which drive a leader's behavior.

Transformational Leadership

The 1970s and 1980s resulted in significant changes in leadership styles. Among these changes were new additions to leadership theories and definitions. Burns (1978) suggested leadership is either transactional or transformational. Transactional leaders are consumed with emphasizing assignments, tasks, and deadlines, as opposed to transformational leaders who are more focused on leading a process that motivates followers and creates an atmosphere where followers believe their insight is just as valuable as the leader's.

Burns (1978) was one of the first to provide a definition of transformational leadership. Burns defines transformational leadership as a process where the leader exercises moral and ethical values, and places emphasis on improving the strength of an organization by increasing the level of the subordinates' commitment and willingness to contribute to the organization (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternberg, 2004). Kouzes and Posner (2002) state transformational leadership occurs when managers raise individuals to a higher level of motivation and morality. Eagly and Carli (2007) believe transformational leaders set high goals for the organization and work to gain the trust of their subordinates. Additionally, they believe transformational leaders often serve in the capacity of mentors to their staff.

Research has shown that success of female leadership is often associated with traits indicative of transformational leadership, and that this leadership style is more frequently used by women (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Paternoster (2006) conducted a study that measured traits typically associated with transformational leadership. The study concluded that more women than men use this leadership style. The study also proved women scored higher than men in the areas of influence, motivation, and improving the overall effectiveness of an organization.

Challenges Associated with Transformational Leadership

One of the major challenges of transformational leadership theory is it is often associated with an elitist concept. Additionally, researchers such as Northouse (2007) contend this theory places an emphasis on the heroic aspect of leadership, and overlooks the contributions of those in subordinate positions. Northouse also argues this type of leadership can cause subordinates to display behaviors which are commensurable with the leader's objectives.

Gender and Leadership in Higher Education

According to a survey conducted by the American Council on Education (2007), the number of women serving in the capacity of community college presidents has tremendously increased from the 1980s. Per the data provided in the survey, in 2006, approximately 28.8% of community college presidents were women, compared to the reported 7.9% of presidents who were women in the 1980s. However, this number is still significantly disproportionate when considering that the remaining 71.2% of community college presidents are males.

Amey (1999) contends that leadership positions in community colleges have often been dominated by White males. The author suggests the practice of having the majority of community college presidencies occupied by White males creates a cultural of male dominance in the presidency. Furthermore, the author suggests that women aspiring for higher positions may be forced to abandon their own unique qualities and adopt those of the dominate culture in hopes of career ascension.

Amey, in collaboration with VanDerlinden (2002), conducted additional research concerning women in higher education. The conclusions of the research again noted that women were significantly under-represented in senior-level positions in higher education. The author's research concluded that males were more likely than females to be internally promoted to the

college presidency. The research also showed approximately 18% of women and 25% of men in senior-level positions in higher education were internally promoted to the college presidency.

In March 2001, the *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* contained an article which examined women as leaders in higher education. Three authors (Stephenson, Evans and Giannini) contributed to the article. These authors suggested that in efforts for aspiring women to secure senior-level positions in higher education, they need to: (a) develop an understanding of how to address pressing issues such as enrollment, staffing, and the current workforce; (b) be able to make needed organizational changes to ensure institutional mission and goals are met; and (c) be prepared to be charged with the responsibility of being a needed “change agent” who is expected to guide the future agendas of higher education.

In 2007, the American Council on Education (ACE) published a report that included a profile of female presidents. The report also compared data collected in a similar study conducted approximately twenty years earlier. The report found the average age of a female college president was younger than the male president, showing an average age of 56.4 years for females compared to 57.9 years for males. The number of female presidents more than doubled from 10% to 23% between 1986 and 2006. However, the report noted that since the late 1990s, there has been a steady decline in the number of women who have secured a college presidency.

Additionally, the report found community colleges hold the largest number of female presidents and institutions that awarded doctoral degrees had the fewest number of female presidents, with only 13.8% of female presidents heading such institutions. The report also showed that only 63% of women in the role of the president were married, compared to 89% of men who served as presidents.

Women in Higher Education

In 1834, Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio was the only institution that did not discriminate in the admission students due to race or sex (Watson, 1977). This institution admitted four young women into a mainstream curriculum, allowing for Oberlin College to be the first co-educational school of higher education in the country (Watson, 1977). Although the opportunity existed for women to enter the doors of higher education, enrollment in the college did not guarantee equality. Women who enrolled in the college could only enroll in specific majors, had very limited social freedom, and were not given the same level of consideration and respect as their male peers (Watson, 1977). Women were limited to studying fields such as education. Professions such as law, medicine, and religion were not available to women and limiting women to the field of education oppressed them. The oppression of women continued throughout the 20th century, despite the fact that the number of women in higher education continued to grow. Women during this era experienced oppression by having the only additional options for fields to concentrate on being related to nursing or administrative assistants. These positions are viewed as servitude and not leadership (Watson, 1977).

The 1900s resulted in increased opportunities for women to gain access into higher education due to the increasing number of female-only colleges and religious schools of studies being founded (Watson, 1977). The number of institutions that amended their admissions policies to allow women to enroll also contributed to the increase of women who attended institutions of higher education. This adjustment in the admissions policies caused the number of women who enrolled in colleges/universities to peak during the 1920s (Solomon, 1985). The increase in women's enrollment continued throughout the 1940s and exceeded the number of men who enrolled during this time, primarily due to the war. The low male enrollment proved to

be beneficial to female students, allowing their academic potential to capture the attention of instructors and open the door for women to study fields such as engineering and science (Solomon, 1985).

The increase in the number of women entering institutions of higher education dramatically dropped during the 1940s due to the reoccurring issue of the role of women in society (Solomon, 1985). The growing economy of the 1950s and 1960s also proved to be a contributing factor to the continued decrease in the number of women who enrolled in post-secondary studies. The growing economy offered opportunities for women to secure paid jobs, which appealed to a significant number of women (Solomon, 1985). However, during the 1970s more women returned to college and took advantage of the increased number of coeducational institutions, as well as the growing number of community colleges (Solomon, 1985).

In 2008, AACU released a report that showed women make up the majority of students enrolled in higher education, with an enrollment of approximately 57% (King & Gomez, 2008). Women earn almost 62% of all associate degrees, 58% of bachelor's degrees, 60% of master's degrees, and almost 50% of legal and medical degrees (King & Gomez, 2008). According to these researchers, women have not only made significant inroads in securing post-secondary degrees, but there has been constant growth in the number of women securing full-time faculty positions as well. Community colleges yield the largest number of full-time faculty who are women (51%) and institutions that award only bachelor's degree have approximately 42% of full-time faculty who are women, institutions that award master's degrees also have approximately 42% of full-time faculty who are women, and institutions that award doctoral degrees only yield 34% of fulltime faculty who are women (Tuchman et al., 1978).

Not only have community colleges proved to have the largest number of women in full-time faculty positions, but in comparison to four-year institutions, community colleges have more women in senior-level positions (King & Gomez). King and Gomez (2008) also report that more than 52% senior-level positions at community colleges are held by women and only 34% of senior-level positions at institutions that award doctoral degrees.

Although women have high visibility in senior-level and faculty positions in community colleges, they are not as visible when examining the office of the president. ACE (2007) reports only 23% of those who served as college presidents were women. This percentage is an increase compared to the data examined two decades earlier, showing only 9.5% of college presidents being women. The website also reported in 2006, only 19% of female college presidents were women of color and of this percentage, only 8.1% were African American.

African American Women in Higher Education

African American women's involvement in education in the United States can be dated as far back as slavery, when enslaved women secretly learned to read and write. Although it was illegal for any slave to learn how to read or write, some female slaves had an infinite spirit of courage and jeopardized their well-being in efforts to teach other slaves to read and write (Wolfman, 1997). The late 1750s proved to be a time period of minute change for African Americans. During this time, a small portion of institutions of higher education permitted African American students to enter their doors. Oberlin College was the first institution of higher education to admit students of color and the first to award degrees to African American women before the Civil War (Fletcher, 1943).

Oberlin College produced some very well-known African American female graduates who made significant contributions to the history of education in Black America. In 1862, Mary Jane Patterson was the first African American woman to receive a Bachelor's degree from Oberlin College. After receiving her degree she taught in the Philadelphia school system and later became the first African American principal of Preparatory High School for Colored Youth (Fletcher, 1943). After completing her undergraduate studies in 1865, Sara Early became the first African American woman to teach at Wilberforce University, and in 1889, Mary Church Terrell earned her undergraduate degree from Oberlin and became the first African American woman to serve on the Washington, D.C. Board of Education and, eventually, the first president of the National Association of Colored Women (Davis, 1982).

Although Oberlin College admitted women beginning in 1837, the first educational institution conferring higher degrees to women was Wesleyan Female College of Macon, Georgia (Brubacher & Rudy, 1958). Other important events related to the success of African American women in higher education include the efforts of a White woman, Mytilla Minor. In 1851, Ms. Minor attempted to build Minor Teachers College, an institution of higher education for Negro girls (Arnold, 1994). Although Ms. Minor passed away before her vision manifested, eventually the college was among the first to offer integration (Arnold, 1994).

The opportunities for African American women to enroll in institutions of higher education such as Oberlin College and Minor Teacher College were the exception. Typically, African American women were often denied admissions at multiple colleges and universities throughout America. For example, by the year 1890, only 30 African American women had college degrees in comparison to 300 African American men and 250 White women (Faragher & Howe, 1988). The discriminatory practice of not permitting African American women to enroll

in institutions of higher education created the development of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Over a span of thirty-five years, HBCUs grew and offered increased options for African American women to pursue post-secondary education. Also, the Morrill Land Grant of 1862 aided in the number of African American women who enrolled in institutions of higher education (Faragher & Howe, 1988). This act required states to admit students to colleges and universities indifferent to their race, or to designate land for colleges to be built to admit students of color. Although land grant institutions and HBCUs offered additional opportunities for African American women to enroll in institutions of higher education, the cost of tuition often prevented many African American women from pursuing post-secondary studies (Faragher & Howe, 1988).

The 1950s and 1960s was another important era that had a huge impact on the entry of African American women in education. In 1954, Brown versus the Board of Education Supreme Court case was won, and the Higher Education Act of 1965 allowed tremendous gains for African American women to have access to institutions of higher education and provided financial assistance to them as well (Roebuck & Murty, 1977). Efforts of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) during the 1970s also helped African American women and other people of color to gain access to higher education. In 1970, the NAACP filed a lawsuit against the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. This lawsuit forced all public schools that wanted federal funding to cease segregation practices (Roebuck & Murty, 1977). The success of the lawsuit dramatically increased enrollment of African American women in predominately White institutions.

In the late 1960s and during part of the 1970s, the Civil Rights period unfolded in the United States. Often, African American students enrolled at predominately White institutions protested and demanded that institutions make greater efforts to accept more African American students, increase the number of African American studies programs being offered, and hire more African American instructors (Roebuck & Murty, 1977). Affirmative Action soon followed the Civil Rights period and resulted in an increase in the number of African Americans who were hired as professors and administrators at colleges and universities (Roebuck & Murty, 1977).

Etter-Lewis (1977) believes research concerning African American women in higher education has been very limited, and much of the existing research has grouped these women into undifferentiated categories of women or Blacks. Vital-Howard (1989) argues that existing research on African Americans in higher education has neglected to specifically examine the challenges and successes of African American women. Vital-Howard contends that the majority of research in this area focuses on African American males, thus excluding the experiences and contributions of African American women.

First African American Women to Earn Doctoral Degrees

Although the existence of HBCUs offered opportunities for African American women to complete post-secondary studies, it was not until 1921 that an African American woman was able to earn a doctoral degree. Sadie Turner Mossell Alexander, Eva Dykes, and Georgiana Simpson were the first African American women to earn doctoral degrees. These trailblazing women earned their Ph.D.s from the University of Pennsylvania (Sadie Turner Mossell Alexander), Radcliffe College (Eva Dykes), and the University of Chicago (Georgiana Simpson), (Mimms, 1996). After the completion of their degrees, Dr. Dykes and Dr. Simpson accepted

faculty positions at Howard University in Washington, DC. Upon completing her doctoral degree, Dr. Alexander earned her law degree at the University of Pennsylvania and practiced law with her husband at their Philadelphia law firm (Mimms, 1996).

First African American Women to Serve as College Presidents

Mary McLeod Bethune was the first female African American college president. Ms. Bethune was the founder and principal of the Daytona Educational and Industrial School for Negro Girls. Ms. Bethune eventually became the president of Bethune-Cookman College in July of 1923 (Mimms, 1996). In 1925 Ms. Bethune joined the efforts of administrators at Cookman Institute, an all-men's college. These joint efforts resulted in the formation of a coeducational institution, Bethune-Cookman College. Ms. Bethune's commitment to the future of African American women in higher education led her to establish the National Council of Negro Women (Mimms, 1996).

Dr. Rosetta Wheadon proved to be another pioneer who made significant inroads to aspiring African American women in higher education. Dr. Wheadon became the first female African American community college founding president when she founded State Community College in East Saint Louis, Illinois in 1967 (Robinson, 1996).

African American Women as College Presidents

According to Darling-Hammond (1987), the lack of African American women in higher education has been a long-standing problem. Eddy and Cox (2008) state that women represent the majority of students on community college campuses. However, women represent less than a third of all community college presidents. The American Council on Education (COE)/Office of Minority Concerns also expresses concern for the lack of African American women in higher education. In 2007, the COE reported three contributing factors which have

affected the number of African American women in higher education. These factors include: (a) lack of institutional support, (b) a shortage of African American women in entry and mid-level positions who are prepared to assume the responsibilities of senior-level administrators, and (c) a significant number of African American women who do not complete their doctoral studies.

James Renick, vice-president of ACE, also addressed the disproportionate number of African American women who serve as community college presidents. After reviewing the presidential data released by ACE, Mr. Renick stated that the growth in the number of African American female presidents was no longer progressing. Furthermore, Mr. Renick stated the lack of progress for African American women in the role of presidency presents an issue for how the next generation of leaders is educated. Renick suggests sincere efforts are made to understand why African American women are not securing a college presidency, and once the answers to the questions are discovered, strategies are created to address the issue(s). Renick also suggests additional scholarly efforts be dedicated to gaining a full understanding of leadership and how it impacts African American women in the pipeline to the presidency.

African American Women as Community College Presidents

When examining the demographic breakdown of administrators at community colleges, information available on the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) website in 2013 indicated that 81% of college presidents were Caucasian, 8% were African American, 6% were Hispanic, 3% were Native American, 1% were Asian American, and 1% identified themselves as belonging to another race. Furthermore, information on the website revealed that 72% of the presidents were male and only 28% were female.

Figure 1 provides a snapshot involving the disparity in race between community college CEOs. The figure shows 81% of the community college CEOs are Caucasian and only 8% were African American.

Figure 1. Community College CEOs by Race(AACC, 2010)

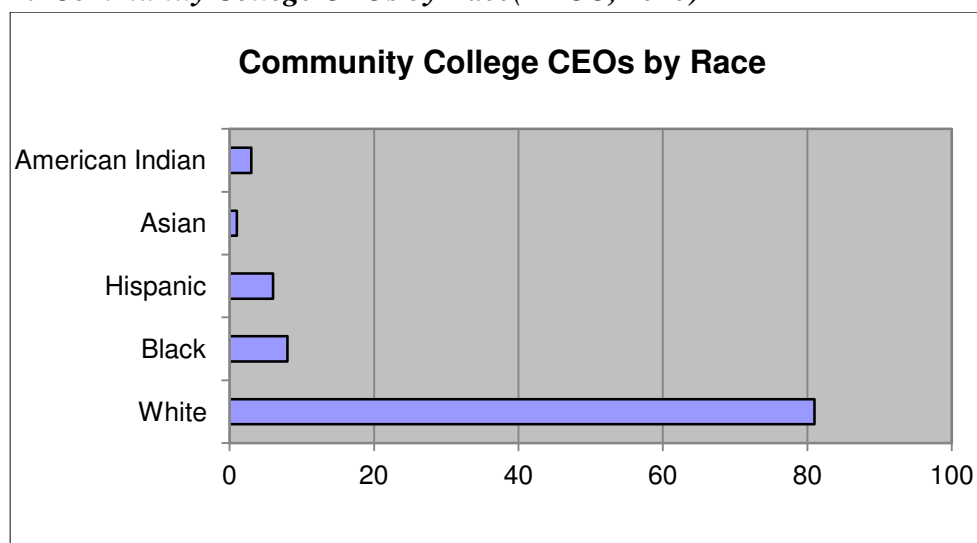
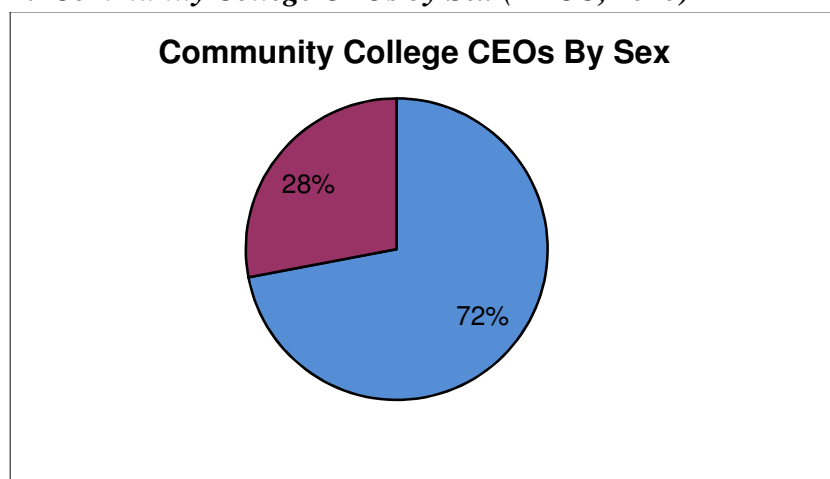


Figure 2 shows another disparity among presidents of community colleges. This figure illustrates the disproportionate number of men in comparison to women who serves as community college presidents. As noted in the figure, the number of men serving in presidential positions almost doubles the number of women who serve in these positions.

Figure 2. Community College CEOs by Sex (AACC, 2010)



Conceptual Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Feminist Theory (BFT) are theoretical pipelines used in this study because they allow the researcher to more deeply explore the issues specifically related to experiences of African American women in higher education. Additionally, BFT allowed the researcher to explore the challenges of Black women and understand how race and gender influence their professional growth. Specifically, for the purpose of this study, CRT and BFT were used as a filter to understand the oppressions that African American women in higher education experience and to identify possible strategies these women can employ to assist with securing a community college presidency.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was formed during the 1970s by Derrick Bell as a response to the slow improvement to eliminate racism after the civil rights era (Delgado, 1993). Derrick Bell was a civil rights litigator for the NAACP where he worked to undo racist laws and segregation in the schools (Tate, 1997). After his work with the NAACP, Bell was hired as a faculty member at Harvard Law School (Tate, 1997). Bell's experiences with the NAACP focused on changing the thoughts and practices of society by changing the laws which governed them (Tate, 1997). Furthermore, Bell took his experiences gained at the NAACP into his Harvard classroom, where his intentions were to use his position to continue with civil rights work and he became noted for his development of CRT (Tate, 1997).

Bell's scholarship in CRT includes the idea of an interest-convergence principal which suggested White Americans do not respond to the needs of African Americans unless it meets the needs of White Americans (Bell, 1979). Along with this idea, Bells also suggests White supremacy and racial power are engrained in American society and consistently maintained over

time (Bell, 1979). The second prominent idea developed in Bell's work with CRT suggests that White Americans will not support policies that threaten their status (Bell, 1979).

Additionally, CRT draws upon the lived experiences of people of color and uses methodologies such as life stories, biographies, and narratives to capture their experiences (Solorzano, 1998). CRT is mostly used in qualitative research to attempt to uncover the ongoing practices of racialized power (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995, p.xxix). CRT has overall goals to eliminate all forms of oppression and challenge America to examine race, class, and gender privileged individuals in both formal and informal settings (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xxix).

There are three tenets to CRT relevant to this study. The first tenet suggests that America considers racism to be normal and because racial practices are so common, it is difficult to see (Bell, 1995). The second tenet suggests that White Americans will only support justice of African Americans when it is in the interest of the White American (Bell, 1995). Tenet three argues that race neutrality, equal opportunity, and color blindness do not exist and are not practiced in education (Bell, 1995).

Black Feminist Theory

Feminist theory focuses on the oppression of women. Through feminist theory, women can understand some of the struggles of oppression existing in organizations (Eisenstein, 2004). Feminist theory assumes that all women exist in homogeneity and have similar struggles (Eisenstein, 2004). However, Black Feminist Theory focuses on the oppression of Black women and argues sexism, class oppression, and racism are inextricably bound together (Collins, 2004). Black Feminist Theory strives to communicate the multiple oppressions of Black women (Collins, 1994). There are two main areas considered in this theory: (a) the experiences and

oppression of Black women are different from other women, and (b) commonalities and differences exist between Black women when considering religion, sexual orientation, and social-economic status (Collins, 2004).

Collins (2004) argues there are two dimensions that have caused the oppression of African American women. The first dimension dated as far back as slavery when African American women worked as domestic servants in homes of Caucasian men and women (Collins, 2004). Slavery created negative images of African American women and created a system of devaluation (Hooks, 1984). The second dimension focused on the denial of African American women's voting rights, the exclusion of African American women and men from political positions, and the denial of equal treatment in the legal system (Collins, 2004).

Feminists such as Alice Walker stressed the importance of understanding that African American women experience more intense types of oppression in comparison to White women. Walker notes that although African American women faced the same struggles as Caucasian women, African American women experience issues of diversity in addition to inequality. Other African American feminists such as Angela Davis believe the liberation of African American women involves freedom for all people of all races because it would end racism, sexism, and class oppression (Collins-Hill, 2000).

Gender and Racial Discriminatory Practices

Discriminatory practices in the workplace have hindered the professional growth and development of African American women. Some of these practices include the glass ceiling, good old boys network, tokenism, racism, and sexism. The impacts these practices may have on the career accession of African American women are manifested in a number of ways. Some of

those practices include, but are not limited to the glass ceiling, the good old boys network, tokenism, sexism, and racism. These practices are highlighted in the sections that follow.

Glass Ceiling

The glass ceiling is a metaphor used to describe an invisible barrier that prevents many women from reaching top leadership positions indifferent to their qualifications and credentials (Kephart & Schumacher, 2005). Thomas, Bierema, and Landau (2004) also describe the glass ceiling as a metaphor for the invisible barrier used to pushed women to the sidelines to slow their upward mobility and career growth. The authors suggest the glass ceiling is created by prejudicial practices such as cultural tendencies and power, and believe that glass ceiling practices keep women in subservient roles, making them inferior to males (Yasin & Helms, 2007).

In 1989, Elizabeth Dole, Secretary of Labor for the Bush administration, launched a Department of Labor investigation to identify glass ceiling practices. The investigation found there were no women employed at nine major corporations that were awarded significant government contracts (Office of Federal Contract Compliance, 1991). As a result of the investigation, the Glass Ceiling Act was enacted in 1991 as Title II of the Civil Rights Restoration Act and a commission was formed to identify barriers and implement strategies to promote employment opportunities for the advancement of minorities and women (Falk & Grizard, 2003).

The research available on glass ceiling practices in higher education is scarce. However, there are some researchers who have examined the practices as it relates to higher education. Unfortunately, in higher education the majority of the available research focuses on the deferential treatment of female faculty. Some of the researchers who did examine the effects

the glass ceiling had on women seeking executive positions in higher education (Thomas, Bierema and Landau, 2004) showed that patriarchal environments contributed to the limited access women have had to leadership positions, acknowledge the existence of the glass ceiling, and suggest it serves as a significant barrier to women seeking advancement opportunities in corporate American.

The Good Old Boys Network

The research for this study showed the “good old boys” network existed and at times proved to be a barrier for aspiring African American women. This network commonly refers to a group predominately comprised of White men who control the educational system (Harvey, 1999). The men in this group are in power to make decisions and control the educational system (Harvey, 1999). Typically, the race and gender of African American women keep them from being included in the group and hinders their career ascension.

Tokenism

Tokenism is another barrier many African American women report experiencing. According to Moses (1989), tokenism can be referred to as the practice of hiring a specific racial group to meet a quota. Moses (1989) provides an example of how tokenism is viewed, by suggesting a dominant group will view a small number of people from other ethnic or racial groups as “tokens.” The dominant group will treat people from the smaller groups as representatives or symbols of their group as opposed to individuals. Kanter (1989) also discusses tokenism in her ethnographic study, which found women of color in management positions were considered tokens because they were so few in number. The women in Kanter’s study (1989) reported feelings of isolation and being viewed as an outsider. Turner (2002) believes the lack of African American women in higher education places an expectation on

women to serve as role models for their profession and race. Sandler (1986) affirms this thought that African American women are constantly called upon to represent the view of all African American women or the women's viewpoint, thus causing several African American women to still feel as though they are not inclusive members of the organization.

Racism and Sexism

Cobb (1969) suggests that African American women encounter racism and sexism early in life and these experiences hinder the professional advancement of these women. Stimpson (1974) states women and African Americans are members of inferior classes; therefore, African American women are faced with double issues of discriminatory practices. Stimpson also states that racism and sexism are common issues that create unwelcoming environments for African American administrators in higher education. Meyers (2002) supports this statement by mentioning that racism and sexism are two issues that lead to adversity in the work and directly impact hiring and promotion practices for African American women. Meyers believes these practices are challenges that hinder opportunities for African American women who are in search of career advancement. Bruner (1998) also believes racism and sexism are challenges that prevent African American women from the college presidency despite the implementation of laws created to cease this behavior.

The research reviewed for this study indicates racism and sexism still exist and highly affect the succession of African American women in higher education. These barriers are a major concern to professionals in higher education, and many scholars believe monetary outreach should be invested in programs design to eliminate practices of racism and sexism in higher education. CRT and BFT are theoretical pipelines that allow the researcher to understand some of the challenges African American women experience during their journeys towards a

community college presidency. Both theories create a platform for Black women to use their own voices to tell their experiences and allow the researcher to better understand how race and gender influence their journey toward a community college presidency.

Summary

This chapter presented a brief historical overview of community colleges, a review of theories of leadership, a historical perspective of African American women in higher education, and some of the challenges African American women may experience during their journeys towards a community college presidency. Additionally, the literature revealed that despite the implementation of Affirmative Action and Equal Pay laws, African American women still experience significant barriers when seeking senior-level administrative positions.

The literature discussed how the theoretical pipelines used in this study allowed the researcher to more deeply explore the issues specifically related to experiences of African American women in higher education. Discussions involving how sexism, racism, tokenism, the glass ceiling, and the good old boys network serve as hindrances to the professional growth of African American women are also included in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a detailed description of the qualitative case study approach used to conduct the research. Following a restatement of the study's purpose and research questions is an explanation of the research design, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and trustworthiness. This case study explored the experiences of four African American women who served as community college presidents in order to gain an understanding of their perspectives concerning career challenges endured and strategies used to achieve their career goals. These individuals were purposefully selected as participants because

their race, gender, and current professional position qualified them to provide important insights into the phenomenon of interest.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore challenges and successful strategies that can be employed by African American women seeking a community college presidency. Information shared by the study participants can assist aspiring African American women in creating a career and educational strategy that would enhance their qualifications, credentials, and pursuit of this leadership role. This study is timely, as 35% of community college presidents are expected to retire by the year 2015 (Schultz, 2001), thus opening opportunities for upward mobility to the presidency. Yet, if an effort is not made to support the upward mobility of African American women who are community college professionals, there is a possibility that the number of women from this group who secure a future presidency could decrease (Lane, 2004).

Research Questions

This study was guided by four research questions:

1. What are the personal and professional attributes that female African American community college presidents identify as paramount in obtaining the position?
2. What are some of the commonalities and differences in each president's journey to success?
3. How does the culture of an institution promote or influence the advancement of African American women in community colleges?
4. What external and internal factors contribute to upward mobility within an institution?

Qualitative Methodology

The research design used qualitative methodology and the case study method. The phenomenon of interest within the case study was the rise of African American females to the community college presidency. In qualitative research, a phenomenon can be defined as the essence or structure of a shared experience (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam (1998) states, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6). She further elaborates by noting that qualitative research is an umbrella covering multiple forms of inquiry that assist in comprehending and explaining the meaning of social phenomena with minimal interruption of the natural setting. Additionally, Merriam (2002) describes five characteristics of qualitative research: (a) reflects an insider’s perspective, (b) uses the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, (c) involves extensive field work, (d) employs an inductive research strategy, and e) requires rich description while focusing the inquiry on a search for the essence and nature of the phenomena.

Qualitative research attempts to document individual experiences and personal studies. This type of research requires the active involvement of the researcher in the data collection and analysis processes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). For this study, a qualitative design was the logical choice because the research questions required an exploration into the real-life experiences of participants concerning the phenomenon of interest; it sought the insiders’ perspectives of African American women who have been successful in becoming community college presidents. As discussed by Merriam (1998) and Bogan and Biklen (2003), the researcher was the primary

instrument for data collection and analysis in this study. The systematic research approach used during interviews resulted in rich, thick descriptions of the participant's experiences.

Case Study Method

From the various qualitative methods available, the case study approach was selected to conduct the research. According to researcher Robert Yin (2003), a case study is a “research process that investigates a phenomenon within real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Merriam (1998) defines case studies as bounded systems enabling the researcher to narrow in on the unit or subject to be studied. Merriam also notes that case study research is widely used in education when there is a bounded system or case of interest. Case study research is very detailed and involves in-depth data collection using multiple sources of information rich in context (Creswell, 1998). A case study is appropriate when the researcher is attempting to probe deeper in order to gain a better understanding of the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the research perceive their experiences.

Thus, the case study method was a good match for the purpose of this study, which attempted to investigate and gain an understanding of the real-life experiences of participants concerning challenges encountered during their journey to secure a community college presidency, and any strategies used by them to assist in achieving their career goals. The case study approach also was appropriate because it involved an in-depth collection using multiple sources of information as described by Creswell (1998).

According to Merriam (1998), there are three different types of case studies: descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative. Descriptive case studies present a detailed account of the phenomena being studied. This type of case study is particularly useful in the field of education

where little research has previously been conducted in a certain area and innovative programs and practices are being considered. When using this type of case study, a database is formed and the information is used later for comparison and theory building. Merriam describes interpretive case studies as also consisting of rich, thick descriptions. When conducting an interpretive case study, the researcher collects as much information as possible with the intent of analyzing, interpreting, or theorizing about a certain phenomenon. In evaluative case studies, description, explanation, and judgment are used. The information collected during the case study allows the researcher to make a judgment. This type of case study may be useful when certain success indicators determine the longevity of a program.

This research best fits into the category of interpretive case study. It examines the rise of African American women to the community college presidency in an effort to arrive at an interpretation and understanding of the challenges faced by these women and strategies employed to achieve their career goal.

Site Selection

Purposeful sampling was used in this study and participants were matched to specified criteria.

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term *purposeful sampling*. (Patton, 1990, p. 169)

Gliner and Morgan (2000) describe purposeful sampling as a method of selecting the study sample from an accessible population that is determined to be appropriate for gaining information relevant to the study.

The researcher sought to incorporate colleges in the study that were (a) close to an urban area, (b) close to multi-campus community college districts, and (c) located within the Midwest.

Urban community colleges were selected to increase the possibility of securing schools that would reflect diversity among administration and students. This diverse pool could assist the researcher in gaining an understanding of some experiences African American women may encounter during their journeys towards the presidency.

Participant Selection

The participants themselves had to be (a) African Americans, (b) females, and (c) community college presidents. The sampling procedure did not control for (a) length of time working in higher education, (b) internal and external applicants, and (c) length of time in the presidency.

After conducting an online search for prospective participants who met the established criteria, the researcher was able to identify three female African American community college presidents and one female African American chancellor of a community college system, who served as a president of a community college immediately before her chancellor appointment.

Researcher as an Instrument

Merriam (1998) discusses the importance of acknowledging and comprehending the cultural paradigm that guides our belief system and ways of thinking. It is imperative for the researcher to acknowledge biases and not allow them to interfere with the research study. Permitting personal opinions into the research compromises the validity of the study; the research findings must emerge from the data, and interpretations need to be based on the data. Reflexivity is a tool that can be used by the researcher to guard against bias. As described by Creswell (2007), it is the awareness of personal biases, values, and experiences the researcher may bring to the research, and the reflection of how these biases, values, and experiences may affect the research study. Reflexivity lent support to the trustworthiness of this study by helping

the researcher to accurately report the views of the participants and constantly reflect on the interpretations made from the data and analysis, thus ensuring that personal biases of the researcher were bounded.

In this study, the researcher is an African American female who has been employed in the community college system for more than eight years and is interested in the possibility of becoming a community college president. During the researcher's journey to secure upward mobility in the community college setting, several challenges such as sexism and racism have been encountered. Experiencing these challenges and attempting to discover a strategy to overcome them inspired this research study on other individuals who had encountered similar experiences, yet managed to secure a community college presidency.

In light of the researcher's career aspirations, she made a conscientious and consistent effort to ensure experiences, opinions, and observations from her own work environment were not allowed to influence the data collected, analyzed, and reported for the study. At times this required strong reflexivity and focused listening skills because the researcher's personal challenges occasionally mirrored those described by the participants as they talked about transitioning to various administrative roles. However, particularly in the interviews, the researcher kept in mind that it was imperative to the validity of the study to accurately report on the specific experiences of the participants, because it was their career journeys being recorded and analyzed to gain insight into the phenomenon of interest.

Data Collection

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) consider data collection to be the rough materials that researchers collect from the participants they are studying. Merriam (2002) states that case study data collection depends on multiple sources of evidence and various methods of gathering data.

Data collection in qualitative research commonly includes interviews, observations, documents, audiovisual materials, and field notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2007). However, Bogdan and Biklen (2003) state that interviews can be the primary strategy for data collection. When conducting qualitative case study research, Patton (1990) described three basic types of interviews typically used to collect data: (a) the informal conversational interview, characterized by no set of formal questions; (b) the general interview, sometimes called semi-structured, in which the researcher has a pre-determined set of questions to be explored with each participant, but can probe beyond the general list; and (c) the standardized interview, which is a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of asking each participant the exact same interview questions. Thus, the primary difference between the three types of interviews is in the extent to which predetermined standardized questions are used - not at all, with flexibility, or precisely.

Biographical Questionnaire

The biographical questionnaire was used as a data collection method for this study. According to Merriam and Simpson (2000) there are two types of questionnaires, the open questionnaire and the closed questionnaire. Open questionnaires permit individuals to answer questions with more freedom, while closed questionnaires require respondents to select from a choice of given answers. In this study, the researcher used an open-ended questionnaire method. These questions enabled the researcher to accurately collect background information such as the participant's race, age, years in the presidential position, and education attainment level, without using interview time. This information was important to the study because the researcher wanted to examine demographic similarities and differences among participants. The questionnaire data also contributed to the research study by detailing the administrative position that participants

had held prior to their presidency, thus helping to answer Research Question 2 and, to some extent, Research Question 4. In addition, the demographic information is useful because the researcher and other readers may share the same marital status or family roles as the participants, and be encouraged to pursue their career ambitions because some of the participants in this study were single mothers or spouses.

The biographical questionnaire data was completed by each participant prior to the interview and handed to the researcher at the interview. Upon receipt of the questionnaire, the researcher quickly reviewed the participant's responses. During the perusal of the questionnaire, some of the participants asked the researcher to make some additional comments concerning the questionnaire. Some of the requested additions included the notation of career paths and a change of marital status (single to divorced).

Face-to Face Interviews

Semi-structured questions were used to guide the interview, and the nature of the interview resembled that of two individuals comfortably conversing. Occasionally, the researcher asked additional probing questions about career transition, leadership styles, family, and other areas of specific interest. The addition of these probing questions resulted in very useful, candid answers from the participants that enriched the data.

The researcher also used face-to-face interviews that were guided by semi-structured questions (Appendix C) as the primary source of data collection, because it was the best method for gaining informed insights into the phenomenon of interest and ensuring the research questions would be answered. In this study, interviews enabled the researcher to capture the real-life experiences of the participants, and probe deeper into their responses. This method of data collection also allowed participants to share related career experiences that may not have

been revealed by a more structured interview question protocol, and these experiences were often highly informative to the study. Moreover, the semi-structured approach enabled the researcher to compare interviews and discover recurring themes among the participants, as well as highlight those categories that were unique to a particular participant.

Field Notes

Field notes were the final data collection method used for this study. Merriam (1998) states that field notes can be useful in qualitative research when the researcher wants to record his or her response to something the participant says, or make note of data that highlights something of importance the researcher believes the participant has shared. In this study, the researcher was able to use field notes for recording observations and reflective responses to some of the participant's comments, noting the body language exhibited by the participants, and quickly making written note of something that was of particular interest or needed further explanation.

As one example of field noting, the researcher wrote down an acronym that was frequently used by one of the participants. Toward the conclusion of the interview, the researcher was able to look at the recorded field notes and ask the participant what the acronym stood for, and if the acronym was something unique to the personnel within their community college. Field notes were also useful in enabling the researcher to remember how relaxed or dynamic the body language of participants was when addressing specific interview questions, and how transparent participants were when disclosing how their leadership roles required their family units to adjust to longer work days, constant phone calls, public appearances, and other requirements of their position.

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe data analysis as a method of analytically searching and organizing the interviews, field notes, documents, and other data that is collected in order to allow the researcher to produce findings. Merriam (2002) adds that data analysis involves the process of concentrating on the data and assigning meaning to information the researcher has collected from participants. The analysis occurs throughout the data collection period and is done simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 1998), as well as after all the data has been gathered. Creswell's (2007) approach to data analysis involves three essential components: (a) description and classification of the data collected, (b) arrangement and abbreviation of the data by placing it into themes through a coding and condensing of coding process, and (c) presentation of the data.

In this study, data analysis was done by using the Merriam data management system. According to Merriam (1998), data management is divided into three stages: (a) data preparation, (b) data identification, and (c) data manipulation. Data preparation is the process of transcribing interviews, typing notes, and inputting data. In this study, the researcher conducted data preparation by using Microsoft Word to input the data and type the interview transcripts. Data preparation, the second phase of data management, involves separating text data into analytically significant and easily locatable sections. The third phase of data management is data manipulation. During this phase, data is searched, organized, recovered, and rearranged (Merriam, 1998). In this study, data management and manipulation were done by both analyzing the research by hand and using the computer to place information into appropriate texts.

To further assist the researcher with additional data analysis, Creswell's data analysis spiral was also used. Creswell identifies four loops in this spiral: (a) data management; (b)

reading and memoing; (c) describing, classifying, and interpreting; and (d) representing (Creswell, 2007). Because the first spiral (data management) in Creswell's data analysis model mirrors that of Merriam, the researcher was able to advance the data analysis procedures to the second spiral, reading and memoing. Reading and memoing was conducted in this study through the constant review of data, during which the researcher wrote notes or memos in the margins of the transcripts, questionnaires, and field notes. The researcher's memos included short phrases and key concepts shared by participants during the interview.

Describing, classifying, and interpreting data is the third loop identified in Creswell's data analysis spiral. During this portion of the analysis, researchers "develop themes or dimensions through some classification system, and provide an interpretation in light of their own views or views of perspectives in the literature" (Creswell, p.151). In this study, the researcher analyzed transcripts to identify and annotate emergent themes. Information was identified as a theme if certain key words were repeated in interviews. These themes were recorded on the hard-copy of the transcript, and then placed into a table that was specifically designed for this study. Some of the themes that were repeated by participants include racism, sexism, and age discrimination. For two of the participants, the skill of successfully balancing work and family was identified as a theme. These emerging themes assist in answering Research Question 1 and Research Question 3. The final step in analyzing the data for this study involved using the research questions as categories for coding the transcripts, and highlighting the data that provided some insight for possible answers to the research questions.

The final loop in the spiral of data analysis is representing. During this phase, the researcher presents possible challenges that African American women who are aspiring to become community college presidents may encounter, and strategies these women can use to

assist in securing their career goals. The challenges and strategies are represented through quotes provided by participants during their responses to the interview questions and summarized in a table.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is exploratory and attempts to document real-life phenomena experienced by participants. Within the literature on qualitative research, various terms and concepts are used to describe characteristics related to trustworthiness, also referred to as validity and reliability. Trustworthy qualitative research is systematic in data collection and uses acceptable research procedures, and the findings of the research are available for analysis by other individuals. Lincoln and Guba (1985) determined that the integrity of the research findings could be strengthened and trustworthiness established, if the research contained credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

In qualitative research, explaining the procedures in detail and making clear how the conclusions were drawn from the findings assists with establishing the validity and reliability of the study. Validity answers the question, is the research credible? Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the *truth value* of a study as its credibility. Patton (1990) states “the credibility of qualitative inquiry is especially dependent on the credibility of the researcher because the researcher is the instrument of data collection and center of the analytical process” (p. 261). Reliability refers to the extent in which research findings can be duplicated (Merriam, 1998); however, because qualitative research seeks the views of participants, this standard of reliability is not generally feasible. Therefore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that reliability in qualitative research means the extent to which the findings of a study are consistent with the collected data.

In this study, the concepts of internal and external validity were used as a means of enhancing the credibility of the findings. Merriam (1998) describes internal validity as “hinging on the meaning of reality” (p. 201), and determining if the research findings match what is really there. Of Merriam’s six strategies for achieving internal validity, three were used in this study: (a) triangulation, (b) member checks, and (c) researcher’s biases.

Triangulation

When using triangulation, the researcher is able to confirm information using various data sources, and in doing so, identify themes or categories (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In this study, triangulation was accomplished by comparing content in three sources of data collection (interviews, demographic questionnaire, and field notes). The field notes assisted the researcher with cross-referencing information provided in the interview transcriptions. After careful review of the transcripts and the field notes, the researcher was able to confirm consistency in the data collected and identify recurring words used by all participants as convergent themes.

Member Checking

Member checking was another internal validity strategy used to enhance the credibility of the research findings. Member checking is an evaluative process that involves a checks and balance system (Merriam, 1998). During this process, participants are able to verify that the transcripts have accurately captured their real-life experiences by reviewing and being able to comment on the transcripts. Additionally, while conducting interviews, the researcher noted responses that were not clearly understood, and later during the interview asked the participant for clarification concerning these responses. By asking for clarification, the researcher was able to report the participant’s responses accurately.

Merriam (1998) further discusses the importance of having the researcher recognize their personal biases when collecting data, so that the findings of the research may be credible. To further support this statement, Merriam notes the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, and the data collected is automatically filtered through the researcher's theoretical position and biases. Therefore, qualitative researchers must understand how they can influence the findings of a study. This is a process Merriam defines this process as reflectivity. In this study, the researcher used reflectivity by reflecting on her thoughts and world interpretations as a way of identifying and controlling any biases that could affect the research.

Audit Trail

The final internal validity strategy used in this research study was an audit trail. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that audit trails help to support both the dependability and conformability of the research. Audit trails provide transparency; are present throughout the research process; and may involve the use of raw data, field notes, memos, and procedures for data analysis. Audit trails provide a detailed description of the systematic steps taken to gather the research data and formulate conclusions. In this study, the researcher used identical methods for collecting and analyzing data for all of the participants. The participants were asked the same semi-structured interview questions, and their narratives were accurately captured via tape recordings, field notes, and transcriptions. The procedures have been documented in detail and are therefore auditable.

External Validity

External validity may be referred to as generalizability. Although case studies cannot be widely generalized, by providing rich, thick descriptions, the reader can determine what is applicable to a different situation. Merriam (1998) calls this "reader or user generalizability" (p.

211), which replaces external validity. Stake (1995) uses the term transferability and refers to this process as *naturalistic generalization*, which are generalizations people make from their own experiences. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define transferability as the extent one may apply a set of findings to another context. In transferability, naturalistic generalizations are implanted in the reader's memory.

External validity was addressed in this study by providing the readers with detailed descriptions of participants and their journey towards the community college presidency. This helps the reader to form naturalistic generalizations that enable transferability. The detailed descriptions are important because they provide the reader with an experience that may be new to them, but familiar within their community college context. Participants in this study were able to speak directly to readers through the use of quotes provided in the findings. This helps the readers construct their own "naturalistic generalizations" (Stake, 1995, p. 85).

Ethical Considerations

Bogden and Biklen (1998) state there are two traditional considerations in the ethics of qualitative research involving human participants: (a) having informed consent and (b) protecting participants from being harmed. To protect the participants in this study, the researcher complied with the National-Louis University Institutional Research Review Board's guidelines concerning the protection of human subject. For example, prior to volunteering for participation in this study, each participant received a description of the study and a copy of the semi-structured questions to be asked, as well as the demographical questionnaire. Participants signed an informed consent form that detailed the description of the study and were provided a confidentiality agreement. Participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher informed the participants

that their identity would be protected with anonymity, and all tapes and transcriptions would be kept confidential and placed in a secured file cabinet drawer.

Limitations of the Study

A few limitations were necessary in order to create a bounded system for this case study. First, the study is not a chronicle of events or prediction for all African American women in higher education and not limited to participants in the community college setting. Second, the study examines the presidential paths of community college presidents within the state of Illinois. However, some of the experiences shared by participants may parallel those of individuals in community college settings throughout the country.

Summary

This chapter provided detailed information as to what methodology was used in this study. The sampling procedure matched the study's purpose, which determined the participant criteria, including who the participants were, why and how they were selected, and what characteristics the participants had that were important to the focus of this study. The interviews provided rich, descriptive data told from the perspective of the participants. The tape recordings from the interview were transcribed and analyzed to identify themes that emerged from the data or contributed to answering the research questions. The trustworthiness of the study was strengthened using triangulation, member checks, reflexivity, and an audit trail. Chapter 4 will provide a detailed analysis of challenges such as racism, sexism, and institutional politics experienced by some of the study's participants during their journeys to the presidency, as well as the impact that mentoring, leadership development programs, succession planning, networking, and completion of credentials had on their ascension.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the findings of this study and addresses each of the research questions. Qualitative methods, including an interview with each president, field notes, and a demographic questionnaire were used to collect data on a sample of four African American women who were current or past community college presidents. The first section of this chapter will introduce the conceptual framework relevant to the study and the remaining sections will include profile of the presidents, responses to the interview questions, and the findings of the study.

The purpose of this study is to explore challenges and successful strategies employed by African American women that assist with securing and sustaining a community college presidency. The following research questions were addressed in order to conduct this study:

1. What are the personal and professional attributes African American women community college presidents identify as paramount in obtaining their position?
2. What are some of the commonalities and differences in each president's journey to success?
3. How does the culture of an institution promote or influence the advancement of African American women in community colleges?
4. What internal and external factors contribute to upward mobility within an institution?

The following sections provide a more detailed account of each president's professional and personal background.

Profile of Presidents

Four community college presidents were interviewed for this study and met the following criteria: (a) African American, (b) woman, (c) current or past community college president, and (d) worked at a community college located in or near a large urban area. The researcher conducted in-person, audio-taped interviews with each president to gain a better understanding of any challenges participants encountered during their journeys towards the community college presidency and what, if any, strategies they used to secure their career goal. Additionally, the participants in this study were given pseudonyms and were referred to as President A, President B, President C, and President D. Likewise, the sites where the presidents were the presidents served were also assigned pseudonyms and respectively referred to as Institution A, Institution B, Institution C, and Institution D.

President A

President A has never married and has no children. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology, a master's degree in adult education, and a doctorate in higher education. This president has served in the capacity of Dean of Academic Support and Vice-President of Advancement at the same college. Immediately after serving as Vice-President of Advancement, this president was asked to serve as Associate-Vice Chancellor of Adult Education. A few years later, she was appointed to the presidency in the same community college district where she served as Associate Vice-Chancellor of Adult Education.

The community college where the president was serving during the time of her interview is located in a large, urban area, immediately adjacent to a major highway. Additionally, the college is a part of a multi-campus district, composed of seven different schools and several satellite campuses. Each campus is individually accredited and has its own president and

administrative team. During the time of the interview, the student enrollment for President A's institution consisted of 2,346 part-time students and 2,431 full-time students. Degree offerings at the institution consisted of associates in arts, associates in science, associates in applied science, and associate's in general studies.

The interview for President A was conducted in her office at the college. The office was located on the left wing, on the first floor of the college. President A's office was spacious and filled with awards she had received throughout her tenure in community colleges. Many of the awards marked contributions she made to the field of Adult Education. In addition to the awards, the décor in the office was very settled and complimented by many earth tone colors. There were also pictures of President A's family members neatly aligned along a table located in a corner as well as fresh flowers situated on a small conference table.

President A was very inviting and encouraged the researcher to relax and ask as many questions needed to collect the necessary information for the study. Throughout the interview this president was very forthcoming and disclosed many instances in which she believed her personal life may have been derailed due to the time commitment needed to adequately perform her job duties and responsibilities. When asked about some of the detours her personal life may have taken, President A mentioned early on in her career she accepted a few job offers which resulted in her having to relocate. She then continued to share her relocating caused her to spend less time with her immediate family members and she at times still felt guilty for the amount of time she spent away from her family.

President B

President B is divorced and has three adult children. She earned a bachelor's and master's degree in education and a doctorate in higher education. She served as president of

three community colleges located in different states and has more than twenty years of experience in higher education. In addition to her presidencies, this participant has also served as Assistant Dean of Research, Dean of Academic Affairs, and Vice-President of Academic Affairs. At the time of the interview, this participant was serving in her second year as Chancellor of a multi-campus campus community college district, composed of four campuses. Three of the campuses are located in a large urban area and the remaining campus is located in an adjacent suburban area. Additionally, all of the campuses are simultaneously accredited.

During the time of the interview, the total student enrollment for the four campuses included 12,019 full-time students and 15,990 part-time students. Degree offerings at the campuses the four campuses include an associate's in arts, associate's in science, associate's in fine arts, associate's in applied science, associates in arts in teaching, and an associate's in general studies.

The interview for President B initial began as a brunch interview which was held in an upscale restaurant located in the downtown area of the city where President B worked. Throughout brunch, President B was very relaxed, direct, and engaging. Once the researcher completed asking the semi-structured interview questions, President B invited the researcher to walk a few blocks with her to tour the building where her office was located.

The building where the office was located was moderate in size and the exterior resembled a corporate building. However, the building took on a more traditional campus appearance upon entering the foyer to the main floors. The foyer was filled with different flags and pendants representing each of the community colleges located in President B's district. Also the hallways leading to President B's office were neatly aligned with current articles highlighting various academic and sport achievements for the schools.

Upon entering President B's office, the researcher noticed several pictures of her children and grandchildren filled the desk and walls in her office. There were also several inspirational quotes and biblical verses within eyesight as well as a compact radio and small refrigerator and microwave. Although several piles of paper filled a corner of her desk, the office appeared to be overall neat and well organized.

President C

President C is married and has no children. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in education. Prior to working in a community college system, this president was a French instructor at an urban high school. This president was seeking a career change when she applied for and was offered a position as Assistant to the President at a community college. Securing this position allowed this president to serve in several administrative positions, such as Dean of Instruction and Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

The college where this president served is part of a multi-campus district, located in a large, urban area. The student enrollment consisted of 3,334 full-time students and 9,840 part-time students. Additionally, degree offerings at the college include an associate's in arts, associates in science, associate's in applied science, associates in general studies, and an associate's in engineering.

The interview with President C took place in a large conference room located down the hall from her office. As the researcher began to start the interview, President C apologized for the change in location of the interview. She then mentioned she opted to use the conference room because it offered a more calming environment in comparison to her office. Although President C was accommodating as possible, she was interrupted several times during the interviews by phone calls on questions from her administrative assistant. At one point, the interview had to be

stopped because of the need for President C to answer an urgent phone call. However, upon her return, she was very apologetic and did remain with the researcher until the interview was complete.

President D

President D has never married and has one adult child. She earned a bachelor's and master's degree in education. This president started her career in higher education as an adjunct faculty member. The community college district where this president was serving as an adjunct faculty member was being restructured, transitioning from being a single-campus district to a multi-campus district in efforts to serve the growing number of students in the large, urban area. The restructuring of the district presented this president with the opportunity to serve as Director of Student Support Services at one of the campuses. After serving in this position for a year, this president fulfilled several other administrative roles such as Assistant Dean of Student Services, Chair of the English Department, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, and Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs. All of these positions were held in the same community college district.

During the time of the interview, the student enrollment for the college where the President was serving consisted of 2,830 full-time students and 5,888 part-time students. Additionally, degree offerings at President D's college include an associate's in arts, an associate's of science, an associate's in applied science, and an associate's in general studies.

The interview with President D took place in her office which was located on the main floor to the immediate left of the building entrance. Unlike her peers whose office painted in very neutral colors, President D's office was painted in a rich lavender color. The décor in her office was also complimented by a large floral arrangement located on a conference table. There was also a plasma screen television mounted on the wall and pictures of her daughter and parents

placed in areas throughout her office. Adjacent to President D's office was a large washroom also painted in a deep lavender color. The washroom was filled with an array of soaps and hand lotion.

The interview with President D went very well. She too was very relaxed and forthcoming involving her personal and professional challenges and accomplishments she experienced throughout her tenure in community colleges. During the interview, this president disclosed what she referred to as "the truth about being a woman in this business". This president was also very direct about challenges she encountered involving being a single mother and simultaneously serving as a president of a college. This president also took time to discuss unspoken biases some aspiring women who are overweight may experience during their journey towards the presidency.

Table 2 includes a biographical overview of the presidents in this study. The information included in this table was taken from the biographical questionnaire (Appendix B) that was completed by each president prior to each of their interviews.

Table 2. Biographical Presidential Profile

	President A	President B	President C	President D
Age range at time presidency was achieved	40-45	45-50	40-45	35-40
Marital Status	Single/never married	Divorced	Married/no children	Single/mother of one adult child
Highest degree earned	Ph.D.	Ph.D.	MS. Ed.	MS. Ed.
	Vice-Chancellor for Adult Education	President (before becoming Chancellor)	Vice-President for Academic and Student Affairs	Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Years in presidency	2	16	1	17

Table 3 captures enrollment information relative to the institutions Presidents A, B, C, and D served in at the time of the interviews.

Table 3. Full-time and Part-time Student Enrollment

	Institution A	Institution B	Institution C	Institution D
Institutional enrollment (full-time)	2,346	12,019	3,334	2,830
Institutional enrollment (part-time)	2,431	15,990	9,840	5,888
Total enrollment	4,777	28,009	13,174	8,718

Table 4 captures the student enrollment by sex at the institutions during the time Presidents A, B, C, and D were interviewed.

Table 4. Student Enrollment by Sex

	Institution A	Institution B	Institution C	Institution D
Male student enrolled	1,449	15,179	5,795	3,101
Female students enrolled	3,328	18,265	7,309	5,557
Total enrollment	4,777	28,009	13,174	8,718

Figure 3 provides a snapshot of Presidents A, B, C, and D student enrollment by race during the time of the interviews. Although all the institutions were situated in large, urban areas, Institution D appeared to have a more diverse student population in comparison to the other institutions.

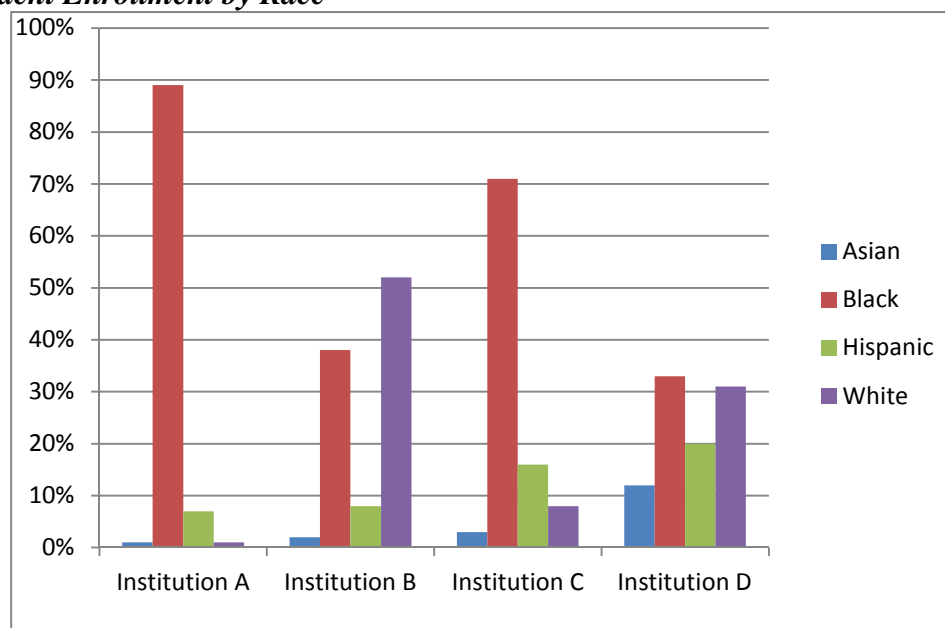
Figure 3. Student Enrollment by Race

Table 5 provides an overview of the various degrees offered at each of the president's college during the time of the interviews. It appears as those all of the institutions where the presidents served offered similar programs of study.

Table 5. Degrees Offered at Institutions

	President A	President B	President C	President D
Associate in Arts	X	X	X	X
Associate in Science	X	X	X	X
Associate in Fine Arts		X		
Associate in Applied Science	X	X	X	X
Associate Arts in Teaching		X		
Associate in General Studies	X	X	X	X
Associate in Engineering Science			X	

Emerging Themes

Several themes emerged from the responses provided by the presidents during the interviews. These themes include mentoring, leadership skills, administrative positions held prior to presidency, educational attainment, racism, sexism, leadership development, professional

development activities, institutional politics, and family. The following responses to the research questions provide a more descriptive analysis of the emerging themes.

The first research question asked: What are the professional and personal attributes African American women who are community college presidents identify as paramount in obtaining their position? This question sought information concerning what personal and professional characteristics the participants perceived as being instrumental in assisting them to obtain a community college presidency. The presidents were to discuss whether or not they recognized they possessed these attributes at the time or only during the reflection of their journeys. During the interviews, all four presidents were able to recognize the attributes in retrospect and even though the presidents understood what they were experiencing at the time, the moments were not as significant until the latter portion of their careers. The experiences shared by the presidents during their interviews gave examples of their individual attributes they believed were paramount in positioning them in the pipeline to secure a presidency.

Emerging themes which surfaced from the interview questions and assisted in answering this research question include mentoring and leadership skills.

Mentoring

The impact that mentoring relationships have on career ascension was shared by all four participants and referenced by many researchers. Roche (1979) believes the presence or absence of a mentor has a direct impact on the career succession of individuals. Roche believes those involved in mentoring relationships often have the privilege of benefiting from a career plan and have higher level of job satisfaction. Growe and Montgomery (2000) also believe that mentoring relationships are key elements to women seeking executive level positions.

The literature affirms mentoring relationships have a positive impact on promotion opportunities for women, as well as on their earning potential. A study conducted by Eberspacher and Sisler (1998) further supports the idea that mentoring relationships are critical in the career ascension of women. In this study, the researchers examined the relationship between mentoring and career ascension. The research concluded mentoring relationships are vital in preparing women to be effective leaders. A similar study was conducted by Ramey (1993). The results from this study also concluded that mentoring relationships are essential to the career development of women. Furthermore, the study conducted by Ramey emphasized the importance of mentoring aspiring African American women in efforts to rectify the lack of available mentors in the college presidency and senior-level positions.

All four presidents believed mentoring had some influence on securing a college presidency. The participants stated their professional mentors were extremely instrumental in assisting them with securing a presidency. Additionally, it was discovered during the interviews that all the participants never considered the community college presidency until they were assured by their mentors they had the skills needed to be successful in the position.

President A

This participant mentioned she was very content operating at a director's level and never gave any thought into applying for a higher level position until her boss encouraged her to move out her comfort zone and seek a more challenging position. The president recalled this conversation vividly and according to her, she had a moment of self-reflection and realized, "If the decision makers at the college believed I was ready for more responsibilities then they identified something in me I did not initially see in myself."

The president recalled driving home that evening after the conversation with her boss, reflecting on the accomplishments she achieved in her current position that perhaps placed her on the radar of high level administrators. It was during the drive that she recalled how she spearheaded efforts to increase enrollment in her area, collaborated with peers to bring additional career programs to the college, and worked relentlessly to ensure she met or exceeded the goals her boss gave her. However, after the reflection upon her professional accomplishments, she re-emphasized how invaluable mentoring relationships can be and firmly stated, “I would not be a president today if it were not for my mentor. He really encouraged me and help groomed me for a presidency.”

President B

President B also believed if it was not for the urging of her professional mentor, she too would never have applied for a college presidency. She recalled that one of her mentors asked her to serve as interim president and assured her she had the potential and skills necessary to be a college president. However, before this encounter with her mentor she never had the confidence to apply for a presidency. When asked why, she responded:

My thought process at the time may have been contributed to the lack of Black women who were college presidents. I thought to myself, it was absurd to believe a woman could be a college president, yet alone a Black woman because where were they? I mean there were some but they were not in my immediate area.

After making this comment, she shook her head while simultaneously verbally expressing her gratitude for having a mentor who provided constant reassurance that she could be president. The president affirmed she will always have a special place in her heart for her mentor because “he saw something in me I never saw in myself.”

President C

President C recalled she never wanted to be a president because of the politics. In addition to the politics, she noted she was very content functioning in the capacity of Vice-President and had grown very comfortable working under the leadership of her president. She mentioned she worked for several years with her president and built a very good team of college administrators. She described the college as being a “well-oiled machine” and a place she wanted to continue working for several years. However, a few conversations with her mentor changed her career plan and opened the door for her to secure a presidency.

She stated, “The person who was my boss at my former college is my mentor and made the recommendation for me to be considered for the presidency at this college.” This participant stated, “I don’t think you aspire to be in a presidential position or are successful in such a position unless you have mentors in similar or identical roles.” This president continued by recalling the incident when her mentor contacted her at home one evening to inform her that one of the presidents in the district was leaving and he believed she should apply for the position. This president described how she came up with what she now considers to be excuses as to why she should not apply because she did not want to move away from her comfort zone. However, her mentor encouraged her to take her career to another level and reassured her he would not urge her to apply for a position he did not believe she would succeed in. She shared that her mentor spent several weeks grooming her for her interview and affirming she had the ability to do the job.

President D

President D firmly believes mentoring relationships had everything to do with her securing a college presidency. She stated:

My professional mentor is responsible for me being where I am. We started out together in entry level management positions at the college many, many years ago. He has always encouraged me and challenged me to do more things. He had a lot to do with me becoming president.

She shared her first year as president was a very challenging transition because many faulty members were against her being appointed president. When asked how she knew this, the participant stated:

You know. You know who is on your side and who is not. But I believe many faculty were upset about me being appointed to the presidency because I was so young, only 37 at the time. They felt I didn't earn the job.

This president mentioned she would talk to her mentor on a daily basis and she needed the uplifting conversations because the work environment was mentally and emotionally draining. She shared she was conscious not to complain when talking to her mentor because no one wants to hear it and when people recommend you for promotion they want to know their judgment was right and they recommended the right person for the job.

Leadership Skills

During the interviews, good leadership skills was an attribute all participants stated they believed assisted them with upward mobility and placing them in the pipeline to secure a presidency. When asked to identify some qualities they believed a good leader possesses, the participants' named successful persuasion and exercising integrity and ethics during difficult times as being characteristics of a good leader. Other responses included being a visionary and recognizing the need for change. Additionally, two of the presidents reflected upon their personal experiences of voluntarily assuming leadership roles and how they believed their actions assisted with their career growth. The remaining two presidents also affirmed how imperative good leadership skills are to the career ascension of a person. Their perspective on

leadership skills and career growth were discussed from the viewpoint of considering a person's leadership skills as being an essential factor for promotion.

President A

President A shared community colleges were growing in popularity when she began her career in higher education. She mentioned she believed the increasing numbers of community colleges help to create leadership opportunities for aspiring individuals. This president reflected upon her earlier professional accomplishments in higher education and shared that although she did not intentionally use the growing number of vacant positions as a strategy to gain career ascension, she now believes her willingness to assume multiple leadership roles in various positions assisted with her rapid career growth. She further elaborated on how the growing number of leadership opportunities in community colleges assisted with her career growth in the following statement:

At the time I entered the community college system, there were new colleges opening every few months. People were looking for people to get schools up and running . . . people that understood what a community college was supposed to do. People who had good ideas and were not afraid to work. They wanted people who were able to be leaders and take on leadership roles.

President B

President B also suggested good leadership skills are critical to career ascension. This president described herself as a self-starter who is usually eager to tackle a new project and assume responsibilities that would deter many individuals. The leadership information gathered from this participant described how she selects individuals for leadership roles. She shared she constantly considers employees who do not require a lot of direction to complete tasks for leadership roles. In addition to not requiring detailed instruction for tasks, this president shared she also considers employees who are capable of working well with others and persuading them

to complete the work for leadership opportunities. She stated: “I am always looking for good leaders. People who did not need a lot of direction about things . . . good leadership skills will get you on someone’s radar and if you are on someone’s radar you will move along the system.”

President C

President C recalled her manager shared with her on several encounters that he thought she was a very good leader and would be a president one day. She shared when the comments were made to her by her manager she could not recall exactly what she was doing to present herself as a leader. However, she was very grateful her manager made an effort to let her know her leadership skills were being noticed. When asked what she thought she did to make her manager believe she was a good leader, this president stated:

I believe my mentor who was my boss at the time knew I was capable of serving in a key leadership role long before I did . . . he would always mention to me he thought I was a good leader. In retrospect, I did initiate changes that needed to be made . . . creating more career programs and getting each one accredited, increasing revenue for the college, spearheading district planning initiatives, stuff like that.

President D

President D also believed good leadership skills can heavily impact the career success of individuals. This president did not reflect upon her personal leadership experiences that may have contributed to her success. However, she strongly affirmed good leadership skills are necessary for career growth. This president also took a few minutes to distinguish what she believed the difference was between leadership and management, as well as describe what she looks for in individuals when considering them for promotions.

When asked what she thought the difference was between management and leadership or if they were the same, she stated:

Oh no. There is a big, big, difference . . . leadership involves management but unfortunately not all managers are leaders. Leadership is the ability to move an

organization forward, getting people involved so they want to do the work. Management is just maintaining the same stuff...day in and day out.

Furthermore, the president described what qualities she looks for in individuals when considering them for promotion. Again, leadership skills was a key attribute the participant believed assist with career acceleration. She stated:

Everyone wants good managers who are good leaders to be on their team. When considering individuals for promotions I look at what type of leaders they are, what contributions they made to the college, what initiative they took to get tasks done, what were the outcome of their efforts? I want my leadership team to be composed of people who can influence others to get the job done. People who can see a potential problem coming and have a resolution before the problem have time to manifest.

The second research question asked: What are some of the commonalities and differences in the president's journey to success? This research question sought to highlight any unique career experiences participants had prior to becoming president. This research question also sought to identify any shared experiences during the participant's careers. For the purpose of this study, the term *shared* represents at least two or more of the participants having the same or similar experiences. Emerging themes which surfaced from this research question include (a) administrative positions held prior to the presidency and (b) educational attainment.

Administrative positions held prior to the presidency

There were many commonalities as well as some differences in the president's journeys to success. When reviewing the participant's profile as well as the interview transcripts, the first commonality noted was the career path taken prior to becoming president. Three of the four participants served as Vice-President of Academic Affairs prior to the presidency. Additionally, the same three participants also served as Dean of Instruction prior to becoming Vice-President of Academic Affairs. The following interview sections detail the administrative positions held by the participants prior to their presidencies.

President B

President B had an extensive career in higher education that involved more than forty years of service. This president served as Dean of Instruction and Vice-President of Academic Affairs prior to becoming president. When securing the presidency, she remained in her position at the same college for more than a decade. Additionally, when she retired from her presidency, she was recruited to become chancellor of a community college district. At the time of the interview, this participant had been chancellor for almost two years. The following quote highlights her academic career pathway to the presidency as well as the chancellorship:

I have had a long history in higher education and have worked at several schools . . . both on the academic and student services sides of the house. I have taught some classes here and there but never was full-time faculty . . . most of my work was on the academic side of the house. I've been Dean of Instruction, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, President, and now Chancellor.

President C

President C mentioned she had a swift climb to the presidency. She shared her first leadership position in higher education was a Program Director. After serving in this position, she moved to various Associate Deans positions and eventually the Dean of Instruction, where she served for slightly more than a year before she was appointed to the office of Vice-President for Student and Academic Affairs. This president also served as Vice-President for nearly seven years before she was appointed to the presidency. The following quote depicts her career experiences: "I started out in an entry level management position and quickly moved up the ranks. However, before becoming Vice-President, I was briefly Dean of Instruction. . . . I got appointed to the vice-presidency and then the presidency."

President D

President D also had a very swift climb to the presidency. This president began her career in higher education teaching developmental courses and quickly transitioned to a full-time English faculty member. After serving as a faculty member for almost three years, she was Dean of Instruction for two years, followed by Vice-President for Academic Affairs. After serving in the Vice-President's position for four years, she was appointed to the office of Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, where she worked for almost three years before she became President.

President A

Although President A did not follow the same career path as her peers, she highly recommended aspiring individuals attempt to secure the position of Dean of Instruction and Vice-President for Academic Affairs. The following quote more accurately depicts her recommendation for individuals interested in the presidency to serve in the role of vice-president:

My career path to the presidency is a little unique. I spent most of my tenure in higher education working in the Division of Adult Education as manager, Dean, and Vice-Chancellor. If I knew I was going to be president, I would have went through the traditional ranks and worked as Dean of Instruction and Vice-President for Academic Affairs. I just think those positions are excellent preparation tools for the presidency.

Table 6 illustrates the various career paths taken by each president. The information included in this table was extracted from the Biographical Questionnaire (Appendix B) that was completed by each president prior to the interview. The table suggested President B, C, and D all followed a tradition career pathway to the presidency. However, it appears as though President A took a less traditional pathway to the presidency by serving in various positions within the Division of Adult Education prior to her presidency.

Table 6. Presidential Career Paths

	President A	President B	President C	President D
Full-time Faculty				X
Dean of Instruction		X	X	X
Dean of Adult Education	X			
Vice-President for Academic Affairs		X	X	X
Vice-President for Development	X			
Vice-Chancellor for Adult Education	X			
Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs				X
President	X	X	X	X
Chancellor		X		

Educational Attainment

The second commonality that emerged from the data involved differences among the participant's level of education. Two of the participants earned their doctorate degree and the remaining two participants began doctoral programs but were unable to complete them due to time constraints associate with work or family responsibilities. However, all the participants commented on the importance of aspiring individuals to earn a doctorate degree before becoming president. Additionally, the recommendation the participants gave for earning a doctorate degree complimented the survey conducted by Sederber (1991). This survey revealed that more than 230 women administrators in Indiana's higher education recommended the completion of a doctorate degree for aspiring presidents. The following paragraphs provide a detailed account of each participant's educational background and recommendations for aspiring individuals to have a doctorate degree before apply for a presidency.

President A

President A enrolled in three doctoral programs before earning her Ed.D. She shared that she more than likely would have completed her doctorate degree years earlier if she had the

necessary support from the faculty members of the doctoral programs she attempted. When asked what specific support systems that institutions failed to provide her, she gave the following response:

I was often the only Black person in the class. I didn't feel like the instructors were as accessible as I would have liked for them to have been and I didn't feel like they had a vested interest in giving me the support I needed to complete the program.

However, President A shared that when she met with the admissions committee for her third and final doctoral program, she took time during her interview to inform the committee if she were selected for the program it was very imperative for her to have accessible faculty members. She also mentioned that during her interview, she informed the committee she would like for her instructors to make an effort to establish an environment where all students felt they were a part of the class.

The concerns expressed by her resonated with an admissions committee member who decided to mentor her and provide the institutional support she needed to complete the program. The following quote details the vital role President A felt her mentor played, as well as her perception regarding the need for aspiring individuals to complete a doctoral degree:

I enrolled in three doctoral programs. I did not complete the first two because I felt like I did not get the support I needed from the school. . . . my Graduate Advisor who was also one of my instructors would tell me I couldn't give up. If I was going to work in higher education I had to get the doctorate degree . . . and today I would say the same to you or anyone else interested in being a president. You must complete your doctorate degree.

President B

President B earned her doctorate degree before becoming a president and believes the completion of the degree assisted her with being able to work in various community college districts. This president gave the same recommendation as President A involving the need for aspiring individuals to complete a doctorate degree. Furthermore, she mentioned the continuous

number of senior-level administrators expected to retire over the next several years will provide career for aspiring individuals and it will be expected for applicants to have a doctorate.

The following quote reflects her position on the need for aspiring individuals to complete a doctorate degree:

You have to get the doctorate degree. This is a must, especially now. Search committees will expect for applicants to have the degree. There will be lots of opportunities out there. Don't miss out because you did not get your degree.

President C

President C had not completed her doctorate degree during the time of the interview. When asked why, she stated: "Not getting the degree is one of my biggest regrets. I started a program and did not finish it because between work and my family, I did not have the time." She continued to share that the significant, long-term relationships she formed in her current community college district tremendously helped her secure the presidency. However, she mentioned she did not believe she would have advanced to the president's level without a doctorate degree if she was working in another district.

President D

At the time of the interview, President D had not completed her doctorate degree. This president enrolled in two doctoral programs but was unable to complete them due to the amount of time she needed to dedicate towards her job and family. This president shared she was a single parent and her daughter was only seven years of age when she became a college president. She continued to share that she moved in with her parents so they could help her raise her daughter while she committed the necessary time to the presidency. Additionally, she mentioned she would have had to sacrifice too much time away from her daughter to complete her degree. However, this president mentioned if she knew she was going to be a president when she

initially embarked upon her journey in higher education, she would completed her doctorate before she gained a senior-level positions and before she became a parent, because there would have had more time to dedicate towards her education. Furthermore, she stated:

At the time I was working in the community college system, you did not necessarily need a doctorate to earn a leadership role. Times are different now and it is expected that presidents will have a doctorate degree. If I wanted to leave and work in another district, I may not be so lucky because I don't have the degree.

The information shared by President D compliments the information shared by other participants, as well as the survey conducted in the Indiana higher educational system. The data from this study as well as that from the survey highly suggest that aspiring individuals seeking a presidency have an earned doctorate before applying for the position.

Table 7 illustrates the various levels of educational attainment accomplished by each president. This information was also extracted from the Biographical Questionnaire (Appendix B) that was completed by each president.

Table 7 summarizes the various levels of educational attainment completed by each president during the time of the interviews. Although all four presidents had enrolled in a minimum of one doctoral program, only two of the presidents completed their doctorates at the time the interviews were conducted. However, it was mentioned by all four presidents that completion of a doctorate degree will be essential for aspiring African American women presidents.

Table 7. Educational Attainment

	President A	President B	President C	President D
Master of Science	X	X	X	X
Master of Arts				X
Doctor of Philosophy	X	X		
Doctor of Education				
Degree not yet completed			X	X

The third research question asked: How does the culture of an institution promote or influence the advancement of African American women in community colleges? This question attempted to discover how institutional practices can assist African American women with securing leadership roles that could possibly position them in the pipeline for the community college presidency. This question also attempted to uncover institutional practices that may have served as barriers for African American women seeking the community college presidency. The final inquiry this question attempted to address involved the identification of any strategies to overcome barriers. Thus, the data from the interviews has been dissected and organized to identify positive and negative institutional practices that assist or hinder African American women. Emerging themes that emerged from this research question include racism and sexism.

Racism and Sexism

According to Harvey (1999), the *good old boys network* can be defined as a network primarily composed of White males who control the educational system. The men in this group are in power to make decisions and control the educational system, and their decision to continue the practice of ensuring leadership roles at colleges are composed of primarily White males makes it very challenging for African American women seeking career advancement (Harvey, 1999).

Cobb's (1969) literature suggests a considerable amount of African American women encounter racism and sexism in the workplace at some point during their careers. Cobb's literature also suggests some of these experiences hinder the advancement of these women. Additional literature written by Stimpson (1974) suggests women and African Americans are members of an inferior class and are faced with double issues of discriminatory practices in the

workplace. Stimpson also suggest racism and sexism are common issues that create unwelcoming environments for African American women in higher education. Meyers (2002) supports this statement by mentioning racism and sexism are two issues that lead to adversity in the workplace and also directly impact the hiring and promotion practices for African American women. Meyers believes these practices are hinder opportunities for African American women who are in search of career advancement.

The information gained from the participants as well as the literature written by the previous mentioned authors suggests the culture of an institution has a significant impact on the career advancement of African American women. The literature reviewed for this study also suggests discriminatory practices of racism and sexism are prevalent practices that hinder African American women from upward mobility. Examples of these experiences that participants in this study encountered are detailed in the following paragraphs.

President A

When asked how the culture of an institution promotes or influences the advancement of African American women, President A shared she believes continued practices of racial and sexual discrimination hinder the growth of some aspiring individuals. When the researcher asked her if she had any personal experiences of racism and sexism during her professional career, President A shared she felt she experienced sexism more often than racism. When asked to describe some of her experiences with sexism she stated:

One incident that really hit a nerve with me was during a large meeting where there were several presidents present. And guess what? Most of them were males. It was like you had to fight to get your voice heard. . . . But when the guys speak, everyone shuts up. Like what they have to say is more important.

When asking President A about any other experiences she had, she continued to share she felt women are always being judged and evaluated immediately upon entering a room. This

president mentioned she did not believe the prejudgment that women experience is fair but it is a practice she believes will be in place throughout her lifetime. She also shared many of the decision makers in colleges are males and they immediately welcome other males in their groups, often grooming them for career advancement. However, she believes women are not as openly received and have to work to be a part of a group where men are automatically accepted and groomed for promotion.

As the interview continued, she continued to share she worked in a multi-campus district where there were several Black presidents who were women. She mentioned a decade prior to her working in the district, most of the presidents were males. However, the current chancellor made efforts to ensure there were more women serving as presidents. She also mentioned the female presidents in her district make an effort to support one another and she makes an effort to mentor women and men who are seeking advancement opportunities.

President B

When asking President B what her opinion was involving the influence the culture of an institution has on the promotion of African American women, she shared she believes the culture of an institution greatly impacts the career growth for any individual. She continued to share she believed if an institution's administration is dominated by males, women may have a challenging time becoming a part of the administrative team because it is not the culture of that college.

She then went on to provide an example of a search committee who is in the pursuit of an Athletic Director should seek the most qualified candidate, but this practice has at times been ignored because the decision makers may feel as though they want, for example, a male to be the Athletic Director. She stated:

What if there is a very qualified female, who has worked at several collegiate conferences. . . . I am willing to bet the committee will feel more comfortable with a male

in the position because football, basketball, baseball and all are male-dominated sports. So a lot of people feel the person in charge of the sports should be a male.

When the researcher asked her if she had any personal experiences with sexism, she was very forthcoming and informed the researcher she had several experiences of sexism and racism. She recalled some of her initial experiences of racism and sexism occurred when she became the president of a community college located in a somewhat rural area that was populated by a large percentage of White individuals. This president mentioned she believed the color of her skin was the reason some people held prejudgments against her. When asked about specific incidents that were racially motivated, the participant informed the researcher she was never called racial names but there was often a tension present in the college and surrounding communities that she believed existed because she was Black. She continued to share she felt as though her initial transition at the college was challenging because she was Black and also a woman. Additionally, she suggested she did not believe she would have experienced some of the resistance she did if she were White. When asking this president how she overcame those experiences she stated:

I always say you learn how to work with people. Even the ones who don't want you . . . so I made them feel a part of the efforts I was trying to do. I asked them to chair committees and make presentations. I made sure I had an open-door policy and kept reminding them I was there to work with them.

As the interview continued, this president mentioned she also experienced what she felt was racial and sexual discrimination from the chancellor of her community college district. She mentioned she, along with the majority of the executive level administrators in the district, had doctorate degrees. She shared she was the only Black person and the only Black woman in the presidential cabinet. This president continued to explain she was the only employee addressed by her first name instead of doctor. She further detailed the events of this incident in the following quote:

I really did not appreciate being the only person addressed by their first name. When I asked the chancellor why I was the only employee called by their first name, he informed me he felt more comfortable with me. What does that mean? What made him feel more comfortable with me? I have my own suspicions why I was called by my first name.

When asked how the issue of her being addressed by her first name was resolved, she shared she decided to address the chancellor by his first name until he either acknowledged her credentials or decided to address the entire presidential cabinet by their first names. The participant shared she was adamant about being addressed in the same manner as everyone else because she felt she deserved the same level of respect as her peers. She later mentioned it only took two meetings for her to address the chancellor by his first name for him to cease the practice of addressing her by her first name.

President C

President C informed the researcher she believes the culture of an institution has a direct impact on the advancement of African American women. This president mentioned her presidential ascension was very unique because she was intensely mentored and groomed for her position by the leadership board in her district. She also shared if she had not been afforded the opportunity to be mentored and groomed for the position, she did not believe she would have reached the presidency so quickly and would have several instances of discrimination based on her race and sex. She continued to share that she believed the practice of selecting internal employees to be successors at the college was a common practice in her community college district.

When continuing to discuss cultural practices, the researcher asked President C if she knew of any peers who had adverse experiences when seeking career advancement. The participant quickly nodded her head and said, “Oh, yeah. I heard some stories and saw some things.” When asked to further elaborate, the participant stated:

A colleague of mine had been Vice-President for several years and was ready to move to the presidency. She had an earned doctorate, been a full-time faculty member, and the whole nine. She was appointed as interim president at a college. She served as interim president of that college for over a year. Well, she applied for the presidency and was not offered the position. I strongly believe the reason she was not offered the position was because she was a woman. I heard from a few people on the search committee they really wanted a male in the position because of all the problems surrounding the school. Imagine that. I can go on, but I won't.

In addition to the previous mentioned example of sexism, this president shared with the researcher that when she attends presidential meetings, the majority of presidents in attendance are males. She did not feel as welcomed in the meeting as she would have liked or if she had the automatic respect some of the male colleagues. The following quote further details her account of these instances: "Most presidents are males and just because you are a president does not mean you get automatic membership in their club. You have to prove yourself and earn their respect."

President D

During the interview, President D shared she believes the cultural of an institution greatly influences the promotion of women. She mentioned in the district where she currently worked, the current presiding president has a significant amount of influence on their successor. She continued to share she only had a few months left in her position before she was to retire and the person she recommended to be her successor was a male. When asked why she recommended her successor, the participant shared her decision was based solely on her work history with the individual, coupled with her opinion he was the most qualified person for the position.

As the researcher continued to discuss cultural influences and the impact their have on the career succession of African American women, this president shared she believed women in general will always experience some form of discrimination due to the existence of the good old boy network.

Table 8 illustrates the responses of those presidents who experienced racism, sexism, or both during the careers. Although all the presidents reported experiencing some form of sexism during their careers, President B was the only president who had experiences of both sexism and racism during her career.

Table 8. Experienced Sexism and/or Racism

	President A	President B	President C	President D
Sexism	X	X	X	X
Racism		X		

The fourth research question asked: What internal and external factors contribute to upward mobility within an institution? The question attempted to gain an understanding of internal factors that were instrumental in assisting participants with their career advancement. The question also sought to explore external factors that impacted the upward mobility of participants. Emerging themes which surfaced from this research question include leadership development, professional development activities, institutional politics, and family.

Leadership Academies and Professional Development Opportunities

During the interviews, all of the participants mentioned they believed participation in leadership academies and professional development seminars can serve as excellent tools for those seeking upward mobility. Thus, leadership academies, professional development activities, institutional politics, and family were the emerging themes analyzed from the data that assisted in answering this research question. The following interview quotes further detail the participants' opinions and experiences with the previous mentioned emerging themes.

President A

President A shared she believed supporting employees interested in attending leadership academies or professional development opportunities were internal factors that contribute to the upward mobility. This president shared she was a strong advocate of participation in professional development opportunities as well as leadership academies. She mentioned she makes an effort every year to allow staff to participate in professional development activities so they will have opportunities to enhance their skill-set outside of their immediate workplace. She also shared she encourages participation in leadership academies and professional development activities because she would like for her staff to learn some of the current best practices being used in other colleges. She further stated:

I don't think you can ever receive too much professional development or leadership training. . . . I don't believe employees receive enough of it and most of that is due to lack of financial resources available at the school.

President B

President B also felt leadership programs such as *Grow Your Own* are internal factors that contribute to the upward mobility of an institution. She mentioned the development of a leadership academy was one of the first programs she implemented during her presidency. This president also shared she implemented this program because she wanted her employees to feel valued and supported. She continued to share that opportunities to participate in the leadership programs were open to all faculty and staff. She explained she felt it was important to learn what the aspirations of her employees were and how the college could assist them in reaching their career goals. She stated:

I started the leadership program to help people get ready for the next step. I don't want my employees to become complacent or feel like there are not fair opportunities for advancement. If you get enough of either of these, you could have some serious morale issues which can be accompanied by poor work performance.

President C

When President C was asked what internal and external factors contribute to upward mobility within an institution, she also mentioned participation in leadership and professional development activities. This president shared she believed attending these activities assists administrators with ascertaining who is interested in upward mobility. Furthermore, she suggested both activities are excellent venues to meet potential mentors, learn new initiatives, and gain exposure.

This president shared because she had only been in her position for a little over a year, she had not yet had an opportunity to recommend anyone to attend leadership or professional development activities. However, she mentioned she would make a conscientious effort during the next academic year to recommend and encourage some individuals to attend the activities.

She stated:

I feel really bad I have not had the opportunity to recommend some employees for leadership academies. I feel so bad because people took the time to recommend and mentor me . . . that's how I got in this position. But I'm going to make a conscientious effort to ensure some of my people participate in some leadership academies and professional development activities in the future.

President D

President D also thought leadership academies and professional development academies are internal and external factors that contribute to upward mobility. This president mentioned her district established a leadership academy to groom entry and mid-level managers for possible promotional opportunities. She continued to share she worked with other minority women who served as presidents of other community colleges to establish a leadership academy known as Kaleidoscope. She stated:

Kaleidoscope is an excellent leadership academy for minority women interested in moving up. It is a very intense workshop designed to expose the good, bad, and ugly of

this business. But more importantly, it is a workshop to design to prepare minority women for the next career move. We pair you with a mentor and do everything we can to make sure you leave better prepared for promotional opportunities.

Institutional Politics

Institutional Politics was the second theme that emerged from the interviews which assisted with answering Research Question Four. Presidents A and C suggested in their interviews that institutional politics can at times have adverse effects on individuals seeking promotion opportunities.

President A

President A stated:

In this district, the politics of an organization has a lot to do with determining who advances in the college . . . politics are heavy but it does not mean it determines everyone's destiny. I'm not a political person, yet I was appointed to the presidency.

President C

President C also shared how institutional politics can hinder growth opportunities for individuals. She mentioned although her district was good at promoting individuals to leadership positions, sometimes the promotions are not based on merit. She continued to share that when wide-spread practices of nepotism are used, talented individuals who do not have the political affiliations are overlooked. The following quote further details her response to Research

Question 4:

Unfortunately, there is some nepotism in this district. It's good for those who can benefit from it but it also bad for those talent people who aren't in the political loop. These people get overlooked and if they keep getting overlooked eventually their work morale is going to suffer or they will become disgruntled or leave.

Family

Family was the third theme that emerged from the data that all participants felt had some impact on upward mobility. This theme was an external factor all the participants identified as

one that could have an effect on upward mobility. Additionally, all the participants felt the time commitment needed for the presidency greatly negates the time available to spend with their family members.

Two of the participants in this study are parents and the remaining two do not have children. The participants who have children mentioned they often felt guilty for spending so much time at work or relocating their family when they secured a new position. The remaining two participants shared that although they did not have children, they still spent a significant amount of time away from their immediate family members (spouse, parents, and siblings) in efforts to perform presidential duties. The following sections detail the participant's perception on the impact family has upward mobility.

President A

President A is not married and has no children. She mentioned she did not believe she could have worked in executive level positions and raise children because of the demanding time commitments associated with the positions. She also shared she believes she has been very successful in her career because she does not have children. Therefore, she has been able to work late evenings and weekends to complete necessary tasks. She elaborated on the issue of work and family in the following quote:

This position is very time consuming. If I had children who were minors, I would not accept a presidential position. It's just too time consuming and I don't think it would be fair to the children.

President B.

President B is a divorced mother of three adult children. She shared she was the president of three community colleges before becoming a chancellor. She mentioned the colleges were located in different states and each time she accepted a presidency, she would have

to relocate her family. She shared how time consuming she felt presidential positions were. She also shared that although she worked diligently at committing 100 percent of her time to the presidency, she never neglected her children. She shared that it is important to find a balance between work and family, and she believes family always should come first.

As the interview continued this president mentioned that right after she was offered the position of chancellor, her adult son was diagnosed with lymphoma. She shared how devastated she was when her son received his diagnosis. She also mentioned she took a leave of absence when her son was ill so she could help care for him. She stated:

Nothing or no one comes before my children. If my son had not recovered and was not in remission and did not basically force me to return to work, I would have stayed. I love my children and no job is more important than them and will never come before them.

President C.

President C is married and has no children. She shared because she has worked several years in leadership positions, the time commitment required for the position is the main reason she decided not to have children. The participant also shared the time she commits to the presidency leaves little time for her to spend with her spouse. She continued to share she felt guilty for spending so many late nights and weekends at work. As the interview continued, she mentioned she believed women presidents have additional responsibilities in comparison to men. She explained women are still expected to fulfill spousal and mother responsibilities when they arrived home from work. However, she felt many men were not held to the same standards. She stated:

If you are a woman, your family still has expectations that you will still fulfill those family roles . . . men, maybe not so much. I don't see anyone asking a male who is president what's for dinner when he comes home. But a woman, your family will still depend on and need you. So you got to find a balance with everything.

President D

President D is a single parent and has never married. She shared she would not have been able to serve as a president if it were not for her parents. She mentioned her daughter was only seven years of age when she secured a presidency and she moved in with her parents so her daughter could be provided constant parental care. She also mentioned this lifestyle change was necessary in order for her to dedicate the time she needed to her job. She elaborated on this topic with the following statements:

The time needed to perform the duties associated with the presidency is very demanding. If I did not have the help of my parents, there is no way I could be president. I don't see how any single parent with young children could be in this position without a tremendous contribution from family or without hiring someone to be in the home full time with the child.

Table 9 illustrates the internal and external factors each president believed contributes to upward mobility within an institution. The table shows all presidents shared a common belief that participation in leadership academies and professional development academies may have an impact on upward mobility. The table also reflects all the presidents suggested family responsibilities may also have an impact on upward mobility.

Table 9. Internal and External Factors that Contribute to Upward Mobility

	President A	President B	President C	President D
Participation in Leadership Academies	X	X	X	X
Participation in Professional Development Activities	X	X	X	X
Institutional Politics	X		X	
Family Responsibilities	X	X	X	X

Conceptual Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Feminist Theory (BFT) are theoretical pipelines used in this study because they allow the researcher to more deeply explore the issues specifically related to experiences of African American women in higher education.

Additionally, BFT allowed the researcher to explore the challenges of Black women and understand how race and gender influence their professional growth. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, CRT and BFT were used as a filter to understand the oppressions that African American women in higher education experience and to identify possible strategies these women can employ to assist with securing a community college presidency.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the first theory examined for this study. CRT was formed during the 1970s by Derrick Bell as a response to the slow improvement to eliminate racism after the civil rights era (Delgado, 1993). CRT draws upon the lived experiences of people of color and uses methodologies such as life stories, biographies, and narratives to capture their experiences (Solorzano, 1998). This theory is mostly used in qualitative research to attempt to uncover the ongoing practices of racialized power (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xxix). The overall goal of CRT is to eliminate all forms of oppression and challenge America to examine

race, class, and gender privileged individuals in both formal and informal settings (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xxix).

There are three tenets to CRT that are relevant to this study. The first tenet suggests that America considers racism to be normal and because racial practices are so common, it is difficult to see (Bell, 1995). The second tenet suggests that White Americans will only support justice of African Americans when it is in the interest of the White American (Bell, 1995). Tenet three argues race neutrality; equal opportunity and color blindness do not exist and are not practiced in education (Bell, 1995).

In this study, CRT was not substantially relevant to the findings because during the interviews, Presidents A, C, and D did not convey any personal experiences of racism during the interviews. However, President B recalled dramatic racial experiences she encountered during her journey to the presidency. President B mentioned at a certain time in her career, she was the only Black person and the only Black woman in the presidential cabinet. Although she along with all the other cabinet members had earned doctorates, she was the only member the chancellor addressed by first name instead of doctor. She further detailed her experience with racism in the following quote:

I really did not appreciate being the only person addressed by their first name. When I asked the chancellor why I was the only employee called by their first name, he informed me he felt more comfortable with me. What does that mean? What made him feel more comfortable with me? I have my own suspicions why I was called by my first name.

This experience of President B directly speaks to the first tenet of Critical Race Theory which suggests racial practices are common and difficult to see. In the experience of President B, the first tenet of Critical Race Theory appears to be relevant because the chancellor did not address President B with the same salutations he used with the other members of his cabinet. Specifically, the practice of the chancellor addressing President B by her first name was common

and not viewed by the chancellor as problematic until President B brought the matter to his attention. The actions of the chancellor appear to be an example of the first tenet defined in Critical Race Theory.

President B also shared she believes the Chancellor only began addressing her by her earned credentials as an effort to stop her from addressing him by his first name. She further elaborates on this incident in the following quote:

He asked me why I called him by his first name and even mentioned he was a little surprised I did so . . . because you always call me by my first name. However, when we are in meetings you refer to my peers as doctor so and so.

The actions of the Chancellor are directly related to the actions identified in tenet two of Critical Race Theory which suggests White Americans will only support justice of African Americans when it is in the interest of White Americans. In the previous mentioned experience, the chancellor did not want President B to continue addressing him by his first name. Therefore, he began addressing President B in the same formality as he did the other members of his cabinet. It seems as though his corrective behavior was self-seeking and done for his personal satisfaction.

The third tenet in Critical Race Theory suggests race neutrality; equal opportunity and color blindness do not exist and are not practiced in higher education. In the experiences of President B, this tenet was present and the experiences she endured demonstrated her institution's failure to given the fact the leaders of the institution did not exercise race neutrality, equal opportunity, and colorblindness.

Although personal experiences of racism only manifested in the interview with President B, profound insights involving racial practices in higher education surfaced during an interview with President D. In her interview, President D shared she believed she would have

experienced racism if she had not spend her entire career working in the same district, which was predominately minority. This president also mentioned she believed if she worked in different community college districts located in more remote areas, she was certain some racially motivated issues would have arisen. President D's thoughts about potential racial experiences that manifested during her interview were as follows:

At the time I am unable to recall any experiences with racism. I have spent my career working in the same district. . . . I think I can't recall any experiences with racism because of where my college is located and the history I have with the chancellor and board members. I may have a different answer for you if I worked in a remote district, or even a district where I did have such a rich history with the community, chancellor, or board members. Now, I am not saying racism does not exist in the district. What I am saying is I have not had any experiences with it.

Even though the tenets of CRT were used to examine their relationships to the experiences of these particular African American female presidents, it appears as though they were not significantly relevant to the presidents' experiences. The theory was not relevant because President B was the only president that had actual experiences related to the theory. However, President D mentioned that although she did not have experiences involving racism in the district where she spent her entire career, she shared if she had worked in different districts she believed she would have experience some racial bias.

Black Feminist Theory

The second theory examined for this study is Black Feminist Theory (BFT). BFT focuses on the oppression of Black women and argues sexism, class oppression, and racism are inextricably bound together (Collins, 2004). There are two main areas considered in this theory: (a) the experiences and oppression of Black women are different from other women and (b) commonalities and differences exist between Black women when considering religion, sexual orientation, and social-economic status (Collins, 2004).

Other important factors related to this theory emphasize the importance of understanding Black women experience more intense challenges in comparison to White women because they are a double minority. The double minority for Black women includes being a woman and being a Black woman (Collins, 2004). Some researchers suggest being a double minority causes some Black women to experience challenges for equality in wages in comparison to men and White women. Other challenges include concerns for fair hiring and promotion practices in comparison to men and White women. All of these challenges are unique to Black women and because they are challenges that can only be understood by women in this racial group, it may be difficult for men and women who belong to other racial groups to understand (Eisenstein, 2004).

Some of the previously mentioned intense challenges experienced by Black women manifested itself in some of the presidents' interviews. Three of the four presidents shared their personal experiences of having knowledge of and being affected by sexism in the workplace. All the presidents who were interviewed believe this practice hinders African American women from upward mobility. President A shared she believes women are not openly received as men in executive level positions and have to work to be a part of a group where men have automatic membership. She further shared she felt this practice was very prevalent at the president's level and was disappointed she still had to fight to have the same attention and respect given to her at meetings that was automatically given to her male peers. She elaborated on this statement:

One incident that really hit a nerve with me was during a meeting where there were several presidents present. And guess what? Most of them were males, it was like you had to fight to get your voice heard...but when the guys speak, everyone shuts up. Like what they have to say is more important. Makes you wonder if you're having these experiences because you're Black, or because you're a woman or both?

The last question presented in the previous quote directly demonstrates how President A's experiences are inextricably bound experiences of racism and sexism. Additionally, the

quote presents the issue of President A experiencing issues of diversity in addition to equality. All of the experiences are relevant to BFT.

President B also shared her experiences and opinions of sexism in the workplace. This president mentioned she believes if any institution's administration is dominated by males, women may have a difficult time becoming a part of the administrative team because it is not the culture of the institution to have several women in executive positions. Another example of an observation made by President B relative to sexism can be found in the hiring of athletic directors. This president gave the example of a search committee not considering women for a Director of Athletics position because they feel more comfortable with a male in the position. This president stated:

What if there is a very qualified female, who has worked at several collegiate conferences. . . . I am willing to bet the committee will feel more comfortable with a male in the position because football, basketball, baseball, and all that are male-dominated sports. So a lot of people feel the person in charge of the sports should be a male.

The beliefs and examples shared by President B demonstrate practices in higher education that oppressed Black women.

President C also shared her experiences of sexism in the workplace and how this practice hinders the career growth of women. This president stated:

A colleague of mine had been Vice-President for several years and was ready to move to the presidency. She had an earned doctorate, been a full-time faculty member, and the whole nine. She was appointed as interim president at a college. She served as interim president of that college for over a year. Well, she applied for the presidency and was not offered the position. I strongly believe the reason she was not offered the position was because she was a woman. I heard from a few people on the search committee they really wanted a male in the position because of all the problems surrounding the school. Imagine that. I can go on, but I won't.

The example shared by President C explicitly demonstrates practices identified in Black Feminist Theory. According to President C, the women who applied for the presidency were not

offered the position because the search committee was specifically seeking a male. The women in this example experienced sexism and oppression, which is noted in Black Feminist Theory.

Based upon the findings of this study, it appears as though Black Feminist Theory had significant relevance, since three of the four presidents shared their experiences of gender discrimination or having knowledge of such practices. Additionally, the incidents shared by the presidents reflect practices of inequality and lack of diversity. These practices are directly related to those experiences identified in Black Feminist Theory.

Summary

This chapter provided an analysis of the most salient findings in this study. Included in this chapter is a profile for each president; emerging themes which include mentoring, leadership skills, administrative positions held prior to the presidency, educational attainment, professional development, family, and institutional politics. Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Theory were the conceptual frameworks used in this study and were discussed in the chapter as well. Finally, this chapter analyzed racism and sexism through the lens of Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Theory.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore challenges and successful strategies that can be employed by African American women seeking a community college presidency. Some of the literature reviewed, as well as information gained from the study, suggest that African American women may have experienced some forms of racism or sexism during their journeys towards the presidency. Therefore, the information shared by current and past female African American presidents can assist other African American women pursuing the community college presidency in creating strategies to cope with these experiences, and possibly enhance their qualifications and credentials for the community college presidency.

Four African American women who served as presidents of community colleges located in or near large, urban areas participated in this qualitative case study. The researcher analyzed data collected through face-to-face interviews, field notes, and biographical questionnaires to address the following research questions:

1. What are the personal and professional attributes African American women identify as paramount in obtaining their position?
2. What are some of the commonalities and differences in the presidents' journeys to success?
3. How does the culture of an institution promote or influence the advancement of African American women in higher education?
4. What internal and external factors contribute to upward mobility within a college?

Additionally, this chapter includes conclusions resulting from an analysis of the data collected, which is provided within the framework of the research questions. A discussion of the

findings in relation to the emerging themes stemming from the data collected is also provided. Finally, this chapter includes recommendations for future practices and offers suggestions for further related research.

Discussion

The challenges encountered by women aspiring to be presidents and serving as presidents in higher education have been well noted in numerous bodies of literature. Some of those challenges have been related to gender bias and the fact that the percentages of female presidents in colleges and universities in the United States is substantially lower than the number of men serving in these positions (Bailey, 2009; Chock, 2007; Dixon, 2005; Duree, 2007). Furthermore, the imminent number of presidential retirements coupled with increasing minority enrollment in community colleges has raised concern over the low number of African American women and other minorities serving in senior leadership positions (Bailey, 2009; Chock, 2007; Dixon, 2005; Duree, 2007). The lack of African American women in these positions is disconcerting because the impending number of presidential retirements could provide opportunities to increase the number of African American women serving in community college presidencies (Bailey, 2009; Chock, 2007; Dixon, 2005; Duree, 2007).

For those African American women who were able to secure a presidency, it appears as though their journeys have not always been easy. Unlike their White female counterparts, African American women are more likely to experience challenges associated with being African American and female. These challenges have limited the career opportunities for some African American women and contributed to the small increase of women from this race who serve as presidents. The findings of this study highlight some of the strides made by African American women who were successful at securing the presidency, as well as notes their challenges.

Learning from the successes of current African American female presidents may encourage other African American women to not only pursue community colleges presidencies but also experience successes while in the positions. Enhancing the knowledge related to the challenges that some African American women may experience can provide aspiring African American women with strategies to overcome those challenges and aid them in being better prepared for the presidency.

Implications

There were a number of implications that resulted from the findings of the research questions. These implications identified some practices of community colleges, governing boards, and search committees that may hinder the upward mobility of aspiring African American women. The implications are identified under each respective research question.

Research Question 1: What are the personal and professional attributes African American women identify as paramount in obtaining their position? This question sought information concerning what personal and professional characteristics the presidents perceived as being instrumental in assisting them to obtain a community college presidency. Emerging themes which surfaced from the interview questions and assisted in answering this research question include mentoring, leadership skills, and participation in leadership academies.

All four presidents who participated in this study have similar sentiments in that they believe relationships they had with their professional mentors significantly impacted their career ascension. The presidents also believed their mentors were instrumental in assisting them with developing a career plan, gaining advice for areas of continual growth, and being provided with networking opportunities.

Additionally, each participant interviewed for this study identified good leadership qualities as being another major attribute that assisted them with securing a community college presidency. The presidents emphasized how imperative it is for aspiring presidents to be able to be good leaders in times of adversity and during times of change.

The final emerging theme shared by the presidents involved participating in leadership development programs for aspiring individuals. This attribute mirrors the suggestion shared by O'Banion (2006). O'Banion suggests institutions should make efforts to create Grow Your Own leadership development programs because they are essential opportunities to prepare African American women for the community college presidencies, as well as serve as a venue to increase diversity among leaders.

There are several implications of these emerging themes to community colleges in general and, specifically, Illinois community colleges:

- It is important that community colleges be aware of those challenges encountered by African American female presidents in order to support their success.
- Community colleges must be aware of the importance of mentoring, particularly as it applies to African American women aspiring to become community college presidents.
- There are implications to the Illinois community, as well as the community college system in general, relative to professional development or the Grow Your Own notion, if the number of African American women presidents is to increase.
- It is important that the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and local community colleges take on shared responsibility in attempting to inspire African American women to pursue the presidency.

Research Question 2: What are some of the commonalities and differences in the presidents' journeys to success? This research question sought to highlight any unique career experiences participants had prior to becoming president. This research question also sought to identify any shared experiences during the participants' careers. Emerging themes which surfaced from this research question include administrative positions held prior to the presidency and educational attainment.

There were few differences in the presidents' responses to this research question. However, there were more commonalities than differences. The first commonality involved three of the four presidents serving as Vice-President for Academic Affairs prior to assuming the presidency. The second commonality involved all of the participants commenting on the importance of aspiring individuals to earn a doctorate degree before becoming president.

Some implications of these emerging themes associated with this research question are as follows:

- African American women pursuing the presidency must be aware of the importance of securing the proper credentials required to obtain these positions.
- African American women pursuing the presidency should be aware of the traditional pathways to this position.
- Being well-versed in all aspects of the presidency may assist interested African American women with being better prepared for the presidency.

Research Question 3: How does the culture of an institution promote or influence the advancement of African American women in community colleges? This question attempted to discover how institutional practices can assist African American women with securing leadership roles that could possibly position them in the pipeline for the community

college presidency. This question also attempted to uncover institutional practices that may have served as barriers for African American women seeking the community college presidency. The final inquiry this question attempted to address involved the identification of any strategies to overcome barriers.

Cobb's (1969) literature suggests a considerable number of African American women encounter racism and sexism in the workplace at some point during their careers. Cobb's literature also suggests some of these experiences hinder the advancement of these women. Meyers (2002) supports this statement by mentioning racism and sexism are two issues that lead to adversity in the workplace and also directly impact the hiring and promotion practices for African American women. Meyers believes these practices hinder opportunities for African American women who are in search of career advancement.

The information gained from the participants, as well as the literature written by the previously mentioned authors, suggest the culture of an institution has a significant impact on the career advancement of African American women. The literature reviewed for this study also suggests the discriminatory practices of racism and sexism are prevalent practices that hinder African American from upward mobility. Therefore, emerging themes which resulted from this research question included racism and sexism.

Some implications formed from the emerging themes include the following:

- Local community colleges should be sensitive to any practices involving racism and sexism.
- Search committees should be properly trained to recognize the importance of and embrace diversity among presidential applicants.

- African American women pursuing the presidency should be aware of the existence of racial and sexist practices that may hinder them from upward mobility.

Research Question 4: What internal and external factors contribute to upward mobility within an institution? This question attempted to gain an understanding of internal factors that were instrumental in assisting participants with their career advancement. The question also sought to explore external factors that impacted the upward mobility of participants. Thus, emerging themes which surfaced from this research question include leadership development, professional development activities, institutional politics, and family.

During the interviews, all of the participants mentioned they believed participation in leadership academies and professional development activities can serve as excellent tools for those seeking upward mobility. The presidents' sentiments involving the impact leadership development programs can have on the career growth of aspiring individuals is also shared by O'Banion (2006), who also suggests leadership development programs can be critical tools in increasing diversity among administration staff, as well as assisting with preparing middle and upper-level managers for the presidency.

Institutional Politics was the second theme that emerged from this research question. Presidents A and C suggested in their interviews that institutional politics can at times have adverse effects on individuals seeking promotional opportunities. President A mentioned institutional politics are a wide-spread practice in her district and often determine which employees were offered opportunities for advancement. President C also suggested institutional politics are practiced in her district and can cause talented individuals seeking upward mobility to not be considered for promotional opportunities because they do not have strong political affiliations.

Family was the third theme that emerged from this research question, and all of the presidents interviewed felt family had some impact on upward mobility. Specifically, all of the participants felt the time commitment needed for the presidency greatly negates the time available to spend with their family members.

Some implications for the emerging themes include the following:

- Illinois community colleges and community colleges in general should be aware of any internal biases that hinder the professional growth of African American women.
- Community colleges should be aware of the benefits of *Grow Your Own* and other leadership development programs.
- Aspiring African American women pursuing the presidency should be aware of the time demands of the presidency and how it can affect their family members.
- Aspiring African American women pursuing the presidency should be aware of any internal political practices of a particular institution and develop a strategy to deal with such practices.

Recommendations for Practice (Illinois Community College Board and local community colleges)

The following recommendations for the Illinois Community College Board and local community colleges address the disparity in the number of African American women serving as community college presidents:

- The development of mentoring programs that pair aspiring African American women seeking a community college presidency with current African American female community college presidents could be one venue to support the aspirations of mentees.

- Implement *Grow Your Own* and other leadership development programs that are designed to address and prepare African American women interested in the community college presidency. These programs can provide information involving possible challenges towards securing a community college presidency as well as strategies to address those challenges.
- Establish dialogue between the Illinois Community College Board and local community colleges addressing practices of racism, sexism, and institutional politics, as well as other challenges that often stifle the growth of some African American women pursuing a community college presidency.
- In partnership with the Illinois Community College Board, local community colleges might coordinate efforts to provide training to those responsible for recruiting and hiring potential presidential applicants.

Recommendations for Practice for Aspiring African American Women Interested in the Community College Presidency:

Based upon the findings of this study, the following strategies are recommended for those African American women pursuing a community college presidency:

- African American women should ensure they complete the necessary credentials prior to applying for a presidency.
- African American women should make efforts to secure positions that are traditional pathways to the community college presidency.
- African American women should make efforts to become familiar with the culture of an institution and its surrounding communities, and be aware of any racial and sexist practices that may exist. These women should also make efforts to develop strategies to deal with such practices.

- African American women should be aware of the time demands associated with the presidency and how it can impact family members.

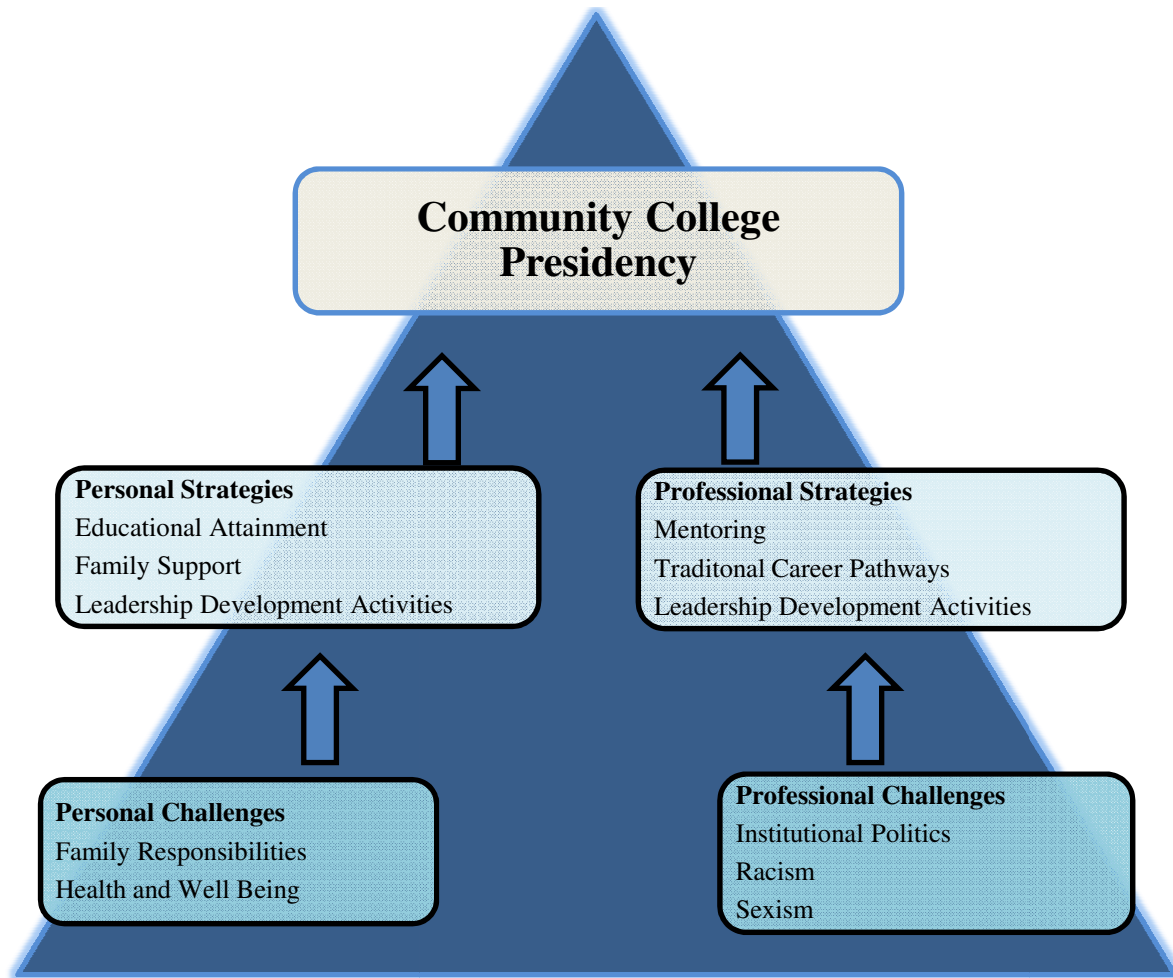
Lois Britton Model for Aspiring Community College Presidents

The model may be considered by some aspiring African American women who are interested in the community college presidency. The model contains some personal challenges such as family responsibilities and health and well-being some of the presidents in this study experienced during their journeys towards the community college presidency. The model also list some professional challenges experienced by the presidents such as institutional politics, racism, and sexism.

In addition to the personal and professional challenges they experienced during their journeys towards the presidency, the presidents also shared personal and professional strategies they used to assist in addressing some of those challenges they experienced while securing their positions. Some of the personal strategies shared by the presidents include educational attainment, family support, and participation in professional development activities. Some of the professional strategies the presidents used to secure the positions include mentoring, assuming positions that traditionally align with a presidency, and participating in leadership development activities.

Figure four is a model that may be considered by some African American women who are aspiring to become a community college president.

Figure 4. Model for aspiring community college presidents



The following examples and definitions apply to the personal and professional strategies and challenges which emerged during the presidents' interviews:

Personal Challenges

- Family responsibilities: child care and spousal support.
- Health and well-being: physical and mental health.

Professional Challenges

- Racism: prejudging or discriminating against an individual due to their race.
- Sexism: belief that men are superior to women.

- Institutional Politics: using practices such as nepotism, sexism or racism as a means of governing an organization.

Personal Strategies

- Educational Attainment: completion of doctorate degree.
- Family Support: assistance of spouses, children, and siblings.
- Professional Development Activities: activities that enhance the professional skillset of an individual.

Professional Strategies

- Mentoring: act of advising and grooming someone in efforts to assist them with their personal and career goals.
- Traditional Career Pathways: assuming positions such as Dean of Instruction and Vice President for Academic Affairs prior to applying for a community college presidency.
- Leadership Development Activities: activities designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of an individual in attempts to position them to assume a key leadership role.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher spent a considerable amount of time listening to some of the challenges of the African American women interviewed for this study. As a result of the challenges identified by the presidents, the following recommendations for future research are suggested:

- Conduct a quantitative study designed to survey all African American women community college presidents in efforts to gain more specific data concerning

challenges and successful strategies they employed to secure a community college presidency.

- Conduct a national study to establish a profile of female African American community college presidents, highlighting attributes they believe assisted them with securing a community college presidency.
- Conduct research designed to compare and contrast responses provided by African American men who are community college presidents in comparison to those provided by African American women who are community college presidents. This research may be helpful in highlighting any similarities or differences in their journeys towards the community college presidency, particularly as it relates to discriminatory practices of racism, sexism, and family matters.
- Research could possibly be designed to compare and contrast experiences of African American women who are community college presidents in southern states compared to African American women who are community college presidents in the Midwest or northern states. This comparison and contrast may assist in identifying any commonalities or differences among their journeys towards the community college presidency.

Conclusion

Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Theory were the conceptual frameworks used in this study. After carefully dissecting the information gained from the interviews, it was determined that the majority of the presidents had experiences more closely related to Black Feminist Theory as opposed to Critical Race Theory. Therefore, Black Feminist Theory was more relevant in this study. For example, Presidents A, C, and D did not convey any personal

experiences of racism during the interviews. However, three of the four presidents shared their personal experiences related to sexism or having knowledge of sexism existing in the workplace. Although the individuals are both African American and women, the findings tend to support discrimination was based more on their gender as opposed to their race. Additionally, all the presidents who were interviewed believe this practice hinders African American women from upward mobility.

There were several emerging themes that arose during the interviews and were discussed in this chapter. These themes include: mentoring, good leadership skills, administrative positions held prior to the presidency, educational attainment, participation in leadership academies as well as professional development activities, institutional politics, and family responsibilities. With the exception of racism and family responsibilities, all of the previous mentioned emerging themes were recurrent.

Summary

This chapter provided a discussion, conclusion, implications and recommendations for practice and future research drawn from the findings of the study. One significant finding suggested African American women experienced more gender bias issues than racial issues during their presidential journeys. There were also a number of implications that resulted from the study. Some of the implications include the repercussions of practices of sexism and racism and the related hindrance to the career growth of African American women who are seeking a community college presidency. Other implications include the impact mentoring relationships and leadership development activities have on the career accession of aspiring African American women.

The recommendations in this chapter provide suggested practices the Illinois Community College Board and local community college can implement to better support the efforts of aspiring African American women. There are also recommendations in the model African American women may consider to be better prepared for a community college presidency. Finally, there are recommendations for future research that may assist with highlighting some expected challenges and suggested strategies for African American women who are interested in the community college presidency.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Informed Consent – Participant

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study that will take place from June 2008 until April, 2009. This form outlines the purpose of this study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

I consent to participate in a research project conducted by Lois Britton, a doctoral student at National-Louis University in Chicago, Illinois.

I understand that this study is entitled Challenges and Successful Strategies Employed by African American Women Seeking a Community College Presidency. The purpose of this study is to identify challenges and strategies new and seasoned African American women community college presidents have used to secure their presidency.

I understand that my participation will consist of one interview lasting 1-2 hours, with a possible second, follow-up interview lasting one hour. I understand that I will receive a copy of my transcribed interview at which time I may clarify information.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and there are no anticipated risks or benefits to me associated with this research any greater than those encountered in daily life. Further, I understand the information collected from this research could be of benefit to future African-American women seeking a community college presidency.

I understand that I can withdraw at any time without prejudice until completion of the dissertation.

I understand that only the researcher, Lois Britton, will have access to a secured file cabinet in which all transcripts, tape recordings and field notes will be kept.

I understand that the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, but my identity will in no way be revealed.

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information, I may contact the researcher: **Lois Britton, 9400 S. Michigan, Chicago, IL, 60619 (773) 678-1980 or loisbritton96@gmail.com**

I have been informed that if I have any questions or concerns before or during participation that I feel have not been addressed by the researcher, I may contact my Primary Advisor and Dissertation Chair: **Dr. Dennis Haynes, National-Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603**

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B: Biographical Questionnaire

1. Age _____ Marital status _____
2. Current place of employment _____
3. Number of years in current position

4. Year the presidential position was assumed

5. What degrees do you hold and where did you earn them?
 Degree _____
 University _____
 Degree _____
 University _____
 Degree _____
 University _____
6. What three previous positions did you hold prior to your presidency?
 College _____
 Position _____
 College _____
 Position _____
 College _____
 Position _____
7. Where you ever a full-time tenured faculty member (Yes/No)?
 College _____

Subject _____

Years _____

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. What are some of the challenges you experienced during your journey to secure a presidency?
2. How did you determine some of the obstacles you experienced in question #1 were a challenge?
3. What were some strategies you used to assist you in securing a presidency?
4. Have you had a mentor?
5. What has been the most useful insight shared by your mentor?
6. What do you like most about being a president?
7. What do you like least about being a president?
8. What advice would you offer to aspiring African American women that are interested in becoming a community college president?
9. What leadership styles and characteristics do you believe future community college presidents should have?
10. Are there any challenges you feel are unique to African American women attempting to secure a community college presidency?
11. What strategies have you developed to deal with these challenges?

Appendix D: Mapping Interview Questions

Driving Question #1	Interview Questions 4, 8, 9
What are the personal and professional attributes that African American women community college presidents identify as paramount in obtaining the position?	<p>Have you had a mentor?</p> <p>What advice would you offer to aspiring African American women that are interested in becoming a community college president?</p> <p>What leadership styles and characteristics do you believe future community college presidents should have?</p>
Driving Question #2	Interview Questions 1, 2, 5, 6, 7
What are some of the commonalities and differences in each president's journey to success?	<p>What are some of the challenges you experienced during your journey to secure a presidency?</p> <p>How did you determine some of the obstacles you experienced in question #1 were a challenge?</p> <p>What has been the most useful insight shared by your mentor?</p> <p>What do you like most about being a president?</p> <p>What do you like least about being a president?</p> <p>What strategies have you developed to deal with these challenges?</p>
Driving Question #3	Interview Questions 10, 11
How does the culture of an institution promote or influence the advancement of African American women in community colleges?	<p>Are there any challenges you feel are unique to African American women attempting to secure a community college presidency?</p> <p>What strategies have you developed to deal with these challenges?</p>
Driving Question #4	Interview Questions 3, 10, 11
What external and internal factors contribute to upward mobility within an institution?	<p>What were some strategies you used to assist you in securing a presidency?</p> <p>Are there any challenges you feel are unique to African American women attempting to secure a community college presidency?</p> <p>What strategies have you developed to deal with these challenges?</p>