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Voices of three African American female college presidents: A qualitative study of their journeys

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VOICES OF THREE AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE COLLEGE PRESIDENTS:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THEIR JOURNEYS

by

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Bachelor of Social Work
Colorado State University
1988

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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ABSTRACT

Voices of Three African American Female College Presidents:
A Qualitative Study of Their Journeys

by

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There are many prevailing myths that have influenced society’s perception of Black women. As a result, a tradition of negativity surrounds African American women in American society. It is these “negative perceptions and misinterpretation of African American women’s behavior that found its way into colleges and universities” (Myers, 1991, p. 9). Unlike White women, and Black men, Black women in academe experience double jeopardy; race and gender biases (Gregory, 1995; Myers, 2002). Research on Black women has found that they are concentrated at the lowest academic ranks, non-tenured, paid less than their male and White female counterparts, and promoted at slower rates, marginalized, viewed as tokens, isolated, expected to work harder, and generally lack mentorship and collegiality (Moses, 1997). Despite these obstacles, a number of Black women succeeded to become university and college presidents.
The purpose of this research was to explore the journeys of three African American women college and university presidents through their history, educational preparation, career paths, and experiences. In addition, the expectation was to identify perceptions of barriers, strategies, and leadership characteristics employed to acquire the position of president. This study specifically addressed questions regarding their perceptions of challenges, how these challenges were overcome, and how those challenges shaped their leadership style. Exploration of these areas through observations, qualitative interviews, and document collection provided the researcher with valuable information that contributed to the extant research on African American women in leadership positions.

The analysis and interpretation of the data was made through the phenomenological method of horizontalization, categorization, and textural and structural descriptions (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Tesch, 1990; Spiegelberg, 1965; Moustakas, 1994). Using that methodology, seven themes were identified: family background, the communities where they grew up, segregation, Black identity development, educational experiences, professional pathway, and leadership style.

The three participants in this study attributed their success to strong family backgrounds, growing up in Black communities, the Black church, and attending predominately Black schools which fostered their Black identity, strong sense of self, self-esteem, resiliency, motivation and determination to succeed. They found through resiliency and determination creative strategies to manage the obstacles they encountered as they journeyed to the presidency. While they each took various pathways to the presidency, they generally practiced transformational leadership styles.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................ iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..................................................................................................... viii

CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 1
  Problem Statement .............................................................................................................. 9
  The Purpose of the Study ................................................................................................. 11
  The Questions Guiding the Study .................................................................................... 12
  Assumptions of the Study ............................................................................................... 12
  Significance of the Study ................................................................................................. 13
  Limitations ......................................................................................................................... 14
  Definitions of Terms Used ............................................................................................... 15
  Theoretical Framework Surrounding the Phenomenon Black Feminist Theory ..... 16
  Overview ........................................................................................................................ 19

CHAPTER 2  LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................... 21
  History of African American Women in Higher Education .......................................... 23
  Education Prior to Emancipation .............................................................................. 28
  Education After the Civil War ..................................................................................... 31
  Attitudes of Researchers toward African American Women ........................................ 36
  The Influence of the Cult of True Womanhood ............................................................. 39
  Quest for Dignity: Black Women in Education .............................................................. 42
  Desegregation and Civil Rights Period ......................................................................... 48
  Higher Education after the Civil Rights Movement ...................................................... 53
  Negative Stereotyped Images of African American Women ......................................... 58
  Challenges for African American Women Faculty .................................................... 70
  African American Women Strength and the Emergence of Resiliency ..................... 98
  Studies of African American Presidents ..................................................................... 110
  Leadership Characteristics ......................................................................................... 110
  Pioneering Model Leaders ....................................................................................... 112
  Transformational Leadership ..................................................................................... 115
  Number of African American Female President ...................................................... 117
  Summary ......................................................................................................................... 121
  Overview ......................................................................................................................... 124

CHAPTER 3  METHODOLOGY .................................................................................... 125
  Design of the Study ....................................................................................................... 126
  Combining Case Study Design and Phenomenological Approach ............................ 129
  Black Feminist Theory ................................................................................................. 135
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Starting Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>FINDINGS OF THE STUDY</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within-Case Analysis: Sheila</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentary Evidence of Sheila’s Biographical Sketch</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Findings</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FINDINGS OF THE STUDY</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within-Case Analysis: Yolanda</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentary Evidence of Sheila’s Biographical Sketch</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Findings</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>FINDINGS OF THE STUDY</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within-Case Analysis: Sue</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentary Evidence of Sue’s Biographical Sketch</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Findings</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>COMPARISON OF CASES AND ANALYSIS</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpretation of the Findings in Relation to the three Research Questions</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Sheila</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation of Sheila</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentary Evidence of Sheila</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Yolanda</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation of Yolanda</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentary Evidence of Yolanda</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Sue</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of Sue</td>
<td>299</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentary Evidence of Sue</td>
<td>370</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>305</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essence of the Experience</td>
<td>305</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>308</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>308</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS</td>
<td>310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>314</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>322</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Results</td>
<td>382</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essence of the Phenomenon</td>
<td>394</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of the Results</td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Practice</td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications of Research</td>
<td>402</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>407</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX I Informed Consent</td>
<td>327</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX II Guiding Questions</td>
<td>329</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX III Documents Collected</td>
<td>330</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>331</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Enrollment of Blacks in Higher Education from 1900 to 1970 ..................... 52
Table 2. Sheila’s Career Path..................................................................................... 198
Table 3. Yolanda’s Career Path............................................................................... 230
Table 4. Sue’s Career Path...................................................................................... 263
Table 5. Identifies Data Pertaining to Presidents Views of Leadership.................. 304
Table 6. Emerging Themes from Cross-Case Analysis ......................................... 307
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Uniqueness of Sheila’s Experience that Shapes her Identity .........................194
Figure 2. Uniqueness of Yolanda’s Experience that Shapes her Identity .....................225
Figure 3. Uniqueness of Sue’s Experience that Shapes her Identity .............................251
Figure 4. Emerging Themes in Experiences of Three African American Presidents ...272
Figure 5. Support Networks Established..........................................................................284
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x
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Finally, I am very thankful for the support of my family and friends. Roosevelt, my dear husband, I know that this endeavor had been hardest on you. Regardless, you encouraged me from the very beginning and never wavered. You provide me with love, patience, support, and understanding while conducting research and writing my dissertation. I appreciate the tremendous amount of sacrifice you made for me to reach my goal. To my daughters, Arielle and Adrianna, though at times you were not very happy when I could not spend time with you, you both understood how important obtaining my doctoral degree was to me. More importantly, when you saw how tired and stressed out I became you always let me know how proud you were of me and encouraged me to stay the course. To my brother and sister, Augustine and Rose, for being there in the absence of our mother and father, you acted on their behalf by continuing to instill in me the drive and motivation to succeed. To the DD’s, my fellow colleagues and sisters, especially Jeanette, your friendship has been vital to me these last five years, your intellect, and expertise in various areas of education has in many ways inspired and guided me in finding my true path. Thank you to all the DD’s for the many
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

People, other than the Black woman herself, try to define who she is, what she is supposed to look like, act like, and sound like. And most of these creations bear very little resemblance to real live Black women (Washington, 1975, p. 1).

As an African American woman working on her doctoral degree for the last three years, I discovered a phenomenon in various literatures that stimulated an interest, compelling me into investigating it further. That phenomenon involves the experience of African American women in higher education. I found myself discouraged, amazed, and shocked by studies that depict the experiences of Black women, filtered through a labyrinth of oppression of race and gender (Benjamin, 1997; Jones & Gooden, 2003; Myers, 2002; Collins, 2000). The experiences of Black women in these studies stemmed from a culmination of negative images that transcend from the past to the present, that misrepresent and mischaracterize African American women.

Images of African American women are burdened with negative reputations shaped, in part, by social science publications and the media since at least the early nineteenth century (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Scott, 1982; Benjamin, 1997; hooks, 1994). These images negatively characterize Black women as domineering matriarchs, mammies, or exotic sexual objects. According to St. Jean and Feagin (1998), these negative images were perpetrated by White social scientists and Black males trained by them. These social
scientists included Dollard (1949), Frazier (1957), Moynihan (1965), and Herrnstein and Murray (1994). For example, Frazier, an African American male, negatively characterized Black women as having poor characters and a fascination with matters of the flesh (Frazier, 1957). Caroll (1900), in his book, *The Negro a Beast or in the Image of God*, argued from biblical scriptures that Black people were barely a notch above the chimpanzee on the evolutionary spiral. Moynihan (1965), in his famous report, “The Negro Family,” referred to Black women as key players in a tangle of pathology within the Black community, and concluded that Black women could not possibly value themselves.

In Herrnstein and Murray’s (1994) *The Bell Curve*, intelligence quotient tests were utilized to label African Americans and other people of color as unintelligent. “The Birth of a Nation,” by D.W. Griffith, released in 1915, and heralded as a great film, depicts Blacks as idling and brutish (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998). It portrayed African American women as mammies, which implied that Black women were only fit to be domestic workers; thus, the stereotype became a rationalization for economic discrimination (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998). This film, along with the scholarly works of the time, reflected and shaped public attitudes about race and set the stage for what would take a decade-long struggle to improve the portrayal of Black people.

Black women, in particular, were portrayed in scholarly literature and in public and media discussions by images of hyper-sexuality, overbearing dispositions, unintelligence, scheming ways, and lewdness (Howard, 1989; Benjamin, 1997; Merritt, 1996; Valverde, 2003; Myers, 2002; hooks, 1994; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998). As a result, a tradition of negativity surrounds African American women in American society; they are often
physically, morally, and spiritually stigmatized by the dominant culture as deviants and misfits (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Benjamin, 1997; hooks, 1994). Myers (1991) wrote, “it is these depilating, constricting, distorted, negative perceptions and misinterpretation of African American women’s behavior that found its way into colleges and universities, labeled through the guise of ‘scientific research’” (p. 9).

Morton (1991) posited that the stories of historians served as historical and scientific evidence for researchers who study the present. She noted that it was during the turn of the late nineteenth century, that history, like other fields of American scholarship, became professionalized. Scholars were increasingly expected to be educated as the intellectual elite entrusted with the production and communication of knowledge. They shared their ideas in teaching, in journals, and in learned associations, and gained their livelihood and reputations from the official and academic institutions to which they were attached. Moreover, the writing of history was increasingly seen as scientific, based upon the collection and strictly dispassionate interpretation of evidence. As the science of the past, the writing of history took in the authority of scientific objectivity, supposedly freed from objective and value-laden perspectives to discover the facts.

It was the historical and social science literature during the late nineteenth century, that set the stage for stereotypes of Black inferiority (Morton, 1991). It was that radical racist era that has reshaped, updated, and endorsed a distinctive and profoundly disempowering composite image of Black womanhood today by equating the role of Black women as slaves, and slaves with Black women (Morton, 1991). According to Morton (1991), the slave-woman image pervaded more than the history texts; slave womanhood has played a major role in American research. The social science
interpretations of race came to present virtually a uniform, pre-encoded story of Black women's past, complete with a set of slave-women images, such as mammy, jezebel, and matriarch. Van Deburg (1984) explains that because Americans identified Blacks with slaves and slaves with Blacks, these images have been forwarded by writers of fiction, history, and drama. These images continue today and endorse traditional stereotypes, not only of African Americans, but they have also been fully inclusive of Black women. As a result, Myers (2002) argued that "African American women live in a society that devalues both their sex and their race; the liabilities of the intersection of female sex and Black race for these women are also evident in the types of occupational roles to which they have been restricted" (p. 5). According to Zach (1998), "they are often assigned limiting occupational roles, such as laborer, mammy, prostitute, church lady, and matriarch. Those who become professionals or entrepreneurs are viewed as strong Black women or are perceived to be emotionally cold, selfish, and aggressive in unwomanly ways" (p. 81). He further noted that, "missing from the perceived traditional occupational roles for Black women, to this day, is wide-scale recognition of their intellectual competence" (Zach, 1998, p. 81). Scott (1982) agreed and stated:

One is almost overwhelmed with the depth and extent of the intellectual void that exists among social science scholars concerning the lived experiences of Black women. Despite the fact that Black women have always played important roles in American society; they have been almost totally ignored by students of American society and human behavior. The experiences of Black women in both a historical and contemporary sense have been examined from a problems framework. As a result
of this approach, the students begin to see the experiences of Black women being limited in nature (p. 85).

Black women have been participants in higher education at all levels for over a century. However, they are not equally or well-represented throughout the full spectrum of the academy, especially as college and university presidents (Howard, 1989; Benjamin, 1997; Merritt, 1996; Valverde, 2003; Welch, 1992; Myers, 2002). Aleman and Renn (2002) wrote that today, “the contributions and achievements of African American women in higher administration have received little attention and commentary largely rendering them as invisible in scholarly writing” (p. 466). Not much has changed; Moore and Wagstaff (1974), commenting on research on African American women, stated:

Victimized by such scholarly neglect, Black women are discussed and written about only in the context of the feminist and Black movements and in affirmative action activities. The women’s activist organization in academia and their voluminous research and their spate of publications and their hundreds of cases against colleges and universities charging discrimination have not isolated and dealt with the problems of Black women in higher education. Most studies in higher education do not mention Black women as academic professionals at all (p. 161).

Benjamin (1997) contended that research conducted on African American women in higher education is mostly examined by social scientists who are rarely women and almost never people of color. As a result, African American women were often marginalized, misnamed, maligned, and made invisible in the academy (Howard, 1989; Benjamin, 1997; Merritt, 1996; Valverde, 2003; Welch, 1992; Myers, 2002). Research conducted with a Eurocentric patriarchal point of view excludes African American
women's values, voices, and visions; instead, they embrace the Western patriarchal perspectives (Benjamin, 1997; Myers, 2002; Collins, 2000). Moreover, the dominant worldview in scholarly works upholds stereotypical images of African American women (Collins, 2000).

Society does not recognize, and goes as far as to deny, the importance of African American women's lives and contributions through racial, sexual, and class oppression (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982). St. Jean and Feagin (1998) noted that "the negative images of African American women reflect the White culture's portrayal of African Americans. For Black women, the White cultural logic includes much more than a set of negative images and attitudes; it involves a broad range of cultural practices of everyday discrimination that is termed gendered racism" (p. 9). St. Jean and Feagin argued that "gendered racism involves negative White reactions, individualized and institutionalized, to Black female characteristics" (p. 6).

In the everyday lives of Black women, distinct combinations of racial and gender factors are termed double jeopardy, a condition of having to deal with both racism and sexism (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Benjamin, 1997; Myers, 2002). As such, Black women face two barriers, being a woman and being a minority, which can combine to create double obstacles for Black women (Moses, 1989). Jones and Gooden (2003) stated, "Black women in America are far more attuned to racism then sexism, in reality, of course, they are constantly fighting against both of the dueling isms, sexism and racial bigotry are so potent and intertwined that they end up hidden within one another" (p. 42).

As a result, racial and gender characteristics are often blended together with one another and can trigger individual and collective racism by Whites, thus providing
barriers to social mobility and personal achievement (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Myers, 2002). This becomes more evident as one examines the positions of leadership in higher education. Lomotey (1997) wrote, “the lack of African American women in this arena points to the university’s mirror image of society and that African American women have been dealt a ‘double whammy,’ which almost ensures her position of invisibility, powerlessness, and exclusion” (p. 126).

The focus of most research on African American women in higher education examined their experiences as faculty, with a dominant emphasis centered on challenges, such as racism, sexism, affirmative action, and recruitment and retention efforts (Gregory, 1999; Welch, 1992; St. Jean & Feagan, 1998). Furthermore, research on the perceptions and leadership styles of Black women in top-level positions in higher education administration are dated (Green, 1997). In the last decade, three studies of African American female college and university presidents have been published (Harris, 1990; Kane, 1997; Arnold, 1994). According to Battle and Doswell (2004), even with these studies, there exists a need for a more comprehensive study of Black women to address how they came to the presidency. Most of the recent research on administrators in higher education does not specifically view the success and achievements of African American women in higher education. As such, the presence of African American women administrators has not been widely-documented. Data are often limited to the numbers and percentages by types of positions, institutional characteristics, earnings, academic rank, effects of race and gender, and years of experience. Moreover, the data are often aggregated within race and ethnicity reports produced by the government or other reporting bodies (Aleman & Renn, 2002).
African American women are underrepresented in higher education leadership roles. Although they are qualified, interested, and capable, few African American women have held the position of college president (Ross & Green, 2000; Touchton & Davis, 1991). According to Myers (2002), Black women are at the bottom of the educational hierarchy and are subject to racial and sexual discrimination at all levels of academic life. As a result, disparity exists, even in the lack of studies available regarding African American women in higher education leadership positions. This void makes it difficult to obtain a clear picture of how African American women live, dream, suffer, succeed, and prosper, in light of gender and racial discrimination, to become college and university presidents.

Some studies on Black women focus on the poor or those dealing with the social welfare system; rare are contemporary studies on African American women and their achievements. Some studies are exploratory and helpful, but offer only the beginnings to understanding the lives of African American women (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998). Today, African American women do hold the position of college president; however, in-depth studies dealing centrally and thoroughly with the voices and experiences of these women are still relatively few (Howard, 1989; Benjamin, 1997; Merritt, 1996; Valverde, 2003; Welch, 1992; Myers, 2002). As a result, not a great deal of empirical research exists on African American women in higher education. St. Jean and Feagin (1998) postulated that “most research studies are presented as short analysis in journal articles or in edited anthologies, or they take the form of personal memoirs or general essays” (p. 5). Yet, according to Howard (1989), “the current and developing body of research on African American women in higher education provides groundwork for realizing our history,
dispelling myth, relating our experiences, formulating theoretical frameworks, and
establishing our own identity through our own voices in higher education” (p. 180).

Problem Statement

It has been well-documented that women who seek administrative positions in higher
education face many barriers (Howard, 1989; Benjamin, 1997; Merritt, 1996; Valverde,
2003; Welch, 1992; Myers, 2002). As Myers (2002) explained:

African American women are a distinct group with dual statuses as Blacks and
women. Historically, they have encountered a myriad of barriers since their forced
arrival to America. Throughout the twenty-first century, obstacles to upward mobility
and equal life chances have confronted them. No other racial or ethnic group in the
United States has been enslaved or faces such perpetual racial segregation and
discriminations in all institutional domains (p. 41).

According to Marable (2001), racism and sexism combine with class exploitation to
produce a three-pronged mode of oppression for African American women. He posited
that both racism and sexism are grounded in stereotypical beliefs and myths about
African American women, and that these myths abound in the academy. As a result,
African American women face multiple barriers to their growth and success in the
academy (Benjamin, 1997). These barriers include: support, retention, research, teaching,
tenure, and upward mobility to administrators or presidents, as well as the effects of
racism and sexism, at both predominantly White institutions and historically Black
institutions (Howard, 1989; Benjamin, 1997; Merritt, 1996; Valverde, 2003; Welch,
1992; Myers, 2002). Valverde (2003) found that racism was more of a problem for
African American women and other women of color than gender bias was for White women. He stated that “one significant indicator arises when the number of White women and women of color holding college president positions is compared” (p. 106). The phenomenon of African American women who rose to the highest administrative positions within the academy gives credence to their self-definition and self-reliance. Their experiences have combined to promote the development of their being, as well as their careers. It is this mix of negative and positive experiences, struggles against racism and sexism through stereotyping, and negative images, that accounts for their ability to stay the course and conquer the challenges they faced throughout their academic journey (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998).

The problem, then, is that African American women in higher education are unnoticed and unresearched and their individual successes remain unaddressed by academia. According to Wilson (1989), historical and existing literature offers little dialogue on African American women college presidents, their preparation, career paths, experiences, perceptions of barriers to the presidency, resiliency, and how they developed their leadership characteristics.

Because of the limited body of research examining the experiences of African American women as they become college and university presidents, I decided to explore the experiences of the African American women, within the constructs of their histories, educational preparation, career paths, and leadership characteristics employed, as they journeyed to their positions of leadership. My intent was to use their experiences as a basis of analysis to understand, through their own voices, the challenges that they faced,
how they overcame those challenges, and how the combination of the two shaped them as leaders.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the journeys of three African American women in the position of college and university presidents at HBCUs through their history, educational preparation, career paths, and experiences. In addition, the expectation was to identify perceptions of barriers, strategies, and leadership characteristics employed to acquire the position of president. Few studies have explored the status of African American women in higher education. However, these studies generally compare Black women to other women, mostly White women (Collins, 1991). While these studies explore some of the experiences of African American women in higher education, they fail to take into account the historical context that has shaped the images of African American women in society and how these images transcend within institutions of higher education. Moreover, these studies do not give voice to African American women’s personal identities and feelings, which influenced how they manage and respond to their academic experiences in the academy.

This study specifically addressed questions regarding the perception of challenges faced by the three African American female college and university president, how their challenges were overcome, and how those challenges shaped their leadership styles. Exploration of these areas through observations, qualitative interviews, and document collection provided the researcher with valuable information that will contribute to the void in the literature on African American women in higher education, specifically, their
achievements in securing such top administrative positions. It will also create a forum for synthesizing the voices of African American women regarding their experiences in the academy, which may assist in building bridges for African American women in higher education.

Myers (2002) said, “African American women throughout the United States need to be aware that what they are experiencing are not simply personal troubles, but public troubles, because the experience of many other women are the same or similar” (p. 2). This study will also contribute to the dialogue and offer much-needed strategies for African American women attempting to secure positions of leadership in higher education.

The Questions Guiding the Study

The overarching questions examined in this study were:

1. What were the perceived challenges faced by the African American women in this study?
2. How were the perceived challenges overcome?
3. How did those perceived challenges and the women’s responses to them shape their leadership style?

Assumptions of the Study

The design of this study assumes that:

1. African American female college and university presidents will provide assistance to other African American females in overcoming barriers to advancement.
2. The participants will respond openly and candidly.

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because it profiled African American women college presidents as they reflected on their history, achievements, challenges, experiences, and resiliency as they journeyed to the presidency within the academy. The data were examined through Black feminist thought and its resulting epistemology to increase an understanding of what some African American women presidents experienced in their journey to the presidency.

Gregory (1995) emphasized that to understand the unique experiences of African American women in higher education, “it is important to contextualize the framework of their perspectives by comprehensively analyzing the historical components which help identify their thoughts, feelings, and experiences” (p. 3). While this is true, it is equally important to allow African American women to speak for themselves to obtain a self-defined perspective of their experiences. Through African American women’s own voices, this study identified strategies that were used to overcome the challenges faced by African American women in higher education. In addition, this study accomplished two things: 1) it informed the academic community about what African American women administrators identify as barriers to achieving leadership positions within the academy, and 2) it served as a useful resource for educators and students in educational leadership and women’s studies. Because only a limited number of Black women have obtained top-echelon positions in higher education, this study should serve as encouragement for other African American women aspiring to become college presidents.
Moreover, hooks (1994) argued that women must share their knowledge and resources with those who are in need in order to end the oppression of other women by giving them choices. She asserted that this can be done by building an agenda that speaks to the needs of African American women by helping them to examine their worlds. As such, Black feminist theory is a combination of academic intellectual thought and political activism by Black women intellectuals using examples of lived experiences (hooks, 1994; Collins, 2000). The goal is to correct the invisibility and distortion of the African American female experience in ways that are relevant to ending their unequal social positions (hooks, 1981). Strides toward this goal entail making gender and race a fundamental category for understanding the social order (Collins, 1991).

Limitations

1. The study only examined three African American female college and university presidents who served during the spring of 2005, and did not provide a comparison of issues facing women in general. Also, there was no comparison of African American women presidents at predominantly White colleges.

2. This study was limited to the level of responses by African American women college and university presidents.

3. The limitations of this study included the inability to generalize the findings because the researcher conducted case studies with a limited number of African American female college and university presidents.
4. The researcher did not interview other campus administrators, faculty, or staff because the sole purpose was to explore African American female college and university presidents’ perceptions and experiences.

Definitions of Terms Used

*African American/Black* (use of): Some individuals of African ancestry prefer the term Black and others prefer African American; both terms are currently acceptable (American Psychological Association, 2001). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used Black interchangeably with African American.

*Barriers*: Individual or organizational factors that influence the success of people; anything that is preventing people from fully participating in society based on things, such as race, gender, sex discrimination, and stereotypic attitudes (Shakeshaft, 1989).

*bell hooks*: bell hooks spells her name with lower case letters. As such, her name is presented in this manner throughout the study.

*Black Feminist Research Approach*: In feminist research methods, the goals are to establish non-exploitative relationships and collaboration. Since African American women’s history is different from those of majority women, Black feminist theory addresses the global struggle against racism and sexism and deconstructs a self-perpetuating paradigm based on the values, interests, and views of oppressive power holders (Benjamin, 1997).

*Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)*: Accredited institutions of higher education, the first of which were established in mid-1860s, after the emancipation of
Black American slaves, with the principle mission of educating Black Americans (Aleman & Renn, 2002).

**Negro:** A term used for African Americans before the middle of the 20th century.

**Perception:** The process by which people select, organize, and interpret information to form a meaningful picture of the world; a belief or an opinion developed by an individual to explain or account for the way that a person views an experience (Van Manen, 1990).

**Resiliency:** The ability of an individual to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change; the ability to take control and make decisions about what to do, instead of just letting things happen (Christle, Harley, Nelson, & Jones, 1998).

**Transformational Leader:** An individual who is skilled in a leadership style that inspires increased worker performance by encouraging all points of view to develop consensus problem-solving models (Hacker & Roberts, 2003).

Theoretical Framework Surrounding the Phenomenon

Black Feminist Theory

Controlling images applied to Black women that originated during slavery attests to the oppression of African American women (Collins, 2000). Gilkes (1983) contended “Black women emerged from slavery firmly enshrined in the consciousness of White Americans as ‘mammy’ and the ‘bad Black women’” (p. 294). According to Collins (2000), “the dominant ideology of the slave era fostered the creation of several interrelated, socially constructed controlling images of Black womanhood, reflecting the dominant group’s interest in maintaining Black women’s subordination” (p. 72). Thus,
Black feminist research and theory makes the experiences and perspectives of Black women central.

Collins (2000) wrote that Black feminists have identified several themes that depicted the core of Black feminist theory as it related to over a century of struggles in the United States. These themes included: 1) the presentation of an alternative social construct for now and the future based on African American women’s experiences; 2) a commitment to fighting against race and gender inequality across differences of class, age, sexual orientation, and ethnicity; 3) recognition of Black women’s legacy of struggles; 4) the promotion of Black female empowerment through voice, visibility, and self-definition; and 5) a belief in the interdependence of thought and action.

According to Collins (2000), as Black women became increasingly aware that multiple oppressive forces of race and gender inequality existed against them, they began to pursue collective action for social change in the hopes of transforming not only themselves through self-determination, but society’s image of them. By reclaiming and reconstructing their images, Black women can challenge the dominant Eurocentric worldview that continues to dominate and oppress them. Collins (2000) contended:

Black feminist thought demonstrates Black women’s emerging power as agents of knowledge by portraying African American women as self-defined, self-reliant individuals confronting race, gender, and class oppression. Afrocentric feminist thought speaks to the importance that knowledge plays in empowering oppressed people. One distinguishing feature of Black feminist thought is its insistence that both the changed consciousness of individuals and the social transformation of political
and economic institutions constitute essential ingredients for social change. New knowledge is important for both dimensions to change (p. 221).

Collins (2000) further elaborated:

Black feminist thought fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift in how we think about oppression. By embracing a paradigm of race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppression, Black feminist thought reconceptualizes the social relations of domination and resistance. Furthermore, Black feminist thought addresses ongoing epistemological debates in feminist theory and in the sociology of knowledge concerning ways of assessing ‘truth’ and offering subordinate groups new knowledge about their own experiences can be empowering. But, revealing new ways of knowing that allow subordinate groups to define their own reality has far greater implications (p. 228).

As a result, African American women have critical insights into the condition of oppression, more so than those who live outside the current and historical social structures; feminist thought reflects the distinctive themes of African American women’s experiences (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989). LaRue (1970) asserted “Blacks are oppressed and that means unreasonably, cruelly, and harshly fettered by White authority. White women are only suppressed and that means checked, restrained, excluded from conscious and overt activity” (pp. 36-37). She further argued “with few exceptions, the American White woman has had a better opportunity to live a free and fulfilling life than any other group in the United States with the exception of her White husband” (p. 38). In LaRue’s (1970) view, the basic dynamics of gender are concretely different and secondary in nature to race and its effect in society.
White women had no need to vindicate their dignity in the midst of national cries that they were wanton, immoral, and socially inferior. Black women, in reference to their lives and concerns, stand apart from White women. White women do not have the severe problems of racial discrimination, which compounds the plight of Black women in employment and education (Steady, 1992).

According to Collins (2000), it is important that African American women take an assertive role in identifying who they are. If not, they will continue to react to perceptions created by others. hooks (1994) encourages African American women to build an agenda that speaks to the needs of African American women by helping them to examine their worlds. As such, “Black feminist thought can create collective identity among African American women about the dimensions of a Black woman’s standpoint, Black women intellectuals offer African American women a different view of themselves and their world from that forwarded by the dominant group” (Collins, 1991, p. 30). Black feminist thought contributes to this study by serving as the lens in which the experiences of Black women are viewed.

Overview

The chapter that follows includes an in-depth review of the literature pertaining to the history of African American women in education, negative stereotyped images of African American women, challenges of African American women faculty, African American women’s strength and the emergence of their resiliency, and studies on African American female college and university presidents and their leadership characteristics. The researcher discusses the research methods used in this study in chapter three.
Chapters four through six incorporate within-case analyses of the individual cases. Chapter seven compares the data collected from each case and discusses the common themes and sub-themes that emerged, while using the literature to further enrich the understanding of these themes. The final chapter includes an important discussion, as well as implications, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Black women, whose ancestors were brought to the United States, beginning in 1619, have lived through conditions of cruelties so horrible, so bizarre; the women had to reinvent themselves. They had to find safety and sanctity inside themselves or they would not have been able to tolerate those tortuous lives. They had to learn to be self-forgiving quickly, for their exterior exploits were at odds with their interior beliefs. Still, they had to survive as wholly and healthily as possible in an infectious and sick climate (Angelou, 1989, p. 2).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of selected literature related to the unique experiences of African American women. Numerous researchers have suggested that in order to understand the contemporary and uniqueness of African American women's experiences, an historical framework is needed to conceptualize their academic lives within an institutional culture originally designed for the benefit of White males (Gregory, 1995; Perkins, 1983; Wilson, 1989). This framework is not to imply that White women in higher education have not suffered because of the White male-dominated patriarchal system—rather, this literature review is situated around the historical intersection of the race, class, and gender experiences of African American women. One would be remiss to assume that the historical context of African American women had no bearing on their experiences in academe. Wilson (1989) stated, “it is apparent that the
limited presence of women of color in higher education administration has its roots in the history of America and cannot be understood separately from that history" (p. 85).

While the current body of research explains what types of challenges are faced by African American women in higher education, it fails to provide the reasons why they face these challenges within an historical context. Thus, this chapter begins with an historical review of African American women as slaves in order to show how slave images were shaped within the constructs of race and gender by White males during slavery. The aim is to take the reader on an historical journey of Black women, whereby it is presented to provide an historical and social framework that has shaped the personal experiences of African American women. The focus eventually narrows and shifts to literature that discusses the experiences of Black women throughout history in education.

The second section examines the research surrounding the factors that hinder the advancement of African American women in higher education. The section begins by tying together how historical and social influences have shaped the negative images of African American women and how these images have effected them in higher education. Literature regarding the negative professional experiences of Black women in higher education is examined in the third section, where factors, such as racism, sexism, tokenism, affirmative action, collegiality, sexual harassment, inferiority, and family, are also explored in-depth.

The remainder of this chapter explores the context of internal and external resiliency as a way to overcome barriers. I describe the personal strengths that African American women use to maintain self-esteem, self-determination, will, and self-definition. This final section explores studies and leadership characteristics of African American women
in higher education. The theory of transformational leadership is discussed and applied to the leadership style most exhibited by African American female college presidents as a commitment to social change.

History of African American Women

In Higher Education

According to Bookman and Morgen (1988), the history of African American women’s struggle for education in America can be characterized as one of resistance to social policies of containment, racist and sexist oppression, and violence. Furthermore, they argue that second to the abolition of slavery, the education of Black people has symbolized the cutting edge of the African American quest for freedom.

Black women in their pursuit of formal learning against forces desirous of ensuring a docile slave population and a pool of cheap, unskilled Black labor have successfully been on the frontline of the battlegrounds for both the education of Black women and that of Black people as a whole (Bookman & Morgen, 1998, p. 180).

According to hooks (1992), when people talk about the strength of Black women, they ignore the reality that to be strong in the face of oppression, is not the same as overcoming oppression, and that endurance is not to be confused with transformation.

Slavery

The enslavement of Africans began in 1440, when Portugal started to trade slaves with West Africa. By the 16th century, western Europeans developed an organized system of trading slaves. Although some slaves organized attempts to revolt and flee from the hardships of slavery, slavery expanded leading to the triangle trade between Europe,
Africa, and the Americas. Slavery continued until the early 1800s, shortly after the American Revolution, "which not only challenged Britain for independence, American slavery is challenged from within, as men and women fight to define what the country would be" (Africans in American History, n.d., pp. 1-2). During the war, up to 100,000 Blacks escaped slavery, which threatened the institution of slavery as never before (Africans in American History, n.d.). Initially, Black volunteers were not allowed into the American army. But, when the British army promised freedom to slaves and indentured servants who would fight against the colonies for England, the colonized army was forced to allow Blacks, both enslaved and free, to fight. Shortly after the war, those Blacks and indentured servants who fought for England obtained their freedom, and those who fought for America remained slaves. Thus, after the War of Independence was won, the nation's Constitution codified slavery and oppression as a way of life (Africans in American History, n.d.).

The United States allowed slavery to continue through a federal law, called the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, which prohibited the freedom of Africans (Jones, 2005). According to Jones (2005), "the enslavement of an estimated 100 million Africans dispersed throughout South America, the Caribbean, and the plantations and cities in early America is characterized as one of the history's largest and most lucrative international business ventures" (p. 61). From the early 1500s through the mid-1800s, the forced removal of Africans from their homeland to America by the Dutch, Spanish, French, and English trading and shipping companies proved to be very profitable for those companies as well as a means of providing cheap, captive labor to build the agricultural economy of the southern states (Bennett, 1993). These men, women, and
children from Africa were captured, packed, and shackled in the holds of ships, where an estimated 10% to 15% of them died during the long ocean journey, by sickness, torture, and suicide (Bennett, 1993). A majority of the slave ships landed at ports in Virginia and the Carolinas (Bennett, 1993). Upon their arrival, African slaves were branded, placed on auction blocks, and sold to the highest bidder, becoming the property of the bid-winning master. Slaves were considered chattel, property that could be sold at will, and abused at the whims of the master; slaves had no legal rights or protections.

A speech, “How to Make a Slave,” delivered in 1712 by Willie Lynch, a profitable British slave owner in the West Indies, provided new slave owners a means to exercise control over Africans. While he cited six cardinal rules to psychologically control slaves, he indicated that special attention must be paid to the African female and their production (offspring). Lynch lamented that both African women and their youngest offspring must be crossbred with good White blood to produce a variety and division of labor. “Both must be broken psychologically and physically and tied together for orderly production; keep the body, take the mind” (Lynch, n.d., pp. 1-2). He further argued that if the African woman resists in submitting completely to the will of the master, “bull whip her, but don’t kill her, for it will spoil good economics” (Lynch, n.d., pp. 1-2). According to Rose (1980), the Black slave woman was defined in terms of her breeding capacity. The younger the woman, the better; in this way, the slave owners were assured that the woman was at the beginning of her childbearing age and would have many children; each new child increased the wealth of the owner. As a result, many slave owners did not wait for the slaves themselves to reproduce in sufficient numbers; instead, they took matters
into their own hands. As property, Black women were expected to produce wealth for their owners (Marable, 1983).

In addition to reproducing, Black women were expected to work in the fields from early morning to late evening. If the overseer felt that she was not working hard enough, she was subject to the same kind of beating that the men received (Rose, 1980). After long hours in the fields, they were expected to return home to cook, clean, sew, and prepare for the next day. Life was difficult for Black women in America, but they survived. According to Rose (1980), Black women at this time exhibited a great inner strength; they became stronger as they were forced to cope with situations brought on by slavery.

The slave era fostered the creation of socially constructed images of African American women (Collins, 2000). According to Collins (1991), “during slavery the breeder woman image portrayed Black women more suitable for having children than White women. By claiming that Black women were able to produce children as easily as animals, this objectification of Black women as the ‘other’ provided justification for the interference in the productive rights of enslaved Africans” (p. 76). The slave owner wanted African women to breed, because their offspring were considered to be a valuable property, a unit of labor, and if female, the prospect for more slaves (Collins, 1991). As a result, the slave era created several controlling images of Black womanhood which are still in existence today.

Black women have emerged out of a history of oppression with a sense of independence and a commitment to the survival of their race. They survived the wanton misuse and abuse of their bodies; they suffered the pain of seeing their children and
husbands being sold away from them; through it all, they remained resilient (Rose, 1980). According to Darlington and Mulvaney (2003), “American Black women have occupied a unique position in the United States. Historically, she has carried the weight of inferior status and prejudice derived from both her sex and race” (p. 26).

The place of African American women in American history began with the antebellum period, when Black women were brought to America to labor and breed more slaves (Hine, 1990). Darlington and Mulvaney (2003) wrote, “African American women’s slow yet distinct assimilation into American society can be characterized as a change from marginalization to significant cultural icon” (p. 27). From disenfranchisement, Black women found opportunities to serve their communities as they crafted new tactics designed to forge their way into the social spotlight (Perkins, 1983). One of the ways in which African American women forged their way was through education (Grimes, 2005). As such, the development of the education of African American women progressed through several phases: their church, family, community, emancipation, the Civil War, desegregation, and the Civil Rights movement.

African American Women and Education

Early African American women leaders were developed through social networks, such as the church, family, and community structures (Allen, 1997). Grimes (2005) stated that “a culturally relevant theory about African American women in leadership is directly linked to social justice and education” (p. 2). Allen (1997) explained that the leadership role of African American women in education has historically taken on communal contexts, like serving as the community other-mother, caretaker, community spokesperson, entrepreneur, church leader, and political activist. These early African
American women leaders who overcame oppression “have been traced back to the circumstances of slavery and the reconstruction” (Grimes, 2005, p. 2). African American women who pursued college work during the nineteenth century truly were pioneers, as the desirability of college education for women of any race was still a debatable matter (Ihle, 1992).

Education Prior to Emancipation

During the period of slavery, it was illegal in every southern state, except Kentucky, for slaves to be educated (Harley, 1995). Despite measures to keep slaves from learning how to read and write, literacy persisted among many. A majority of the efforts taken to educate Black slaves were led by the Christian church. They advocated for the education of Blacks based on the premise that it would make good Christians of “our Negroes and other Heathen” (Godwyn, 1680, p. 72). This rationale became pivotal in allowing Blacks to have an education to study the Bible and become Christians (Smith & Smith, 1992).

The first missionaries to provide an education to enslaved Blacks were the French Catholics in 1634 in Louisiana (Harley, 1995), followed by the establishment of the first known school for enslaved Blacks, which opened in 1695, at Goose Greek parish in Charleston, South Carolina. The school was led by the Reverend Samuel Thomas, a missionary, where he taught slaves how to read and write (Harley, 1995). The African American women who managed to learn how to read and write began teaching their children and other women and their children in the community to read and write by conducting secret classes or schools (Wolfman, 1997). Despite the measures to keep
slaves from learning, Franklin (1992) asserted that the desire for literacy and book learning was often stronger than the prohibitions and persecutions.

Smith and Smith (1992) researched the history of early African American women educational leaders. They wrote that the commitment to self-development, regardless of the odds against success, helped African Americans reach their goals of an education, as the early African American female educators taught slaves to read in clandestine schools in the woods and slave quarters at night. For example, the earliest known school conducted by an African American slave was that of Milla Grenson who taught classes after midnight to slaves in Nanchez, Louisiana. According to Smith and Smith (1992), it was there that the matriarchal society of African American educational administrators began. Some of these early African American women included: Ann Marie Becraft, who, at the age of fifteen, founded the first seminary boarding school for girls of African decent in Washington, D.C., in 1805, Mary Smith Peake, who established a school for fugitive slaves who escaped to the North to her home in 1847, and Catherine Ferguson, who opened one of the first schools for poor children in New York City in 1793 (Smith & Smith, 1992). Escaping the South, these women survived the journey North via the Underground Railroad, and upon their arrival, opened schools to educate poor, orphaned, and runaway slave children. Grimes (2005) argued that “these early African American leaders began a long-standing tradition of mending a fragmented culture and rebuilding a people through education” (p. 2). Black women were not alone in this quest, as there were strong efforts toward the literacy of Blacks, mostly led by missionaries.

With the help of Quakers and other Christians who believed that an education for African Americans was necessary and encouraged by the White women’s seminary
movement. Mytilla Minor, a White woman, built a schoolhouse called the Minor Normal School for the higher education of Black women in 1851 in Washington, D.C.; this was the first organized attempt to provide any kind of formal education for Black women. Noble (1956) asserted that Mytilla Minor’s school became a first class teachers’ college, as she taught the conventional subjects of the seminaries of that day, offered a large library, and provided lectures on scientific and literary subjects by the leading scholars of that time.

In addition to Minor’s Teacher College, other educational opportunities for Black women became available. In the early to mid-1800s, various White institutions were admitting both Black women and men. In 1835, Oberlin became the first coeducational institution in the United States and the first college or university to admit African American women before the Civil War (Hines, 1993; Solomon, 1985). Hines (1993) asserted that “at a time when other college doors were closed to Black students, the Oberlin trustees’ commitment to the education of people of color had profound effects on the educational aspirations and achievements of free Black women” (p. 897).

Oberlin graduated more African American female educators and social activists than any other institution. The first and most noted graduate of Oberlin was Mary Jane Patterson in 1862; she became the first Black woman to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree (Noble, 1956; Solomon, 1985; Aleman & Renn, 2002; Hine, 1990; Plowden, 1993). When her education was complete, she became a teacher at the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, where she taught for seven years. In 1869, she became the first Black principal at a preparatory high school for Black youth in Washington, D.C., a position she held until 1884 (Noble, 1956; Solomon, 1985; Aleman & Renn, 2002; Hine,
According to Noble (1956), Mary Jane Patterson was not alone at Oberlin, “there were 44 Blacks in all. All but three of them were either in the preparatory department or were taking ladies courses and of the number, 31 were women and 13 were men” (p. 19). He stated that, “these women were venturesome considering the fact that their race was still enslaved and that they had no assurance about the future, one wonders about the motivation prompting these early women pioneers” (p. 20).

Before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, and several years thereafter, there was not a legitimate legal or well-defined opportunity for African Americans in higher education in America. If they received an education at all it was because: 1) they were free northerners who were permitted to acquire a minimum amount of education befitting to their race; 2) they had gained access to learning while working as a personal servant to a White plantation owner; or 3) they were secretly educated by sympathetic White Christian workers who were against the practices of slavery (Hines, 1993; Noble, 1956). Regardless of how Blacks entered into education, it was considered to be for the betterment of the race (Noble, 1956).

Education After the Civil War

In 1860, of the 4.4 million Black slaves living in the United States, some two million of these slaves were women (Noble, 1956; Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003; McLemore, Romo, & Backer, 2001). The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, the end of the Civil War, and the ratifying of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution of 1865, which abolished slavery as a legal institution, brought significant changes to the lives of African Americans (Jones, 2005). As a result, lobbying efforts waged by Whites,
especially in the South, called for distinctions to be made between the freed Blacks and Whites, and for laws to control the large population of Black men, women, and children (Jones, 2005). In response, Black Codes were enacted in the South between 1865 and 1866, which controlled every aspect of the ex-slaves’ lives, including limiting occupations, education, and the freedom to move in and out of towns without permission; self-sufficiency was discouraged (Noble, 1956; Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003; McLemore, Romo, & Backer, 2001).

The continued denial of basic human rights for Blacks throughout the South and the rest of the country, culminated in successful campaigns for the continued disenfranchisement of Blacks, which resulted in further legislation enforcing segregation through the Jim Crow laws during the mid-1880s, replacing the Black Codes (Jones, 2005). Many Black people began to challenge these laws, but they were constantly rebuffed by the judicial system (Jones, 2005).

In an effort to challenge the discriminatory practices against African Americans, legislation enforcing segregation was challenged by Blacks in the landmark case, Plessy v. Ferguson. Toward this end, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in 1896 that separate facilities for Black and Whites were not in violation of the constitutional guarantees of the Thirteenth (abolition of slavery) and Fourteenth Amendments (rights guaranteed for citizens of the United States). Not only did these laws forbid intermarriage and ordered business and public institutions to keep Black and White clients separate, the ruling set the stage for future policymaking excluding Blacks from participating equally in all areas of society, including education (McLemore, Romo, & Baker, 2001).
Fleming, Gill, and Swinton (1978) maintained that “White institutions of higher education continued to ignore the plights of Blacks. Only a few were willing to accept even a token number of Negro students, and virtually all refused to hire Black faculty members” (p. 20). Regardless, education was viewed by the Black community as the key to unlocking wealth, respectability, and economic development. According to W.E.B. DuBois (1953), African Americans saw literacy as a means to full citizenship in America. As a result, between the period of emancipation and the beginning of the twentieth century, there was an intense fight waged by Blacks toward education, as they saw literacy as integral to their freedom. Aiding them were White religious and philanthropic benefactors, such as Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, and Presbyterians, who believed in the freedom and intellectual development of Blacks, as less than 10% of former slaves in 1865 were literate (McLemore, Romo, & Backer, 2001). The early education of Blacks focused on assisting emancipated slaves to become productive members of society (Noble, 1956; Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003).

White missionaries greatly influenced the education of Black women, as they saw Black women as a key component to uplifting the race; as a result, significant attention was given to their development. Brazell (1992) contended, “both Blacks and Whites believed that Black women bore the weight of the entire race. If they failed, a whole people failed” (p. 38). Gaines (1996) defined race uplifts as:

Popular understanding of uplift, dating from anti-slavery folk religion speaks of a personal or spiritual and potentially social transcendence of worldly oppression and misery. Describing a group struggle for freedom and social advancement, uplift also
suggests that African Americans have, with almost religious fervor, regarded education as key to liberation (p. 1).

Moreover, the Civil War served as an impetus to educate women, whereby teaching became a respectable occupation for women during this period, as they were called upon to fill positions vacated by men who left home for the war (Solomon, 1985). The education of Black women at this time, was prompted by the realization that there was an increasing need for teachers, as it became obvious that the masses of illiterate and uneducated freed slaves, who had been ravaged by the institution of slavery, needed at least, a rudimentary education, if they were to progress in society. According to Noble (1956), “despite the fact that some Whites volunteered their services as teachers, it was evident that Blacks interested in the welfare of their own people should be educated to perform this task” (p. 20). In an effort to educate Blacks to perform the task of educating their own, the government, along with certain religious denominations, aided the training of Black teachers by establishing Negro colleges (Noble, 1956; Aleman & Renn, 2002).

The second Morrill Act of 1890 provided for Black colleges, which sprung up throughout the South; by 1910, of the one hundred Black colleges available, most of them admitted women, and three of them, Barbara-Scotia in Concord, North Carolina, Spelman in Atlanta, Georgia, and Bennett in Greensboro, North Carolina, were for women only (Noble, 1956; Solomon, 1985; Aleman & Renn, 2002). Noble (1956) indicated that at this time, Black colleges and colleges for women were criticized for imitating the methods and philosophy of education for White men. She further elaborated the need for African Americans to seek acceptance from the dominant culture to prove that they could measure up to the status quo of education. Blacks felt to be accepted, they had to prove
that what was good enough for Whites was also good for Blacks, and that they could absorb a classical education equally well (Noble, 1956).

The African American community used education as a means to further their struggle for equality. At the forefront of this struggle were African American women (Gregory, 1999). Collins (1991) contended that Black girls, in particular, were raised to view education as the primary tool needed to catapult Black people from White subjugation to Black liberation. Aptheker (1982) noted that by 1910, “107 non-Negro colleges had graduated 114 Negro women in their collective histories, with the largest number (66) coming from Oberlin, followed by Howard and Fisk, having graduated 514 women by 1910” (p. 92). According to Coleman (1989), the African American community’s priority on education for Black women has been unprecedented.

African American women began to recognize the need to educate their race, as their primary purpose was to prepare members of the next generation to take their rightful place as tomorrow’s educators and leaders (Coleman, 1989). Black female educators developed academic programs that blended the ideas of W.E.B. DuBois, who emphasized a classical academic preparation for a leadership group, and those of Booker T. Washington, who proposed vocational education and preparation for work, self-support, and racial interdependence (Benjamin, 1997). Black women felt that it was important to utilize both philosophies, as they realized that the Black community needed social, financial, cultural, and intellectual development to improve living conditions, strengthen families, and provide direction for the future (Benjamin, 1997). In addition, they needed to prove that they could meet an academically challenging curriculum, as well as challenge theories that began to emerge from sociologists and psychologists that Blacks...
and women were inferior, mentally, and that it would be useless to educate them in the higher arts (Noble, 1956). Frazier (1957) noted that:

Education was not simply a form of compensation because it set them apart from the Negro masses; it provided a form of compensation as regards to their relations with Whites. They constantly asserted their educational and cultural superiority to the majority of the Whites whose education was inferior to theirs (p. 148).

As a result of the establishment of historically Black colleges and universities, Blacks began to develop their own intellectual community in an effort to erase the myth of inferiority that began to surface during the nineteenth century (Collins, 2001).

Attitudes of Researchers Toward African Americans and Women

Anti-Negro ideas came to pervade nineteenth century research. For example, Rhodes, a distinguished historian, published the History of the United States in nine volumes between 1892 and 1922, which was acclaimed by scholars and the public alike. In it, he expressed that Negroes constituted one of the most inferior races of mankind (Williams, 1989). He also informed readers that the Black women slaves had welcomed sex with their masters; they were jezebels with immoral characters (Williams, 1989).

A growing criticism concerning the intellectual abilities of Blacks and women emerged. Cloaked in the arena of scientific authenticity, the American medical and anthropological thought during the late nineteenth century exclaimed that Blacks would eventually become extinct as a consequence of inferiority. According to Aptheker (1982), this claim served as a bulwark for the perpetuation of racist and White male supremacist ideologies. Typical of such arguments was:
The Negro brain, some one thousand years behind that of the White man’s brain in its evolutionary data, existed within a visceral and organic structure that was physiologically juxtaposed to its intellectual capacity. The Negro’s moral delinquencies, along with the elements of bestiality and gratification, were demonstrations of the close relationship of the race to his animal and sub-human ancestors. Confined within narrow physical functions, the Negro’s nearness to a superior race merely accelerated his innate tendency to sexual appetite (Haller, Jr., 1970, pp. 160-161).

Aptheker (1982) further contended that attitudes toward women were hardly more enlightened. For example, Hammond, a Virginia doctor specializing in neurology and neuropsychological fields, argued that a man’s brain was, on the average, five ounces heavier than a woman’s and that the cerebral structure of the brain of each sex was consequently, different. As a result, he concluded that men were of a higher order and intelligence than women. The female brain, he believed, is a brain in which emotion, rather than intellect, evolved; few women were capable of intense degrees of abstract thought, no matter how much education they received. Black women, in particular, were criticized for possessing the mental capacity of an anthropoid ape. As a result, they encountered enormous obstacles as they sought to enter the professional world (Aptheker, 1982).

Opponents to female education saw a direct challenge to the traditional place of women, which is that of homemaker, in American society (Solomon, 1998). Criticisms regarding the education of Blacks and women appeared in speeches made at educational meetings, reported in magazines and books by scholars, and encouraged by the dominate
culture as a whole (Noble, 1956). All women were subject to this criticism. As such, Rudolph (1990) contended that during the colonial period, women were thought to be "intellectually inferior-incapable, merely by reason of being a woman, of great thought. Her faculties were not worth training and her place was in the home where man has assigned her a number of useful functions" (p. 308).

Similarly, Brubacher and Rudy's (1997) research regarding educational initiatives during the period indicated that there was a widely-held belief that education was the domain of men who were assumed to be more capable of making religious, social, and political decisions. They further stated "that it was feared that such educational training would raise women above the duties of her station and that a man would not love a learned wife" (p. 65). The popular sentiment at the time was that it was "far better to teach young ladies to be correct in their manner, respectable in their families, and agreeable in society than waste time preparing them for public administration" (p. 65).

Black women emerged from slavery as "significantly different in their image from either Black men or White women in America" (Morton, 1991, p. 2). According to Noble (1956):

The role of her past that did come up in discussions concerning the Negro woman’s education related her to her foremother’s role as concubine. The Negro woman’s new role carried not only the stigma of being a Negro, but also a new sense of inferiority of being a woman. The degradation of Black womanhood (concubine), as contrasted to the elevation of White womanhood, distinguished the majority of Black slave women from White women. As a result, it is not surprising that the Black woman as a
freed citizen started her striving for higher education on a different footing from that of her White sisters (pp. 16-17).

As a result, the majority of missionaries did not advocate that Black women be educated for self-fulfillment; instead, they argued that Black women needed a moral and domestic education in order to maintain clean homes and be better mothers and wives (Solomon, 1985; Noble, 1956; Aleman & Renn, 2002). Among the criticisms regarding the education of Blacks, there emerged a double threat regarding Black women as they were confronted with an additional challenge battling both gender and race (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003). The Black women’s role not only carried the stigma of being Black, but also a new sense of inferiority in being a woman. The government, along with some missionaries, felt that it was more important to educate Black men. They argued that the only education that a Black woman needed was a rigid moralistic education due to Black women’s roles as concubines during slavery (Noble, 1956).

The Influence of the Cult of True Womanhood

According to Collins (2001), the value system of White women missionaries who played a prominent role in the education of Black women was greatly influenced by the “Cult of True Womanhood” (p. 33). The cult of true womanhood focused on how a woman was judged by her husband, her neighbors, and her society. Giddings (1984) noted the importance of domesticity in the cult:

The true woman’s exclusive role was as homemaker, mother, housewife, and family tutor of the social and moral graces. Isolated within the home, women raised men above the lusty temptation, while keeping themselves beyond its rapacious grasp. Women’s imprisonment in the home virtually guaranteed piety and purity.
Submissiveness, too, was assured where housewives depended on the male support. When leisure (formerly scorned as idleness), rather than industriousness, indicated one’s social standing, middle class (White) women, once contributors to the family economy, became models of ‘conspicuously unproductive expenditure’ (p. 47).

The idealized image of White women under the cult of true womanhood could be divided into four cardinal virtues: “piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity” (Welter, 1966, p. 152). This image meant that newly freed Black women in a society controlled by White males could never be one of the women described by the tenants of the cult because of her image not only as a laborer during slavery, but also as a jezebel; she could never be looked upon as being pure.

A majority of White Southerners agreed, and, as a result, advocated for Black women to become well-trained domestic servers, develop morals, and to be trained in ladylike behaviors (Collins, 2001). According to Collins (2001), “White missionaries oversaw every aspect of the Black woman’s curriculum, dress, and conduct” (p. 32). Collins (2001) also wrote about a curriculum based on domesticity, immortalizing the image of the Black mammy, as the mammy image was a very comforting one for Whites; it represented a harmless, ignorant woman whose main pleasure was to take care of them.

White women were also exposed to rules concerning their conduct. The dominant patriarchic perspective of the White woman was that of an ultra feminine creature: delicate, sexually pure, and devoted to her family. As a result, the curriculum for White women contained lessons related to morality and how to be better wives, mothers, and housekeepers, as well as the traditional subjects contained within the classical curriculum (Solomon, 1985). The curriculum at Black colleges was influenced by the nature of
education for White women—albeit, the rules and regulations concerning Black women were predicated on reasons relating to their foremothers' sex roles as slaves (Noble, 1956; Collins, 2000). The Black women's education was based on a philosophy which implied that she was weak, immoral, and at best, she should be made fit to rear children and keep house for her husband (Noble, 1956; Solomon, 1985).

Moreover, Giddings (1984) stated that White women were being praised for their unselfishness in returning to the homestead, while Black women and poor immigrant women were being ridiculed and looked down upon because they had to leave their home for employment. He further noted that “it was not a coincidence that the cult idea gained impetus at a time when the abolition of slavery brought Black women into the wage labor-force” (p. 48).

The combination of racial and sexual oppression forced the vast majority of Black women into the lowest paying and most menial labor. For example, Aptheker (1982) noted that “in 1910, nearly 95% of the Black women who were employed labored as agricultural and domestic workers; only 3.5% were in factory work, and (an) even smaller 1.5% were professionals, mainly teachers” (p. 96). Lerner (1981) concurred with Giddings’ (1984) premise that the cult idea was a strategic maneuver by White men in power to alienate and separate Black and poor immigrant women from White women who were becoming part of the middle-to-upper class social structure that was being established. He further elaborated that “just as the Cult of White Womanhood in the South served to preserve a labor and social system based on race distinctions, so did the cult of ladyhood in an egalitarian society as a means of preserving class distinctions” (p. 26).
The image of the homemaker meant that in a society controlled by White males, the Black woman could never be one of the women described by the tenets of the cult because of the life and image that followed her since slavery. She could never be perceived as the delicate, fragile, pure woman, like her White sisters. And, as a result, the Black woman was in need of moral and domestic training.

Quest for Dignity: Black Women in Education

According to Noble (1956), regardless of this argument, there were educators who felt that a practical need existed to teach Black women the classical curriculum for them to become teachers. And, while on the one hand, educators stressed moral education and education for homemaking, they also recognized that they must recruit teachers from among the ranks of Black women (Noble, 1956; Solomon, 1985). As a result, more and more Black women entered college, women like Anna Julia Cooper and Mary Church Terrell, who received their Bachelor of Arts in 1884 from Oberlin, as well as Fanny Jackson Copper, who received her Bachelor of Arts from Oberlin in 1865 (Ihle, 1992).

Toward this end, Anna Julia Cooper's book, *A Voice from the South*, published in 1892, discusses her inspirational views on White feminists, the issues of womanhood, and Black men. A chapter within this book titled, *Womanhood: A Vital Element*, challenges intellectual discourse pertaining to the role of Black women as leaders in their communities. This book is believed to be one of the first academic writings published by a Black woman in the United States and a major contribution to the Black feminist paradigm. According to Collins (2001), her writings and intellectual discourse are considered to be an inspiration for many Black women today.
These women, and many like them, graduated from college prepared to teach, as teaching proved to be of great consequence for their advancement. They were responsible for opening schools for Black youth, instrumental in establishing community service organizations, and authored books. These women were focused on opening dialogue for intellectual discourse among Black intellectuals. More importantly, they saw themselves not only as educators, but also as leaders, with a purpose of enabling other Black women to become self-reliant and economically self-sufficient (Collins, 2001).

Welch (1992) noted that “freedom of mind and body was paramount to African American women’s existence, learning and development, and full participation in society” (p. 28). For centuries, many Black women were exploited as concubines, child bearers, house slaves, and field workers. Yet, despite the odds, many Black women were committed to self-development and education; most educated Black women were involved in efforts to uplift their race. Because education was viewed as a means to uplift their race, several African American women organized schools to assist in educating Black Americans (Welch, 1992; Solomon, 1985; Noble, 1956).

In 1873, in particular, Catherine Ferguson, a teacher, opened a school for 48 poor children in New York City. Lucy Laney founded the Harris Normal Institute in Augusta, Georgia, starting with 75 pupils in 1886. Charlotte Hawkins Brown founded Palmer Memorial Institute in North Carolina in 1902, Mary McLeod Bethune opened the Daytona Educational Industrial Training School in 1904, and Emma Wilson opened a school in South Carolina with ten pupils in an abandoned cotton-gin house and later built the school into one serving 500 students (Wolfman, 1997). Despite resistance, these women, and many more, tirelessly advocated for the education of Black women and the
promotion of Black community development (Hine, 1990; Plowden, 1993; Valverde, 2003). In general, Black women were encouraged to pursue careers in the helping professions, which included nursing and social work as well as education (Moses, 1989). The Black community was interested in the education of Black women, more so than Black men. Coleman (1989) noted:

Historically, for the Black child, it was the mother who determined the status. The education of Black women, it was reasoned, would raise the status of the Black child. Second, community emphasis was on a Black woman’s education because of the type of employment that she could gain beyond being a domestic would more likely be of a higher and more prestigious character than that of the Black male. Third, Black women, like all women, have been viewed as the carriers of the culture. Schooling was socially a “finishing” process for women, preparing them for society and the transmission of culture to their children...however, the goals and aspirations of Black women went far beyond those of Whites. An educated woman/mother was viewed by the Black community as an asset (p. 153).

In response, Black women not only established schools, but the early African American female leaders also established women and youth organizations to meet the needs of their community (Gilkes, 1983; Perkins, 1983). The first African American women’s educational society was the Female Literary Association of Philadelphia. Their preamble indicated that it was their “duty...as daughters of a despised race, to use our uproot endeavors to enlighten the understanding, to cultivate the talents entrusted in our keeping, that by doing so, we may in great measure, break down the strong barrier of prejudice, and raise ourselves to an equality with those of our fellow beings, who differ
from our complexion” (Perkins, 1983, p. 19). In addition, The National Association of Colored Women was established in 1896 by a group of educated African American women, whose motto was “lifting as we climb” (Perkins, 1983, p. 19). This group focused on community development and included the establishment of orphanages, elderly homes, educational institutions, and religious programs (Perkins, 1983). Jane Porter Barrett opened the Palace-of-Delight in her home for the children and adolescents of the community, and Carrie A. Tuggle opened the Tuggle Institute in 1903 for orphans in Birmingham, Alabama (Welch, 1992). Additionally, Black women, over a succession of a few years, entered virtually every occupational category available, even though their numbers were few. For example, there were various positions held by Black women, as noted by Amott and Matthaei (1996):

In 1880, the first African American woman became a lawyer; the first female doctors to practice in the South were Black. By 1890, there were 160 female physicians, seven dentists, ten lawyers, 164 ministers, assorted journalists, writers, artists, 1,185 musicians and teachers of music, and 13,525 school instructors. However, the vast majority of Black women continued to be barred from nearly all jobs other than agriculture and private domestic service, with 44 percent of African American women concentrated in private household services. Another 44 percent worked in agriculture. Only 5 percent held jobs in higher paid occupations: approximately 3 percent in manufacturing, 1 percent in professions (mostly as teachers). In contrast, less than one-third of employed White women worked in domestic service, and 10 percent in agriculture; almost one-third worked in manufacturing, 10 percent in professions, 7 percent in clerical, and 4 percent in sales (pp. 157-158).
Over the years, African American women made slow, but steady gains in various professions. Against insurmountable odds, “Black women were willing to sacrifice and follow their path to build institutions where young women and men could prepare themselves for life in the United States; with little more than courage, they were unafraid to take a risk to invest their time, energy, and resources in people and property” (Welch, 1992, p. 30). They were the early leaders who charted the course for African American women. Each showed resilience in the face of opposition by giving of herself and emulating a sense of values, goals, directions, self-determination, and meaning that contributed to the education of young African Americans (Welch, 1992).

Prior to World War I, a small number of Black women in college obtained teacher training, rather than a liberal arts education. Collins (2001) noted, “by the twentieth century, a shift occurred in the Black academic community: emphasis was no longer placed on home economics, teaching, and nursing, but also on liberal arts and the social sciences” (p. 35). By 1920, a significant increase of women in Black colleges made them the majority (Solomon, 1985). Even during the depression, Black women continued to enroll, as they knew that degrees would assist in obtaining jobs as teachers in segregated schools. In addition, the expectation that Black women must work became an important aspect within the social structure of the Black community. As such, according to Benjamin (1997):

The social structure of the Black community and the stratification of that community are quite different from the social structure and the stratification of mainstream society. These differences are important in the circumstances surrounding the evolution of Black female leadership. The Black social structure is more loosely
configured than that of the larger society; this can be attributed to the constraints of prejudice and discrimination (p. 160).

It has also been important that Black girls be prepared to be self-sufficient as professionals in respected, service-oriented professions. If not, the only alternative available to them would be to work as domestic servants or in unskilled jobs (Benjamin, 1997). As a result, more African American women then men enrolled in colleges. Between 1939 and 1940, alone, Black women numbered 21,418 at Black institutions of higher education, compared with 16,311 men (Bookman & Morgen, 1988).

Decades after the demise of slavery, the onset of a post-Reconstruction campaign of White terror brought new socioeconomic proscriptions by the broader society. Nevertheless, countless Black women continued to teach and establish schools to assist in the Black struggle for first class citizenship over the next century. These proponents of Black women's rights advocated for the higher education of Black females as a route to both the advancement of Black women and the promotion of Black community development (Bookman & Morgen, 1988).

According to Collins (2001), Black women focused on giving back to their community by developing a dialogue of intellectual discourse among Black intellectuals. Noble (1956) postulated that there was no denying that their education was put to use, as there was a great social need for the concerted effort for freed men and a strong demand for skilled and trained leadership for the emancipation of slaves and for uplifting their race; educated Black women saw themselves not only as teachers, but as leaders of their race (Noble, 1956; Collins, 2001).
Desegregation and Civil Rights Period
In Higher Education from 1954-1975

Following the abolition of slavery in 1865, and policies and practices, including the Jim Crow laws, this period perpetuated racial inequality and denied Blacks equal access to education. Legally, these barriers enforced segregated schools, which were mired in poverty and lacked basic resources (Aleman & Renn, 2002). Because of legalized segregation through the Jim Crow laws, every societal event influencing the lives of Black people in the United States from 1877 to 1954 effected them adversely. They were not afforded the same social freedoms, rights, and privileges as Whites. Blacks, in essence, were restricted to only those social activities deemed for Blacks only (Smith & Steward, 1983).

While the dominant society advanced as a whole, the status of African Americans remained fixed. White Americans responded with persistent racial and prejudicial attitudes toward Blacks. Such persistent discriminatory attitudes translated into acts of segregation and discrimination in every aspect of their lives. Thus, for the most part, the educational attainment of Blacks was poor and few were able to attend college.

Aleman and Renn (2002) asserted that by 1910, fewer than 700 African American students graduated from predominantly White colleges and universities. This trend continued until the landmark U.S. Supreme Court Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas decision in 1954 declared that racial segregation in public education was unconstitutional and ordered that schools be desegregated “with all deliberate speed.” This decision was highly contested and the pace of change slow, as many state officials fought bitterly to maintain racial exclusion. Many Blacks attempting to attend
predominantly White schools were harassed, both verbally and violently (Solomon, 1985; McLemore, Romo, & Baker, 2001). Aleman and Renn (2002) posited that this decision laid the foundation for significant changes, not only in primary and secondary education, but it also set precedence for changes in higher education.

Prior to the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision, 96% of all full-time Black faculty members were employed by historically Black colleges and universities (Gregory, 1995). The eventual effects of the Brown v. Board of Education case brought about some important changes; for the first time, significant numbers of African Americans were granted admission to predominantly White institutions from which they had been excluded from in the past (Aleman & Renn, 2002). Blacks attending White colleges in the South rose from 3,000 in 1960, to 24,000 in 1965, and to 98,000 in 1970 (Levine & Associates, 1989, p. 64). However, those who gained admission to predominantly White colleges and universities faced severe restrictions throughout the United States, including not being able to reside on campus (Aleman & Renn, 2002).

The resistance to the Brown v. Board of Education decision propelled American Blacks into the Civil Rights movement. With the strong support of President Johnson, President Kennedy’s Civil Rights programs were ultimately enacted. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 implemented programs in the United States to remedy the effects of 300 years of governmental, societal, and cultural oppression (Benjamin, 1997). This Act, for instance, empowered the United States Attorney General to bring suit on behalf of Black plaintiffs and prohibited, under Title VI, federal funding for segregated schools and colleges. Also, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act banned discrimination by unions or employers (McLemore, Romo, & Baker, 2001).
Even when segregation and discrimination were not required by law, these tenets had become deeply ingrained into the infrastructure of society (Washington & Harvey, 1989). The formal end of the Jim Crow laws, and the enactment of the Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s, did not create equality between the dominant group and various subordinate groups; the laws did not end discrimination (McLemore, Romo, & Baker, 2001). Pinkney (1969) stated that “by this time, African Americans had been relegated to a caste position in society, and no Black person, no matter what his or her level of achievement, could expect to be accorded treatment equal to that of a White person” (p. 40). No institution in the United States was exempt in putting forth discriminatory practices against African American people.

In response, President Johnson argued that the achievement of true equality required more than just the simple absence of discrimination. He stated, “you do not take a person who for years has been hobbled by chains, and liberate him, bring up to the starting line, and then say, you are free to compete with all the others” (Hacker, 1992, p. 119). As a result, the legal foundation for affirmative action (Executive Order 10925, 1961) was in place. This order stated that the government would encourage equal opportunity for all qualified persons through positive measures (Robinson & Spitz, 1986). Federal courts were required to “take affirmative action that applicants are employed without regard to their race, creed, color, religion, sex, or national origin” (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1978, p. 10). Affirmative action programs were initiated in an attempt to level the playing field for American Blacks due to years of slavery (Lindsay, 1994). It was also intended, along with the Equal Pay Act of 1963, to protect women employees by ensuring that women were paid the same as men for equal work (Lindsay, 1994).
University admissions were not an early target of affirmative action programs. However, with the growing disparity between Blacks and Whites in all facets of higher education, Congress amended Title VII in 1972 to extend coverage to higher educational institutions (McLemore, Romo, & Backer, 2001). In addition, Title IX also prohibited gender-based discrimination in educational institutions receiving federal funding. Title IX is an important statute protecting female faculty and administrators who might be victimized by gender discrimination in regards to hiring, firing, promotion, and tenure (Turner & Myers, 2000). The application of affirmative action procedures has been fought as bitterly in higher education as in any other segment of our society, beginning with University of California v. Bakke in 1978, fourteen years after the Civil Rights Act was instituted (McLemore, Romo, & Backer, 2001), and more recently with Grutter v. Bollinger (02-516, 539 U.S. 244, 2003), and Gratz v. Bollinger (539 U.S. 244, 2003).

While the Civil Rights Act and affirmative action programs implemented in the 1960s brought about some significant changes, other factors further contributed to the increase of Blacks enrolling in White colleges and universities. These factors include: 1) the migration of Blacks to northern states substantially increased enrollment at northern White public colleges; 2) the educational provisions of the GI Bill; 3) the 1973 Adams decision that mandated desegregation of state systems of higher education; 4) expanded financial aid programs that provided various grants, loans, and college work-study opportunities; 5) increases in the high school graduation rate of Black students; and 6) Black student activism on White college campuses, which hastened the opening of many doors previously closed to Black academicians (Mosley, 1980; Smith, 1980).
Despite the fact that predominantly White colleges and universities in the United States began to integrate, problems with racism continued. African Americans were often confronted with chilly racial climates (Marable, 1998; Aleman & Renn, 2002). According to Aleman and Renn (2002), “Blacks had to continually justify their presence to White students, faculty, and administrators who openly question their qualifications and intellectual abilities and treat them as tokens of underserved affirmative action” (p. 268).

Regardless, Civil Rights legislation enabled an unprecedented number of Black women and men to seek opportunities at American colleges and universities (Bookman & Morgen, 1988). During the Civil Rights period, Blacks’ demand for equality resulted in greater access, educational reforms, and opportunities. Reforms in higher education during this tumultuous era included Black studies programs, open admissions, and increased recruitment of Black faculty and administrators (Bookman & Morgen, 1988). In addition, the African American feminist movement assisted in eliminating additional barriers to higher education for Black women by politically advocating for Black women’s studies programs, women’s centers, and Black women faculty and administrators (Bookman & Morgen, 1988).

Table 1. Enrollments of Blacks in Higher Education from 1900 to 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Estimated Enrollment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>2,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>4,000</td>
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<td>1920</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>105,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>205,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>370,000</td>
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</tbody>
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Note: Data adapted from Pifer (1973, p. 29).
Moreover, Moses (1997) surmised that the implementation of affirmative action did not necessarily translate into acceptance by the dominant group for African Americans and other minority groups in higher education. As a result, African Americans were often marginalized and perceived to be less qualified and scholastically inferior. Kawewe (1997) argued that "colleges and universities devised sophisticated internal mechanisms to subvert affirmative action in recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion to the advantage of the privileged gender and race that dominate the academy" (p. 264).

Higher Education after the Civil Rights Movement

African Americans experienced slow, but steady gains in college participation and degree attainment during the 1990-2000 academic years, a total of 244,324 degrees and certificates were awarded to Blacks. Of that total, African American women showed a larger growth than Black men, receiving 65% of Bachelor's degrees, 68% of Master's degrees, and 60% of Ph.D. doctoral degrees awarded (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Despite these gains, African American women only represented a small portion of total degree recipients. According to Harvey (2001), of those aged twenty-five and over, 15.4% of African American women completed four or more years of college, compared to 23% of White women.

Even though conditions had slowly improved since the Civil Rights movement, African Americans still faced educational disadvantages that impeded their advancement (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Welch, 1992; Benjamin, 1997). Research indicates that African American students enroll in college and universities at lower rates than Whites (Tinto, 1993; Pacarella & Terenzini, 1991). There are more than 1.5 million African Americans
in institutions of higher learning, yet, only 58% attend four-year colleges and universities; the remainder is enrolled in community colleges or other certificate-granting institutions. African Americans represent 11% of all undergraduate students, but receive only 7.5% of all Bachelor's degrees conferred (Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 2000). In 2002, the national college graduation rates of Blacks were 39%, compared with 60% of Whites (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

Scholars, such as Tinto (1993), Pacarella, and Terenzini (1991), cite several reasons for the disparity: first, there has been a resurgence of open racial hostility since the 1990s and the early part of the twenty-first century toward African American students and other students of color. Since 86% of all African American undergraduates attend predominantly White colleges, the experience of this population provides important insight. For example, many African American students reported that they are threatened, harassed, racially intimidated, treated as undesirable group members for projects, and excluded from social activities. As a result, they feel a sense of loneliness and isolation.

Second, studies have revealed negative interactions with White faculty, both inside and outside of the classroom. For example, African American students often state that White faculty members either have low expectations or expectations above and beyond that of their White peers; did not seem to care about their learning and were unwilling to provide mentorship; failed to see them as individuals; treated them like experts or spokespersons for their race; excluded them from academic recommendations for fellowships or scholarships; and rarely acknowledged their achievements (Benjamin, 1997; Myers, 2002; Aleman & Renn, 2002). As a result of these challenges, some
African American students elect to attend historically Black colleges as an alternative to predominantly White institutions.

Aubert (1997) found that experiences with both White and Black faculty at these institutions was one of caring and concern. African American students reported a feeling of acceptance and high self-esteem; as a result, they were more likely to graduate from a historically Black institution (Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). However, there are only 109 historically Black colleges and universities and only 12 historically Black colleges confer doctoral degrees, producing 11.7% of all doctorates awarded to African Americans. Aleman and Renn (2002) contended that these conditions make it difficult to achieve greater African American representation among degree holders. The climate at predominantly White institutions, coupled with the low number of historically Black institutions offering advanced degrees, diminishes the pursuit of African Americans in obtaining advanced degrees, thus decreasing the possibility of choosing an academic profession as a career option.

When comparing White students to African American students, Aubert (1997) found that White professors communicate warmth and sincerity toward White students, through words, gestures, and attitudes, while using a more rigid, distanced approach toward Black students. Similarly, Roebuck and Murty’s (1993) research found that the adjustments of African Americans on predominantly White campuses are so severe as to warrant the creation of a racially homogenous social world. These experiences of African Americans in higher education have been characterized by higher attrition rates, greater states of alienation, and less-than-satisfactory relationships with White faculty (Roebuck & Murty, 1993; Aleman & Renn, 2002; Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).
Despite such challenges, African Americans have made great strides in educational attainment since the Civil Rights era. Black women have led the way by establishing long-lasting educational programs for uneducated Blacks (Morton, 1997). For example, Haines Normal School in Atlanta, Georgia founded in 1866, Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida founded in 1904, and Frelinghuysen University in Washington, D.C. founded in 1906, were established by Black women (Benjamin, 1997). As individuals in organizations which were exclusively Black, they dealt with the concerns of African Americans. Black women demonstrated that they had the motivation and the leadership skills to contribute to the improvement of the conditions within the Black community (Morton, 1997, p. 43). According to Aptheker (1982):

Black women were the first women of any race to practice medicine in the south, and among the first women to enter into the professional world, are explicable in terms of the historical experience of the Afro-American community. Honed in the agony of the slave experience, and yet achieving a degree of economic and psychological independence from Black men that was unknown to the majority of White women, Black women sustained a strength and resilience that allowed them to conquer an otherwise forbidden terrain (p. 108).

There were daring leadership acts by women committed to self-development, regardless of the odds against them to achieve, educate, and uplift their race (Welch, 1992). These women were acutely conscious of themselves as representatives of a race, barely a generation removed from slavery (Aptheker, 1982). However, they still faced considerable obstacles to their advancement in higher education (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Benjamin, 1997; Myers, 2002). Despite these odds, Black women were supported by
their communities, inspired by optimism born of the knowledge that no matter how rough it was nothing could be worse than slavery. Anna Julia Cooper, in her inspirational book, first published in 1892, captured this feeling of optimism when she wrote:

To be a woman in this age carries with it a privilege and an opportunity never implied before...to be a woman of the Negro race in America is to have a heritage unique in the ages. The race is young and full of elasticity and hopefulness of youth. All its achievements are before it. Everything to this race is new and strange and inspiring. There is a quickening of its pulse and a glowing of its self-consciousness. Aha, I can rival that! I can aspire to that! I can honor my name and vindicate my race! This is the enthusiasm, which stirs the genius of young Africa in America (Cooper, 1969, pp. 144-145).

It appears that between the 1960s and early 1970s, Blacks had been dealing with and fighting a multiplicity of racial injustices in the United States (Snearl, 1997). They participated in protests, marches, sit-ins, demonstrations, and confrontations, most of which occurred on college campuses; they were the ones who displayed some semblance of justice. For African Americans during the 1970s, university and college campuses appeared to be places of “tolerance, respect, appreciation, understanding, and acceptance” (Snearl, 1997, p. 125). This period of social and political activism on campuses gave African Americans hope on inclusion, fairness, justice, and possible redemption for America. Unfortunately, when this period was over, by the 1980s, most institutions of higher education returned to traditional elitist and exclusionary behavior within the good old boy system (Snearl, 1997).
Colleges and universities, by the 1990s, had yet to become the environment that the authors of affirmative action policies had hoped to accomplish by fostering diversity and opportunity for future generations. The failure of higher education to accomplish equal opportunity is evident by who works, leads, controls, and enrolls in colleges and universities. According to Snearl (1997), “the disappointments of higher education are many, but one of the most tragic is the continued under-representation of certain groups in both faculty and administrative positions” (p. 126). This tragedy becomes even more apparent as one views the plight of African American women in postsecondary institutions. A combination of negative images, racism, and sexism create significant challenges and serve to impede the progress of African American women in higher education (Snearl, 1997; Myers, 2002; Benjamin, 1997; Collins, 2000; Valverde, 2003).

Negative Stereotyped Images of African American Women

The historical images of Black women in the United States began with the antebellum period in which race and gender played a large role in the social hierarchy. To justify their insidious treatment of Black women during slavery, White men contrived images for Black women that depicted them as subhuman objects of labor, fit only for breeding and fieldwork (Collins, 1991; Morton, 1991). As a result, Black women were viewed as unintelligent, lacking Christian values and morals, and having an insatiable sexual appetite. Collins (1991) argued that these images were primarily “designed to make racism, sexism, and poverty appear to be natural, normal, and an inevitable part of everyday life” (p. 68).

African American women carry the dual stigma of being female and Black in a society that devalues both. As a result, “American society is complete with cultural
images based on race, ethnicity, gender, and class” (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003, p. 27). With the combination of race, gender, and class, a plethora of diverse cultural images emerges. Although most cultural images change over time, the cultural images of Black women have undergone only minimal changes (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003; Collins, 2000). Christian (1985) asserted that in America, “the enslaved African woman became the basis for the definition of our society’s ‘other’” (p. 160). According to Collins (2000), maintaining the image of “other” provides ideological justification for race, gender, and class oppression (p. 70).

Moreover, the slavery era devalued Black women as women and as people. White representations of slave women were usually crude and helped rationalize cruel exploitations. Dehumanizing characterizations make the appalling expropriation of life and labor appear the result of Black women’s own doing (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998). “In countless situations, Black women’s negative treatment by Whites in authority over them was said by Whites to be warranted by their transgressions as some imagined rebellious or immoral jezebel” (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998, p. 27). As Van Deburg (1984) asserted, long after the slavery era, African American people remain identified in the minds of Americans by the equation of Blacks with slaves and slaves with Blacks. He noted that these images have been forwarded by writers, scholars, history, fiction, and drama. These stereotypes have been fully inclusive of Black women and endorsed by the popular media (Van Deburg, 1984).

The oppression of Black women is a direct result of slaveholders’ portrayals of Black women, which negatively influenced their situation; it was during the era of slavery, in particular, that the images of Black women were molded into a peculiarly American
mythology, coupled with decades of negative scholarly research, which, in turn, have unearthed derogatory, slave-rooted images (Morton, 1991). As a result, “Black women emerged from slavery firmly enshrined in the consciousness of White America as a ‘mammy’ and as one of the ‘bad Black women’” (Gilkes, 1983, p. 294). Collins (2000) claimed, “the dominant ideology of the slave era fostered the creation of several interrelated, socially constructed controlling images of Black womanhood, each reflecting the dominant group’s interest in maintaining Black women’s subordination” (p. 73).

The image of true womanhood emerged centuries ago, accompanied by the White patriarchal family ideal that a true woman possessed four virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1994). Middle class White women were encouraged to aspire to these virtues, while Black women were viewed as immoral and were subscribed a different set of controlling images (Collins, 2000; Morton, 1991). As Washington (1975) asserted, “stereotypes about Black women abound like weeds in this society” (p. 237). The image of the “mammy” is accompanied by a plethora of images subscribed to U.S. Black women, including that of the matriarch, the inferior, and the jezebel (Morton, 1991; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1994; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998). As such, Hoke (1997) wrote that “White perceptions of African American women faculty are shaped by the controlling negative cultural images that have been created to symbolize Black womanhood” (p. 295).

The Mammy Image

The old slave mammy lives on as the most popular historical image of Black womanhood (Morton, 1991). This popular image is represented today and presides on a
product label; Aunt Jemima represents the modernization and yet continuity of this old-time figure, depicting the image of a plantation slave (Morton, 1991). Hoke (1997) argued that “the ‘mammy’ is one of the most pervasive images used to characterize Black womanhood” (p. 295). At the beginning, “mammy was depicted as a large, dark submissive woman who was devoted to the White family that owned her. After emancipation, the image was modified to show mammy’s submissiveness to her employer” (Hoke, 1997, p. 295).

The “mammy” represents a faithful, obedient domestic servant, created to justify the “economic exploitation of house slaves and sustained to explain Black women’s long-standing restriction to domestic service” (Collins, 2000, p. 72). The mammy image represents the yardstick used to evaluate Black women’s behavior (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) further contended:

By loving, nurturing, and caring for her White children and family better than her own, the mammy symbolizes the dominant group’s perceptions of the ideal Black female relationship to elite White male power. Even though she might be well-loved and has some authority in her White family, the mammy still knows her place as obedient servant and has accepted her subordination (pp. 72-73).

Several scholars have asserted that the mammy image is central to the intersecting oppression of race, gender, sexuality, and class (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1994; Morton, 1991). The image of the mammy aims to influence and stereotype Black maternal behavior, “employing Black women in mammified occupations supports the racial superiority of White employers, encouraging middle class White women in particular to identify more closely with the racial and class privilege afforded their
fathers, husbands, and sons" (Collins, 2000, p. 72). This transpires in an environment where “those Blacks who did rise into the middle class end up being figured only as those who were given whatever they enjoy, and the Black underclass becomes those whose sole life activity is taking” (Williams, 1995, p. 61). According to Collins (2000), “no wonder that working class Whites expect Black women to exhibit deferential behavior and deeply resent those who do not. Mammy is the public face that Whites expect Black women to assume for them” (p. 73).

Furthermore, the mammy image serves as a symbolic function in maintaining oppressions of gender and sexuality. “Juxtaposed against images of White women, the mammy image symbolizes the oppositional difference of mind, body, and culture thought to distinguish Black women from everyone else” (Collins, 2000, p. 73). Mammy has been cast as physically strong, tough, obese, and ugly (Morton, 1991; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1994). The defeminized figure of a mammy perpetuates the continuing assumption that Black women deserve their inequality because they are losers as women (Morton, 1991).

According to Collins (2000), “the fact that the mammy image by itself cannot control Black women’s behavior is tied to the creation of the second controlling image of Black womanhood” (p. 74). While the mammy image portrays the Black mother figure in White homes, the matriarch symbolizes the mother figure in the Black home. The mammy represents the good Black mother; the matriarch symbolizes the bad Black mother (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Collins, 2000; Morton, 1991).

According to the Moynihan Report (1965) titled, The Negro Family: The Case for National Action, Black women who failed to fulfill their traditional womanly duties at home contributed to the social problems of Black civil society. He asserted that by
spending too much time away from home, Black women could not properly supervise their children and thus, were a contributing factor to their children’s failures in school. Moreover, as overly aggressive, the unfeminine Black matriarch women emasculated the Black man; as a result, these men deserted them or refused to marry them. “From the dominant group’s perspective, the matriarch women represented a failed mammy, a negative stigma applied to African American women, who dared reject the image of the submissive, hardworking servant” (Collins, 2000, p. 75). Collins (2000) also stated that in this context, portraying African American women as matriarchs allows White men and women to blame Black women for their failure to model appropriate gender behavior; as a result, they are responsible for their children’s failures in school and with the law as well as Black children’s subsequent poverty.

The mammy image has evolved to a more contemporary form that Hoke (1997) asserted “continues to impact the lives of many African American females, including those Black women who occupy professional positions at predominantly White college and university campuses” (p. 296). African American female faculties who work at predominantly White campuses are effected by the controlling image of the mammy on a daily basis (Hoke, 1997). For example, Black women faculty who are very supportive of their students are described as being mothering, whereas their White colleagues describe their support as mentoring. Hoke (1997) contended that such contrasts suggest that Black women, regardless of their educational attainment, are perceived as nurturing, domestic servants. According to Benjamin (1997), the mammy image has been transferred to the academy through daily interactions with both colleagues and students.
The Matriarch Image

The image of a matriarch supports racial oppression; social science research uses gender relations in African American communities as a measure of Black cultural disadvantage (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Collins, 2000; Morton, 1991; Fleming, 1983). For example, the Moynihan Report (1965) contended that slavery destroyed the Black family by creating reverse roles for men and women. As such, the Black family structure is deviant because it challenges the patriarchal assumptions, thus underpinning the traditional family ideals (Collins, 2000). According to Morton (1991):

Moynihan presented his Black matriarchy in a matter of fact, commonsense kind of way. The appearance of this image in his report, essentially as a fact…stemmed from such eminent scholars as Stanley Elkins and Thomas Pettigrew; these sources appeared to substantiate as conventional academic wisdom (p. 4).

The absence of the Black patriarch has been used as evidence of Black cultural inferiority (Collins, 2000). Blacks have been construed in various social science research as inferior; their inferiority has been attributed as either biological or cultural (Collins, 2000). Thus, their cultural inferiority has been blamed on flawed gender relations; the failure of Black women to conform to the Cult of True Womanhood has been identified as one fundamental source of Black cultural deficiency (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1994; Morton, 1991). Collins (2000) stated that “locating the source of cultural difference in flawed gender relations provides a powerful foundation for U.S. racism” (p. 77). Moreover, society’s assault on Black womanhood has had damaging consequences between the relationships of Black men and Black women.

hooks (1981) pointed out:
Through the matriarchal mythology, ‘White racist oppressors’ have been able to forge bonds of solidarity with Black men based on mutual sexism, by scapegoating the Black woman for the Black man’s inability to play the traditional masculine role...these negative images promote divisiveness between Black men and Black women (p. 180).

Wallace (1978) argued that from the “hell of a history assigned to Afro-American women have emerged the images of Black female strength and Black male weakness that created the myth that they were weak because we were strong” (p. 153).

The Jezebel Image

Lastly, the historical image of the jezebel and contemporary hoochies is commonly associated with Black women, representing a deviant Black female sexuality (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Collins, 2000; Morton, 1991). This triggers for most Whites “images of immorality, divine outrage, and earned punishment...it depicts Black women as violators of things moral in a society of morally upright Whites” (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998, p. 9). St. Jean and Feagin (1998) asserted that “in both the scholarly literature and in public and media discussion, images of hypersexuality and overbearingness often merge to symbolize the Black women” (p. 7). These images become central in the nexus of controlling images of Black womanhood (Collins, 2000).

The image of the jezebel originated under slavery when Black women were portrayed as “sexually aggressive wet nurses” (Clarke, 1983, p. 99). The jezebel image functions to demote Black women to the category of sexually aggressive, providing a rational for labeling her as a sexual animal and not a real woman at all; exploiting Black women as breeders objectified them as less than human because only animals can breed against
their will (Collins, 2000; Morton, 1991; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; hooks, 1994). This image also justified the master’s interest in her ability to procreate new slaves. Thus, it provided an excuse for the master’s sexual abuse by presenting her as a woman who deserved what she got (Collins, 2000; Morton, 1991; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; hooks, 1994). This representation suggests that “it is the Black woman’s behavior that inspires dominant perceptions and actions toward them” (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998, p. 7).

The contemporary hoochie image has pervaded popular culture in an entirely different way; the issue lies with African American men’s portrayal of the Black woman, particularly in rap songs and videos (Collins, 2000). Images of Black women as sexually aggressive as Collins (2000) puts it “takes Black women bashing to new heights” (p. 82). She asserts that there are several versions of the hoochie image: “plain hoochies” are sexually aggressive Black women that can be found across social classes; “club hoochies” wear sleazy clothes and dance in a provocative manner. These women aim to attract men with money for a one night stand, which is in contrast to the “gold diggin’ hoochies,” seeking long-term relationships with men who have money, usually athletes. Finally, there is the “hoochie-mama,” “hoodrat,” or “ghetto hoochie,” which is linked to poverty. Her main purpose is to exchange sexual favors for money, motivated by her children’s economic needs (Collins, 2000, pp. 82-83).

According to Collins (2000), the image of the hoochie has pervaded everyday Black culture to the point where it is accepted. She further elaborated that African American women and men rarely challenge the hoochie image within Black popular culture (Collins, 2000). Despite the offensive nature of rap music and videos, some Blacks, males in particular, argue that such views have long been expressed in Black culture.
Collins (2000) argued that “not only does such acceptance mask how such images provide financial benefits to rap-groups and White controlled media, such tacit acceptance validates the image. The more it circulates among U.S. Blacks and Whites, the more credence it is given” (p. 82). The perception of African American women’s alleged deviant sexual behavior becomes constructed around the jezebel’s sexual desires. “In this context, jezebel and hoochie becomes a racialized, gendered symbol of deviant female sexuality” (p. 83). Collins (2000) further asserted that as a result, “normal female sexuality is expressed via the Cult of True White Womanhood, whereas deviant female heterosexuality is typified by the ‘hot mommas’ of Black womanhood” (p. 83).

Although the status of African American women has changed from slaves to free women, the condition of their lives and their social environment for decades to follow are still governed by exploitation. Images that symbolize African American womanhood have, with a few exceptions, been defined by not only a majority of scholars, but by the popular media as well (Collins, 2000; Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003). Collins (2000) posited that “the influence of television, radio, movies, videos, CDs, and the Internet constitute new ways of circulating controlling images” (p. 85). As a result, popular culture has become an ever-increasing and powerful source for promoting these images, especially within new global technologies, which allow U.S. popular culture to be exported throughout the world (Collins, 2000).

For example, in the 1970s, the media portrayed Black women as trash-talking prostitutes. In the 1980s, they were the teenage mother with many children by multiple lovers living on welfare. And by the 1990s, they became the girl in the video who would bare her body for a ride in a Benz and a bottle of champagne. Black performing artists,
through their music and videos, have objectified and propagated the idea of Black womanhood as sexually charged and obsessed with money and men. Black men are not the only ones objectifying Black women, as Black female rap artists personify this image by portraying the insatiable diva that lives for sex and money (Jones & Gooden, 2003).

Toward this end, the news media, schools, and government agencies all play a role in reproducing these controlling images. Morton (1991) claims that schools and the scholarship produced and disseminated by their faculties historically have played an important part in generating these controlling images. For example, social science research has been influenced by the assumptions of the jezebel, the mammy, and the matriarch, as most research is influenced in one way or another by previous studies (Collins, 2000; Morton, 1991; Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003). Darlington and Mulvaney (2003) contended that “these portrayals perpetuated the social disenfranchisement of the African American woman, and perhaps contributed to a large degree, to the stunted growth of Black women in the United States” (p. 28).

According to Collins (2000), with history, scholarly discourse, and the mass media snipping at the heels of an underrepresented and misrepresented culture, African American women are forced to represent themselves in the workplace in order to salvage the dignity and respect that history and current popular culture has denied them. As such, African American women have found ways of surviving the everyday disrespect and outright assaults that accompany controlling images through self-determination (Collins, 2000; Morton, 1991; Sudarkasa, 1996; Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003). It is through their self-determination that acts of resistance, both individual and organized, have been a source of strength for African American women. Today, cultural degradation targeting
Black women continues to maintain oppressive conditions against their daily fight; institutions of higher education have been no exception to the many challenges that African American women endure (Benjamin, 1997; Myers, 2002; Valverde, 2003; Collins, 1998; Collins, 2000).

Inferior Image

In a study conducted through in-depth interviews and surveys of 333 African American women ages 18 to 88, Jones and Gooden (2003) reported that many women in the study expressed how painful it is to live with the myth that Black women are inferior to other people. Nearly all of the women interviewed reported how difficult it is to survive a culture that constantly stereotypes Black women as unintelligent, lazy, and unmotivated. Many times, Black women spend a significant amount of time and energy trying to disprove these myths of inferiority by emphasizing to non-Blacks that they are not lazy, but intelligent and hard working (Jones & Gooden, 2003).

Willis and Lewis (1999) argued that African American women in higher education must be more qualified and that their performances are held to greater and higher expectations than that of their White peers. Their research supports the idea that African American women must be better qualified, more articulate, aggressive, but not threatening, and patient. Additionally, Williams (1989) reported that Black women administrators that she interviewed for a study at the City University of New York felt that they performed at the 150% level, while other women were performing at the 75% level. While they agreed that being an administrator requires long hours and involves in-house politics, a majority of the Black female administrators under study felt that being in their positions could serve as positive role models for Black female students.
Morton (1991) noted that images of African American women are distinctively different from the Black man and White women. The persistence and peculiar shape of these images of Black womanhood can only be fully understood through the legacy of both racism and sexism working together over a long period of time; it was during the era of slavery that these images were molded into American mythology. Hoke (1997) asserted that because African American women faculty members continue to be perceived in terms of these negative cultural images suggests that Black women have a devalued status because of their gender and race. Yet, despite these images, African American women have come a long way and against great odds toward transcending the myth and defining their own identity (Morton, 1991). Farmer (1993) stated:

It is difficult to talk about being Black in a White space, even though in the United States such is usually the case. The difficulty is to speak, to name, without appearing to whine, a near impossibility, since African American women are not expected to speak at all. It is particularly difficult to be heard, since despite reality, the myth still prevails that African American women are making great professional strides. Enmeshed within this myth is the belief that even when African American women are suffering, obstacles are faced stoically and handled with prayer, and a smile. In other words, we always overcome. We African American women are reluctant to dispel this myth for it is one of the positive stereotypes afforded us (p. 205).

Challenges for African American Women Faculty

To understand how discriminatory practices are propagated in the faculty profession, it should be noted that what happens in higher education settings to a great extent mirrors
what is happening in the culture at large. American society is, after all, one of hierarchies, and it is, therefore, inherently one of divisiveness and power struggles (Howard, 1989). Various scholars assert that to be an African American in the United States, is to be relegated by birth to a position of inferiority (Collins, 2000; Howard, 1989; Rothenberg, 2004).

Prior to World War II, African American faculty and administrators were deliberately excluded by law or tradition from predominantly White universities (Myers, 2002; Benjamin, 1997; Aleman & Renn, 2002; Valverde, 2003). Although women comprise 27.3% of all faculty in American higher-education institutions, research indicates that African American women represent only 2.2% of full-time faculty in institutions of higher education; of that number, 1.2% are at predominantly White universities. Even though opportunities exist today for greater inclusion, the figures for African American women have not increased appreciably since 1990 (Aleman & Renn, 2002). Most are employed at predominantly Black institutions, and they occupy the lowest faculty ranks as well (Myers, 2002; Smith, 1980). Many African American women have found life inside of both predominantly White and Black institutions to be fraught with numerous contradictions and dilemmas (Myers, 2002; Benjamin, 1997; Aleman & Renn, 2002; Valverde, 2003).

Aleman and Renn (2002) wrote, “African American women continue to be under-represented among the faculty in most institutions of higher education” (p. 380). They argued that “although studies that examine the impact of race and gender on the experiences of African American women in higher education is limited, the explanation relating to these persistent circumstances typically fall into past discriminatory policies”
(Aleman & Renn, 2002, p. 380). Benjamin (1997) found that Black women faculty members face numerous barriers to their growth and success in academe. Issues, such as support, retention, research, teaching, tenure, racism, and sexism, are effected by the climate of both predominantly White institutions and historically Black ones. Carroll (1982) stated:

Four years ago, if anyone had said to me that the Black woman in higher education faces greater risks and problems now than in the past, I doubt I would have taken the remark seriously. I would have marveled at the rhetoric and pointed to federal legislation enacted on the crest of the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and nodded proudly at the few Blacks as token (you’ve got to begin somewhere). But Blacks, including women, have come a long way. In 1972, after four years of teaching and working in a university administration, I would nod my head in ready agreement if the same remark were made. My mind was changed...Black women in higher education are isolated, underutilized, and often demoralized (p. 115).

The issues that Carroll (1982) raised regarding her experiences in higher education in 1972 are still being addressed by Black women in the academy today. Some of the most frequently cited concerns raised by Black women in higher education are isolation and alienation, tokenism, the lack of mentoring and networking opportunities, race and sex discrimination, lack of collegiality, promotion and tenure, unrealistic role expectations, race relations between White males, White women, and students, and limited career opportunities (Collins, 1991; Moses, 1997; Gregory, 1995; Smith, 1980).

In her survey of 182 members of the Association of Black Women in Higher Education, Gregory (1995) found that “Black women faculty continue to be concentrated
among the lower ranks, primarily non-tenured, promoted at a slower rate, paid less than their male and White female counterparts” (p. 11). In addition, African American women reported experiencing racial and gender discrimination in subtle and not-so-subtle ways, which included stereotyping, disrespect, isolation, and repercussions of affirmative action, such as hostility and a lack of support networks. She concluded, “it is evident that we still have much work to do to encourage the permanence of Black women scholars; regardless of talent, a faculty member cannot reasonably function in an inhabitable academic environment” (p. 96).

Affirmative Action

One of many factors that have influenced an inhabitable academic climate is the battle over affirmative action within higher education among faculty, staff, and administrators, which has been met with hostility (Benjamin, 1997; Myers, 2002; Turner & Meyers, 2000). According to Benjamin (1997), even in those institutions in which they are treated well, Black women professors in White colleges and universities are always made aware that their presence represents a distributive incursion into spaces never intended for them. As such, “Black female professors may be seen by other faculty members and students as an intruder, or she may be perceived as a token, and affirmative action hire and therefore deemed incompetent” (Pope & Joseph, 1997, p. 245). Aleman and Renn (2002) agreed as they asserted that “many scholars characterize these women’s presence as contested space. Their space, especially at predominantly White institutions, is contested because White colleagues question whether African Americans’ presence in the academy was the result of affirmative action” (p. 382).
Begala (1997) noted that part of the resistance to affirmative action in higher education occurs in the context of shifting privilege. He states, “don’t believe the old canard about how unqualified people benefit from affirmative action. That may have been true in the past, when only the inbred progeny of the eastern moneyed elite received preferential treatment” (p. 88). According to Turner and Meyers (2000), “most senior White faculty employed today have maintained positions of privilege in markets and institutions in which competition from women and minorities did not exist” (p. 16). They argue that “these perspectives point to an existing, but unacknowledged preferential system for Whites now and in the past. These comments are reiterated over and over again in the debates surrounding affirmative action” (Turner & Myers, 2000, p. 16).

Moses (1997) asserted that as a result of affirmative action, students, faculty, and administrators are poised to undermine the professional authority of African American women. According to Pope and Joseph (1997), “the triangle of racism, sexism, and the affirmative action label is always looming on the horizon” (p. 253). As a result, harassment by students presents serious problems for Black women in the academy.

In a study of 95 African American female faculty members, Pope and Joseph (1997) reported that 54% of the respondents reported being subjected to harassment, with a majority of the incidents consisting of name-calling. Comments included, “Bitch, go back to Africa,” “Black bitch,” and other racially disrespectful statements, such as, “I don’t want a colored teacher” and “You are here because of affirmative action” (pp. 255-256).

Other faculty members reported that students left offensive notes in their offices. For example, Benjamin (1997) points to an attack on a Black woman historian at Princeton University by a group of students in the fall of 1990. The National Association for the
Advancement of White People, Princeton chapter, distributed flyers, including one in the professor’s mailbox, in which Martin Luther King, Jr., Winnie Mandela, and the professor under attack were called filthy names. The female professor was singled out as intellectually incompetent and told that she was not qualified, and that she was only there because of affirmative action (Benjamin, 1997).

Additionally, Russell (1997), a law professor, noted in her essay how an unidentified person placed a magazine cover of a gorilla in her mailbox at her law school. According to Williams (2001), this picture was not only an attack on her intellect and her human dignity, these attacks, and many like it, exhibited throughout academe represent how Black women are continuously assaulted on many different levels. Additionally, the fact that the individual who perpetrated the acts did not have to reveal himself or herself lends credence to the silent protection felt within the walls of the academy. According to Moses (1997), Black women are stereotyped, treated with disrespect, and resented because they are perceived as less qualified.

Wilson (1993) noted that even though affirmative action was implemented to work toward parity and inclusion of people of color within higher education, such efforts continue to meet with resistance. For instance, a study conducted by Yanick and Feagin (1998) found:

Black workers face stereotyping, excessive demands, an absence of mentoring, exclusion from work cliques, and being ignored and harassed. Frequently defined as workplace twofers, Black women many carry the stigma of affirmative action hiring, whether they are hired under those circumstances or not (p. 41).
Kerlin and Dunlap (1993) believed that the interests of the corporate sector greatly influence many aspects of American higher education. They argued that the mission of colleges and universities has shifted toward serving more technocratic, economic, and private research interests, as opposed to public interests. As such, global competition, private interests, and a history of exclusion in higher education combine to fuel the fires of contention regarding affirmative action within higher education today (Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993). Blackwell (1988) stated, “people are motivated by economic self-interest; hence their responses to programs like affirmative action will be dictated in large part by perceptions, real or imagined, of the threats to their own sense of economic entitlements imposed by the implementation of such programs” (pp. 68-69).

Wilson (1989) asserted there is an ongoing pattern of resistance to inclusion of minorities in higher education; the images and stereotypes about African American women being domineering, unintelligent, and promiscuous have not been eliminated. According to Pope and Joseph (1997), such negative attitudes, stereotypes, and images of African American women are commonly transported to college, especially by students who have had no previous contact with Black female teachers; these preconceived negative notions result in harassment. Society’s mirror renders African American females as powerless, inferior, and incompetent. These misconceptions and stereotypes arise from affirmative action compliance, thus inhibiting the professional growth of African American women (Pope & Joseph, 1997).

**Token Syndrome**

Riding on the back of affirmative action is the token syndrome; the small number of people from other ethnic or racial groups are often seen by the dominant group to be a
token hire as a result of affirmative action, and, as a result, treated as less qualified representatives of their group, rather than as individuals (Turner & Myers, 2000). According to Freire’s (1970) theory of oppression, tokenism is a device frequently used to control and perpetuate the loyalty of the oppressed. Black women faculty and administrators are no exception as they often find themselves in the position of being tokens (Daniel, 1997). They are recruited, appointed, and placed in highly visible positions and showcased like a trophy (Daniel, 1997).

In a study conducted by Myers (2002), Black women reported a propensity for the dominant culture to view them as spokespersons for all Blacks, rather than as individuals with qualifications. Oftentimes, they are asked to solve problems dealing with racial issues and to sit on committees as experts regarding Blacks. Because so much of their time is taken up in this manner, they report that their appointment to tenure suffered, as they spent a higher proportion of their time advising and teaching, rather than engaging in original research. As a result, Black women are less likely to be included in collaborative research projects with their peers, lack sponsorship, and have less access to resources (Turner & Myers, 2000).

Moses’ (1997) study of Black women is a crucial view of how tokenism is applied in higher education. According to Moses (1997), tokens face the dilemmas and contradictions of being both representatives of their group and exceptions to their group. Even though they are viewed as exceptions, they are often stereotyped with the attributes of the minority group to which they belong. Furthermore, tokens are often isolated and discouraged from associating with the cultural group with which they most identify; those who are similar in race and gender. The notion of being representative of a group, but yet,
an exception, speaks to a concept coined by W.E.B. DuBois as “double consciousness; two contending souls, the one American, the other Negro, at war with each other” (Lemert, 2004, p. 1). In other words, they are living a life in two cultural worlds and having to adapt to the language, cultural beliefs, and traditions of the dominant culture, while building a community of their own (Jones & Gooden, 2003). Williams (1991) speaks to this double consciousness concept:

A man with whom I used to work once told me that “I made too much of my race.” After all, he said, “I don’t think of you as Black.” Yet, sometime later, when another Black woman became engaged in an ultimately unsuccessful tenure battle, he confided to me that he wished the school could find more Blacks like me. I felt myself slip in and out of a shadow, as I became non-Black for purposes of inclusion and Black for purposes of exclusion. The paradox of being Black yet, non-Black, visited me again when the same White man and then a Black woman wondered aloud if I really identified as Black. I was acutely aware that the choice of identifying as Black was hardly mine (pp. 9-10).

Whites view Black behavior as aberrant and abnormal, and as a result, Blacks move back and forth between the Black community and the dominant culture (Jones & Gooden, 2003). Because Blacks are expected to adjust to the dominant cultural norms, they must make a conscious decision about their level of involvement in the constant tension between the two cultures (Rothenberg, 2004).

In higher education, the token hire misconception also calls into question the competence of African American women. Myers (2002) reported that in many instances, White colleagues believe African American women to be incompetent; as such, they are
viewed as less likely to contribute to research. She argued “this perception, unfortunately, pervades much of their career; forcing upon them the underserved stress of providing a defense they should not need to give and fighting to prove merit when merit is unquestionably apparent” (pp. 21-22). In several studies, African American women reported a tendency to criticize research efforts, ethnic professional associations, conferences, and workshops as not worthy (Moore, 1987). Aleman and Renn (2002) noted “these institutional cultures are not supportive, and the network of ‘good old boys’ and, more recently, the ‘good old girls’ is difficult for many African American women to penetrate” (p. 468). They asserted that part of the problem stems from the inability of White men and White women to recognize and listen to the voices of these women (Aleman & Renn, 2002).

Mentorship

Because African American women are viewed as outsiders and incompetent, they also lack mentors and are rarely included in university networks (Benjamin, 1997; Aleman & Renn, 2002; Myers, 2002; Clark & Corcoran, 1986). Wenniger and Conroy (2001) asserted that African American women face an interesting challenge searching for a mentor to monitor their progress and facilitate their professional development, as the scarcity of African American women faculty makes it difficult to find enough mentors to meet their demand. According to Dodgson (1986), this is crucial because the lack of mentorship and sponsorship is a major stumbling block to the accomplishment of a successful academic career. African American women are less likely to be familiar with the practical aspects of their jobs or receive support for their efforts. The lack of support from colleagues contributes to a feeling of isolation from professional networks, research
grants, and publishers (Myers, 2002; Aleman & Renn, 2002; Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Thus, “to move up the academic ladder, one depends heavily on the support of departmental colleagues” (Moses, 1997).

Harvey and Scott (1985) have argued that often “in the absence of support groups...Black faculty members are subjected to the aggravating aspects of the academic milieu without enjoying some of its compensating benefits: contemplation, independence, and social and intellectual stimulation from colleagues sharing the same interests and outlook” (p. 70). Mentoring is an important vehicle for upward mobility in the careers of women; mentors nurture a sense of belonging for minorities in the profession (DeFour, 1990). Because of the shortage of Black female faculty, there is a feeling of neglect, disrespect, ostracism, and isolation within higher education (Myers, 2002; Collins, 2000; Moses, 1997; Lomotey, 1997; Gregory, 1999; Epps, 1989). Snerarl (1997) noted “the isolation felt by African American women points to the problems of a lack of representation in administration” (p. 128).

The absence of mentors contributes to the pressures that exist for Black women in the academy, which further increases their sense of isolation. As a result, many African American women are forced to seek mentors outside of their academic departments or university community. Blackwell (1989) espoused that mentoring is cross-cultural; it is maintained that there are fewer women of color than there are White women in academe. Those seeking mentorship often choose mentors who are similar to themselves in race and gender, because there are a limited number of African American women in the academy. Given these barriers, African American women seek mentors in other professions outside of higher education. Snerarl (1997) contended that when Black women...
seek mentors outside of their departments, they are often perceived as being aloof, an outsider, or suffer from poor interpersonal skills. These perceptions make it difficult for Black women to build vital networks within higher education.

Double Discrimination: Racism and Sexism

Numerous scholars identify the myriad of ways that African American women faculty receive the message of contested space: “you don’t belong here” (Myers, 2002; Collins, 2000; Benjamin, 1997; Aleman & Renn, 2002; Welch, 1992; Lomotey, 1997; Morton, 1991; hooks, 1994; Valverde, 2003). As a result, African American academic scholarship is invalidated or relegated to research on “Black stuff” (Aleman & Renn, 2002, p. 383). Woods (2001) refers to this as marginalization of research as Black women choose research topics with relevance to their backgrounds, such as issues of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Woods argues that “when people of color pursue research topics that relate to their personal experiences and background, they are accused of not having objectivity or of being too close to the topic to conduct quality research” (p. 113). Even more insulting is the accusation that doing research pertaining to African American women will somehow ghettoize one as a scholar in academe. Yet, Whites are not subject to the same criticisms when their research focuses on Whites (Woods, 2001). As a result, African American women constantly have to overcome racial and gender bias to become key players in higher education (Benjamin, 1997; Myers, 1991; Welch, 1992).

African American women feel pressure to outperform, just to maintain perceived equal status with their colleagues, only to have their accomplishments discounted or undervalued as a result of racism or sexism (Benjamin, 1997; Myers, 2002; Valverde, 2003; Lomotey, 1997; Welch, 1992; Aleman & Renn, 2002).
Myers (2002) compares the treatment of White women in academe to the era of the Cult of True Womanhood when White women were revered as pure and were placed on a pedestal. She exclaimed, "as it was then, women of color do not fit the ideal of 'true women.' Therefore, the privileges granted to White women then and now are not bestowed on African American women" (p. 67). Myers explained that even though the ideal of true womanhood reduced White women to a subordinate status, it has made them feel far superior to women of color. Furthermore, Myers claimed that "White faculty members do not seem to get it. They do not acknowledge or even seem to be aware of the possibility that they engage in the rule of false universalization" (p. 67). In other words, they see all women through the lens of White women; whatever is perceived as true of White women's experience is also perceived as true of women of color. This falsehood ignores race and renders Black women's presence and experience as invisible.

Myers (2002) postulated that, as a result, faculty seems colorblind in terms of overlooking competencies and contributions of Black women. Gilkes (1982) surmised:

The additional burden of negative images and stereotypes peculiar to Black womanhood (mammy, jezebel, and the Black matriarch) has added to the complexities of their professional identities. The strain of the double whammy has led to a variety of perspectives and responses to the racial and sexual status dilemmas Black women face in the world of work (p. 290).

Historically, Black women first began to experience the effects of the double bind during slavery: being both Black and a woman. However, the current effects of being both Black and a woman are evident today by the low pay scales and minimal representation of Black women in the workforce, as compared to White men and White
women in top echelon positions (Rothenberg, 2007). Additionally, this phenomenon is also prevalent in the educational arena, as evidenced by the low representation of African American female faculty and administrators (Myers, 2002; Benjamin, 1997).

West (1994) inferred, “to engage in a serious discussion of race in America, we must begin not with the problems of Black people, but with the flaws of American society…rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding cultural stereotypes” (p. 6). West presents a basis of institutional racism that is deeply rooted through inequalities and stereotypes. As a result, we only become aware of its presence when there is a cultural challenge brought about by the introduction of an “outsider,” a person of color, whose cultural profile does not match that of the dominant culture.

In presenting the results of 209 Black women’s experiences with racism, St. Jean and Feagin (1998) noted that even though blatant forms of racial discrimination have disappeared from U.S. society, many forms of overt and covert discrimination have persisted, but through more subtle and sophisticated ways. For example, a respondent in the study indicated that institutions find ways in which they can discriminate by indicating a lack of qualifications as a way of screening; they find ways to screen out what they don’t want. In order to avoid being screened out, another respondent in the study indicated having to work harder and be better than their White peers. However, the respondents’ primary concern was not with the particular expressions of gendered discrimination, but with racism, in general, that originated from Whites, including White women (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998, pp. 181-182). From their research, St. Jean and Feagin (1998) concluded “in most cases, Black women interpret their blended racial-gender experiences with more emphasis on racial factors” (p. 17).
Johnson (1999) examined African American women in undergraduate and graduate programs. The researcher was interested in examining the narratives of the women in an effort to determine how the dynamics of the larger society, which had a negative impact on their lives, were played out in higher education. The results revealed that the respondents identified racism as the specific dominating factor, and that they used an oppositional worldview to frame their stories. Gender, while not advanced by the women in the study as a restraint on their lives or educational endeavors, was observed to be the factor that consistently effected their lives regarding their gender-bound roles as mothers and wives. Johnson (1999) concluded that the issues of race and gender were uniting forces. Many of the women in the study described their experiences of being Black as feeling inferior, as compared to others in American society; they were aware of racial differences in a segregated American society.

Essed (1990) found that in universities, the workplace, and public places, Black women consistently faced poor treatments by Whites. One of the poor treatments was having their intelligence, qualifications, and authority called into question. Black women were judged negatively as being inferior and lazy. Being viewed as unintelligent has been an issue for Blacks in the United States since slavery. As a result, African Americans' are scrutinized by the dominant race as having the inability to learn (Davis, 1983). Collins (1991) noted that in the academy, women of color, despite their advanced education, are still the subject of antiquated racist ideology used to subordinate Blacks and other people of color. In a narrative case study conducted by Woods (2001), Black women asserted that White faculty viewed them as being unintelligent. For example, a respondent in the study stated:

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They think we’re dumb...they think we are not as smart as Whites. They do not think we are smart, at every stage. If I hear the words, ‘Oh you’re so articulate!’ one more time. If I hear, ‘Oh you really write well...’ At every stage, you get the sense, like it is a surprise that we actually can put two words together, and we’ve read and understand Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. I actually think that is a BIG issue. They don’t think we’re smart (p. 114).

One respondent also exclaimed that being seen as intellectually inferior effects many interactions that Black women have with White faculty. Woods (2001) explained that this leads to a hostile and alienating environment where Black women’s development within the academy is hindered.

Additionally, in a survey of 3,000 Black women scholars working in predominantly White institutions, Moore and Wagstaff (1974) found that 95% of all Black respondents reported some discriminatory activity by persons within their institutions. Black faculty members often encounter prejudice and discrimination, which can create major obstacles to their academic success (Hine, 1997). For example, African American women who choose to concentrate on scholarship to further the research of Blacks report that the majority of their faculty, peers, and superiors do not consider it to be relevant or worthwhile (Gregory, 1999).

According to Tack and Patitu (1992), Black women, who have gained access to higher education and higher paying positions, often find themselves in less than optimal work environments. The racist and sexist attitudes of their colleagues can often lead to less satisfactory work conditions and increased stress in the lives of Black female professionals. As a result, Black women faculty members are often caught in a double
bind between discriminatory racism and sexism that impedes their progress in higher education (Gregory, 1999). Williams (1991) describes this as *quadruple jeopardy*, being Black, a woman, educated, and isolated.

Wenniger and Conroy (2001) contended that:

Systematic racism may be one of the most covert, but virulent forms of racial oppression facing the African American community. Although doors have recently opened and African Americans have obtained greater educational and occupational opportunities, there has been no fundamental change in the principles and ideologies that fuel racism (p. 47).

For African American women, the effects of both racism and sexism lead to a unique and egregious form of sexism and sexual harassment. Adams (Jones & Gooden, 2003) at Morehouse College calls this unique form of racism and sexism, "the radicalization of sexual harassment, how the stereotypes of Black women, such as the mythical perception that they are promiscuous, may influence the nature, form, and intensity of harassment" (p. 43). Because Black women are viewed as being oversexed and promiscuous, they become targets for sexual harassment; it is assumed that they desire sexual contact (Jones & Gooden, 2003).

**Sexual Harassment**

According to Moses (1997), because of the perceived lack of status and power, minority women, in general, and Black women, in particular, are likely to be treated in a superficial manner and viewed in terms of their sexuality by both White and Black men (p. 29). As a result, Black female professors have been sexually harassed by White and Black men seeking to intimidate them (Gregory, 1995; Moses, 1997; Collins, 2000). In
several interviews and surveys conducted with African American women in higher education, Moses (1997) found that Black women at both predominantly White campuses and historically Black ones deal with the effects of sexism; some of their colleagues relate to them in terms of their sexuality, rather than as a professional. For Black women, this can lead to sexual harassment, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conducts of a sexual nature (Benjamin, 1997; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Myers, 2002; Aleman & Renn, 2002). According to Sandler and Shoop (1997), sexual harassment has permeated women’s academic experiences since their inclusion within institutions of higher learning, and it is a common occurrence.

Because of the perceived images, as well as their lack of status and power, “Black women, in particular, are especially likely to be treated in a superficial manner or viewed in terms of their sexuality by both White and minority men. This can result in sexual harassment, social distancing, and lack of collegiality” (Moses, 1997, p. 29). In fact, a majority of Black women in a study conducted by Moses, reported that the only praise they receive is mostly for their attractiveness, not their achievement. St. Jean and Feagin (1998) conducted a study on the climate of African American women in the workplace and found that Black women endure a special kind of racialized sexism. They state, “myths about wanton Black women abound in this society...for some reason, White Americans feel they can reduce a Black woman to a sexual object” (p. 101). They surmised that myths about the sexually aggressive Black women influence this type of thinking, especially among White men, as privilege allows these men to try to actualize the myth (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998).
In a study conducted with African American women and White women in Los Angeles County, Wyatt and Reiderle (1995) found that 45% of the women had experienced sexual harassment in public or social settings, and that poor Black women were the most vulnerable. Additionally, 67% of the Black women, as compared to 45% of the White women under study, had been directly propositioned at work. Because of their race, Black women were sexually harassed differently from many White women. Hoke (1997) noted that these negative cultural images shape Whites’ perceptions of African American women within the academy as well.

Moreover, the social categories of race and gender are culturally constructed by cultural and social contexts and historical circumstances. This distinction is important to those thinking about issues pertaining to African American women in higher education because issues of their dissimilarity are constantly being raised in the academy (Aleman & Renn, 2002, p. 91). “Attitudes help to actualize myths about Black women and feed the imagination of both Black and Whites who see Black women less for their professional achievement than for how they fit certain myths of aggressiveness” (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998, pp. 101-102).

**Collegiality Among Faculty**

When African American women voice their concerns about the racist and sexist oppression that they experience, it is often not treated as legitimate by their colleagues. While White men understand the interconnections of racism and sexism on an intellectual level, at the operational level, they tend to ignore it, dismiss it as not pertaining to themselves, or they label Black women as domineering (Benjamin, 1997). Even White women are guilty of racist verbal expression. As hooks (1981) points out:
From our (African American women's) peripheral role in the movement, we saw that the potential radicalism of feminist ideology was being undermined by White women, who while paying lip service to revolutionary goals, were primarily concerned with gaining entrance in the capitalist, patriarchal poser structure (p. 502).

As such, White women posing as allies suggest that Black women would be better off if they returned to predominantly Black colleges and universities, instead of remaining at predominantly White institutions (Aleman & Renn, 2002). The suggestion that African American women return to historically Black colleges is made, despite the fact that a majority of them received their doctorates at predominantly White universities (Aleman & Renn, 2002). Wilkinson (1991) claimed that sustained disparities in occupational achievements and career mobility are grounded in gender and race stereotypes, as these articulate the past. He posited that:

When studies of occupational and income inequality are made, serious consideration should be given to the historical record of slavery which perpetuated unceasing discrimination and entrenched racial stereotyping of African American women. The influence of the past legacy of slavery should not be ignored if we are to gain a clear understanding of the present occupational income, educational, and privilege dissonance between African American and White women even when education is controlled (p. 99).

Snead (1997), an African American woman in higher education, noted:

As one continues to work here, the work experience and atmosphere become dismal. African American women are consistently ignored for promotions and substantial salary increases. Nonetheless, they are expected to be happy and content. Countless
numbers of African American women have stated that this university thinks that Black folks should just be happy without equitable compensation, voice appreciation, power, and, worst of all, hope of improving their status at the university (p. 127). Lamotey (1997) stated, “this injustice creates a sense of hopelessness that manifests itself in daily resentment, anger, distrust, and lack in initiative” (pp. 127-128).

Harvard University law professor, Lani Guinier, acknowledged dual discrimination in the academy, saying, “for too long, Black women have been submerged in the claims of race or in the claims of women” (Collison, 1999, p. 16). Tack and Patitu (1992) concurred, as they noted, “the combination of racism and sexism creates significant obstacles and serves to impede the progress of African American women who seek to advance in the administration of postsecondary institutions” (p. 468). Several scholars reported that women faculty of color describe the interlocking effects of gender and race as compounding the pressure of the workplace environment. They perceive that being both a minority and a female hampers their success as faculty members. The environment for African American women at both predominantly White institutions and historically Black colleges and universities, does not value, nor embrace them as equals; as such, their ascension to positions of power and authority is limited (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Myers, 2002; Benjamin, 1997; Lomotey, 1997; Blackwell, 1988; Davis, 1983).

Moses (1989) summed up the overall experience of African American women in higher education, when she identified seven problems Black women face in the academy: 1) being challenged on a constant basis; 2) lack of professional support systems; 3) being overly scrutinized by peers, supervisors, and students; 4) an unusual requirement to work harder for recognition and respect; 5) assumption if being an affirmative action hire and
not truly qualified; 6) being seen as a symbol of her race, rather than as an individual; and 7) being denied access to the power structure associated with her position, normally.

Farmer (1993) noted that Black women are effected by racial and gender bias because they must fulfill a number of roles. If they do not fulfill all of the roles and expectations placed upon them, then they are perceived as unapproachable, antisocial, or incompetent. Black women are on display and subject to inordinate scrutiny by Whites who believe that they should not be where they are. Regardless, Black women’s presence is often “sustained by a sense of personal and community responsibility and the potential for challenging oppression” (Owens, 2004, p. 77).

**Balance Between Family, Community, and Career**

Many African American women often feel stretched to their limits psychologically, emotionally, and physically; they report feeling divided by home, community, and career obligations (Higginbotham, 1981). According to Moses (1997), “Black women have a long history of managing family, work, and community responsibilities; however, like White women, they do it at a cost” (p. 30). Bracken, Allen, and Dean (2006) suggested that tenured female faculty often sacrifice childbearing for their careers. Because Black women tend to engage in more teaching, committee work, and counseling students than do their White male and female peers, they feel extra pressure and demands. This often translates into sacrificing family, community involvement, and their personal life for career development, if they are to engage in research and publication (Moses, 1997). Moses (1997) pointed out that this presents a dilemma for Black female faculty who want to pursue an academic career. She refers to a respondent in her study who contended:
To have civic consciousness and involvement, to have a family, to teach with social responsibility and vision, to pursue socially pertinent research and writing, to actively render service to one's profession...to do all of these things would be to be a whole, multifaceted, well-rounded person. However, in light of the imbalances in academia (for example, the focus of publications at the expense of teaching integrity), to do all of the above is to risk chronic burnout and frustration. I am still learning how to reach a comfortable balance. But, if I do, it will become my own drive and convictions, rather than because of any support for the university (p. 30).

Another respondent shared a similar story; she noted:

Black women faculty who are also mothers and wives have a very difficult time. The standards demand and pressures of academic work reflect "yuppie" value orientations, and they are andocentric to boot! To remain competitive in the Ph.D. academic market often translates into sacrificing family, personal life, and so on for career development (particularly with the publish or perish syndrome of research universities) (Moses, 1997, p. 30).

Yet another respondent indicated:

There are subtle discrimination and disadvantages that effect Black women during childbearing years. Beyond the problem related to race, being a mother of small children puts one at a professional disadvantage because of the standards and expectations of the academy, who do not reflect or respect the realities of a parent/professional (Moses, 1997, p. 30).

Hervey and Wooten (2004) extended the notion that "African American women experiences differ from other faculty members because they are constantly reconciling
the dominant group’s career values with the family values of their African-American cultural heritage” (p. 63). In a study of 27 African American women faculty members, Hervey and Wooten (2004) found that supportive organizational cultures that reflect a family-friendly work environment were more prominent at historically Black colleges and universities. Respondents, who were faculty members at historically Black colleges and universities, described a supportive culture that showed a concern for employee well-being in both work life and personal life (p. 67). As one respondent indicated during an interview:

I left my job at a large state university and joined the faculty of a HBCU because of my son. I wanted to have more time for him, and I was tired of the departmental policies. I now have more control over my life, and I live closer to my extended family (p. 67).

Hervey and Wooten (2004) also pointed out that one of the explanations for less job-related stress among African American women at historically Black colleges and universities has more to do with the fact that they do not have to confront the disadvantages associated with being a racial minority, “but instead, work in an environment that values their unique contributions in the area of research, teaching, and service” (p. 76). In addition, because they are not considered tokens, they are called on less frequently to serve on certain committees or represent a particular scholarly perspective regarding minority issues (Hervey & Wooten, 2004).

African American women faculty members who work in less supportive organizational cultures employ personal strategies for managing work-family conflicts. Most of the African American women professors in the study had developed some type...
of personal coping strategy to manage work-family conflicts around three general themes: alternative career paths, non-traditional work-family solutions, and the establishment of social support networks from the local African American community (Hervey & Wooten, 2004).

Three of the women interviewed in Harvey and Wooten’s study chose alternative career paths; they worked full-time, but not in tenure-track positions. This alternative gave them an opportunity to actively work in their perspective fields, but free of the pressures associated with a tenure-track position.

Nearly 30% of all female, full-time faculty members work in non-tenure-track positions, compared to 14% of all male full-timers. Leatherman (1999) and Wilson (1999) surmised that this trend is due to the phenomenon of the trailing spouse; women taking contract positions at institutions that have recruited their husbands for tenure-track positions.

Another strategy employed by African American women is a non-traditional work family solution. More than half of the women in the study integrated work and family responsibilities within dual-career commuter marriages. Hervey and Wooten (2004) found that a number of women had recently left their families and relocated to accept administrative positions, such as provosts, vice chancellors, and presidents at various campuses throughout the country. A majority of the women interviewed indicated that they had children early in their life and thus, were able to leave the primary care of their children to their spouses (Hervey & Wooten, 2004).

According to Hervey and Wooten (2004), this arrangement provides each spouse with a sense of achievement and the ability to pursue career goals without everyday family
constraints. Unfortunately, stress and loneliness are associated with this type of arrangement because the total segregation of work and family results in hectic schedules. Yet, another solution among Black women faculty in the study was the arrangement of a work schedule so that one parent is available to take care of the children (Hervey & Wooten, 2004).

A large portion of the Black women indicated that they established an African American support system as an essential strategy for managing the stress associated with the demands of working within academia and the responsibility of a family. Examples of groups within this support system are churches, sororities, book clubs, and informal cliques of African American friends. Daly, Jennings, Beckett, and Leashore (1995) contended that the use of social support networks is an important part of the African American community, as historically extended kin and kinship networks have alleviated psychological isolation by providing emotional and social support. This support system is especially vital when working at predominantly White research institutions. As several respondents in the study noted:

My church really supports my career aspirations and the members help out with back-up childcare. Most of our social activities center around the church or with its members. Belonging to a Black church is important for my children. I want them to have Black friends and be proud of their African American heritage. The church is my family away from home (Hervey & Wooten, 2004, p. 69).

Another respondent added, “I lived in a college town. The only time that I get to chat with other women like me is at sorority meetings. It is a sense of relief to have my sorors

95
there for support. These are the women that connected me to the Black community” (Hervey & Wooten, 2004, p. 70).

Hervey and Wooten (2004) also made the distinction that the above narratives presented support for the belief that the African American culture values promoting collectivism within the Black community, rather than individualism. The social support network within the African American community serves as an extended family as well as psychological support for African American women faculty (Butner, Burley, & Marbley, 2000).

According to Gregory (1999), the division between work and family has been identified to be an important issue for professional women attempting to manage both. In an equal relationship, dual-career couples compromise by sharing both the parental and family responsibilities. However, in a traditional household, the family follows the man because he is usually the main wage earner (Gregory, 1999). As a result, women are often forced to postpone advancement because of geographical immobility. With the inability to relocate, their chances of job advancement diminish substantially (Tack & Patitu, 1992).

Crawford (1982) suggested that “marriage is bad for women’s careers, as it can create conflict for professional women” (p. 90). In order to avoid conflict with marriage and family, many professional women often compromise advancement in their careers. Felmlee (1980) also contended that marital status can effect a woman’s job mobility. As married women are forced to “coordinate work choices with her husband, making geographical moves required by job transfers or advancement opportunities very difficult” (Gregory, 1999, p. 56). Although women in higher education face difficulties
balancing scholarly work and family, according to Simone (1987), there are no
differences in productivity between married women and single women; women in
academe, who are successful, were able to make arrangements that are workable for
themselves and their family. Black women, despite the extraordinary challenges faced in
academe, successfully manage both professional demands and family because of their
ability to cope, adapt, and arrange their lives.

Membership in the professorate is an important qualifying credential in academic
institutions. African American women who are sufficiently armed with the appropriate
credentials are not achieving tenure status, nor are they being recruited to join the
faculties of the highest ranking institutions in the country (Myers, 2002; Benjamin, 1997;
Lomotey, 1997; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Gregory, 1999; Sudarkasa, 1996; Valverde,
2003). Traditionally, the route to a college presidency starts through the ranks of faculty,
which requires a full professorship, as well as department chair, dean, and provost
appointments. Despite the number of African American women in the pipeline, they are
still underrepresented at all administrative levels of higher education.

In spite of these challenges, many African American women view their presence in
the academy as one that is committed to the transformation of higher educational
institutions (Aleman & Renn, 2002, p. 383). African American women see their functions
as agents of social change, as fundamental to their roles as scholars, and crucial to their
career success (Thomas, 2001). Thomas (2001) also noted that “African Americans
define academic career success partially on the basis of their achievements related to
social change, and that they persist in their careers, in spite of experiences of hostile and
unsupportive environments, because they have accepted the obligation to promote social
change in and out of the academy” (p. 83). Additionally, African American women struggle not only against the patriarchal status quo, but also against the negative images that have followed them since slavery; they cannot separate gender oppression from racial oppression.

Nevertheless, African American women have not only survived the oppressive forces of the academy, they have thrived within them (Thomas, 2001). According to Collins (2000), it is important to note that the self-worth of African American females is not dependent on the academy, nor the White faculty, staff, and administration. Instead, Black women’s “self-definition speaks to the power dynamics involved in rejecting externally defined, controlling images of Black womanhood” (p. 114).

African American women possess the spirit of independence, self-determination, and resiliency. It is through their resilience and fortitude of character that African American women possess to combat the challenges that have pervaded them since slavery (Lamotey, 1997; Collins, 2000; Myers, 1991; Welch, 1992). Through their own determination, they carved out a path where there was none. Through the harshest environments and challenges, they acquired skills in handling barriers and prevailed to reach the highest level of leadership within the academy (Valverde, 2003).

African American Women Strength and the Emergence of Resiliency

Black women, since the inception of slavery, have shown determination, strength, and resiliency in overcoming obstacles and barriers throughout their historical journey in America by maintaining a strong sense of self-identity. According to Welch (1992):

When the Black woman was taken from her home by force, the only saving grace was a sense of self. Unless there is a balance between the psychological and physical to
save the self from another day of life, death can seem the only solution. This was the answer for some; however, for most African American women, the choice was to undergo the pain of slavery with all its unknown problems so that a generation of others could fight for a better existence (p. 27).

**Black Identity Development**

Identity or self-concept in an organized system of schemas or beliefs about the self (e.g., I am shy, I am tall, I am Black), characterizes an individual’s behavior in salient social settings (Murray & Mandra, 2002). According to Murray and Mandra (2002), “racial identity is a schema or mental representation of the racial aspect of the self, including perceived attributes and the feelings associated with them” (p. 74). How African American children decode and understand the concept of race when they begin to establish a racial identity is important to how they will survive within the context of racial discrimination, negative images, and prejudices, as they develop into adulthood (Tatum, 1997).

Cross (1971) is known for developing one of the first identity models regarding African American children. The Cross model consists of a five-stage psychological conversion process through which he believes that Black people proceed. The stages of the model are: 1) pre-encounter. In the first stage, Blacks pre-encounter where the world is described as anti-Black; 2) his second stage involved an encounter that validated the person’s Blackness; 3) this third stage involved immersion and a deliberate rejection of non-Black values; and 4) the fourth stage emphasized internalization to sharply define a secure sense of Black identity.
Later, Cross (1995) expanded his early model to move from a broad focus to a narrow convergent focus midway in the identity development process and then toward a broader divergent focus at the highest stages. According to Cross (1995), the pre-encounter identity is the first person’s identity that is shaped by early development. This socialization involved experiences with one’s family, extended family, neighborhood, community, and schools, covering the periods of childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. This early socialization to building a strong Black identity helps the person feel centered, meaningful, and in control of making life predictable (Tatum, 1997).

For Black children, it is the family that provides a safe place—a protected internal environment where they can grow and develop away from the external imposition of the outside world. Gregory (1995) noted that historically, “the Black family can best be described as a social system which emphasizes the interdependence of familial and community relationships, which plays a role in the child’s development.” (p. 4). Bell, Avery, Jenkins, Field, and Schoenrock (1985) contended that when children form strong bonds and attachments with their parents, specifically, their mothers, they are more likely to develop not only a strong sense of confidence and trust, but a sense of self and high self-esteem. It is this strong sense of self that permits the individual to interact with the larger (external) environment in an appropriate and adaptive way. According to Cross (1995), any fully developed identity is difficult to change.

Pedersen (2000) noted that self-identity is perceived as a separate identity with internal characteristics that are stable across situations, regardless of context. It is this strong perception of Black self-identity that has enabled African American women to seek harmony over personal goals, to reject externally defined controlling images, and to
become resourceful, self-reliant women. Josselson (1996) provided a framework regarding ethnic identity to understand the nature of identity with a contextual understanding of how it is shaped within two cultures; their ethnic culture, and the culture of the larger society. In describing ethnic identity, Josselson (1996) stated:

In forming a core of who we “are,” identity weaves together all of the aspects of ourselves and our various locations of ourselves with other and with the larger society...usually we include in our identity an economic function in society; a set of meanings we have for others, a place in a sequence of generations, and a set of beliefs and values. We may also have an unusual genetic makeup, an atypical early history or family background, an eccentric temperament or psychological structure, or we may have special abilities or disabilities. Any of these channel our lives in one way or another (p. 28).

Many developmental theorists, such as Erickson (1963), Bowley (1990), and Cross (1971), agree on the significant role that family background plays in children’s identity development. However, according to Cross’s (1971) model of psychological Nigerescence, it is this early stage of identity development that influences the internal and external constructs faced by African American women in their everyday lives.

Resiliency

Peterson (1992) noted that Black women have the ability to survive conditions of great adversity; they find the strength and courage to succeed, which speaks to their resiliency. Webster (2002) defined resiliency as the ability to recover or adjust easily to misfortune or change. In other words, individuals who are resilient find ways to cope and cultivate strengths to positively meet the challenges of life. African American women
found a way since emancipation to set goals toward educating themselves and their race, despite the myriad of obstacles in their path (Welch, 1992). Resiliency may be explained by the presence of protective factors—those qualities or situations that help alter or reverse expected negative outcomes. These protective factors can be internal (within the individual) or external (involving family, friends, and community) (Christle, Harley, Nelson, & Jones, 1998).

According to Jones and Gooden (2003), Black women in America expend substantial psychic energy on managing the threats of racial and gender bias, as race, class, and gender oppression continues because of powerful images that have been constructed to justify their existence. They further suggested that the United States is a country where the myths about Black women obscure the truth. Harris (1982) noted some of the socially constructed images describing Black women:

- Called Matriarch, Emasculator and Hot Momma, Sometimes Sister, Pretty Babe,
- Auntie, Mammy, and Girl. Called Unwed Mother, Welfare Recipient, and Inner City Consumer. The Black American Woman has had to admit that while nobody knew the troubles she saw, everybody, his brother and his dog, felt qualified to explain her, even to herself (p. 4).

In order to eradicate the prejudices and discrimination directed toward African American women, Black women find that they must spend emotional energy, time, and thought watching every step they take. “They do this by managing an array of feelings and altering behavior in order to cope with it all” (Jones & Gooden, 2003, p. 61). Snearl (1997) argued that the challenges that African women face are so numerous that one shrinks at the thought. These challenges have become a part of daily life for Black
women, and dealing with them is commonplace. However, Black women have acquired skills in handling these barriers. They do this by maintaining high levels of self-confidence and self-worth. Snearl (1997) suggested, just to consider pursuing a career in higher education administration, one must have feelings of confidence and self-worth.

Internal Protective Resiliency

A protective factor in resilient individuals is the ability to take control, be proactive, and makes decisions about what to do, instead of letting things happen. They possess a positive outlook and have developed coping and stress reduction strategies. According to Myers (1991), “excessive stressful experiences have historically impacted Black women from the beginning of slavery to the present day. However, against insurmountable odds, Black women have managed to cope with an array of life events over which they have no control; they have natural existing support systems which serves as buffers in enhancing the ability for Black women to cope” (p. 14).

In order to survive oppression, African American women became familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor, while hiding a self-defined standpoint from the prying eyes of the dominant group (Collins, 2000). In order to maintain independent self-definitions, African American women “have to know how to play the game; they always had to live two lives...one for them and one for ourselves” (Gwaltney, 1980, pp. 238-240). Jones and Gooden (2003) referred to this practice as shifting; they modify their speech, they shift in one direction at work in the morning, then at home each night. In other words, they adjust the way that they act in one context or another. In their research of African American women, 58% of the women surveyed reported that at times, they
have changed the way that they acted to fit in or to be accepted by White people.

According to Jones and Gooden (2003), respondents in their study indicated:

Black women use a variety of images to describe the shifting process, referring to the “mask” they wear, the “chameleon” they have become, having to constantly bend what they do and who they are to please others. They say they must shift to conform to codes set by various segments of society, modulating their language, their behavior, even their personal appearance, to make White colleagues feel comfortable, and then shifting again to appease fellow Blacks who may feel that a woman who speaks too distinctly has forgotten who she is and is trying to be White (p. 61).

Despite the psychological effects of sexism and racism, Black women’s acts of resistance, both independent and organized, have long existed (Myers, 2002; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1994). “African American women are not defenseless victims, but a strong willed resister; as meanly as she is thought of, hindered as she is in all directions, she is always doing something of merit and credit that is not expected of her” (Williams, 1989, p. 151). Collins (2000) stated that “acts of resistance could not occur without Black women’s long-standing rejection of mammies, matriarchs, jezebels, and other controlling images. When combined, these individual acts of resistance suggest that a distinctive collective Black women’s consciousness exists” (p. 98).

How have Black women’s consciousness allowed them to cope and transcend the confines of intersecting oppression of race, class, gender, and sexuality? How have Black women found the voice and strength to oppose being objectified? How have Black women accounted for the voice of resistance? The answer lies in their self-definition, high levels of self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, and personal empowerment, as
all five of these characteristics empower Black women to bring about social change. According to Lorde (1984), by struggling for a self-defined Black woman’s perspective that rejects the master’s image, African American women change themselves. As a critical mass of individuals with a changed consciousness, they can, in turn, foster women’s collective empowerment. A changed consciousness encourages people to change their lives (Collins, 2000). Being able to use the range of one’s own voice to express the totality of self is the core theme in Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1994; Gwaltney, 1980; Lorde, 1984). The effort to find a collective, self-defined voice and express a fully articulated womanist standpoint reflects the best of Black feminist thought (Collins, 1998, pp. 61-65). As such, Lorde (1984) observed that:

Within this country where racial differences creates a constant, if unspoken, distortion of vision, Black women have on the one hand always been highly visible, and so, on the other hand, have been rendered invisible through the depersonalization of racism. The visibility which makes us most vulnerable, that which accompanies being Black, is also the source of our greatest strength (p. 42).

For Black women to resolve, fight, and change the negative images that have defined who they are in America, it takes considerable inner strength and a positive self-image. Collins (2000) noted, “why this theme of self-definition should preoccupy African American women is not surprising. Black women’s lives are a series of negotiations that aim to reconcile the contradictions separating their own internally defined images of self as African American women with our objectification as the other” (p. 99). Gwaltney (1980) elaborated and asserted that the struggle of “living two lives one for them (dominant culture) and one for ourselves creates pressure to construct independent self-
definitions within a context where Black womanhood remains routinely derogated” (p. 240). The reality of racism and sexism means that African American women must construct their personal realities to include an awareness of what society’s negative public image might mean to others. “This is not paranoia. It is preparedness” (Holloway, 1995, p. 36).

According to Collins (2000), being categorized as a Black woman makes all U.S. Black women visibly open to objectification. This treatment, therefore, “renders each African American woman invisible as fully human. Ironically, being treated as an invisible ‘other’ places African American women in an outsider-within position that has stimulated creativity in many ways” (p. 100). Resolving these contradictions is not an easy feat; it takes a considerable amount of strength. In developing a strong sense of self and resisting racial injustice, African American women construct knowledge that is essential to resolving contradictions; they learn to do this by “speaking in a unique and authentic voice, they jump outside the frames of the systems authority, and create their own frame” (Belenky, 1986, p. 134).

Collins (2000) explained that “unlike the controlling images developed for White women, the controlling images applied to Black women are so uniformly negative that they almost necessitate resistance” (p. 100). Collins also pointed out that “for African American women, constructed knowledge of self emerges for the struggle to replace controlling images with self-defined knowledge deemed personally important, usually knowledge essential to Black women’s survival” (p. 100). Hine (1992) concluded that African American women had to develop a culture of “dissemblance and self-reliance in order to survive. They had no choice but to become creative agents for change and
embark upon the heroic task of re-imaging themselves and their sex” (p. 14). The ability to deal with adversity depends on personal strength, an African American woman’s personality, and her ability to cope, garner family support, and obtain access to community resources. These strengths and skills enable Black women to use the African-derived conceptions of self and community to resist negative evaluations of Black womanhood by dominant groups (Collins, 2000). It is through these strong personal strengths that promotes resiliency in African American women (Jacobson, 2000).

External Protective Resiliency

According to Christie, Nelson, Harley, and Jones (1998), external protective factors, as they pertain to resiliency, are formed through the home, spirituality, and community. Peterson (1992) described external resiliency as power in African American women. The power has to do with “the relationship with ourselves, the relationship with God, and the relationship with family, friends, and community” (p. 86). She further noted that “it is within these relationships that we feel comfortable to act and to express ourselves, know that we will be affirmed for who and what we are” (p. 86). As individuals, African American women possess unique talents; however, it is within these relationships that their talents are affirmed (Peterson, 1992). The Black family can be best described as a social system which emphasizes interdependence of familial and community relationships (Gregory, 1999). Marriage and motherhood are important features in the lives of Black women, as it is within their family environment that they draw power, will, and self-determination. In turn, they are empowered to maintain integrity in the face of injustice and to never compromise their beliefs (Peterson, 1992).
The ability of African American women to define themselves comes from the strong spiritual belief that no human has the right to define another (Gregory, 1999; Peterson, 1992; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998). Black women believe that each person is a unique creation of God, and through God, the individual elicits their own becoming. As such, "the Black female knows that she is constantly in a state of becoming as she reconnects with God, family, and community, and as she is moved in different directions" (Peterson, 1992, pp. 86-87). For Black women, taking risks and extending themselves is important, for they know that failure only comes from not trying (White, 1984). White noted for the African American woman, "resilience and revitalization of the human spirit are facilitated by the use of humor and the knowledge that one is not alone" (p. 87). As such, "if she succeeds, then she was true to herself and what she wanted and felt she could become" (Peterson, 1992, p. 87).

African American women also draw a great source of strength from what is considered the center of the Black community—the Black church. The role of the church is to provide spiritual, moral, emotional, social, political, and economic support (Gregory, 1999). Murray and Harrison (1981) found that more college educated Black women are returning to the church, not only for its religious value, but for the social interaction they are lacking in the workplace due to their relatively small numbers. Also, Black women acquire higher status and take on more powerful roles within the church, and in return, receive recognition for their efforts.

Hill (2003) identified seven major strengths and maintains that they are pivotal for the survival, advancement, and stability of the Black community, particularly for Black women. These strengths are strong kinship bonds, adaptability of family roles, strong
religious orientation, strong work orientation, strong achievement orientation, community, and presence as resistance. Mimms (1996), in her study of the career paths of four African American women administrators, identified five shared characteristics among these women: strong family ties and kinship; valuing education; strong religious beliefs; parental encouragement and support; and, commitment to hard work. These values are essential to Black women’s inner strength and are pivotal for the resilience of African American women.

According to Peterson (1992), part of being resilient is having self-will. It is through this will that African American women embrace self-determination, freedom, and power (Peterson, 1992). For Black women, “the will is where that which is human and that which is spiritual meet; they have the power to be in a relationship with God and to act with God in the creation of the world to come” (Peterson, 1992, p. 88). It is through their relationship with God that gives African American women power and strength to determine a course of action and then act upon it. By exercising their self-will, African American women move closer to rising above sexism and racism to become the person that they want to be (Collins, 2000).

Community and Family Ties

Another source of external resiliency for Black women is through their community and family. It is within the characteristics of the Black community and family that Black women have richly benefited; these extended support networks have provided emotional support and a source of strength and protection (Gregory, 1999). Family support is most critical to the overall success of African American women. Whether the support comes from mothers, fathers, husbands, siblings, or children, many African American women
feel that they would have not risen to their current level of success without the support and confidence of their families (Gregory, 1999).

The community also provides an additional layer of support, with built-in positive reinforcement, encouragement, and affirmation. Additionally, spirituality remains one of the most critical components of African American women's strength and resistance. They resist assaults on their self-esteem and self-worth by immersing themselves in their community, families, and churches where they receive positive reinforcement (Wenniger & Conroy, 2001; Gregory, 1999). It is through their internal and external resilient characteristics that leadership in Black women is developed (Welch, 1992). This commitment to self-development, regardless of the odds against success, has helped some African American women reach their goal in becoming university and college presidents.

Studies on African American Presidents

The college presidency is viewed as the pinnacle of academic administration and can serve as a benchmark of status for women administrators in higher education (Anderson & Sullivan, 1997). In reviewing the literature, the researcher found several studies that address the issues of African American female presidents in higher education. In a study of 15 college presidents, Bradley, Carey, and Whitaker (1989) found that all presidents surveyed indicated that their backgrounds had a significant impact on their leadership style. Growing up, they were taught to define themselves in terms of a group; they learned how to negotiate, as well as understand those in power. They were encouraged to be strong and assertive and told that they were capable of doing whatever they put their minds to do, making them self-sufficient and resourceful.
In addition, Bradley, Carey, and Whitaker found that all 15 presidents in their study reported that race and gender played a role in how they were perceived, and that they felt that this perception diminished their ability to succeed. In contrast, they saw the benefits of being Black and a woman because they were seen as being non-threatening. As a result, they were able to assume a more participatory style of leadership and demonstrate a willingness to share power with others.

A study by Robinson (1996) of 14 African American female leaders in community colleges found several commonalities in their experiences. These commonalities included early exposure to leadership skills, caring and self-reliance, strong spiritual beliefs, close relationships with their families, strong support systems, and a determination to continue to grow intellectually and professionally. Similarly, Mimms (1996), in her research on the career paths of African American women in higher education, found some of the same personal attributes cited in the Robinson (1996) study: strong family ties and kinship bonds; valuing education at an early age; strong religious beliefs; and, strong parental and family support. The respondents indicated that these attributes played a large role in their achievement and resiliency.

Leadership Characteristics

African Americans must cope with racial tensions arising from the negative images prescribed by Whites and thus, feel a great need to assimilate to the culture and norms of White Americans. In retrospect, this pressure has some African Americans feeling the need to disengage from their Black culture in order to be accepted in academe. W.E.B. DuBois (1903), recognizing this discrepancy, aptly stated, "be yourself and not the White man's image of you. Let the world catch your light as from the beacon, rather than from a
mirror's pale reflection (pp. 16-17). According to Wolfman (1997), “this advice from W.E.B. DuBois to American Blacks has been an unconscious guide for African American women who have been administrative leaders in American higher education institutions” (p. 199).

African American women presidents of universities and colleges have an ambiguous status where they are given minimal recognition and respect because they are newcomers to administrative positions in the academy (Benjamin, 1997; Kane, 1997). Yet, despite the lack of recognition, the commitment to self-development has elevated a small group of African American women who succeeded against insurmountable odds (Hacker & Roberts, 2003; Lomotey, 1997; Darlington & Mulvany, 2003). They survived and thrived, despite racism and sexism. They emerged victorious, through resilience; they had self-confidence, independence, and inner strength. They knew that they could rely on themselves to overcome most challenges. Instead of letting adversity make them feel powerless, they felt personal responsibility over their own destiny (Peterson, 1992). According to Hacker and Roberts (2003), these characteristics are what makes a leader. These characteristics illustrate the paths that African American women have taken, both past and present (Welch, 1992).

Pioneering Model Leaders

By examining the leadership skills of African American women, such as Lucy Craft Laney, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Mary McLeod Bethune, who began their involvement in education during the period of slavery, we find the roots of current African American women leaders. Their work was carried out with the full knowledge
that being discovered had severe penalties, including death (Welch, 1992; Hine, 1990; Benjamin, 1997; Valverde, 2003). Whether they taught in houses, barns, churches, or in the woods, these women were pioneers in founding institutions where young men and women could prepare themselves for life in the United States (Welch, 1992).

With courage, self-determination, will, and self-definition, they were unafraid to take a risk to invest their time, energy, and resources in people and resources (Welch, 1992). These leaders had qualities that enabled them to get along with people who agreed, and in some cases, disagreed with their goals. Each gave of themselves by emulating a sense of values, goals, direction, and meaning that contributed to the education of young African Americans (Welch, 1992; Hine, 1990). Their leadership effectiveness as administrators is evident by the many successful activities that they initiated. These leaders of the past have demonstrated many human values and practical skills in their efforts to build educational experiences and gain equity with other ethnic groups in America (Welch, 1992).

Despite the recurring obstacles to leadership, African American women continue to prevail through a frame that is closely aligned with their early roots in leadership displayed by Lucy Craft Laney, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Mary McLeod Bethune, and many like them. Their leadership characteristics make up the profile of African American female leaders in higher education today (Valverde, 2003).

Current African American female leaders in the present-day academy are linked to these early pioneers. Like the early Black leaders, today's African American women still experience exclusionary conditions and harsh climates. However, their overall purpose remains the same: serving their underrepresented communities; getting more students of
color admitted; creating supportive environments; and, doing so under harsh and challenging conditions; thus, transforming their culture in order to provide a more equitable and inclusive environment (Valverde, 2003).

Under harsh conditions, African American women have shown great resiliency and a strong self-will. These characteristics are what aids African American women in overcoming stormy climates, entailing the same fundamental characteristics and qualities that has served past oppressed African Americans as a whole to overcome worse treatment, such as slavery, lynching, house burning, drive-by shootings, denial to vote, and de-jure segregation (Collins, 2000).

African American women find themselves starting off with two strikes against them, and they are not afforded the same respect as their White colleagues. “On top of this, add the common and quietly spoken view that persons of color are not as capable and not well prepared. Their appointment is due mostly to affirmative action; not open competition” (Valverde, 2003, p. 40).

African American women, demonstrating leadership, and pursuing a goal to bring about greater opportunity and social justice in higher education, face a variety of unjust treatments and interactions. Valverde (2003) asserted that the character of African American female leaders starts with a strong will of mind and a hope that the future will be better. Black women have the capacity to endure misfortune, coupled with a strong work ethic and a firm holding to what is right and wrong. All of this is nurtured by a religiously self-imposed obligation to improve the lives of oppressed people. It is reinforced by their community, their family, and a sense of solidarity, forming a national sisterhood.
African American women are linked in a common struggle, where the odds in society and the academy are stacked up against them. However, their strong will, confidence, inner strength, and self-determination maintains a high energy level, fueled by controlling their anger and the anger generated by observing the many transgressions against others and feeling those against themselves; all of which is sustained by learning to be adaptive and resilient.

Transformational Leadership Characteristics

According to Northouse (2004), within the past 50 years there have been as many as 65 classifications of leadership theory developed to define the dimensions of leadership styles. Some of these theories include: 1) contingency theory, which is a leadership style that matches leaders to appropriate situations; 2) path-goal theory, which is a leadership approach whereby leaders motivate subordinates to accomplish designated goals; and 3) situational leadership, which stresses that leadership is composed of both directive and supportive dimensions, and each has to be applied appropriately in a given situation. Despite the various ways that leadership has been conceptualized, transformational leadership is identified as central to the phenomenon of leadership exhibited by people of color because they face multiple barriers against them, and, as a result, they are forced to transform current-day educational institutions (Valverde, 2003).

Transformational leadership is “the process that changes and transforms individuals. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals, and includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as human beings” (Northouse, 2004, p. 169). Valverde (2003) asserts that the basic premise of
transformational leadership is to make over "substantially, the institution; its mission, its structure; its polices and procedures; in short, its overall way of doing things" (p. 52). He further contends that African American women tend to practice transformational leadership styles because of the many challenges and dilemmas that they face.

According to Valverde (2003) and Hacker and Roberts (2003), the characteristics developed through resiliency make for transformational leaders. Northouse (2004) described transformational leaders as "concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals and includes assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings" (p. 169).

A study conducted by Valverde (2003) found that African American leaders and leaders of color, as a whole, in the academy overwhelmingly define themselves as change agents. "Transformational leadership is a style that enables a mission to be redefined and helps members of the organization to renew their commitment and to restructure systems to accomplish goals; its primary tools are collaboration and relationships" (Wenniger & Conroy, 2001, p. 273).

Bass and Avolio (1994) proposed that transformational leaders exhibit four components: inspirational motivation; idealized influence; individualized consideration; and, intellectual stimulation. Inspirational motivation includes the creation and presentation of a vision for the future. Idealized influence incorporates behaviors, such as sacrificing for the benefit of the group, setting an example, and demonstrating ethical standards. The third component, individualized consideration, includes being supportive, encouraging, and coaching followers. And lastly, the fourth component, intellectual stimulation, involves behaviors that increase awareness of problems and challenges...
followers to view problems from new perspectives. Those who are classified as transformational leaders are characterized by the way that they treat others, which is oriented by moral values, such as justice or integrity (Popper & Mayseless, 2002).

Number of African American Female Presidents

There are approximately 3,500 higher education institutions in the United States. In 1986, there were 379 women presidents. Of the total, 332 were White women, African American women accounted for 9. In 2002, fifteen years later, there were 430 White women presidents and 36 African American women presidents (ACE, 2002). The majority of African American women presidents were employed at community colleges or historically Black colleges (Benjamin, 1997; Valverde; 2003; Myers, 2002).

While African American women currently hold an increasing share of presidencies, as compared to 1986, still, in comparison to White women, they remain underrepresented. ACE (2002) reported that the rate at which women and minorities are rising to the presidency is beginning to slow down. According to the ACE report, White women held 398 presidencies, compared with 38 held by African American women since 1998—all has been only a 1.8% increase for women; the increase for minorities were slightly smaller at 1.5%. Even though the numbers are low in comparison with White women, African American women are making slow strides; they are not the rarity that they once were. According to an article in New Crisis (2001), “in the last third of the 20th century, facilitated by affirmative action access ranging from students to faculty and executive appointments, Black women professors and administrators collectively have
stayed the course, albeit slow, of preparation, performance, and perseverance, thus increasing the pool of ranking contenders for high office” (New Crisis, n.d.).

According to Valverde (2003), in spite of the slow gains, African American women presidents bring many added dimensions by way of their transformational leadership characteristics they possess; one of their many added values is drawing on their inner strength and spirituality. Adding to this, Hacker and Roberts (2003) noted, “one of many added values of a transformational leader is drawing on inner strength; knowing how to get the most out of self and the internal self is a challenge. Self-mastery is empowerment; knowing yourself, your purpose, vision, and values enables one to lead others” (p. 39). Thus, empowerment requires trust in leadership—a trust that leaders will share their core beliefs openly and honestly—as the leader is most confident and effective when the leadership comes from the spirit of expressing itself. The message is to develop personal mastery, which emanates from a strong consciousness of self and life’s mission (Dyer, 2001). According to William, Norhira, and Robinson (2003):

When leaders demonstrate their true and firm commitment to their beliefs, they reinforce their leadership roles. Their employees see that the chief executives live by their words, that they can be trusted, and that trust is precious, particularly when times turn hard. No one wants to hear bad news, but it goes down better when it comes from a person you trust (p. 24).

Hacker and Roberts (2003) asserted “self-mastery is seen when self-awareness intercept deep-seated passion. When drive to live life of meaning connects with consciousness of self, the latent potential that resides within each person comes alive.
Thus, transformational leaders work to develop an awakened mind. Awakened minds are conscious of a purpose and mature with life’s abundant offerings” (p. 40).

Another characteristic of a transformational leader is the ability to engage the spirit (Dyer, 2001). Dyer (2001) declared “that the heart of creating an organization of meaning is the leader’s view of the individual as a spiritual being. You are a soul with a body, rather than a body with a soul. You are not a human being having a spiritual experience, but rather, a spiritual being having a human experience” (p. 2). Spirituality is one of the major themes that African American women utilize for their survival and strength. As such, they feel that all experience has spiritual meaning and significance (Peterson, 1992). Hacker and Roberts (2003) stated “when a leader seizes upon this belief with conviction, the workplace will take on a collective meaning; when spirit is engaged in the daily work, transformation becomes a possibility” (p. 35). Hacker and Roberts (2003) further noted:

Your spiritual consciousness guides you to seek formation of a vision, not to focus on a barrier or outage. Solving the problem gives to leveraging the energy to work, even when it first appears to be negative in nature. With such a spirit, the number of possibilities seems endless. If the vision is the creation of a more trusting culture in which diverse views can be shared without demeaning others, what an opportunity to roll up your sleeves and dive in: this is how daily problems turn into great creation opportunities. The secret is to have your spirit engaged consciously knowing why you are in the role as a leader to begin with (p. 37).

Transformational leaders acknowledge the value of individual performance by building relationships based on trust, spirituality, and operating democratically and
equalizing resources (Valverde, 2003). By putting into practice these tenets and other practices of transformational leadership, Valverde (2003) stated:

African American women become beneficiaries of such things heretofore missing: being judged on performance, not unwarranted perceptions; equal not different treatment; access to information; an opportunity to be heard regarding recommendations; and, most important, the persons of color are no longer mavericks arguing for changes (p. 53).

One of the major characteristics attributed to transformational leadership is the leader’s ability to present a vision, as well as to inspire others to share their vision (Popper & Mayseless, 2002). Popper and Mayseless (2002) contended that “in order to demonstrate a consistent future orientation and formulate it in terms of a vision that people can pursue with faith and enthusiasm, a person must be optimistic in terms of positive expectations for the self, for others, and for society at large” (pp. 212-213). The leader must not only have a positive outlook on life, but be able to evoke in followers the recognition that they share similar values with the leader.

Transformational leaders’ success hinges on the development of self-efficacy, which may be defined as a generalized self-perception in the domain of leadership (Kark & Shamir, 2002). As a result, they are able to align the organization and empower people with a vision, maintain trust, communicate effectively, and encourage creativity and learning (Oden, 1999). Thus, a transformational leader engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower; they are attentive to the needs and motives of the follower (Northouse, 2004).
African American women, in particular, tend to practice transformational leadership styles because of the many challenges and dilemmas that they face. Valverde (2003) asserted that “even though they may find themselves on different campuses, in different states, and in different services, they interpret the historical record, find the societal situation, and experience campus dynamics in similar ways” (p. 7).

Summary

It must be mentioned that the researcher’s review of the existing literature of African American women in higher education was discouraging, as the literature and research conducted regarding Black women is not only limited, but it is also dated from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s. According to Owens (2004), “the limited research on the presence of African American women in higher education suggests that their presence and issues relevant to their experience in the world are not valued and indicates their numbers are small” (p. 77). A majority of the research was directed toward the academic experiences of Black males in predominantly White colleges and universities. Fortunately, some of the current literature, although limited, has been produced by Black female researchers.

The limited amount of literature concerning African American women faculty and administrators validates for this researcher the academy’s control of academic scholarship pertaining to people of color. This researcher found it very frustrating, particularly the history, as most were written as a book chapter, a paragraph, or a few sentences which needed to be weeded-out in order to provide a chronological perspective of Black women in education.
According to the literature, the unresolved issues of race, gender, and class significantly impact both the structure of higher education institutions and the experiences of people of color (Moses, 1989). Rasool (1995) found that Black women were generally perceived as powerless by others, and, as a result, institutional practices created structures which limited their participation.

Black women typically experience lack of support, instability, and isolation within communities of higher education. As such, a majority of the research conducted on African American women in higher education is related to experiences, such as tokenism, affirmative action, mentorship, race and sex discrimination, harassment, wage inequities, vague and unclear research and publishing expectations, and Black women’s exclusion from strategic decision-making positions. Regardless, their presence is often sustained by a sense of personal and community responsibility and the potential for challenging oppression (Owens, 2004).

However, few attempts have been made to provide an explanation as to the origins of these experiences. As a result, the review of the literature was situated within a historical framework in order to provide a deeper understanding of the unique position that African American women have held in society and how it transcends to higher education, specifically. A number of researchers (Gregory, 1995; Perkins, 1983; Collins, 2000) have suggested that to understand the uniqueness of the experiences of Black women, a historical framework is needed to situate their academic life within the academy. Wilson (1989) stated, “it is apparent that the limited presence of women of color in higher education administration has its roots in the history of America and cannot be understood separately from that history” (p. 85).
The literature also suggests that race relations in the United States are juxtaposed within higher education, thus adversely effecting the academic experiences of Black women in the academy. For these reasons, I chose to begin the literature review with a discussion of how the images of Black womanhood were shaped historically by White males during the period of slavery and how this influences them today. The history was presented as a framework to conceptualize the historical and social influences that shaped the images of African American women in society overall and to provide the reader with an explanation of how these images have shaped the professional experiences of Black women in higher education today.

Furthermore, the existing literature on African American female presidents in colleges and universities is sparse. The existing literature showed that while others have looked at career dynamics, stress factors, leadership characteristics, and the personal attributes of Black women at predominantly White institutions, no one has done a qualitative study of African American women presidents' whole experiences, from past to present, as they journeyed to the presidency. Nor has the literature discussed the resiliency of these women, which the researcher attempts by showing how African American women have showed resiliency since slavery and what factors, both external and internal, make them resilient.

Regardless, African American women, both past and present, made considerable strides in higher education. Albeit slow, their resiliency in overcoming barriers and maintaining a commitment to self-development and serve as an uplift of their race helped not only a few African American women to attain presidential positions in higher education, but they developed transformational leadership characteristics along the way.
Despite the accomplishments of a few African American women in key educational leadership positions, they remain underrepresented; barriers still exist to the career development of Black women within the academy, as the literature clearly demonstrates.

Overview

In this study, I explored through oral narratives the experiences of three African American women college and university presidents. This study specifically addressed questions regarding the African American women presidents’ perceptions of their challenges, how they overcame those challenges, and how those challenges have shaped their leadership styles. To discover the answers to these questions, I conducted a comparative case study. The following chapters provide a description of the study, the results, and the implications for future research.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the research methodology used throughout the study.

Specifically, the researcher used qualitative case study and phenomenology research methods (Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 1998; Stewart & Mickunas, 1974; Hurrel, 1967; Tesch, 1990; Van Manen, 1990; Vaz, 1997) to conduct a comparative case study with three African American female college and university presidents. As part of each case study, the researcher interviewed the three African American female college and university presidents regarding how they perceived and overcame challenges, and how these challenges shaped their leadership style, collected supporting documents, and used participant observation to interact with the participants in the study by engaging in activities with them and others involved in the social setting.

All three of the participants who agreed to participate in this study are presidents at historically Black colleges and universities located in the South. When I approached the research participants, I assured each of them of their anonymity. The participants selected all generously agreed to allow me to enter their lives for a brief period. As a result, all attempts were made to camouflage the identities of the participants and their universities by using pseudonyms. Information collected about the participants was kept confidential, even when submitting tapes to be transcribed. It is very important that they be provided anonymity, not only to maintain their privacy, but to allow for uninhibited, flowing
interviews, as the way that they are represented is important in any empirical attempt in discovering “truth” through examining their reality. Because they are African American females who have risen to the presidency, it is my contention that they have compelling stories from which much can be learned. Each participant was portrayed in an accurate and ethically responsible manner, while conforming to the research standards and guidelines of this study (Williams, 1989). Their voices were portrayed using a narrative format; by using this format, the reader can gain a greater sense of their truth, because their words and actions are represented as they intended. The methodology for this study is described in detail in the following sections.

Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the journeys of three African American women to the positions of college and university presidents through their history, educational preparation, career paths, and experiences. In addition, the expectation was to identify perceptions of barriers, strategies, and leadership characteristics employed to acquiring the position of president, utilizing a phenomenological case study approach. A phenomenological case study approach is the methodology most suited to provide insight and to answer the following questions:

1. What were the perceived challenges faced by the African American women in this study?
2. How were the perceived challenges overcome?
3. How did those perceived challenges and the women’s responses to them shape their leadership style?
This is an exploratory study examining the life experiences of African American women presidents in higher education. Because phenomenology focuses solely on capturing the essence of an experience in a person's life without doing a comparative analysis, a case study design was also utilized. A case study design was chosen for an in-depth analysis of a social phenomenon. Yin (1994) noted that "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon with its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). A case study provides a unit of analysis on each individual and allows for comparison across cases. According to Merriam (2002), "since it is a unit of analysis that defines the case, other types of studies are combined with a case study" (p. 8).

In addition to a case study design, a phenomenological approach was used to focus on the essence or structure of the lived experiences of the participants in this study. The study of phenomenology shows how complex meanings are built out of simple units of direct experiences; the phenomenological approach guides the questions produced by the case study (Merriam, 2002). Moreover, a theoretical framework of Black feminist thought is the lens through which the phenomenon was viewed. Since little research had been conducted on the lived experiences of African American women college and university presidents, and this study, in particular, was exploratory in nature, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate.

Case study and phenomenological research are appropriate when the researcher seeks insights on what people believe and how they feel about the essence of their experiences. Qualitative approaches are generally suitable for probing deeply into the research setting in order to obtain a deep understanding about the way things are, why they are that way,
and how the participants in the context perceive them (Merriam, 2002; Creswell, 1998).

Several analogies help us to understand the characteristics and the nature of qualitative inquiry. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) noted, for example, that qualitative research involves a collection of a variety of empirical materials, such as a case study, personal experiences and interviews, observational, and historical and visual texts.

Creswell (1998) stated that qualitative research can be described as "an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of materials. Like the loom on which fabric is woven, general frameworks hold qualitative research together" (p. 14). According to Merriam (2002), qualitative research is "an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (p. 5). To further elaborate, Merriam (2002) listed the following five characteristics of qualitative research: 1) qualitative research reflects an insider's perspective; 2) the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; 3) it involves extensive fieldwork; 4) it primarily employs an inductive research strategy; and 5) the product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive; the focus of such inquiry is to search the nature and essence of a phenomena. With it philosophical roots in phenomenology, the design characteristics are flexible, evolving, and emergent; the sample size is small, purposeful, and relies on multiple sources of evidence (Merriam, 2002).

By conducting interviews with three African American female presidents and analyzing supporting documents, the researcher was able to gain a broad, in-depth view of the three African American female presidents’ perceptions of their experiences.
Moreover, acting as a participant observer allowed for increased awareness of the social situation to use as reference points, along with the interviews. Observing and collecting information from these multiple sources allowed for triangulation of the data, which means that the researcher used multiple sources of data to confirm the common themes within the study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003).

Combining Case Study Design and Phenomenological Approach

Qualitative case study design is an appropriate methodological approach when the researcher is interested in seeking insight, discovery, and interpretation, rather than testing a hypothesis (Vaz, 1997). “Qualitative designs are naturalistic, in that the researcher does not have to manipulate the research setting; the setting can be a naturally occurring event, program, community relationship, or interaction that has no predetermined course established by the researcher” (Vaz, 1997, p. 202). Thus, qualitative research methods seek to understand the naturally occurring phenomena observed in its natural state (Patton, 1990).

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), qualitative research: 1) is concerned with the context of the data gathering; 2) serves primarily as descriptive research; 3) is concerned with the research process, not merely the outcomes or products; 4) produces theory that emerges as the data are being gathered and grouped; and 5) is concerned with participant meanings and perceptions. This qualitative case study, with a phenomenological approach, sought to capture what African American female presidents have to say in their own words in their natural setting, while exploring the characteristics
of African American female leaders and comparing those emergent themes with those of the review of the literature (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Case Study

A case study is "a detailed examination of one setting, one single subject, one single depository of documents, or some particular event; several theoretical perspectives and several disciplines can provide the basis for such a detailed examination" (Merriam, 1998, p. 233). Furthermore, a case study is an exploration of a bounded system or a case, or multiple cases, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information in a rich context (Creswell, 1998). A case is a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context; the case is the unit of analysis, which allows the researcher to see the case as a thing, a single entity, and a unit around which there are boundaries (Merriam, 1998). In other words, the researcher can fence in the case under study. According to Creswell (1998), the bounded system is bounded by time and place, and the case being studied could be a program, an event, and activity, or individuals. Merriam (2002) provided further details regarding the concepts of bounded systems in case studies:

One technique for assessing the boundedness of the topic is to ask how finite the data collection would be, that is, whether there is a limit to the number of people involved who could be interviewed or a finite amount of time for observations. If there is no end, actually or theoretically, to the number of people who could be interviewed or observations that could be conducted, then the phenomenon is not bounded enough to qualify as a case (p. 28).
The context of the case involves situating the case within its setting. Stake (1994) pointed out that a case study is a methodological choice, a choice of object to be studied; it is the researcher who chooses the case study. He further posited that the most unique aspect of case studies in the social sciences is the selection of cases. Yin (1994) noted that a researcher investigates “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-live context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clear or evident” (p. 13). For the purpose of this study, three African American females who serve as college and university presidents were the unit of analysis under investigation.

The Phenomenological Perspective

Qualitative research that draws on the philosophy of phenomenology emphasizes experience and interpretation; the focus is on the essence or structure of an experience (Merriam, 1998). Phenomenology examines the essence of an experience and clarifies various relationships. It investigates the essential structure of presentations, perceptions, judgments, and feelings (Van Manen, 1990). Quantitative methods are not adequate to treat the nature of consciousness for two reasons: 1) consciousness itself is not an object among other objects in nature; and 2) there are conscious phenomena, which cannot be dealt with adequately by means of the quantitative methods of experimental science. In short, phenomenology does not limit its investigation only to those realities which are objective. Instead, it offers a considerable broadening of the range of inquiry. It begins with the content of consciousness as valid data for investigation (Stewart & Mickunas, 1974).

Phenomenology is both a twentieth century school of philosophy associated with Hurrserl (1967), and a type of qualitative research (Creswell, 1998). With its roots in
philosophy and psychology, phenomenology focuses on the subjective experiences of the individual. A phenomenological study seeks to understand the essence or structure of a phenomenon. According to Creswell (1998), this approach rejects the notion of a dichotomy between subject and object; in other words, "the reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual" (p. 53). As such, the person and their world are interrelated and independent. The researcher does not focus on the human subject, nor the human world, but on the essence of the meaning of the interaction between the two. It is the researcher's task "to enter that dialogue, and eavesdrop, as it were; to listen in, and capture the essence of what is perceived by the subject" (Van der Mescht, 1999, p. 3).

One of the philosophical principles of phenomenology was based on epoch or the ability of the researcher to suspend his/her own beliefs. Husserl, a German mathematician, first developed the philosophy in the 1930s (Creswell, 1998; Stewart & Mickunas, 1974; Tesch, 1990). The term derives from the Greek "phainomenon," which means "appearance" and "logos," which means "reasoned," "word," or "reasoned inquiry." In other words, phenomenology is the reasoned inquiry of an appearance; appearance is "anything of which one is conscious" (Stewart & Mickunas, 1974, p. 3).

Husserl believed that empirical methods did not give a true understanding of the causes of certain phenomenon, as the scientific process required grounding theory in accepted postulates. Phenomenology, however, is based on the mainsprings of old Greek philosophy which was the conviction that philosophy was the search for wisdom or true knowledge. Plato observed that it was philosophy's task to articulate the questions arising out of the depths of the human spirit itself (Stewart & Mickunas, 1974). The emphasis
then, is on the individual and on subjective experiences in an effort to understand what
the experience is like (Tesch, 1990).

Unlike quantitative research, phenomenology was not designed to generalize
information or populations, but to uncover the essential pieces of the phenomenon that
allow for the lived experience to be understood more fully (Husserl, 1967).
Phenomenological methods allow the researcher to explicate the lived experiences of
people through careful questions, design, and by careful analysis of information, allowing
for the unique qualities of the phenomenon to be revealed. Husserl (1967) referred to this
as the essence of the phenomenon. “In order to gain access to others, experienced
phenomenologists collect intensive and exhaustive descriptions from their respondents”
(Tesch, 1990, p. 68). The descriptions are then examined intensely for emerging themes.
Themes lead to findings, which are common, and unique about the experiences that result
in the essence of the phenomenon (Tesch, 1990; Van Manen, 1990). Additionally,
reflection occurs in this type of research. However, it is informed largely by intuition or
tacit knowledge. Tesch (1990) refers to reflection as “examining with a sense of wonder”
(p. 68). Not only does reflection require wonderment, but also searching deeply into the
words of the individuals and self, becoming “awakened” to it, and “inspired” by it (p.
70).

The study of human phenomenon, such as the experiences of African American
women as presidents in higher education, “requires a methodology that enables the
researcher to explore the phenomenon as it manifests itself in human consciousness”
(Peterson, 1992, p. 23). Heidegger (1977) wrote that phenomenology roughly translates
to “let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself”
"This methodology assumes that all human phenomena have meaning because we, as humans, feel, experience, and then commit to consciousness, the phenomena; those phenomena then become a repertoire of experience" (Vaz, 1997, p. 158).

Phenomenological research addresses questions about common, everyday human experiences; these experiences are believed to be important sociological or psychological phenomena of our time or typical of a group of people and transitions that are common or of contemporary interest (Tesch, 1990). Thus, the aim of phenomenological research is to focus on describing the essence of a phenomenon from the perspective of the person or persons who experienced it.

As such, an understanding of how three African American women succeeded in becoming university and college presidents could be gained by listening to the stories and descriptions of their experiences. Collins (2000) wrote, “for African American women, the distinction between knowledge and wisdom, and the use of experience as the cutting edge dividing them, has been key to their survival” (p. 257). She further contended:

In the context of intersecting race and gender oppressions, the distinction is essential; for most African American women, those individuals who have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read or thought about such experiences. Thus, lived experiences as a criterion for credibility frequently is invoked by African Americans when making knowledge claims (p. 257).

Using a phenomenological approach has allowed me to understand the essence of the experiences of the three African American female college presidents in this study. The rise of Black feminist literature links the past to the present social structures that
perpetuate the myriad of obstacles that Black women typically encounter. As a result, Black feminist theory is the lens through which the data for this study was analyzed.

**Black Feminist Theory**

This study is also embedded in the theoretical framework of Black feminist thought, which, along with the literature, established the parameters for this research study. While current feminist theories are universally applicable to all women as a group, upon closer examination, they appear to be greatly limited by the White middle-class origins of their proponents and lack the unique experiences of African American women (Collins, 1991). A Black theoretical framework offers a unique feminist consciousness about the intersection of race and gender that pervades the entire social structure of Black women (Collins, 1991).

According to Merriam (1998), “the theoretical framework is derived from the orientation or stance that the researcher brings to their study; it is the structure, the scaffolding, the frame of the researcher’s study” (p. 45). This disciplinary orientation is the lens through which the researcher views the world. It determines what the researcher is curious about, what puzzles the researcher, and what questions to ask to give form to the investigation (Merriam, 1998). One of the ways that Merriam (1998) suggested that is perhaps, one of the clearest ways to identify the theoretical framework, is to attend to the literature that is related to the topic of interest. Thus, the framework will generate the problem of the study, specific research questions, data collection, analysis techniques, and how the researcher will interpret the data (Merriam, 1998).
According to Merriam (1998), all aspects of the study are effected by its theoretical framework. As such, the theoretical framework, in relation to the specific research problem to be investigated, is pictured through a set of interlocking frames; the outermost frame—the theoretical framework—is the body of literature and the disciplinary orientation that the researcher draws upon to situate the study. The problem statement is represented by the second frame that is firmly lodged within the larger framework. And lastly, the exact purpose of the study is found within the problem statement and can be the third, innermost frames in this set of interlocking frames (Merriam, 1998).

The theoretical framework of Black feminist theory is best suited for this study, as it represents a specialized thought that reflects the thematic content of African American women's experiences. Because Black women have had to struggle against stereotyped images perpetrated throughout history and against White male interpretations of the world in order to express a self-defined standpoint, Black feminist thought can be best viewed as subjective knowledge (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) asserted, “the suppression of Black women’s efforts for self-definition in traditional sites of knowledge production has led African American women to use alternative methods, such as everyday behavior and experiences, as important locations for articulating the core themes of Black feminist consciousness” (Collins, 2000, p. 202). African American women have developed not only a distinctive Black women’s standpoint, but have done so by using alternative ways of producing and validating knowledge. Thus, Black feminist theory epistemology expresses African American women’s experiences and concerns. In research, Black feminist epistemology emphasizes the perspectives of those whose lives are shaped and constrained (or marginalized) by the dominant social order.
(Yuval, 1997). According to Collins (2001), the central concern of feminist thought is to theorize and explore the ways in which women's experience is gendered.

Summary

The qualitative research design, utilizing a phenomenological case study approach, is the most appropriate form of inquiry to use in the present investigation because it "helps us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (Merriam, 1998, p. 5). Merriam (1998) noted that the primary criterion that guides qualitative research is: "the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (p. 6). This inquiry specifically sought the perspectives of three African American female college and university presidents about their experiences as they journeyed to the presidency. The data gathered are based on each president's constructed reality of her history, beliefs, and personal experiences; her constructed reality and thought processes are essentially the result of complex interconnections with their world. The use of a case study was essential to this investigation. The case studies of the three presidents in this study focused on their pathway to the presidency through an historical account. This investigation also centered on the challenges they experienced, how those challenges were overcome, and their leadership style. Through the collection of data, including interviews, observations, and documents, key incidents and themes are presented in thick description, which provides an illustrative portrait of each president. Furthermore, in reporting the inquiry in the form of a case study, the similarities and differences held by each participant can be clearly documented. Thus, the information gained in this investigation provides valuable insights.
about these three African American female presidents’ trajectory and experiences in their journey to the presidency.

Case Study Design and Phenomenology Approach

Selection of Case Study Participants

In phenomenological and case study research, no set number of participants is required. However, two criteria are critical for determining enough participants. The first is sufficiency, which refers to having enough participants in the study that make up the population so that others outside of the study can relate to the experience. The second criterion is saturation of information, in which the interviewer begins to hear the same information being reported; the researcher is no longer learning anything new (Seidman, 1998).

Seidman (1998) reiterated that while the criteria of sufficiency and saturation are useful, three other factors play a role—practical exigencies of time, money, and other resources are also a consideration. He further elaborated, “the method of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of a relatively few participants” (p. 48).

Merriam (1998) stated that two types of sampling are used in research: probability and non-probability. Because generalization from a statistical perspective is not the goal of qualitative research studies, nonprobability sampling was the method used in this study. Non-probability sampling is termed “purposeful sampling” (Patton, 1990, p. 100). “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover,
understand, and gain insight and, therefore, must select a sample from which most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). Patton (1990) further emphasized, “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 importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 169).

For the purpose of this study, three African American female presidents were invited to participate in the study. A purposeful and snowball sampling approach was adopted to identify the participants. Snowballing, or network sampling, involved asking respondents for names of other potential participants. In this case, three African American college and university presidents were selected (Patton, 1990; Vaz, 1997; Merriam, 1998). Because the intent of this study was to identify the unique lived experiences of Black female college and university presidents, it was important that the participants fit the criterion of race (Black), gender (female), and employment (university or college president), so that any resulting differences of experiences could not be attributed to those factors. Since this study examined African American women presidents at postsecondary institutions, the sample was limited to only those women who presided in postsecondary institutions during the time of the study. All three participants had been active presidents at historically Black colleges and universities for more than five years. This criterion was established in an effort to ensure the credibility of the subjects’ responses as well as the overall validity of the data.
Gaining Access

At the beginning of this study, I inquired about possible participants by asking friends in several departments at a large western university. I was referred to a president at a historically Black college and university by a close friend. First, my friend contacted the president and explained that I wanted to interview African American female presidents at colleges and universities and asked if she would be interested in participating. The president agreed and asked to be contacted via-email. I e-mailed the president and explained the purpose of the study. After she agreed to participate, I inquired of her via e-mail if she knew of anyone else who may be interested in participating in the study; she e-mailed me a reference list of six presidents.

Using the snowball technique, other African American women college and university presidents were identified. Initially, six potential subjects were identified using this technique. After reviewing all six, two were selected to participate. After asking permission to use the first president, who agreed to participate in the study as a reference, I called the office of the two presidents who were selected. Initially, I spoke to their secretaries; after explaining my study, the secretaries provided me with the personal e-mail addresses of the two presidents. I e-mailed them immediately, explaining my topic; once they agreed to be interviewed, the participants established their own place and time for the interview. Participants were given a letter of consent (Appendix I) to read and sign and were reminded, per the letter, that follow-up interviews and clarification session may be necessary.
Description of Settings

All of the participants in this study presided at historically Black colleges in the South. Historically Black colleges and universities were established to educate Black Americans. These universities were established by not only the second Morrill Act, but also through the work of private, philanthropic, and religious organizations attempting to overcome the effects of a divided nation (Aleman & Renn, 2002).

As a person of color, I felt very excited and proud to set foot on campuses so rich in history. More importantly, because a majority of my education has been at predominantly White institutions, it was exciting, yet, strange, to be at an institution where the majority of people attending were African Americans. In addition, I was amazed at how ethnically diverse the faculty population was, compared to predominantly White schools.

Upon entering these campuses, I felt an immediate sense of the historical significance that I encountered, especially when written under the name of each school is the year that it was founded. I could not help but imagine how a group of newly emancipated slaves felt when they stepped foot for the first time into an institution designed for the uplifting and education of their race and how eager and proud they must have felt to have an opportunity to learn. The thought literally overwhelmed me emotionally, and brought chills to the very core of my being, as I imagined that not too long after these schools were founded, Blacks were enslaved. And even though emancipation elicited newfound hope for what W.E.B. DuBois deemed “literacy” or “book learning as an integral part of freedom and full citizenship” (Lemert, 2004, p. 4), I could not help but recount that the Jim Crow laws, lynching, and other forms of oppression still existed. But, despite the times, African American men and women forged ahead.
I also discovered that the campus environments were relatively small, compared to most universities, and that the landscapes were full of lush, green grass and trees. In size, historically Black colleges and universities enroll a range of 3,000 to 12,000 students and are located in the South. I was immediately impressed with the sense of community spirit and welcoming campus atmosphere. I was constantly being greeted by people just passing me by, some would inquire as to who I was and when told I was working on my dissertation, they expressed pride and gave praise and encouragement. Additionally, a strong sense of Black culture was evident, demonstrated by the food being served to faculty and students, dialect, dress, and music, as well as all of the various insignias representing the Black fraternities and sororities. More fascinating was the incredible amount of respect that was demonstrated not only among faculty, but the respect students demonstrated for faculty and staff; females and males were repeatedly addressed as sir or ma'am at each institution.

According to the African American women presidents who participated in this study, students who attend historically Black colleges and universities provide community service and are demonstrably religious. Behavior codes, which include dress, are strictly enforced, and students have limited independence of movement and free time. Because many of their students have been educationally disadvantaged, they have less flexibility in course selection and a rigorous general studies curriculum, with only a few electives. Additionally, historically Black colleges and universities add their own Afrocentric curriculum, which could take the form of a weekly session with African American leadership from around the world, required coursework on Black diaspora, or weekly informal sessions with the university president, as there is little political distance between
faculty, students, and administrators. Students are also required to participate in formal ceremonies designed to introduce or reconnect them to the African American history, culture, and legacy of achievement; they are also connected through their coursework.

The participants in the study related that faculty at historically Black colleges and universities teach an average of four classes per semester, yet they nurture and mentor students more or less at a parenting level. Though historically Black colleges and universities provide a safety net for students, they practice "tough love," as timelines for completing projects and being on task with coursework are held constant, and no excuses are tolerated. Some faculty may take a personal interest in their students, as it is not uncommon for some faculty to have regular communication with parents, to counsel students beyond advising hours, to encourage students to seek programs leading to several career paths, and to locate scholarships, paid internships, and graduate opportunities for them.

The feeling that I had when spending time on these campuses, and through listening to the participants describe the mission of historically Black colleges and universities, is that much time is spent at practically all levels, including the presidents, in encouraging, exposing, supporting, expecting, and demanding the best from their students. Historically Black colleges and universities are not only learning communities, but a village, raising, promoting, and developing a generation of young African Americans to maintain self-esteem, take risks, and develop leadership skills that can propel them to success, not only in their careers, but in graduate and postgraduate training at traditionally White institutions.
Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research involves systematic inquiry that is designed to collect, analyze, and interpret data. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument. As the primary data gathering instrument, adaptability and flexibility is at the core of qualitative research methods. The skills, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork are of vital importance in order to conduct the investigation effectively. Toward this end, Lincoln and Guba (1985) reported:

Only the human instrument is capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of that differential interaction; because the intrusion of instruments intervenes in the mutual shaping of elements and that shaping can be appreciated and evaluated only by a human; and because all instruments are value-based and interact with local values, but only the human is in a position to identify and take into account (to some extent) those resulting biases (p. 39).

It is also important to note that the researcher’s view of the world or paradigm that guides their thinking process is an essential component to the investigation. In this sense, a paradigm is a set of beliefs that guide action. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated “paradigms represent a distillation of what we think about the world (but cannot prove). Our actions in the world, including actions that we take as inquirers, cannot occur without reference to those paradigms” (p. 15). It is important that the researcher’s perspectives and beliefs about the world and how it functions be explicit and evident. As a result, the process must include struggling with paradigm issues, exploring assumptions, and coming to grips with the differences in worldviews and what that means for doing research.
An essential aspect of the inquiry process is that researcher’s flesh out their belief system, which is the foundation of their thinking (Merriam, 2002). As an investigator conducting this study, my interactions with the participants were of utmost importance in order to gain their trust. Their viewpoints were important to me and were an integral aspect of the data collection process. This role permitted me to modify techniques to fit the situation and explore circumstances and various components as they surfaced during the interviews.

Understanding the role of the researcher begins with acknowledging and articulating the complexity of the role. Interaction of the researcher within the environment is vitally important. “Phenomenological research becomes an integrative, living form, where the researcher is involved, committed, interested, concerned and open to intuitive visions, feelings, sensing, that (go) beyond anything (one) could record or think about or know in a factual sense” (Tesch, 1990, p. 70). In other words, my role as the researcher was to be the instrument by which data were gathered, analyzed, and interpreted.

For this study, I was the “insider/outsider” or “outsider within,” a term also used to describe marginalized Black women (Collins, 1986, p. 17). Black women are privy to certain types of information or activities because of their role or position within the group, setting, or institution. As an African American woman, I identified with the experiences of the three Black women in this study, even though I was not one of them. As a result, it was important for me to connect my own experiences of being an African American woman with the feelings, emotions, and experiences that the participants revealed to me in their stories. Through this connection, I was an outsider within because, as a Black woman in my 40s, I could relate to some of their personal stories and
challenges as they navigate in a White-dominated society. Like some of the participants, I grew up in a predominantly Black community. However, I attended a predominantly White high school located within a very wealthy White neighborhood. As a matter of fact, I attended predominantly White institutions throughout my entire academic career. As a result, I learned how to operate within the two worlds. This connection created a sense of likeness between the participants and me.

Creating a likeness with the participants required developing an early sense of trust, including building a rapport with my participants. My rapport with the participants was aided by my insider status (Merriam, 1998), meaning that I shared common characteristics with the participants, such as being part of a sorority. While all three belonged to a sorority, two of the participants were my sorority sisters; this discovery related to how we communicated with one other. Because we were sorority sisters as well as Black females, it was easy for us to drift back and forth into the dialect of our people and the standard English language. My role was not one of distant reporter, as the shared characteristics allowed the participants to talk exclusively, and it allowed me to continue the rapport throughout the entire interview. At the same time, I knew that I needed to remain neutral with respect to the content of the interview responses. As an outsider, I was mindful that I was a student, I had not worked in education, and I did not possess their academic ranks or administrative titles.

As a qualitative researcher, I was challenged with the task of observing, interviewing, recording, interpreting, and describing. As a participant observer, I was allowed into the lives of these African American female presidents as they reflected on their experiences...
during the interview. I participated as they recalled, reflected, and resurrected past experiences and their meaning.

In conducting this study, I was engaged as a research instrument. As a result, it was important that I recognized some of the bias that I had in terms of the history and images of Black women that were portrayed in the literature, but also the negative effects of Black women in higher education as it pertained to career mobility, as well as my own personal experiences of being a Black woman in higher education. It was essential that I flesh out my own attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions about African American women in higher education. Bringing these issues to the forefront assisted me in becoming more aware of my personal lens and permitted me to become increasingly more conscious of my own biases and their influence on the implementation of the study. I took these biases into account when interviewing, so that I did not deliberately seek my personal biases out. Instead, I stayed cognizant of my attitudes and feelings, so that I remained aware of any personal biases that might have tainted the interview process. It was also important that the interview guide did not address the topics of race, gender, or class. As a result, the respondents were asked open-ended questions about their lives, so that the stories elicited the truth regarding pleasant and unpleasant experiences, without being led during the interviews to the obstacles cited in the literature.

The fact that I played an integral role in the process of this study remained paramount throughout the duration of the interviews. As the researcher, I made an effort to ensure that high levels of professionalism and respect towards the participants were maintained during the entire study in order to convey the integrity of the researcher and the study.
Data Sources and Collection

In collecting case study data, Merriam (2002) explained that the study relies on multiple sources of evidence without "claiming any particular methods and any and all methods of gathering data can be used" (p. 28). Multiple sources of information include observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents. Patton (1990) believed that qualitative data consists of three parts: 1) direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge obtained through interviews; 2) detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviors, and actions recorded in observations; and 3) excerpts, quotations, or passages extracted from various types of documents.

According to Merriam (2001), the most frequently used techniques for collecting case study data in education include interviews, observations, and document analysis. The reason is that understanding the case in "its totality, as well as the intensive, holistic description and analysis characteristic of a case study, mandates both breadth and depth of data collection" (Merriam, 2001, p. 134). Since this study incorporated a case study design and a phenomenological approach, multiple sources of evidence were gathered. The sources employed in this study included interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Interview Data

The first source of data collected for this study was through person-to-person interviews. Phenomenological and case study interviews are the primary method of data collection wherein one attempts to uncover the essence, or the invariant structure, of the meaning of the experience (Merriam, 1998). The main purpose of the interview is to obtain a special kind of information, when this information cannot be obtained from
direct observation. For this study, interviewing was the method most effective in capturing the feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of African American female presidents.

Three basic types of interviews are used in qualitative research: 1) the informal, conversational interview, characterized by no set format of questions; 2) the general interview, in which the researcher has a predetermined set of questions to be explored with each participant; and 3) the standardized, open-ended interview, which is a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each participant the same questions with essentially the same words (Patton, 1990, p. 98). For this study, I employed the semi-structured format following an interview guide to ensure that the same questions and probes were asked with the same wording. The interview guide was adopted so that the sessions remained conversational and flexible, while also ensuring that the same material was covered with each of the subjects included in the sample and allowed for consistency in the information provided by the participants. Furthermore, the use of an interview guide also helped to make the best use of limited time that was spent with each subject and ensured that the predetermined topics of this study were addressed. A copy of the interview guide is included in the Appendices of this study (See Appendix II).

The phenomenological interview involved an informal, interactive process that utilized open-ended questions to ensure transferability (Yin, 2003, p. 89). Three 90-minute interviews were conducted with each participant. According to Seidman (1998), the three 90-minute interviews allow the interviewer and the participant to plump the experience and to place it in context. Regarding phenomenological interviews, Seidman (1998) noted:
Interviewing provides access to the context of people’s behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of the behavior. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience...interviewing allows us to put behavior in context and provides access to understanding their action (p. 4).

The interviews provided opportunities to hear each president’s description about her life and experiences as she journeyed to the presidency. At each stage of the interviews, these presidents demonstrated that they were able to reflect their own life histories and the beliefs they constructed about their worlds. Additionally, they were able to articulate their feelings, attitudes, and perceptions about their experiences in higher education.

Each interview served a particular purpose. The first interview focused on life history. I asked the participants to tell me as much as possible about themselves up to the present time, to establish the context of the participants’ experience. The second interview allowed the participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurred. The purpose of the second interview was to concentrate on the concrete details of the participants’ present experience. The third interview was on the reflection of meaning, in other words, they were asked to reflect on the meaning of their experience. This allowed the participants to look at how the factors of their lives interact to bring them to their present situation; it also required that they look at their present experience in detail (Seidman, 1998).

Throughout the interview process, I was able to gauge the memories of the participants regarding their past and current experiences. Because I was interested in capturing the essence of their experiences, as well as the reason for their feelings and
perceptions, opinions, and attitudes, the open-ended interviews provided the most effective method of inquiry. Additionally, face-to-face interviews gave me the opportunity to observe non-verbal characteristics, such as facial expressions and gestures. According to Vaz (1997), “nonverbal gestures and other movements can influence the impression the researcher gets. In addition, variations of voice tone, as well as wholly unexpected comments, may be observed and noted during the in-person interview, this helps breathe life into what could have been a sterile research experience” (p. 149).

During the interviews, not only were comments made as to the questions being asked, but sometimes, lengthy side conversations took place. Some of these side conversations were related to the question being asked and, at times, I was on the receiving end of a question about such things as my age, where I was from, and my family background. But, for the most part, the participants would talk about themselves. These side chats, I felt, were due to the rapport and trust established between the respondents and I, and in some way, it was their way of carrying on a conversation without feeling like they were doing all of the talking. This also encouraged them to talk further about their experiences with ease.

Merriam (1998) pointed out that there are two common ways to record interview data: to tape record the interview or to take notes. In this study, I utilized both methods. Using a notebook, I took descriptive and reflective notes during each interview, allowing me to keep notes without interrupting the participant and to elicit a more in-depth response when the participant was too vague or to ask for clarification (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). In addition to the notebook, data were collected primarily through the use of tape-recorded interviews. A tape recorder was used to ensure the accurate and complete transcription of responses to the open-ended interview questions. The entire interview
was audiotape recorded, excluding the participants’ names; the tape recording was transcribed verbatim. Important information and direct quotes from the interviews with the participants were utilized to frame the study and to paint a descriptive portrait or picture of the various aspects of the presidents’ life experiences and career paths as they pertained to the research questions.

Observation Data

The second source of data collection was through participant observation. While the interview is a primary source of data collection in qualitative research, so is observation. According to Merriam (2002), “observation is the best technique when an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand, when a fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not able or willing to discuss the phenomenon under study” (p. 13). Observation can be distinguished from interviewing in two ways: “1) observations take place in the natural field setting, instead of a location designed for the purpose of the interviewing, and 2) observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest, rather than a secondhand account obtained in an interview” (Merriam, 2002, p. 13). Similar to interviewing, observation exhibits a range from being a complete observer to being an active participant. In being a non-participant observer, Spradley (1980) explained that the role of the researcher is one who observes, but does not participate; he or she is unknown to those being observed. Merriam (2002) described this type of observer as one who is “behind a one-way mirror or in an open, public place” (p. 11). A participant observer might be someone who is fully engaged with the group or organization and is participating, while observing (Spradley, 1980). Glesne (1999) noted:
Participant observation provides the opportunity to acquiring the status of ‘trusted person.’ Through participant observation, through being a part of the social settings, you learn firsthand how the actions of research participants correspond to their words, see patterns of behavior, experience the unexpected, as well as the expected; and develop a quality of trust with others that motivates them to tell you what otherwise they might not (p. 43).

Merriam (2002) provided a checklist that the researcher should take into account during observation: 1) the physical setting, such as what the physical environment is like; 2) the participants, such as who is in the scene; 3) activities and interactions, in other words, what is going on; 4) conversation, what is the content of conversation in the setting; 5) subtle factors, those things that are less obvious to the observation; and 6) the observer’s own behavior.

During the observations, I not only followed these suggestions, but also chose to be a participant observer. By using the participant-observer strategy, I was able to interact with the participants in this study, while observing and engaging in activities with them and others who were involved in the social environment. Through these involvements, I was able to reconstruct their reality.

Documentary Data

The third source of data collection was through document analysis. Document analysis in qualitative inquiry makes use of experts, quotations, or entire passages from an organization; clinical or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries; and biographical information (Patton, 1990).
Merriam (2002) further emphasized that documentary data includes public records, personal papers, physical traces, and artifacts. She pointed out “the strength of documents as a data source lies with the fact that they already exist in the situation; they do not intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the presence of the investigator might” (p. 13). Furthermore, by employing documentary data in a study, the researcher is not “dependent upon the whims of human beings whose cooperation is essential for collecting data through observation and interviews” (Merriam, 2002, p.13).

According to Vaz (1997), “documents provide valuable information because of what the researcher learns directly by reading them; they can also provide a stimulus for questions that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviewing” (p. 203). The documents that were analyzed for the purpose of this study were biographical publications and institutional data obtained from the university website regarding the career paths and achievements of each African American female president. The biographical documents that were used provided evidence of the achievements of the participants in this study that was not discussed during the interviews and to contextualize their experience (See Appendix III for list of documents).

This study employed various data sources. Each source provided this researcher with an in-depth investigation of each president and offered an opportunity to check the quality and usefulness of the information by utilizing multiple sources from which to gain similar and diverse types of information. “Multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective. By using a combination of observations, interviewing, and document analysis, the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check
findings” (Patton, 1990, p. 244). Merriam (1998) noted that “rarely are all three strategies used equally. One or two methods of data collection predominate; the other(s) play a supporting role in gaining in-depth understanding of the case” (p. 137).

For this study, I relied most heavily upon interviewing, as interviews are more typical in phenomenological studies. The decision to use personal interviews as the primary source of data is supported by the literature. Williams (1989) found interviews to be critical in gathering data regarding the individual experiences of women in higher education. McCraken (1988) asserted that interviews typically resulted in more detailed, descriptive information than other forms of data collection. And, Vaz (1997) contended that self-reports through interviews tend to contribute the most accurate picture of behaviors and characteristics associated with administrators in higher education.

Data Analysis

Data analysis requires the researcher to capture the complexity of reality (phenomena) and to make convincing sense of it. Analysis of the data involves the process of putting meaning to the information that has been collected from the participants through the numerous data sources. Merriam (1998) reported that “making sense out of the data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read, it is the process of making meaning” (p. 178). The process requires that the researcher be guided by the participants’ interpretations, the researcher’s own interpretations of the participants’ responses, and the analysis of the data collected during the study. Secondly, the grounded theories generated by this type of study, which are the final products of data analysis, must involve
combinations of many concepts and linkages among those concepts. And lastly, the researcher must closely attend to and examine the data in detail to discover the complete of what is contained in and what is suggested beyond the data collected (Vaz, 1997).

Analysis begins as soon as the first data is collected from the interviews (Tesch, 1990). The researcher subjectively begins the process of reflecting, exploring, shifting, analyzing, and conjecturing (Tesch, 1990). According to Merriam (1998), “unlike experimental survey, or historical research, case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis; any and all methods of gathering data, from testing to interviewing can be used in a case study” (p. 28). In addition, no one methodology for conducting a phenomenological study is recommended (Tesch, 1990; Van Manen, 1990; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). However, various researchers have suggested particular steps that can be followed when conducting a phenomenological case study (Creswell, 1998; Van Manen, 1990; Merriam, 1998; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990; Moustakas, 1994). For the purpose of this study, a combination of strategies suggested by these researchers was employed.

**Bracketing**

The first step in phenomenological analysis is bracketing; when all presuppositions and beliefs of the observer are bracketed off; thus, any preconceptions or biases must be held at bay (Tesch, 1990). This step required that as the researcher, I had to clarify my preconceptions of the phenomena under study. However, Tesch explained “biases cannot be controlled completely” (p. 92). Even though this was a foundational step of HurrseTs methodology of phenomenology, even he was not able to suspend his biases completely. In his later writings, he revealed that he eliminated this part of his methodology in a few
of his studies, and as a result, theses studies turned out to be his best analysis (Spiegelberg, 1965). Spiegelberg (1965) further noted that it is not reasonable to begin the process with this difficult task because it is the hardest to accomplish, instead, it should be deferred until the end.

My own stance regarding this process was that, while conducting the interviews, I was constantly aware of the influence of the literature on the experiences of African American women in higher education, combined with my personal experiences as a woman of color. I recognized the biases that I held regarding the barriers of African American women in higher education. As a result, I attempted to have an attitude of bracketing from the beginning by suspending any preconceptions I held from the literature and my own personal experiences. I took this background into account by posing questions that were not leading, inclusion of all comments, and through listening and probing objectively. In addition, I avoided censoring comments that I thought were not relevant to the topic. It turned out that these stories were critical regarding the participants’ experiences. It was my goal to represent the realities of the interviews as accurately as possible, while constantly monitoring for biases.

**Immersion**

During the immersion process, the researcher becomes deeply familiar with the data to achieve closeness with the data and a sense of the whole. I read the entire transcribed data for each participant and listened to the tape recordings several times and also reviewed the documents and field notes from the observations. During this time, the data was coded with each participant’s name, their pseudonym, type of data document, date; the pages were numbered and then I re-read them thoroughly in order to find patterns,
categories, and salient aspects of the participants’ conceptual knowledge and beliefs.

According to Tesch (1990), even though it is desirable to conduct one study at a time, phenomenological researchers will do a cross-case analysis, comparing the commonalities among them. I maintained the integrity of each case by immersing myself in the data for one participant at a time. Each piece of data was analyzed and those which provided information about the president’s personal backgrounds was highlighted the same color on each transcript. Using separate folders and various color stickers, I listed each category as the patterns emerged and pasted the information under each participant’s name in the folder, constructing a chart. I began to write the first drafts of the within-case analysis per participant, when the three within-case analyses were drafted; I then examined the data as a whole. Through this process, I was able to search for connections between concepts in order to flesh out the patterns and categories in the data.

**Horizontalization**

Horizontalization is the process of laying out the data and treating it as having equal weight; all data have equal value at the initial data analysis stage. In this third step, the information was then refined so that new themes, patterns, and categories were developed and improved. Moustakas (1994) asserted that “in horizontalization, there is an interweaving of person, conscious experience, and phenomenon. In the process of explicating the phenomenon, qualities are recognized and described; every perception is granted equal value, non-repetitive perspective constituents of experience are linked thematically, and a full description is derived” (p. 96).

I examined all verbatim statements made during the interview within a single case and examined the documents and field notes and then compared the varied data sources.
for each participant in order to develop the case study. Additionally, I listened for specific
statements that seemed to support or refute the literature and for statements that brought
voice to the lived experience in a unique way; those statements that were redundant or
overlapping were eliminated.

Meaning Units

During the fourth step, meanings were formulated from significant statements and
grouped into “meaning unites,” which took into account various frames of reference, such
as the participants’ dimensions of personal identity (Creswell, 1998, p.150). This
personal identity included their perceptions of their family’s influence on developing
self-esteem, resiliency, and their perceptions of professional identity.

The following is an example of how I determined meaning of units from verbatim
transcripts in two separate segments of an interview:

Segment 1: Well, you know, I came from a family of strong women. My mother was
very strong and my grandmother was a pillar of the community, she was outspoken
and my mother was outspoken and sort of determined, but my grandmother and my
mother made us believe that you could do anything you set your mind to do; there
was nobody that could stop you from getting it. They did not tolerate bringing home
bad grades; you were supposed to be productive and successful. There were no
excuses for not doing well, no matter the reasons, nothing should hold you back, if it
held you back, it is because you did not try, and if you didn’t try, you had to put forth
that effort.

After listening to this segment on the tape and reading and rereading the transcripts, I
noted the following meaning of this passage in the margin of my transcripts, “strength of
Black womanhood" (Interview 1, personal communication, 2005), reasons she developed self-definition, and determination to be successful. Later, the participant stated, in response to expectations of daughters in her family:

Segment 2: I remember my aunt and her friend, and my grandmother and her friend competed with each other, they all had daughters and sons, it was interesting; they were interested in educating their daughters, but not their sons. They competed and ended up sending their daughters to Clark College, all the daughters ended up attending college somewhere.

Upon continued examination of this segment, I gave the following meaning to this reaction as developing "positive images of Black womanhood."

Thematization

During the fifth step, the meaning units were extracted into phrases and themes. Once I became assured of the recurrence of a certain theme, I decided upon a color for that theme and highlighted that unit of data. All data that were representative of similar concepts were highlighted in the same color. Each piece of data was then hand coded with information as to the participants' pseudonym and the type of data (I-interview, O-observation, D-documents). This decision to hand code the data was primarily based upon my need to review all of the data and look for common issues and themes (as well as significant discrepancies). Furthermore, it was decided that the "voices" of the participants and their unique experiences would have been diminished if the data was sorted by computer or quantified in any way.

As the inquiry persisted, I searched for connections between the concepts in order to flesh out the patterns and the categories in the data. They were then compared to the
varied data sources for each of the participants in order to develop the case study. A second folder was initiated and titled “Case Studies;” each color coded theme was cut from the original document and pasted into the folder in a location with the heading of the category on it. The category used for each heading came specifically from the themes that emerged from the data. Themes were placed in charts to allow for a more direct view and analysis of the patterns. Merriam (2001) commented that “categories should reflect the purpose of the research” and the categories are, in effect, “the answers to the research questions” (p. 183). For a research study, the category process is for the researcher to have “a conversation with the data, asking questions of it, making comments to it” and then write notes to serve as an isolation tool to separate the “initially most striking aspects of the data” (Merriam, 2001, p. 181). Concerning the number of categories, Merriam (2001) explained that it depends on the data and the focus of the research. However, in any case, the number should be manageable.

In this study, I followed the above guidelines. Based on the voluminous data collected and the focus of the research study, I decided that the categories should not be too detailed so as to be beyond management since there were already three types of data existing: interview, observation, and documentary data. Similarly, Merriam (2001) believed that the categories should not be too broad either, which could increase the level of abstraction. Eventually, a data category scheme was worked out and themes were analyzed through categories and subcategories, which were organized on the basis of a single semantic relationship (Spradley, 1980). This allows the researcher to collapse data into themes and sub-themes; it reveals sub-themes and their relationships (Spradley, 1980). Using the example provided in the previous steps of analysis, I clustered these two
meaning units of “strength of Black womanhood” and “positive images of Black womanhood,” along with several other similarly related meaning of units, and labeled this cluster as the theme of “mother/daughter relationship.” Ultimately, seven themes were identified: 1) family background, 2) the communities where they grew up, 3) segregation, 4) Black identity development, 5) educational experiences, 6) professional career path, and 7) leadership style.

Extracting meaning units and developing themes seemed to be a cumbersome task. However, through the color-coding, I could see how each meaning unit of data fit in with each question and what specific themes more clearly answered which questions.

**Descriptions**

When multiple cases are chosen, a typical format is to first provide a detailed description of each case as themes within the case, called within-case analysis followed by thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-case analysis, as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case (Creswell, 1998). Merriam (1998) stated “for the within-case analysis, each case is first treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself. Data are gathered so the researcher can learn as much about the contextual variables as possible that might have a bearing on the case” (p. 194). Thus, the sixth step in the analysis process is to describe the themes in terms of textual and structural meanings.

The textual meanings describe what the lived experiences were and the structural meaning describes how the lived experiences occurred (Moustakas, 1994). The interview was designed to answer three guiding questions, but the objective was to establish a foundation of understanding on each of the African American female participants and how they evolved to become university and college presidents, as the life experiences,
challenges, and backgrounds of each woman were unique. I had to continually ask myself, what were the life experiences and challenges, and how were they experienced?

While the “how” of the experiences seemed easy to identify, the “what” was somewhat challenging as this process required that the researcher focuses on the phenomenon in order to comprehend its essence. This is done by continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure of meaning in and of itself. The themes that I identified had messages about their experiences in terms of their personal identity, dimensions of professional identity, and professional career path. And while these themes helped me to understand the answers to my three guiding questions, I gained a deeper understanding about their challenges as they journeyed to the presidency by focusing on just that theme and allowing the other seven themes to penetrate that contemplation.

Using the example provided in the previous step of analysis, the structural description of challenges experienced by the participant was the expectation by her mother and grandmother of being successful. She was not allowed to bring home bad grades, and if she did, she was not doing what she was supposed to do; she was not doing her best. As a result, the participant experienced expectations from her mother and grandmother to be successful, and was challenged to be successful by having no excuses. Therefore, the textual description of what she experienced was grounded in the emotions of the expectations related to being a strong Black woman.

Cross-Case Analysis

Cross-case analysis involves collecting and analyzing data from several cases; “A qualitative, inductive, multi-case study seeks to build abstractions across cases”
According to Merriam (1998), “by looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it carries on as it does. Thus, the inclusion of multiple cases is a common strategy for enhancing the external validity of your findings” (p. 40).

Yin (1994) asserted “the researcher attempts to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details” (p. 112). The data gathered from the interviews, as well as the documents and field notes on each participant, were further analyzed through a cross-case analysis. In analyzing all three data sets, a comparison was made between the three sets to see where commonalities and differences existed, as well as what was unique to each participant’s experience. By using cross-case analysis, I was able to see the process and outcomes that occurred across the three cases in the study and understand how they are qualified by local conditions and thus, develop a more sophisticated description and more powerful explanation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, cross-case analysis also assisted in identifying the essence of the experiences. While making generalizations across populations is not the intent of a case study or phenomenology, several of the qualities that were unique to each participant, as compared to the studies depicted in the literature, or to presidents of colleges and universities in general, revealed common experiences that the participants in the study had as they journeyed to the presidency.

Reporting

Data from this study will be reported in the form of case studies. “The case study should take the reader into the case situation, a person’s life, a group’s life, or a
program’s life” (Patton, 1990, p. 387). Detailed descriptions of the study are necessary for the reader to assess the evidence upon which the researcher’s analysis is based. Donmoyer (1990) offered three compelling rationales for conveying the vicarious experience of a case study to the reader:

First, is the advantage of accessibility. Case studies can take us to places where most of us would not have an opportunity to go. Case studies allow us to experience situations and individuals in our own settings that we would not normally have access to. A second advantage to case studies is seeing through the researcher’s eyes; we may see something familiar, but in new and exciting ways. And third, people can learn from a case study, perhaps, more willingly than from actual experience (p. 238). Donmoyer (1990) referred to this process as “decreased defensiveness” (p. 238).

According to Stake (1994), “the purpose if a case study is to represent the case, not represent the world. It draws attention to the question of what, specifically, can be learned from the single case” (p. 237). Stake (1994) further theorized that researchers tend to select this approach because an understanding of what is being studied will lead to a better understanding when a number of cases are studied jointly. It is because of this belief that collective case studies were chosen for this study, as opposed to an individual case.

Merriam (1998) noted, “in order for the reader to vicariously experience a phenomenon, the writer must transport the reader to the setting and the situation. This is done through writing a vividly descriptive narrative of the setting and situation” (p. 238). As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) observed, “there are no formulae or recipes for the best way to analyze the stories we elicit and collect. Indeed, one of the strengths of thinking
about our data as narrative is that this opens up the possibilities for a variety of analytic strategies" (p. 80). For this study, the data is presented through narratives. Narratives are first-person accounts of experiences in the form of storytelling. First-person accounts of the experiences of the three African American women college presidents form the narrative text of this study.

Several methodological approaches are available in dealing with narrative. According to Merriam (2002), “each approach examines, in some way, how the story is constructed, what linguistic tools are used, and the cultural context of the story. Biographical, psychological, and linguistic approaches are most common” (p. 287). For the purpose of this study, both a biographical and psychological approach was used. Through the biographical narrative approach, their story was analyzed in terms of the importance and influence of family origin, professional identity, life events and turning point experiences, and other persons in the participants’ life. The psychological approach emphasizes more of the personal information, including the participants’ thoughts and motivations. “This approach focuses more on the inductive process, contextualized knowledge and human intention, it is holistic in that it acknowledges the cognitive, affective, and motivational dimensions of meaning making” (Merriam, 2002, p. 287). Mishler (1995) explained that we do not find stories; we make stories. In fact, we retell our respondents’ accounts through our analytic re-descriptions. We, too, are storytellers and through our concepts and methods, narrative units and structures, and interpretive perspective, we construct the story and its meaning. By using narrative form in this study, I was able to access the human action and experience of the African American female college presidents in order to tell their stories in this study.
Evaluation of the Results

Credibility is an important aspect of any research study. It refers to what the researcher intends to do to ensure that the results of the study accurately represent and reflect what has been examined within the context of the study. To ensure that this study was a true portrayal of the reflections, feelings, perceptions, and understanding of the participants’ experiences, an evaluation of the study occurred at several points.

Triangulation

The first consideration of credibility was through triangulation. Triangulation refers to the use of a variety of data sources, investigators, theories, and methodological approaches in an attempt to understand the phenomena under study (Janesick, 1994). According to Mathison (1998), “triangulation presents a holistic understanding of the situation to construct plausible explanations about the phenomena being studied” (p. 17). By using a variety of data sources, I was in a better position to make valuable assessments of what was occurring.

In this study, I conducted sets of one-on-one interviews with the respondents and reviewed documents regarding their career paths to get a better understanding of positions held prior to the presidency; as a participant observer, this allowed me to see things firsthand and interpret what was observed, instead of relying solely on interviews. For example, I was able to see patterns of behavior, interact with faculty, staff, and students, and gain a better understanding of the research settings, its participants, and behaviors (Glesne, 1999). Norman (1993) referred to observation as interactive analysis: the unit is interaction, rather than a person or a group. In other words, the unit becomes the interacting persons in a natural field setting. By selecting interviews, documents, and
observations, I discovered what the participants had in common across settings. By using triangulation, the researcher accomplished several aims: 1) to describe the experiences of African American women college presidents in this study; 2) to explain how challenges were overcome through resiliency; and 3) to describe the formation of leadership characteristics and style, by using multiple sources of data collection.

**Member Checks**

The second consideration of credibility was through member checks, which represents a "checks and balance" system in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) indicated that through member checks, participants may be able to: 1) verify that you have captured their reality and not your superimposed one; 2) inform you of responses that may be problematic if the information were to be revealed in written form; 3) help you to remain focused on specific thematic areas; and 4) provide new ideas and areas to be examined.

Throughout the interview process, I kept a note pad to jot down statements that were not clear; I did this so as not to interrupt the respondents during the interviews. However, when something was said that was not clear, I consulted with the participants to verify that my understanding of their experiences was actually how they perceived the experiences to be, or that it captured what they told me. In addition, participants were asked at various points of the data analysis for their clarification of any dubious points, or for extensions of thought where necessary. Luckily, I had time between interviews to listen to the tape and to jot down questions or ask for clarification prior to the next interview. These member checks enhanced the internal validity of the study (Merriam, 1998). Member checks provided the participants with the opportunity to refine what was
said, and in some cases, clarified incidents for me. By doing this, the participants’ voice was reported as they had intended.

**Epoche**

The third point of evaluation was self-monitoring for epoche. Epoche is the process by which the “researcher engages in to remove, or at least become aware of prejudices, viewpoints or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 158). This became a constant process wherein I continually suspended judgment by being aware of my own biases and setting my own personal viewpoints aside in order to see the experiences of the participants. This was a challenging task because of the influence of the literature and my own personal experiences as a woman of color in academe. However, I was aware that in this type of study, it was critical that the voices of the participants be heard first and that any biases, preconceived notions, or expectations drawn from the literature or my own personal experiences did not influence the study in any way, but rather, that any resulting connections that were made or refuted during the discussion phase of this study were based solely on the results of the data presented.

**Integrity of the Study**

The integrity of the research is weighted in its quality and credibility. Thus, the integrity of the study depended on my ability to be current with the literature and formulate meaningful questions, recognizing the subject matter as a very sensitive topic, and, therefore, being sensitive to the responses of the participants. I had to handle my own emotions and biases and set them aside in reporting the results (Van Manen, 1990). My credibility as a researcher was based, in part, upon my participants’ trust and
acceptance of me as one with substantial insider's knowledge. As such, it was important to approach the study from various angles, examining the phenomenon through the content and voice of the participants, examining what was said and not said, and presenting the data through multiple domains of meaning. Chapter four will explore the participant's lives through cross-case analysis. These multiple domains or meanings are examined further through case study narratives of each participant in chapters five, six, and seven. Chapter eight will continue with discussion and implications of the findings in relation to the three research questions.

Similar threads were drawn as all the participants have shared a common world—being an African American female. The individual case studies preserved the uniqueness of the participants' experiences and the impact on their professional success. Through face-to-face interviews, I was able to engage more intimately with my participants. Through many hours of hearing their voices and listening to what was said, I was invited into their world. By understanding the backgrounds and integrity of the participants, their words and thoughts began to make sense, and, as a result, I developed an understanding of what they experienced as they journeyed to the presidency. Hence, the results of this study are a collaborative work wherein the women have actively participated in developing the meaning of what is presented (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Summary

In this chapter, I detailed the research methods conducted in this study. I used a combination of case study design and phenomenology methods in order to gain rich, thick descriptions of the participants and discover the essence of their experiences (Yin,
2003; Merriam, 1998; Van Manen, 1990). During the three site visits, I interviewed the participants using semi-structured formal interviewing techniques (Merriam, 1998). Additionally, I collected documents regarding biographical information listed on the university web page and chose to be a participant observer. Following the site visits, I analyzed the data utilizing a combination of strategies suggested by researchers which involved bracketing, immersion, horizontalization, meaning units, thematization, description, cross-case analysis, and reporting of the qualitative data collected during the case studies (Creswell, 1998; Van Manen, 1990; Merriam, 1998; Stewart & Mickunas, 1974; Moustakas, 1994; Tesch, 1990; Yin, 2003).

Overview

In chapters 4, 5, and 6, I will introduce the women who participated in this study as Sheila, Yolanda and Sue, so as to provide insight to their individual challenges and successes. A case study was created for each of the three participants in order for the reader to better understand the complexity of each woman’s reality and respond to the research questions that were used to guide this study. Next, in chapter 7, a comparative case study analysis was conducted that resulted in themes and sub-themes that transcended across the three cases. Finally, I discuss the research and present implications, recommendations, and conclusions in chapter 8.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Within-Case Analysis: Sheila

Description of the Setting

Sheila was the first president that I interviewed; arriving on campus for her interview, I realized that it was also the very first time that I had ever stepped foot on a historically Black campus. This particular university was originally a religious training institution founded in the early part of the twentieth century and is located in the South. It is a four-year institution offering 30 undergraduate and graduate degree programs, as well as a wide range of outreach programs to the community. It has an enrollment of over 2,500 undergraduate and graduate students, with students coming from various states and ethnic backgrounds. The university sits on more than 100 acres and is located in the middle of a suburban neighborhood, which features old, brick historical buildings mixed in with more contemporary buildings.

Upon my arrival, the first thing that I noticed was the name of the university and the date it was founded in gold letters and numbers placed upon a beautiful, curved brick wall surrounded by lush landscaping. The campus was absolutely beautiful and surrounded by plush, green grass, trees, bushes, flowers, and other various plants. A majority of the buildings on the campus were made of red brick and exuded the institutions
historical past. Outside of the president's office is a quad, and across it stands a red brick fraternity house, one of many. In the middle of the quad, there are large, tall trees and bushes surrounded by pavement and sitting areas. Students were gathered around the quad as a fraternity was hosting a barbecue. They were eating, listening to music, reading books, and meeting with their fellow students.

The buildings were spaced far apart on the campus and adjacent to the campus was a river with a bridge. I could not help but think that this looked like a university located in the middle of the forest, as the greenery from the huge trees almost occupied the entire campus. However, the most striking feature of the campus was a beautiful, red brick building with French windows and white shutters and beautiful, white engraved doors. The building had a triangular white elevation with a black roof; huge, white pillars stand tall in front of the entrance with brick steps. It is a historical building that was preserved to represent the rich history of the campus.

Documentary Evidence of Sheila’s Biographical Sketch

Sheila left her position of dean at a prestigious historically Black college and university nine years ago to become the first African American female president at a historically Black college and university located in the South, a position that she has held for the last nine years. Sheila is an attractive, tall, light-skinned African American woman in her late 50s. She carries herself with style, beauty, grace, and confidence. She speaks very distinctly and appeared very self-assured. She grew up in a two-parent household with two sisters. She grew up during the time of segregation, and as a result, lived in an all-Black community and attended segregated elementary and high schools. At the time
of the interviews, she was quite a number of years into her second marriage. She has three sons and grandchildren.

Sheila obtained her Bachelor's degree in education at a teachers' college. She received her Master's degree in education, and her doctorate in early childhood and elementary education at a predominantly White institution located in the northeast. Between securing her Master's degree and her doctorate, she worked in an elementary and high school as a reading specialist; later, she became an instructor for an Upward Bound program. She completed a post-doctorate fellowship overseas, after which she became a faculty member in the school of education at a historically Black college and university, followed by becoming a department chair and director for medical education. She was later promoted to dean of the school of education.

She is very dedicated to community service and has served on a number of prestigious boards and committees, for example, the Commission of Advancement of Racial and Ethnic Equity for the Council on Education, the National Association of Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, American Council on Education, American Association of State Colleges, and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. She has been honored within her university’s state as one of the 50 most influential women. She is also a recipient of an Outstanding Leader in Education award through the university that she attended for her doctorate.

Participant Observation

Our first interview was scheduled at 10:00 a.m. in her office. However, her secretary called my hotel room and related that Sheila wanted to push back the interview until later
because she was giving a lunch presentation on an overseas trip that she took with some of her colleagues. The president invited me to attend this presentation, and the secretary offered to pick me up. Without delay, I accepted the invitation.

The secretary picked me up from my hotel around 11:30 a.m. She was a very beautiful, distinguished, and elegant woman. She immediately made me feel very comfortable. She informed me that she has worked for Sheila since she became president and spoke about what a wonderful person she was. She explained during our ride that Sheila was a very warm, kind person, but yet, stern when need be. She was very involved with the community, staff, faculty, and administrators.

The presentation I was invited to attend was open to all faculty and staff. When I first arrived on campus, I was immediately taken to the student union where the presentation was being held in one of the many rooms. Sheila had already started the presentation when I arrived, so I quietly snuck in with the secretary and settled in to listen to her presentation. The room was full of mainly faculty and some staff. There were many artifacts placed on tables around the room, which Sheila purchased during her visit. She explained that the purpose of the trip was to help provide counsel to a national education system, which was far different from that of the United States.

Sheila is a tall, but petite, light-skinned woman. Her aura aluminates pride, confidence, and inner strength. She is very professional in her outward appearance and presentation, yet, not overly stuffy or impersonal; she presented with humor. She carries herself as a person who is self-assured. She speaks very properly; I found it fascinating to watch her body language, as she talked with passion and excitement about her trip. After she presented, several of the faculty, all of whom she knew by name, asked questions to
which she responded. However, my thoughts while observing was that how great it is for a president to share the purpose of her trip with her staff and faculty and show them pictures and artifacts, especially with the ease and warmth that she had in her tone of voice and personality, as she related her travel stories to her staff.

After the presentation was over, I was able to walk around the room and look at all the different artifacts that she brought back from this far-off foreign country. As we all walked around, she joked about how much money she spent and her husband’s reaction to it, but how she could not help herself, relating, “I was able to purchase beautiful tapestries, dishes, statues, and bowls at a steal of a price. If I had purchased them in this country, I would have paid double the price.”

Later, Sheila announced who I was, where I was from, and why I was there. Immediately, her staff introduced themselves to me, congratulated me for pursuing my doctoral degree, and proceeded to hold conversations regarding what I would like to do once I was done. Some gave me their cards and offered guidance, if I needed it. I felt very comfortable and at ease. For the first time in my academic career, I found myself among a very diverse group of staff and faculty. They were not all African American, some were White, or from India, or Africa; it was just amazing to me to see such diversity. I thought to myself, why can’t all universities reflect this type of diversity among their faculty? More importantly, I watched Sheila take the time to personally speak to all who attended the event. Some members of the faculty and staff who did not attend the presentation, but who needed to speak with her, came by afterwards to address her with whatever concerns they had. She did not put them off, but instead, took the time to speak to them. I noticed the ease with which her faculty and staff approached her—
with professionalism and respect, but yet, they seemed to feel very comfortable in her presence.

After seeing all of the artifacts and talking to the faculty, I had the opportunity to sit down with Sheila while she was eating lunch. Immediately, she addressed me as her soror, as I was wearing my Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority pin. At that moment, our relationship shifted from being strangers to relating as sorority sisters; I knew that I could be myself and let down my guard. During our conversation, she asked specific details about the context of my dissertation. After explaining to Sheila the specific content that would be included in my dissertation, she related that she was proud that I was doing such a study, as there are very few studies done on African American women in higher education. She further elaborated that it is our (African American women in higher education) duty to make sure such research continues. As did the faculty, she asked about my goals after I graduate. I responded that I would not mind being a faculty member, but that I was going to submit applications for both administrative and faculty positions and see what happens. After she was done with lunch, we drove back to her office to begin the first round of interviews.

All of the interviews took place in the president’s office during regular business hours; we met for three days for two hours each day. Throughout my three-day stay, I had the opportunity to actively engage in conversations with many of her staff and faculty; all were very friendly and pleasant. During one of our interview sessions, which always ran past the time allotted, Sheila introduced me to twelve staff members from a department that was attending a brown-bag lunch meeting that she was hosting. All of them introduced themselves to me, inquired about my dissertation, and expressed pride and
encouragement. It appears that once a month, Sheila rotates meetings with her faculty from various departments. They meet to discuss what is happening in each department, if there are any concerns that needed to be addressed, or changes that needed to be made. This gives Sheila a chance to have a working relationship with her faculty and to keep a pulse on what is happening in the various academic departments.

Throughout my observations, I was amazed at the respect that was shown, how they addressed each other, and the ease in which students came into the president’s office if they had problems or concerns. It appears that Sheila had taken a special interest in specific students who might be struggling or going through personal problems. Sheila explained to me that it was not uncommon for her to have conversations with their parents, if she felt it necessary, to stop the students from dropping out of school.

The environment that I observed, in essence, was warm and welcoming, as staff, faculty, and students felt that they could drop by the president’s office with concerns. Even at times when Sheila might not have been available to see them, the secretary would set up appointments for them to come back later and meet with her. There appeared to be a tremendous amount of respect given to Sheila, which was reciprocated by her to everyone, she is very actively involved at all levels of the university community.

Interview Findings

Family Background

Sheila was born in the North during a period in history when court-sanctioned restrictions of the freedom of African American people still prevailed. She started the interview by providing a brief history of how her family came to be the third generation
to live in the North. Sheila related that her grandfather was a lieutenant in the fire
department’s colored company, and his father was a slave who escaped from Maryland to
the North, and got a job in construction. Sheila stated that “eventually the master came to
look for him and called his name several times, but my grandfather never responded, and
one of his White co-workers says, that can’t be your Negro because he didn’t answer, so
move along.” Later, her great grandfather became a minister and started a church in the
North, and it remains today. Sheila related that it was the usual pattern for Blacks back
then to migrate from the South. In addition, Sheila indicated that her grandmother wanted
more for her mother than the South was offering, so her mother migrated to the North
during a time when a great exodus of Blacks to the North occurred to seek greater
opportunities. Sheila related:

When slavery was over, and we all got our freedom, we didn’t know what to do, so
we sat there for awhile and worked for nothing, but finally, we got someplace. My
mother got out of the South, because her mother said, “Get her out.” That is when she
ended up in the North. She got out first, and brought over her four brothers. It was
like, come, I am going to make a way for you. Now, we had a three bedroom house, it
became cramped at times when cousins and the rest of the family who migrated from
the South were staying with us. But, my mother’s obligation was to make sure that
everybody got an opportunity…and then you were told get out there and bring
somebody else along.

Her parents met in the North where her father attended a university, and her mother
attended a Normal School. Later, they married, and remained in the North, where her
father attended law school in the evening, while working at night. At the same time, her
mother went to college during the day to finish her education degree and worked during the day. After finishing law school, her father obtained employment at a housing department, and her mother went on to get her Master's degree; she worked as a teacher and a counselor, with thirty credits beyond her Master's degree. Sheila stated, "my mother was an outstanding teacher. I learned to be a teacher from her, she let me grade papers. We talked about lesson plans, and so it was sort of a natural evolution. My dad wanted me to go to law school and offered to buy me a car if I did. At first, I said I would, but in the final analysis, I went into teaching, and my older sister went to law school. So, he was somewhat satisfied with that."

She was raised in an all-Black community, her grandmother and aunt lived right behind them. Sheila spoke of her maternal grandmother's influence in her life; not only was she close to her, but was very enamored with her strength, dignity, self-esteem, and her self-assured glamour and style. Sheila smiled when she said:

My maternal grandmother played a positive role in my life. I loved her. She wore hats when she went downtown and gloves and always dressed up and now, I think I own about 35 hats that I wear on Sundays just from her because I just loved the way she looked so dressed up in hats.

Sheila indicated that she spent much of her time at her grandmother’s house specifically, when they came home from school. She indicated, “when we came home from school, we went there to get our snacks, to ask our grandmother what we could do to help out until my mother came home, and then we would have all families dinner together at 6:00 in the evening.”
Sheila and her sisters had a very strict upbringing, "my father and mother raised us believing that we were more important and better than most people." They were raised that life was hard, but you could do anything you put your mind to. Her father thought the world had to be conquered, and as a result, they were good enough to be successful, and excuses were not tolerated. According to Sheila, "education wasn’t just a thing, it was the only thing." As a result, "we got very few toys and games, unless it was educational. We went to what we considered to be the best elementary, junior high and senior high schools at the time." Her father was very conscious of the importance of reading and made all three of them read books. Sheila indicated that eventually, they caught the bug, and they were always reading. They were not allowed to go to parties, or hang with what she called "riff raff." They went to camp during the summers. Even while in college, she had to be home by midnight.

Her family members were avid church attendees: "we grew up in the church—Episcopal Church. I went from being a student to a teacher and on the choir, then the junior choir, and the senior choir, to eventually, playing piano for the choir."

Sheila’s overall family structure was not traditional of the time in which women stayed home, while the men went off to work. Rather, in Sheila’s case, both parents worked outside the home and furthered their education at the same time, while raising a family. The maternal grandmother assisted in raising and caring for Sheila and her siblings, and along with her mother and father, played a vital role in Sheila’s life. She stated “that’s how we were raised; we are a very close family.”

All of her siblings attended college and went on to very successful careers. The youngest moved out west with her husband, finished her Master’s degree, and became a
hospital administrator; another sister completed her education in law and is now a politician in the North.

Growing Up During Segregation

As indicated previously, Sheila grew up on the cusp of segregation and integration. Jim Crow laws were still being practiced, and as a result, they effected every area of a Black person's life. All of the schools Sheila attended were segregated and located within her neighborhood. Her grandmother could look across the street and see her playing in the playground. "Everybody knew me, all of the teachers knew me, and I was the one who talked loud in class, so if anything went wrong, they would call my mother. And so attending an all-segregated school was like a big womb, as we were protected in every instance." She talked about how junior high was very much the same, "we (her sisters) got into the smartest sections, my sister being the person that she was, everybody loved her, and she was so bright and self-effacing. I was a little less self-effacing." She felt that she was going to spend her life going from segregated elementary schools, to junior high and high schools, which she felt, had a positive influence on her because of her relationship with her teachers and inevitably gave her the feeling of being safe.

Sheila was protected from the total effects of segregation because she went to school and lived in a Black community, as a majority of her activities growing up were within the Black community. Sheila stated, "I had very little experience being around White people, except a few in church." She rarely ventured outside of her community to experience the negative effects of Jim Crow laws. She was shielded from that until her freshman year in high school when desegregation was implemented in 1954 as a result of Brown vs. The Board of Education. Sheila indicated that she was "devastated, because in

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one year, I had been vice-president of the class, a major in the girl’s cadet, principal’s advisement counsel, honor roll—so I had my life set and I knew what I was going to do and going into.” She related that they had moved and as a result of integration, “there was no prom, nothing. I felt devastated; we were robbed of an experience we should have had.” She further indicated:

When I got with the White people there wasn’t a problem with my feeling that I couldn’t compete, but we were not friends, so really what they created was a White school where the Black folk sort of huddled together and the White folks huddled together. We did not have much to do with them, nor they with us. There wasn’t hostility, but it was almost like they didn’t exist because they weren’t in our social unit, and we did not try to get them to be, and vice versa. The situation was tense; they were not friends of mine.

I asked Sheila to describe her feelings toward growing up during segregation, and how integration effected her. She stated very pointedly:

Well, first of all, I felt I had people who went before me who were successful, so I knew it was possible. My eldest sister went through predominantly White colleges, and then she broke into law school, then into a clerkship. So, I had a role model in front of me. I also had parents telling me that you’re as good, if not better, than anybody else. I think my background and upbringing especially in the Black schools not only prepared me well, but also gave me the feeling that I could do it. I was a pretty cocky little woman. I don’t mean it in a disrespectful manner. My father said they called me arrogant, and I said, ‘well, daddy; I’m sorry. I don’t mean to be
arrogant, but if someone asks you if you can do something, you think you can, you raise your hand.’

Segregation did not effect her ability to do well in an integrated school, as she felt just as capable as Whites. In addition, Sheila admitted:

My father protected us from stuff, even though he exposed us to things, like the museums and zoos. However, we got ready to come out and say, ‘daddy, you going to buy some ice cream?’ And every time we come out, it was closed. We said to him, ‘geez, maybe, we need ice cream before we go in.’ Daddy said, ‘no, we have to get it when we come out.’ It appeared to me it was always closed. But, it never occurred to me. He never explained we couldn’t eat there, so he would always say it was closed. He protected us from it.

Sheila told me the story of the very first time that she encountered the effects of segregation and how she felt during the experience:

At age eleven, I was taking a bus to Philadelphia and I was wearing my nice Easter clothes. My father told me under no circumstances should I get off the bus. He gave me a little money and related that I was to only spend it when I arrived in Philadelphia. I remember wearing my nice straw hat, my little coat, gloves, and my patent leather shoes. The bus stopped in Bloomington, Delaware; everybody was getting off the bus, so I got off the bus too. I went up to buy a candy bar, and a guy said, ‘we don’t serve you here; you have to go around to the back.’ I thought it was children they didn’t serve. So, I go around to the back and pretty soon I see the concrete wears out and it becomes a dusty road and I looked at my little patent shoes, but I kept going. There’s this big fat White guy looking at us and says, ‘What can I do
for you'll, gal?' So frightened, I said, ‘Oh,’ and just turned back around and got back on the bus and wiped off my shoes.

Sheila explained that was a life lesson for her, but that was a life lesson that she had been protected from all of that time. She recalled that after that incident, she had wariness with White people. She stated, “I am sure my parents, my mother and father, wouldn’t like that, to even hear me say that, God bless them, but I have wariness with White people.”

Notwithstanding, Sheila’s experience during integration did not appear to have too much of a negative influence on her, even though she stated that she was devastated because she felt deprived of certain opportunities. She managed it emotionally by remaining very active and grounded within her Black community and church.

Growing up in a Predominantly Black Community

Growing up in a Black community provided a safety net where families watched over each other and schools were connected to the community, parents, and children. Sheila had a lot of opportunities, even in the midst of segregation, to remain active and involved in a strong social culture through her family’s dedication and influence in providing her and her siblings with every opportunity to be exposed to a variety of cultural experiences. They managed to do so without exposing them to the harshness of segregation outside of their Black community.

Black Identity Formation

Sheila, who grew up in a predominantly Black environment, had no problem establishing her identity as a Black female. “I had parents telling me that you’re as good, if not better, than everybody else. It may be hard at times, but you get out there and try it.
So I had piano lessons and dance lessons. I was just enamored with athletics, and so I was on every team. I ran track, played basketball, and was just interested in everything. If it was a challenge, I was up for it.”

The women in her life—her mother and grandmother, and other Black women she encountered through school, church, and on college campuses—served as role models. Her father also played a vital role in her strong self-identity as a Black woman. Sheila stated “with that kind of support, it’s just the same thing you would have in the White environment, so I walked and felt just as equal as White people.” Her family served as a role model at a time in history where there were visible sites of contradictions to the portrayals of Blacks in society, and more specifically, Black women. Her influences of her mother, grandmother, and father provided her with numerous examples of being a strong, self-assured, and confident Black woman.

Educational Experiences

Sheila attended predominantly Black public schools in her neighborhood from kindergarten through the 9th grade until her school became integrated. Sheila indicated that she attended what was considered the best schools at the time in her neighborhood. A majority of the Black teachers in her elementary, junior high school, and high school had master’s or doctorate degrees. Her high school was known to have 90% to 95% of its Black student graduates go on to college. Sheila noted “that was very good for those days.” Sheila related that she excelled scholastically all the way through school and did so because she loved a challenge. She did note that the high school she attended was very prejudiced against dark skin Blacks. Even though prejudice existed as a whole, a majority of the Black students that did attend her high school had lighter complexions. Even
though racism existed for them, it was not to the degree in which darker Blacks experienced it.

According to Sheila, "we knew we were going to college, it was a matter of what college and how we were going to get there." Sheila and her sisters received scholarships to college. Sheila received scholarships to two historically Black colleges and universities; however, she chose to attend a teachers' college. She lived at home while attending college; she joked and indicated that even while in college her parents were strict, as she had a midnight curfew. She related that some racial challenges existed while attending undergraduate school. It appears that prior to integration, the school was known as X Teachers College, which was predominantly Black at the time, and the other college, known as Y Teachers College, was predominantly White. They merged to become a well-known and respected teachers college. Much like her integrated high school, Blacks gravitated toward each other, much like the Whites: "They divided up the faculty, so that you had a lot of White faculty, and some of them, I felt...they were being put upon, having to teach Black students." This presented a problem to Sheila as she related "when you are in an all Black environment you’re known, you can’t escape. You know where to go if you needed help. Now, I am not saying its utopia and that everybody wanted to help you, but you knew where to go and you knew what your rights were, and you knew it wasn’t race based." Sheila encountered problems specifically with a White faculty member during her senior year while taking an English class. The teacher administered a literature final, which had nothing to do with the class, as it was mostly structured around English grammar. Sheila explained:
I went to the president’s office to complain; however, he refused to do anything about it. At that time it became a personal thing, not for the class, but for me because my dad would have expected me to do something about it. After I exhausted all the options I had, I called my father, and he made an appointment with the president and that is when the world turned around. We got everybody’s attention, then we got our needs met.

She indicated that, “There was prejudice to a situation where this White faculty member did not want to write the appropriate final for us to take, it took the world, it worked out, and it got done.” She related that this incident made her concerned about the environment in which she would work. “How would I work with young people to make sure that they had rights and use them? And, so when I began teaching that was one of my main points.”

Because of the racial divide and the lack of being able to participate in extracurricular campus activities, Sheila’s social life emerged from a predominantly Black, nearby campus. She stated:

Just about every boyfriend I had was from that environment. When I joined Alpha Kappa Alpha Incorporated, which was an all-Black female sorority, the whole world opened up to me; my sorority was a wonderful social setting. But, it had to be, it was tense at my undergraduate school, and Whites were no friends of mine.

However, she did remark that despite the racial challenges, there were no academic challenges, as she was very competitive and excelled in all of her classes. She stated, “I was a language fiend, so I took French, English, and then my elementary education because I really wanted to do that.” Once again, she attributes this to her background and
upbringing, remarking, “It prepared me well, by giving me the feeling I could do anything.”

Sheila graduated from Teachers College, fell in love, married, and remained in the North to pursue her Master’s degree in education. Sheila explained that up until that point, a majority of her education was at all-Black schools and integrated schools, where a critical mass of Blacks made up the student body. However, it was not until graduate school where she found herself the minority, as the graduate school she attended was predominantly White. She noted that even though she excelled academically, at times, she had to prove herself worthy without support from her peers or faculty. She referred to an incident she encountered:

I remember I had to do a project in a White elementary school, we had to partner up and work in teams; my partner was a White woman. However, when it came time to act or volunteer, I stood up and the teacher in the class, a White, middle-aged woman, told me that I should sit down, ‘I know about you people, and you can’t stand the heat.’ So, that just floored me. My partner never defended me or wanted to cooperate on the project with me. As we were leaving the school, I turned to her and said, ‘we need to take turns on this thing and work together; otherwise, you’re going to have a hard time catching up.’ And she said, ‘I don’t know what you are talking about.’ And I said, ‘Oh, okay.’ And after that, I made sure I was prepared and that there wasn’t a thing she could do that I hadn’t already done and showed the teacher. Finally, my partner got the message that either you cooperate, or I’m going to leave you in the dust.
Sheila, visibly upset while recounting this incident, stated: “Here I am at a White elementary school, doing a project. I am in an all-White environment. I had no problems with the kids, we were doing fine. But, the teacher had set me apart from my White partner, not only academically, but even physically.” Sheila continues to be wary with White people and indicated that this wariness is shielded by a protective cover to remain strong and to stand up for what is right.

After Sheila graduated with her master’s, she had three sons. While her husband attended dental school at Howard, she taught for five years in an elementary school—teaching second, third, and fourth grades. She became a reading specialist and taught all grade levels, as well as worked with teachers. She related that she was getting bored and wanted to pursue her thirty credits beyond her master’s because her mother had gotten that. She indicated that her mother always said: “You have to do better then me.” When Sheila went for her interview for admission into another master’s program in an attempt to obtain thirty beyond her master’s, she was told that they did not have a thirty beyond the master’s program. Instead, she was invited to apply for the doctoral program. She stated, “I said something dumb like I have to go home and ask my husband. It never occurred to me that I should pursue a doctorate degree.” When she approached her husband, he was not very keen on the idea. But, because Sheila had helped him through dental school, he felt that it was her turn. She applied and got accepted.

Once again, Sheila found herself attending a predominantly White school, except this time, she was the only African American in the program. She found support from outside of her program; she indicated, “we had a little critical mass of Blacks to support each other.” Sheila stated that she did not really encounter problems with her peers, as they
appeared to be very conscious about how they related to her. So conscious, in fact, that while she was helping to decorate for a Christmas party her department was giving, a White male friend of hers, and a doctoral student, himself, came in and said, "Oh, nigger toes, those are my favorite nuts." Sheila indicated that the room became silent, but confessed that she had no clue what he was talking about, and this flustered her, so she just walked away. Later, he came and apologized, and he explained that they were Brazilian nuts and that he meant nothing by the comment.

I asked Sheila about her relationship with faculty while pursuing her doctoral degree. She explained that she had daily contact with faculty, not only as a student, but also as a graduate assistant. She happily related that the chair of the department was a very vigorous person. He would say, "we're all going for pizza, and so we would all go. And, pretty soon we would all have to get to know each other and talk to one another. And, I began to feel I'm just like everybody else."

Sheila indicated that for the most part, she had a good relationship with her peers, department chair, and most of the faculty. However, Sheila encountered some problems with a White female faculty member regarding a grade:

As a graduate assistant and a student, I had to teach undergraduate classes. As a result, I team taught with faculty. As part of my grade, I had to prepare for their class. I wrote the whole syllabus for this White female faculty, and I team taught her class. She did very little in the class. The class went well, I received great reviews from the students, and everybody enjoyed the class and did well. And when it was my time to get my grade, she gave me a B.
Instead of getting angry, Sheila asked her professor what she would have to do to get an A. She stated, “I showed her all of the grades I received. There were no problems on the examinations; I passed them all with high marks. I developed the curriculum, wrote the syllabus for all of her classes, and taught them.” She remarked that the professor felt she had earned a B, despite the fact that all of her grades indicated otherwise. Sheila indicated that she was very frustrated, “I asked the professor, if there was something I did not do.” It appeared that the professor said nothing, and Sheila, clearly angry at this point, asked why she did not receive an A. The professor explained that she felt that she was a B student. Asking for proof of that, Sheila realized that she was going nowhere, and no matter what, this professor was not going to change the grade. Sheila felt that this particular faculty member had put a ceiling on Sheila’s capabilities and really could not see beyond it. Even though she felt that she was being treated unfairly, she decided to leave the matter alone. “Now, I could have taken that to a grievance, and I would have won. Here’s the thing. I am in a doctoral program—I am too close to finishing. Am I going to rock the boat over an A? No, I was not going to do that.”

Later, Sheila was given the responsibility for training teachers in counties throughout the state, and a lot of them were not integrated, which gave her access to data needed for her dissertation. Her dissertation was on the relationship between the use of Black language in an educational setting and reading achievement. Sheila stated that, once again, she encountered problems with her chair, who was a White woman from the South. Sheila described her chair: “She was pretty much a countrywoman—Southern country; I am talking about hunt country. I think her father was a stable man or something, and she married into that hunt country environment. So, she was pretty much
assured of where our places were. And she took me through it after she found out she couldn’t hold me back—it went through very quickly.”

Sheila explained that she faced criticism regarding her dissertation, which was on Black language. “She really did not have a grasp of the subject. Rather then let me lead, she wanted to lead.” In addition, she did not like the idea that Sheila wanted to get through in two years and a summer; as Sheila was trying to raise a family, it was taking its toll on her. Her three boys were still young at the time. Sheila indicated that she would get up at 3:30 a.m. every morning and study until 7:30 a.m., then get her kids ready for school. She would leave for the university and stay until 4 p.m., then return home to take care of her children and do it all over again the next day. When it came time for the dissertation, she packed a lunch and went to the library everyday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. and devoted the evenings to her family.

Despite the resistance from her chair, a member of the committee intervened and assured her chair that Sheila was an expert on the subject. Sheila stated, “then she had no choice but to probe in the areas of design and other areas, but not in the graphic relationship because she didn’t know them. And so, she couldn’t challenge them.” Sheila was warned by her peers that she should have never chosen this woman to be her chair, but Sheila was not discouraged, as she knew that eventually, they would work it out.

Sheila was determined to finish and asked her chair what it was going to take to complete her dissertation. Her chair requested that she meet with her everyday and that they could work from there. Sheila jokingly questioned, “I asked her what time did she get up?” And her chair remarked, “7:00 a.m.” Sheila was at her door everyday by 7:00 a.m. until the dissertation was ready for defense.
When it came time for the defense, Sheila indicated how nervous she was at first. She prepared cards for her presentation. However, Sheila noted, "I said to myself just what my daddy said, you got to be better than the rest. I put my cards down because I convinced myself this was my dissertation. I was the expert on it, and that's the way it was. I calmed down. Once the presentation was over, they asked a couple of questions and then asked me to step out of the room. I thought this is it—I had done my best. When they called me back in and said, 'Congratulations, doctor,' I just burst out crying. All that combination of my babies crying, this one sick and that one sick, husband not pleased because I'm here and not there, it just all came flooding down. It was just a tremendous relief to get it done, and it was a blessed day for me."

Figure 1: Uniqueness of Sheila's Experience that Shapes her Identity.
Professional Career Path

Prior to obtaining her doctorate degree, Sheila worked as an elementary and high school teacher as a reading specialist. She was also an instructor for an Upward Bound program. Once Sheila graduated with her doctorate degree, she indicated that it was pretty easy to get a job as a faculty member, as many universities all over the country needed people. Sheila had many job offers, but chose to become a faculty member at a historically Black college and university. She stated: “It was like home to me, and immediately, the department chair took me in, like I was her daughter.” That very year, Sheila was offered a fellowship to study abroad the following summer. Once she completed her fellowship, she settled into being a faculty member.

Sheila was a faculty member for just three years when she was first considered for tenure; she was hoping to make it within those three years, but was denied. Determined not to be denied again, she found out how many more publications she needed and went about the business of taking that year to write and publish more articles, teaching classes, and serving on committees. When she went up for tenure review the following year, she passed successfully. She continued to be a faculty member for about four more years, and then she was promoted to chair of the department of curriculum and instruction, and after three years in that position, she was promoted to director of a medical department. Then three years later, she became dean of the school of education. She remained in that position until she became the first African American female president at her current historically Black college and university for the past nine years.

Sheila revealed that her promotions did not come without its challenges and oppositions. According to Sheila:
When I got ready to go up for the chairmanship, an African American female colleague said to me ‘I am not going to support you for chairman.’ So, I said, ‘Why is that?’ She said, ‘because I think you got breaks around here because you’re a fair child.’ And I said, ‘What does that mean?’ She said, ‘Because you’re light-skinned.’ I said, ‘well, could it possibly have to do with the fact that I come to work all the time early and stay late and made tenure in four years?’

Sheila also indicated that she always referred to her father’s advice about working hard and challenging herself and having to do better then the next person. She explained that is how she tackled her education and career, as a challenge. But, more importantly, she knew that she had to work harder, specifically, because she understood the challenges that she faced being an African American woman. “What was hurtful about my colleague’s comments was the fact that we were good friends; I was her daughter’s godmother. All this time, she carried anger and resentment, and instead of supporting me and giving me credit for my hard work, she thought I was being selected because I was light-skinned. Can you imagine that?”

Sheila went on to explain how a majority of universities are male-dominated, and hers was no exception. She indicated that “it was a man’s world; my experiences were not based on racism, but more on sexism. The guys want to hit on you, and the older guys wanted to put you sort of in your place.” She recalled an incident while she was abroad on her fellowship:

There were several educators who received fellowships to this study abroad program, one was a male co-chair of my department. During the trip, he told me he would like me to come to his room around 8:00 p.m., he wanted to talk to me about something
and have some wine. So, I said, ‘oh, sure,’ and I went and got about three or four other people. And, I said, ‘we are going to see Dr. X.’ He opened the door and appeared quite put off. I said, ‘we understand you have some wine in here, and we have a desperate need for some.’ And, we played it off like that.

Sheila related that it took him awhile to see that she was not a sex symbol, nor was she going to be the little woman at the door. It turns out that later, he came to respect and depend on her, as she proved herself to be an intellectual and a hard worker.

Once she became chair, she also found out that there were wage disparities with her male colleagues who were doing the same job. “It turned out they were making $500.00 more than I was making. When I talked to the dean of the school about it, he went on as to how the males are the major wage earners for their family.” Sheila indicated that she was not going to accept that as an excuse and related that she was going to fight the wage disparity. She asked her dean, “Now, where do I write the letter?” He backed down, and she got her raise.

When Sheila became a director, she stated that there were many incidents of what she called “sexist baring” at meetings. Even though she had a great relationship with the dean of her college, Sheila indicated, “he looked at me like a child. I was on this cabinet for the college, and when I would raise my hand to speak, he would look around the room at the men first. And I would say something and then the men would say the same thing, he would say good point.” Sheila never brought it up, but indicated that if she did not have a strong sense of self and come from a background where she had to be strong, she would have been devastated by that, and may have even had gone as far as to leave the position. She attributes her strength and resiliency to withstand such treatment to her family.
It is that strength that Sheila brings to her current position as president. "I have to be that strength for the students, and encourage my faculty and staff to be that, just be that strength of a family, because if they don’t have it, it’s doubtful that they will go beyond a mid-level kind of position. They won’t seek it. They won’t see if for themselves. My family background kept me from giving up, and here at my university, that is what I am trying to establish with everyone, is the strength of a family, not allowing students, especially, to give up."

Table 2: Sheila’s Career Path.

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*Early Childhood & Elementary Education*

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Leadership Style

Sheila describes her management style as that of a transformational leader and explained that she lets people do the job they are being paid to do and to use her as a
sounding board. She sees herself as inclusive and makes sure to incorporate everyone’s input, even at the lowest level. She relates that every decision does not have to be her way, but the right way. “I incorporate an inclusive leadership style. I share information so I find inclusiveness in that when I make a decision. I make it based upon the best light of others, then just myself. I include my faculty and staff before I make a decision, even the big decisions, I like to hear their input.” Sheila felt that the benefits offered by giving her students, faculty, and staff the flexibility to be creative and innovative far outweighs the direct approach, and it gives them the feeling that their input and ideas are important and valued. She also notes:

I have high expectations of my students, staff, and faculty, and so my style is to let them perform and let them tell me what’s going on. But, they need to answer the questions, so I am sort of probing and penetrating, but I include them. I am involved in most of the activities on the campus—some might think too involved. But, I have the kind of personality where I like to run, see, do, and participate. So, I get involved with the students, faculty, and staff. This way, I have a holistic approach to problems—why things aren’t going the way they should, or what kinds of questions people have to keep them from doing the job that they need to do.

Sheila views her leadership style as totally opposite from the authoritative model. She likes to reward talent and inspire her faculty, staff, and students to reach the top and to see themselves as leaders. She adds:

God gave to me in different ways the ability to inspire others to use whatever talents they have to move foreword. So, it has been all encompassing. I am a role model for my staff, faculty, students, children, and grandchildren. A leader has to be able to find
something good in everyone in her charge. Even though you make the rules, you do it with humanity. You treat people as full human beings with human kindness. In my career, I saw people of authority who felt that they were following the rules, and I saw other people hurt by them.

Sheila related that she knew how it felt as an African American female faculty member not being treated as an equal, and the problems she encountered being a female chair and dean in an environment that was predominantly male. Because of those experiences, she made a decision to value individuals by performance, to build relationships based on trust, to give everyone the opportunity to be heard and to offer equal treatment of her students, faculty, and staff. Sheila concludes by adding:

That spells my presidency, transformation literal university; little college into a university—a college that has suffered environmental damage, transformed into a pretty little school. Groups of students who came from places that you would not be able to believe one could come from and do well and see them go to new and different heights. So, I believe it is transformational. My whole presidency has been spent trying to do that, transform something into something else—always for the better. And so, I believe that I am a transformational president.

Sheila admits that it takes a lot of energy, risk taking, and self-esteem to be a transformational president. She remarked that one should never give up their principals, morals, or integrity; she attributes this strength to resiliency:

One of the leadership characteristics that I have is resiliency. There are so many crises that come up and hits you from everywhere if it is not one thing, it is another, and you have to be able to not let it take you down, remain flexible. When things get
you down, you find a way to go on. You put a smile on your face and go to the next level. It is a good characteristic to have as a leader, and it is a value that I brought from home. You pick it up more and more as you take on more responsibility. Being resilient keeps me in a good state; otherwise, I could be depressed from one moment to the next.

**Essence of the Experience**

The essence of Sheila’s experiences, in moving up through the ranks in higher education to become a university president, was resiliency. Sheila explained that the whole experience of going to college was something that she expected to do. However, becoming a university president was something that she felt was necessary in order to show a generation of young Black men and women the role that resiliency played in her success. For her, the whole experience from growing up to present has been all encompassing. “I have been able to take advantage of opportunities that were provided to me. I was able to risk volunteering for activities and opportunities that I did not know much about.”

The experience has been one of magnitude that I cannot even recount—how much I enjoy...how much I am able to use my little talent that God has given me in different ways to inspire others to use whatever talents they have to move forward. I’m the role model for my children and for my grandchildren and the next generation of African American children. I tell my students the sky is the limit when you can see it. Instilling the ability to learn and grow and be resilient. I am hoping to pass some of that along. It has been a transformational experience.
Summary

Sheila has worked in the field of higher education for twenty-nine years and has spent the last nine of those years as college president. While she noted that it was never her intention to be a college president when she started off in higher education, she could not see herself working in any other environment. She commented that when she started on this journey, she encountered both racial and gender inequities, especially in her position as faculty, chair, and dean, but her drive, motivation, self-esteem, and what she deemed as “cockiness” gave her the strength to overcome. She attributes her strong sense of self and her resiliency to her upbringing, as her family background has played a significant role in making her a strong Black woman.

Sheila has described herself as a transformational leader, not only changing and transforming the university environment, but enabling others to change. She is concerned with the emotions, values, and input of others and has utilized the talents that each can provide to improve the university. This has allowed her to move her staff, faculty, and students to accomplish more than what may be expected from them. Seeing herself as a role model and the strength that keeps everyone together, Sheila encourages her faculty, staff, and students to become their best and to aspire toward leadership positions.

She sees her position as a university president as a crucial role in transforming not only the institutional structure, but more importantly, her students—to instill in them the belief that they can do whatever they put their minds to doing to become the future leaders of tomorrow. Sheila feels successful in this quest, as she spends time with students getting to know them and their family. She has created an environment that is nurturing, but tough. Students are expected to challenge themselves and to do their best—
no excuses are allowed. More importantly, she has worked hard to instill in them the importance of bringing the generation behind them along, so that they, too, can become successful in their perspective careers.

Sheila practices the same motivational techniques that she received from her family growing up. Because Sheila was taught that she could do anything that she put her mind to, she has excelled throughout her entire academic and professional career. She attributes resiliency and high self-confidence to her success.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Within-Case Analysis: Yolanda

Description of the Setting

The university in which Yolanda presides is also located in a thriving city in the South. It is a four-year historically Black college, private, coed, liberal arts institution offering both a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Bachelor of Science degree program, with an enrollment of slightly over 1,300 undergraduate students, with students coming from a variety of states and ethnic backgrounds. The school was originally affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. Founded in the nineteenth century, it is one of the oldest historical universities established to educate emancipated male slaves.

Like Sheila's university, upon entering this university, I was greeted by campus police located at the entrance. Also located at the entrance is the name of the university and the year that it was founded. Yolanda's university is also full of stately trees, lush grass, shrubs, and a variety of plants. It is a very beautiful campus with old, brick red buildings, among new, white brick buildings. One of the most distinguishing features is a tall, old, red brick building with a variety of elevations that resembles an old English chapel. It has pointed rectangular-shaped roofs and a clock that sits tall upon the tower on all four sides, which rings every hour. It also has a variety of stained-glass windows. Also among the stained-glass windows are several windows with arched red frames that can be
seen throughout the entire campus. Near this building, stands another building that is
made of white brick, detailed with beautiful arched doors and window frames with
French-style windows. It also has white molding and huge, white pillars that sit
underneath a rectangular roof located at the entrance. Because it was spring break at the
time of my visit, no students were on campus, but several faculty and staff that I
encountered were very friendly, encouraging, and helpful. The overall feeling that I had
during my visit was that this was a very intimate campus community with a mission of
making sure that all of their students are successful, not only with their education, but as
future leaders.

Documentary Evidence of Yolanda’s Biographical Sketch

In 1994, Yolanda left a faculty position from a predominantly White technological
college located in the South, where she was the first African American woman to be
promoted and tenured to full professor, in order to become the twelfth president of a
historically Black college and university also located in the South. She is the first female
to be elected to this prestigious post at this institution. She holds a Bachelor of Arts
degree in history and social science, a Master of Arts degree in history, and a doctorate in
political science. She has studied abroad and earned certificates in management
development from one of the top Ivy League universities in the United States.
Furthermore, she is listed as an arbitrator with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation

Yolanda is a petite, but glamorous, light-skinned African American woman in her
early 60s. She carries herself as a very confident, strong, and self-assured woman who
speaks her mind and has a very vivacious personality. Like Sheila, she grew up during the time of segregation, and as a result, attended segregated elementary schools and high schools. She has been married once, divorced, and has a daughter.

During her career, Yolanda served as the associate director of the school of social sciences. Prior to that position, she also taught at several universities and served as the director of the Afro-American studies program. She also taught at the high school level. In addition, she was the first American to lecture at several prestigious organizations. Yolanda has excelled in leadership; publishing over forty articles and labor arbitration cases in academic journals.

Yolanda has contributed widely to civic and professional communities. She was the first African-American to be appointed special master to a Public Employee Relations Commission, was a member of labor delegations to the Soviet Union and Europe, is the former president of the Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists research association, and is a former member of the Executive Council of the Links, Inc.

Yolanda became the first female to be elected president to a variety of organizations. In addition, Yolanda is also a former member of the Governing Board of the Council of Independent Colleges, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the Executive Council of the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities Commission on Financing Higher Education, the American Council of Education Commission on Women in Higher Education, and the U.S. Air Force Historically Black Colleges and Universities/Minority Institution (HBCU/MI). She is also a former member of the Board of Directors for Bank of America, the Urban League, and the Chamber of
Commerce. She presently serves as an advisor to the Mint Museum of Art, is on the Chamber of Commerce Board of Advisors, and is a member of UNCF, a member of the Corporate Board of UNCF, a member of the Executive Committee of United Negro College Fund, and is vice-president of the state Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. She is also the chairperson of the Historically Black College and University Congressional Forum Steering Committee.

Yolanda has received numerous awards, including Outstanding Teacher of the Year and Undergraduate Faculty Member of the Year. She has been listed as Outstanding Young Woman in America, Outstanding Professional in Human Service, Who’s Who in Black America, Who’s Who Among American Women, the World’s Who’s Who Among Women in Education, and selected as “one of the Six Best Teachers in the U.S.” Other honors include membership in Phi Kappa Phi, Alpha Kappa Mu National Honor Society, Sigma Rho Sigma Honor Society, and Omicron Delta Kappa. She was inducted into the most prestigious honor society in the nation; Phi Beta Kappa.

Furthermore, Yolanda has been nationally recognized: she is the recipient of the Belle Ringer Image Award, Bennett College, inducted into the National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame in Education; was featured in *Black Issues in Higher Education*, named a Twentieth Century Educator; awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award; awarded the W.E.B. DuBois Award, recognized by the Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists; recognized by the Maya Angelou Tribute to Achievement/UNCF; awarded the Torchbearer Award in Education; selected as the Person of Prominence in the state that she serves as president, as well as Outstanding Educator of the Year. *Black Issues in Higher Education* also went on to name Yolanda as one of the nation’s top 207

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educators of the 20th century. In the nationally recognized Savoy Magazine, she was listed as a "leader to watch." She has received the Delaney Award and The American Association of Higher Education Black Caucus award. In 2005, she was recognized by her state's Business Journal as one of the Top Women in Business in the region. Additionally, under her tenure as president, U.S. News and World Report has named her college as one of America's best colleges.

Yolanda was one of only three presidents and the only African American to address the U.S. Senate Web-Based Education Commission during the hearings on the Internet in Washington, D.C. She discussed issues in technology trends, pedagogy, access and equity, technology cost, teacher training and support, and research and development.

Participant Observation

I arrived on campus to interview Yolanda in March of 2005. Because it was spring break, Yolanda requested that we do one five-hour interview, instead of three one and one-half hour interviews. Our interview was scheduled for 9:30 a.m.; I arrived on campus around 9 a.m. When I arrived, I was met by security and then escorted to the president's office. Once again, I was struck by the exquisite manners in which I was approached and treated. Mostly, I was impressed by the old buildings, especially a beautiful brick building that contained a clock located within the tower. It reminded me of an old colonial building, and it was, without a doubt, the focus of the campus.

The president's office was very cozy, as there was a nice couch in the waiting room and some chairs, all facing an old, wood-burning fireplace. Old historical artifacts and documents related to the history of the college lined the office walls. Her secretary was
very accommodating and open, especially after she found out that I was a sorority sister. We talked as if we were old friends; Yolanda was running late, so she kept me company. While I waited, she informed me that Yolanda was also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Incorporated; she is listed as one of the most influential women in our sorority’s history.

Since it was spring break, not many students were on campus. I had the pleasure of meeting one who stayed behind to work in the president’s office. She appeared very kind, introduced herself, and inquired about where I was from. In the midst of our conversation, Yolanda arrived, full of energy, and talking a mile a minute. Her rapport with her secretary was outstanding, as she was very open, kind, and direct. She inquired about several business matters and her schedule for the week. She walked over to me and introduced herself. I must say, I was taken with her, as she was very professionally dressed and her personality was overwhelming. Out of all the participants I interviewed, Yolanda was the most dynamic and outspoken. She does not hide behind pretenses and is quick to speak her mind. She is probably the strongest, self-assured Black woman that I have ever had the pleasure to meet.

During our introduction, she asked me questions about my goals, my family background, and where I was from. She noticed from my sorority pin that I was a soror, and once she found that out, she started to relate to me as a sorority sister and spoke to me with a very down-to-earth tone. Prior to our interview, she called over to the building where the interview was to be held and requested that refreshments and snacks be delivered. She then informed me that she needed to make some calls and would join me shortly; she wanted to make sure that we were not interrupted during the interview.
Her secretary walked me over to a building that appeared to be a student gathering area, not really a union, but a really intimate place for students, faculty, and guests to gather. A small, but elaborate, library was in this room, where most of the books pertained to Black history. Like the president's office, a nice wood-burning fireplace was located in the middle of the room, surrounded by plush couches and chairs. On the other side was a huge wood table, surrounded by eight chairs. While I sat there and waited, staff came in and introduced themselves, as they delivered and prepared the cart stacked with a variety of refreshments and snacks. I waited for about 15 minutes, and then Yolanda arrived.

Yolanda appeared very excited about the interview and, like Sheila; she related how more studies needed to be done on African American women in higher education. She inquired as to how I was presenting the study, and I informed her that I felt it necessary to include a historical overview followed by images of African American women and experiences of African American women as faculty, detailing their resiliency and leadership. She related that it was wise to give an historical account so that society remembers how Black women were treated and how those images have followed them. With passion, Yolanda replied, "and you wonder why they say, why is it a big deal when an African American woman is successful in any area? They don't realize the struggle to diffuse the negative stereotypes that come with being an African American woman."

Throughout the entire interview, Yolanda displayed a variety of emotions, from passion to anger and pride. She was very direct and to the point. I was elated that she was so passionate about the interview. The interview lasted for five hours, but seemed much shorter, mainly because of her dynamic personality during the interview, which was mind
blowing. Yolanda enjoyed telling her story, which flowed well throughout the entire interview.

After the interview was complete, we talked some more off the record, and then she called a security person to take me to the airport. While riding with this individual, he related how proud the whole campus community is to have Yolanda as president and how she really changed things around; making it a top notch private school with the latest in technology. It appears that Yolanda brings passion and energy to everything she does. He informed me that she is very involved with the campus community and that everyone feels very comfortable around her and can talk to her about anything. She knows many of her students by name, attends games, and makes them her priority. She is very supportive of staff, faculty, and students. However, he did relate that she doesn’t play games or tolerate frivolity. She is very determined and expects the best from everyone and will not yield to excuses. She values the input of her staff, faculty, and students.

He appeared to be very proud to have her as the president and respects how she has literally transformed the university since her arrival; he attributes that to her sense of self, intelligence, and assertiveness. He related that not only is she highly respected as the college president, but within the community as well because she has implemented what she calls service learning programs, which allows students to take the theory they learned in class and practice it in the field. He explained that community service was adopted as a graduation requirement. In order to graduate, students must accumulate 40 hours over the course of their tenure at the university and honor students must accrue 120 community service hours. The service learning program provides students the opportunity to serve
those hours. It appears that as a result of this program, she has made a positive impact connecting the university to the community.

Interview Findings

Family Background

Like Sheila, Yolanda grew up during segregation. However, Yolanda grew up in an integrated farming community in the South. She explained that her father attended school until the 9th grade; her mother finished the 7th, and they were married when they were eighteen years old. She indicated that her father was an overachiever. Not only did her father farm over a thousand acres of land, he also worked at the steel mill. Because of his ambition, he won a farmer of the year award, with it, came a huge sum of money. Regardless of such accolades, he continued to work at the steel mill until he retired.

Yolanda indicated that even though her parents had a minimal education, they stressed to her and the rest of her siblings, the importance of obtaining a college education. She stated, “my grandmother, my father’s mother, had this commitment to education that somehow... she passed it on to my father and my mother. My mother came from a poor family... my father did too... but there was something about education.” She indicated that after the Civil War, several family members ended up with land. “All of my great grandfather’s children got 160 acres a piece. They started a church, and within that church, they started a school, and the teacher lived with them.” Yolanda explained that one of her family members learned about the Rosenwall Foundation out of Chicago that provided funding for Black children to attend schools in the Black community. “Somehow my family completed an application and received funding to have the
Rosenwall School built in their community, and the county paid the teachers.” As a result, her father attended the Rosenwall School. “I went to the Rosenwall School—all of us did. And, the teacher lived with us when I was a child. And for some reason and another, there was this thing about you were supposed to go to college.”

Her family members were also avid church members; they belonged to the United Methodist Church. Yolanda related that her church community also played an important role in encouraging the younger members to attend college. As a result, her church held college days so that a variety of representatives from historically Black colleges could provide information regarding their colleges. Yolanda recalled that at times, the minister would go from house to house encouraging and recruiting students for Clark College. Her family often made financial contributions to specific colleges in Mississippi. Sheila stated “I don’t understand it, but it was something that happened in this little church community; they all were United Methodist and they all ended up going to college someplace.”

Yolanda explained that the pressure to attend college was all around her; bad grades were not tolerated. Part of the pressure was because her parents wanted more for her and her siblings. She explained that her grandmother specifically hammered education into her grandchildren. “My grandmother and her best friend competed with each other. They had all these daughters. They also had sons. It was interesting, but they were more interested in educating their daughters, but not their sons.”

Yolanda reported that she had a strong relationship with extended family members. She explained that her father made a good living between the farm and working at the steel mill. As such, he helped his sisters go to college; he helped everybody go to school,
including his own children. Her father was not alone. Her grandparents also contributed financially to ensure that everybody in her family that wanted an education had the opportunity to go. The whole family pulled together.

Yolanda indicated that all of her siblings went to college. However, her brother did not graduate and her sister ended up earning her Master's degree. Even though her brother dropped out of college, three of his children completed their college education. His eldest son is a dentist; his daughter is now working on her master's, his other son is working on his doctorate degree in physical therapy and the youngest just started college. Yolanda concluded by adding, “we knew that was what we were supposed to do. There was never a question of were you going to college. The question was where you were going.” The expectation of going to college has been ingrained throughout the generations in her family.

Growing Up During Segregation

Yolanda grew up in a small farming community in the South during the 1940s and early 1950s, prior to the Brown vs. the Board of Education decision and the Civil Rights movement. Jim Crow laws were still being used to prohibit Blacks from equally participating in activities that Whites enjoyed. I asked how segregation effected her. She related, “I went to segregated schools. I guess the challenge was the fact that we knew that our schools were not equal to schools that White students attended. We knew we had books that were outdated and hand-me-downs.”

Even though Yolanda grew up during segregation, she indicated that her family was very close to a White family that lived within their small farm community:
I grew up with these White boys that lived near us. My father was close to their parents and to their grandfather. We all knew what segregation was, even though we ate in and out of each other's house, but it was a strange kind of relationship. I lived further north where they did not have many Black people.

She remembered going to White churches at times, and that her mother's best friend was White. However, she indicated that other than eating in each other's homes and attending their White church at times, everything else was separate; she rode the bus twelve miles to attend separate schools.

Yolanda remembered being excited after the Brown vs. the Board of Education decision. But, this excitement was in vain, as she got into serious trouble around the age of twelve. She recalled a holiday or event called May Day and stated:

They celebrated it on the other side of the county. Me and my girlfriends went over there, and there was a White school. We were walking past it, and we decided that we were going to go inside to see what it looked like. I'll never forget it. We were talking about college, and I wanted to see the chemistry lab because I thought I wanted to major in chemistry. I had another little girlfriend who wanted to see what their business department looked like; she thought she wanted to major in business. And then there was another who thought she was going to do home economics. So, we went to the principal’s office and introduced ourselves, told him who our parents were.

Yolanda indicated that the principal gave them a guided tour around the school. She noted, "I will never forget it—we were so excited." However, her happiness was short lived. She stated, "we were that stupid. This was 1956, you have to understand; this is
just after *Brown vs. the Board of Education*. We went to school the next day and were summoned to the principal’s office. He had caught hell. Evidently, those White people had called him, and he was my mother’s cousin, which made it even worse, and he punished us.” Yolanda was not allowed to attend school that day and was forced to sit outside until the bus arrived to take her home. She indicated that she had never gotten over that. “I said to myself, you’re getting punished because you wanted to see what White people had.”

She indicated that everything was segregated; she recalled that in February of 1960 the sit-ins started. She attended a historically Black college and university because of segregation. “When I got there in 1960, I started to protest during the Civil Rights movement just like everybody else. Even though integration became law after the *Brown* case, various schools, companies, and doctors’ offices that did not want to integrate, they continued with segregation. I will never forget that.”

**Growing up in an Integrated Farming Community**

Yolanda grew up in the South, but because she grew up in a farming community, she did not experience the effects of living in a segregated neighborhood. She grew up near a White family that was very close to her family. Even though they all knew what segregation was, they ate in and out of each other’s homes and attended their church on occasion. Her mother’s best friend was White. Though Yolanda thought it was a strange relationship because of the racial tensions of the times, she indicated that Whites and Blacks got along in her community, and as a result, she was taught to respect differences.
Black Identity Formation

Unlike the other participants in this study who grew up in predominantly Black communities, Yolanda grew up in a more integrated community and attended all segregated schools. The women in her life—her mother and grandmother—served significant roles in Yolanda’s strong personality, confidence, and Black identity. Her father also played a role, as he expected his children to be successful, and for nothing to ever get in the way of achieving their potential. According to Yolanda:

Well, you know, I came from a family of strong women. My mother was very strong and my grandmother was a pillar of the community. My grandmother would tell the minister how long he was supposed to preach. I’m not kidding. Every time we got a new minister and in the United Methodist, and that was often, she explained to him what time church started and what time it ended. I’ll never forget—I remember her saying to him once that her grandchildren had things to do and places to go, and it was hard enough for her to get us to church. And, whatever he couldn’t do within an hour, he could save until the next Sunday.

Yolanda’s grandmother and mother were very outspoken and very determined. Because of their strength and determination, they made her feel that there was nothing she couldn’t do. “My grandmother, my mother—made us always believe and my father that you could do anything you set your mind to do. There was nobody that could stop you from getting it done. They didn’t tolerate bringing bad grades home. You just were supposed to be productive and successful. It was just that simple, and I mean, that’s what you heard. There was no explanation for not doing well, not matter what, nothing was supposed to stop you.”
Yolanda’s parents and grandmother felt that even though times were tough for Blacks, they did not believe that was the thing that would hold them back. “If it held you back, it is because you wouldn’t try, and if you didn’t try, you had to go out and put forth that effort. You had to do it.” Her parents also taught her that there was nothing beneath her. She explained:

My mother was a maid when she did go to work. There were times that she worked when my sisters were in college to make ends meet because my father would get laid off from the steel mill. Sometimes I went to clean houses for her. I was like 12 or 13 years old. I would also baby-sit for those same White women. I learned as a child there was no job that was beneath me. She wanted to know what was I going to do, and I told her I was going to college. She looked at me because, of course, none of her children had gone to college. I made up my mind when that lady asked what I was going to do. And I look up at her and said to myself; one thing I’m not going to do is clean your house.

She made it clear that she did not think there was anything wrong with cleaning houses, and her mother made her understand that. But, her mother wanted more for her and encouraged her to do so. Yolanda indicated that is why bad grades were not tolerated and that we were all expected to go to college, to meet the challenge, and not fall into the stereotypes of Blacks, especially those of Black women. Yolanda’s self-identity and self-esteem was high. She admits that she liked a challenge and carried a high degree of pride.

Yolanda attributes her strength and strong identity to her parents and grandmother. She had many opportunities to witness their strength during challenging times. Yolanda admired and respected her mother. “My mother motivated me. I think of what my mother
could have been if she had been born in the right circumstances: a wonderful nurse. She talked about it all the time. We were very close. My mother could give energy and resources where there was none any place else; she was the type that would push one to the next level and keep you steady and grounded.”

Educational Experiences

All of Yolanda’s experiences in elementary through high school were during court-sanctioned segregation. Even though the United States Supreme Court ruled in Brown vs. the Board of Education that segregation was unconstitutional and ordered schools to integrate with “all deliberate speed” (Tussman, 1963, pp. 45-46), none of the schools Yolanda attended chose to integrate. Yolanda indicated that she started her undergraduate education at a historically Black college and university in 1960 and started to protest like everybody else for equal opportunity. She reminded me that this was the beginning of the Civil Rights movement; and up until 1965, everything was still segregated. She related that because she attended a historically Black college and university, she had great educational and social opportunities. Even though the rest of the country was in turmoil because of race relations, she felt protected and nurtured, while pursuing her undergraduate degree. She reported that there was little tolerance for failure by the faculty, and as a result, she received a stellar education. Yolanda also pledged and joined Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. “I pledged because everybody in my family had. I had friends who were AKAs.” She related that once she left undergraduate school, she also left that behind, until later, when she became active again through community service work and to initiate a new chapter at a predominantly White university.
Yolanda graduated with her undergraduate degree in history and social science in May of 1964:

I became part of a group of students that the Southern Education Foundation had vowed to integrate at University X, and they had brought us from various Black colleges. We had choices of graduate schools to apply for, and I decided to apply to University X. I will never forget that Friday before college graduation, we didn’t know if we were going or not. The dean of our school got on the phone, and somehow, we were admitted, instantly.

Yolanda attended University X the following week after graduation. At the time she attended, there were very few Black people in graduate school, let alone, in their undergraduate school. She stated, “They were using us as guinea pigs; they had a group of young Black students they did not recruit.” She explained that the few Black students that were in their undergraduate programs were mostly males. “I don’t remember meeting any Black females, except for graduate students. We ate with the few Black males in the dining hall. It was a most unusual experience; half of University X was integrated and the other half was segregated.” Additionally, Yolanda did not have a great experience living in the dormitory, as the White female students never spoke to them stating “they were all racist.”

Even though Yolanda excelled academically with no major problems, she recounted an incident with a professor who taught American history. She indicated that they had an honor system when it came time to take exams:

I was so nervous, you bought your own blue book from the book store to take your exam, and so I had taken my books and gone in there to take my exam. That weekend
When I was studying, I realized that I passed in the booklet that was empty. That’s right, because I had put my name on both of them. I passed in the wrong book and that Monday after class I went to his office, and I explained what I had done. He said, ‘I’ve been waiting for you.’ He sat me down and related, ‘I know this is a terrible experience.’ He talked to me, and he was an old southern White gentleman, ‘but young lady, let me tell you something.’ I had just turned 20. ‘You have to grow up and grow up fast. This world is not going to wait for you. Don’t you ever make a mistake like this again.’ He stated, ‘You’re so scared, I believe you; I know you have not touched this booklet, and I am going to grade it like you passed it in on Friday.’ He said, ‘Don’t you ever do this again, and you start acting like a grown woman and adult and you will do just fine in this world.’ And that scared me to death, but I’ll never forget and that was the encouragement I got at University X.

While Yolanda found that professor very encouraging and trusting of her, she indicates that was rare, as the rest of her time there she describes as “hell.” Particularly disturbing to her was a professor who taught history between the periods of 1815-1870. She remembers vividly a debate that ensued in class regarding the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. She participated in the debate and was very angry regarding White students’ reaction to the Civil Rights Act being unconstitutional. More specifically, she recalled a White female student who passionately expressed negative feelings toward the Civil Rights Act of 1964:

I can remember getting very angry. I expressed to her that we were supposed to be covering the year 1815-1870. I could not understand why we were talking about that when we were supposed to be doing the year of 1815-1870. I remarked that the Civil
Rights Act of 1964 was constitutional, and this lady jumped all over me. Finally, I blew up and said, ‘Until blood runs in the street, and people like you are dead, life is not going to change in the South.’ He told me I needed to calm down and leave class. I sat there, and I refused to move.

Because of that incident, Yolanda realized that she was doomed academically in his class, no matter how well she did. “I knew there was nothing I could do that was going to make life better for me in that class and from then on, every time I would say something in terms of my presentation, he would interrupt me before I could finish, and tell me what I should have said. Of course, he never gave me the chance to say it. He was just a racist old bastard.” Yolanda eventually left University X stating, “I was glad to get the hell out.” Even though she had a group of Black students she used as a support system, the racist experiences she encountered were overwhelming.

Yolanda transferred to a school further east. When I asked about her experiences at this particular university, she stated “well, it was an interesting thing. As soon as I arrived on campus, I was called a nigger by some kids driving down the street. So, I knew who I was right off the bat.” This was 1964 and race relations in America were in turmoil, and the school she attended reflected the times, as racism was prevalent there as well. However, Yolanda found a group of Black students, and everyone got to know each other. She noted “there couldn’t have been more than thirty of us between undergraduates to graduates.” She found this new university to be strange. She felt somewhat uncomfortable, but she was determined to graduate, despite the racial challenges. She indicated that they were treated as inferior. She recalled the chair of her department being very racist. “He called me in as soon as I got to school and told me that was the first time
they admitted anyone from a Black college, and if I did not do well, I would be the last. And that was my introduction to him. Then he went on to tell me how liberal he was because he graduated from Harvard.”

Not all of Yolanda’s experiences at this university were negative. She had a young, White professor who graduated from Columbia, was very supportive, and selected her to be his graduate assistant. But, her main support came from the thirty Black students attending the university with her. She referred to them as “a Black community.” She remarked, “we had a little Black community, and I discovered that no matter where you go in these crazy places, if you have some kind of little community it works. You know someone, you figured out how to help each other.”

After graduation, Yolanda held several university positions, got married, and had a child. She secured a permanent position at a predominantly White technological university in the South. She indicated that she was “a professional student. I became one of these interdisciplinary people. I took thirty hours past my master’s at various universities; of course, they were worthless hours because they were courses I just wanted to take.”

While she was teaching, a friend called her and encouraged her to pursue a doctorate degree. Her friend indicated that she was working on her doctorate degree in political science; she felt the university would be a good fit for Yolanda. Yolanda initially applied to a different school, and when she interviewed, she recalled being called a “girl” and decided that school was not going to be a good match for her. She then applied to the university that her friend had suggested. “So, I went over there to see what my friend was
talking about, and I figured this might work. I'll take two classes at night. By then, my daughter was 2 years old, and I ended up loving it. I loved the classes.”

Yolanda took one year off from teaching to do her courses. “I did something stupid. I started school in January and took two classes. That summer I took three.” Yolanda was determined to finish and realized that it was going to take too long if she only took two to three classes at a time. As such, she decided to take more credits:

In the fall I took eighteen hours, and in the spring I took fifteen. I took another full load in the summer. When I went back in the fall, I took my comprehensive exam, and I defended my proposal. However, I discovered that I could not get my dissertation done and work at the same time, so I went back to my university and requested a leave for the next two quarters during the spring.

She worked on her dissertation during the spring and summer, defended it in the fall, and graduated in 1978. Yolanda notes that she had a great experience while working on her doctorate degree. “I loved the professors, and I stayed and finished my doctorate degree in political science. I had some really good professors, and they overworked you. I never worked that hard in my life, but it was fun and more intellectual then my experiences while obtaining my masters.”
After Yolanda graduated with her Master's degree, she at first thought about pursuing a doctorate degree right away. She remarked, “My father did not know what a Ph.D. was, so he explained to me how it was time for me to find a job. So, after I finished my master’s that summer, I looked for a job.”

Yolanda’s first position out of graduate school was as an instructor at a historically Black college and university in the South. Yolanda related, “I went there to work. It was around ‘64. There was lots of stuff going on in Civil Rights in the South in teaching, and I decided at that point to teach.” She was there for two years then transferred to another historically Black college and university and stayed there for two years because she got married and became an advocate for the students. It appears that Yolanda and her
married and became an advocate for the students. It appears that Yolanda and her husband were very active in the Civil Rights movement. They got involved with students, which led to what she called a “revolution” against a college president. She indicated that regardless of this action, she was offered a job by the very same male president she was protesting. She did not accept the job, but made sure she got a copy of the contract so no one would think she had been chased away.

In addition, while at her second job, she became active in the sorority because of an African American woman who was in the same department. “She was an older woman, and she was very nice and supportive, and she was active in the AKAs. I remember becoming active in that chapter because of her, because she was always doing community service work. She started treating me like one of her daughters.”

Later, they moved to Illinois because her husband was accepted to a doctoral program at University X. Yolanda decided to apply as well and got accepted. However, her husband had difficulty with that. She stated that, “he actually went off, and I guess he could not handle it. I could not understand it. He came from one of those families where I understand that men needed to go to college. And if they did not go to college before you, you were going to have problems in the marriage. So, he was being pushed first.” As a result of the riff between them, Yolanda decided not to pursue her doctorate degree at that time; instead, she worked while he was in school. She worked two jobs—she taught at a high school and at a private Catholic university while taking some graduate courses at night. “I was kind of possessed. I guess it was like I had to figure out something to do with myself.” After two years, her husband was offered a position in the South and worked on his dissertation at the same time. Yolanda, who was pregnant at the time
decided to stay behind and continue working both jobs. However, she indicated that while teaching at the Catholic university, she was advised to join her husband. “Sister B sent for me one day and explained how Catholics believed in saving marriages, and I needed to go and save my marriage, have this baby, and do what I was supposed to do. So, I followed her advice.”

Yolanda left to join her husband in the South and managed to secure a faculty position at a predominantly White technological college in the South. Because Yolanda did not have her terminal degree, she was encouraged to go back to do so, which she did. She received her Ph.D. in political science and started to work toward tenure.

Yolanda published several articles from her dissertation; she had great teaching evaluations and service. She had taken on an administrative position as the Associate Director of the School of Sciences, but after five years in that position, she decided that she did not want to do that any more. She continued to teach while holding that post and decided to resume a full-time teaching position.

Yolanda waited until the last minute to go up for tenure and promotion for several reasons. First, she wanted to make sure that she would make tenure on the first try. She stated, “I had no guidance because there were no Black professors. I did not know quite what I was doing, but I knew they had to give it to me or they had to fire me, and I was only going to be beat once. That was my theory. You know you’ll kick me once, but that’s all.” And, secondly, she knew once she made tenure as an associate professor, she could be one for life. Once she made up her mind to pursue tenure, Yolanda began to publish, was selected as Teacher of The Year, and received teaching awards from student government. She also became active with her students, classes, and professional
organizations. She started a chapter for Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. Because of Yolanda’s determination, hard work, and diligence, she was appointed tenure the first time. “I remember getting it and then did not worry about this for a while. It was the strangest situation. You had to have reference letters from the outside, and they had to be listed in certain kinds of publications themselves. Their biographical sketches had to appear in scholarly directories. But, these were things you really did not know, but you had to feel your way around and figure it out.”

Yolanda indicated that shortly after she made tenure, there was a position created in the late 1970s-early 1980s called the director of minority affairs. She noted:

Everyone thought I would take it and I refused to be considered for it, because I called it a Negro position. You have to understand, I was a very outspoken professor. I felt that a professorship was much more important than being dean of Black students. My mother did not send me to college and my father sacrificed for me to be dean of the Negroes. You can always be dean of the Negroes, but you cannot find too many African Americans that can become associate professor or full professor and have faculty status and being treated like a faculty member at a major White institution. That was my personal decision.

Yolanda also made full professor some years later; she was the first African American to become full professor at her university. But, she indicated that she had to work hard to achieve that position:

My daughter was little; I used to go to work on Sundays because I knew I was with a group of boys—that’s what I used to call them. At some point, you knew your papers were going to be laid on the table, and we all had to compete with each other. And so
you knew they did not have the same kind of responsibilities as you had, so my
daughter learned to go to work on Saturdays and Sundays and whatever it was and go
to meetings. She knew what the life of a professor was.

Yolanda was happy with her position as a full professor: she taught two classes, she
did labor arbitration, and she did consulting. “There were never restrictions on my
movements; I was free as a bird.” The only major complaint Yolanda had regarding her
position was the unequal pay. She explained that when she first arrived there with her
Master’s degree, she was being paid less than a young Asian woman who had the same
credentials. She recalled:

By the time I got down to my dissertation, I finally had to have a confrontation with
my dean and my department chair about my salary. I had been severely underpaid for
that first two-year period. The state had a program at the time where they did have to
change your salary, and everybody got increases, except me. They finally came to the
conclusion that they could raise my salary. It became known as Yolanda’s rule
because I had raised so much hell about it.

Yolanda argued for fair wage increases for everyone, not just herself. But, increases
did not go without merit, especially for people of color:

There was always this tension between not getting paid and what you were supposed
to get paid. Plus, you were expected to be on every committee there was, particularly
if it had to do with Black people. You were expected to be involved in everything,
and then you were expected to do publications and have great teaching evaluations.
But, the White boys or the White girls did not have the same expectations. There
were always different expectations for Black people versus White people.
Yolanda remained at her position as full professor for twenty-two years before becoming a college and university president.

Table 3: Yolanda’s Career Path.

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<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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**Leadership Style**

Yolanda had a difficult time trying to describe her leadership style. She acknowledges that she delegates, but there are times when she does not. Her vision was to transform the university into one where she provided the necessary resources and freedom for her staff to feel comfortable in an environment that encourages teaching and research in their perspective fields. By being supportive of her faculty, her students would benefit, as they will receive an outstanding education. They are able to take their rightful places in society and to use their knowledge and skills to make a positive difference in the world.
She feels that it is important to gain the trust and loyalty of her faculty and staff. She had to figure out how to work with people to accomplish that goal, because without it, she could not take the university to the next level. “I became a real believer in this institution. I saw myself as a product of it, and I had to sell it. I had to sell my students, my faculty, and my programs, which meant that I had to know what they were, and I had to know what we needed next, and I had to look at our weaknesses. We didn’t have the technology. There were just things we did not have, and I had to figure out how we were going to get on the cutting edge of technology. I had to learn how to take risks.”

She leads by looking at the big picture. “Everyone has their own agenda. I had to listen and make sure that we all shared the same mission and that was to educate the students and to raise money to provide the university with critical resources to change the campus landscape, to offer additional space for their academic endeavors, renovation of buildings, and to provide for new academic programs.”

Yolanda managed to become the driving force in changing the university, with the support of her staff, faculty, students, and the community. During her presidency, she renovated the campus, provided the latest in technology, and became the first historically Black college or university to become technologically advanced; each student receives a laptop with the latest software and wireless capabilities. “In the last decade under my presidency, our university has received recognition in U.S. News & World Report and Black Enterprise, ranking us as one of the best small, liberal arts colleges in the South.”

Yolanda’s approach to leadership has been through a broad-based perspective, vision, initiation, and development in order to achieve significant changes to her organization. She would not have been able to accomplish these goals without first empowering and
nurturing her staff, faculty, and students. She was able to raise their consciousness to not just look at their personal agenda, but to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of the university and the students.

She knew that she needed to be a product of the university or she would not gain the support that she needed. "You learn that you can't get anywhere without people supporting you. You have to learn to take 'I' out of your vocabulary, and it becomes 'we.' Of the skills that I brought to the presidency, other than people skills and my ability to deal with the students, is my most important skill of being a labor arbitrator—a mediator and fact finder." Yolanda also feels that going through the academic track prepared her to lead as well. She explains:

The other thing that was probably the best thing for me was the fact that I came from an academic track. That's the core of every universe. If that piece is missing, then the whole thing is wrong, and if you understand that piece, you just figure it out. You learn all these other pieces. You can learn student affairs; you can learn the academic track. I think going through the promotion and tenure process and teaching and doing all the evaluations and things faculty members do...I think that it prepares them for things they don't know they're prepared for.

By trying to impress upon her faculty, students, and staff that they are all the product of the university, she was able to move them to accomplish more than what was usually expected of them and to reach their fullest potential. To be in a position of influence within the organization and presenting herself as a role model, she became the core leader in changing and shaping the meaning of the university. Yolanda provided the transformational energy needed to shift the results of the entire university. She
understood her role and aided her faculty and students to know their roles so they could become major contributors to the mission and purpose of the university. Being the role model and the product, she became the catalyst and the person out front, in interpreting and shaping a shared vision and meaning among her faculty, staff, and students to support the greater good of the university.

**Essence of the Experience**

Yolanda’s strong Black identity was significant to the essence of her experience. Had she not portrayed a strong sense of who she was once she became a graduate student and a professor at a predominantly White university, she would have never survived some of the experiences that she faced. By exhibiting pride in who she is as a Black woman, Yolanda was able to maintain her cultural identity while attempting to become successful in an educational environment that did not welcome the presence of an African American woman. She did not back down, nor subscribe to the negative images or attempts that were made in an effort to discourage her from moving up the academic ladder in higher education.

As a president of a predominantly Black university, Yolanda tries to instill that same sense of Black pride and identity to her students through education. She stated in her narratives:

I’ve tried to live a life of giving, but my giving has been in the educational arena. And within the arena, the folk I have been most committed to are the students, in trying to make sure that I have some influence and input into educating this generation. It seems to me that every five years you have a generation. Every five years, kids are different. You have to get them out to do all the things they can do in this world, to
make it a better place. It’s the same meaning assigned to being a professor, contributing to the success of his or her students. When they do well, you do well; you have done your job. To me, it is the students; you want to sharpen them up, fatten them up with knowledge, and send them out. They are a reflection of you when they go out into the world. They will represent all the things that you tried to instill in them.

Summary

Prior to becoming president, Yolanda worked as a professor for twenty-two years at a predominantly White university in the South where she was the first African American tenured professor. She has served as president for the last twelve years. During her presidency, she has managed to transform her institution to become one of the top 100-degree producers, ranking 37th nationally in awarding computer and science degrees to African Americans, and 45th nationally in awarding English degrees.

Like Sheila, it was never Yolanda’s intention when she started off on her academic journey to become president of a university. Regardless, she attributes her success as president to her willingness to challenge herself. Additionally, she feels that being a faculty member, as well as a labor arbitrator, prepared her to work well with her staff, faculty, students, and community. By seeing herself as a product of the university, she engages with others to create a connection that raised the level of motivation in herself, as a leader, and with her faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, Yolanda feels that the essence of her whole journey was to serve her students and to empower and instill
knowledge in the next generations of students, so that they can become the leaders of the future and make a difference in this world.

It appears that it is this level of motivation, determination, strong sense of self, and resiliency that has aided Yolanda in achieving major milestones as an African American woman, navigating her way through the academy.
CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Within-Case Analysis: Sue

Description of the Setting

Out of the three universities that I visited, the one which Sue presides over is the smallest, and has preserved a majority of its historical buildings. The university was founded in the mid-1800s and is located in the South by the Protestant Episcopal, with the purpose of educating freed Black slaves. The institution began as a Normal School that taught technical and trade-related programs and later adopted a liberal arts curriculum. The university provides a strong liberal arts education, and currently offers programs in over 30 disciplines, with over 1,600 students enrolled from various states and ethnic backgrounds.

The campus is located in the middle of a suburban neighborhood, encompasses over 100 acres, and is recognized for its historical landmarks and buildings. Upon entering the campus, I was amazed at how old the buildings were. Later, I was told that because it is considered a historical landmark, limited renovation has been done in order to preserve the campus's historical significance. The campus entrance is surrounded by a huge gothic stone wall with a bronze plaque that has the name of the university and the year it was founded. Once I passed security, I noticed many students gathered on the quad, on the sides of buildings, and meeting with fellow students. Adjacent to the student union sits a
yard which represents the various Black sororities and fraternities that are located on the campus.

Like all the other campuses I visited, this university also had large trees, bushes, plush, green grass, and a variety of plants. Among the foliage were red brick buildings, some with triangular-shaped elevations, with large, white pillars. However, the most significant landmark, and oldest of all the buildings, was a chapel that was made of gothic stone and had beautiful stained-glass windows. Two other buildings of historical significance were made of the same gothic-style stone. The more contemporary buildings are located on the school’s outer grounds, but the campus core represents the university’s early beginnings and is designated as a historical landmark.

Documentary Evidence of Sue’s Biographical Sketch

Sue, who is the 10th president of a historically Black college located in the South, assumed the presidency of the college in 1999. The first female to lead the institution, Sue is an experienced educator and administrator with 24 years of teaching, consulting, and administrative experience.

Sue is a very reserved African American woman in her late 50s. She dresses very professionally. She speaks very articulately, with body language that reveals that she is confident and self-assured. She grew up in a two-parent household during segregation and is the eldest of three children. She has been married twice and has two daughters and a grandson.

Sue received a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education at a historically Black college and university, a master’s of education in curriculum and
development from a predominantly White university in the Midwest, and a doctorate of education in educational administration from a university in the South. Upon completion of these degrees, she worked as a teacher, elementary school principal, and a secondary school principal.

Prior to assuming the presidency at this institution, Sue held administrative positions at a predominantly Black university in the South, including dean of administrative services, vice-president of administrative services, assistant provost for academic affairs, and adjunct professor in the graduate college of education.

Sue currently serves on President Bush’s Board of Advisors to the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the Central Regional Board of Directors of a bank, and the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association Board of Directors. She also serves on the Business and Technology Center’s Board of Directors and is the founding Board of Director for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Resource Center in the state in which she resides. Sue is on the Easter Seal Board of Directors; she also serves on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Race Relations Center Task Force; the Advisory Board for the City Museum; and is a member of the Rotary Club. She is a member of her county’s Commission for Women and the Consortium of Doctors, LTD.

Participant Observation

I visited Sue’s university, in the South, during the spring semester. Our first interview was scheduled for a Tuesday at 11:00 a.m. Like Sheila, I was able to schedule three 90-minute interviews. As a result, I spent the entire week at her university conducting the interviews. When I first arrived, the receptionist positioned at the front desk greeted me.
She informed me that Sue had been delayed, but asked if I would take a seat and wait for her. In doing so, I noticed a tremendous amount of activity in her office. Then it struck me that her office was located within a classroom building, which explained why there were many students lingering on the front steps and within the hallways. Unlike the prior presidents’ offices I visited, this one was more informal, and it did not have the feeling of being cozy. No fireplaces were located within the office, hardwood floors, or shutters. But, as I observed with the other participants in the study, many students were coming in and out of her office, more so than the previous universities I had visited. This particular campus had not only the smallest student population, but the campus environment was very small, which explains why the students felt so comfortable coming in and out of the president’s office and why the staff members knew the students by name.

On this particular day, a variety of students were working on projects in the president’s conference room. Many spoke to me while I sat there and waited. Of course, I was asked the usual questions about where I was from and what I was doing there. Their pride was apparent when they found out that I was working on my dissertation and interviewing their president.

One young man, in particular, must have thought that I was a student because he sat right next to me and introduced himself in a very strong southern accent. In a way, I felt flattered as he asked what year I was in and what I had declared as my major. I explained to him that I was not a student there, but rather, a visiting student from Las Vegas working on my doctorate degree. Referring to me as “ma’am,” he apologized for his misunderstanding and sat there for a while relating some of his own personal history. It appeared that he did not reside on campus, but was a local resident obtaining his degree.
He indicated that he does landscaping when he has time, to help pay his college expenses. He referred to himself as an entrepreneur in that area and that he makes a decent wage. He was a very flattering young man, polite, and full of energy. But, during the conversation, he was interrupted by the receptionist and told that he needed to get to class. Embarrassed, he excused himself and left.

Later, the receptionist told me that Sue was running later then expected. Our interview was scheduled for 11:00 a.m.; however, it was now approaching noon. One of her administrative assistants came to me and asked if I would like to join her for lunch; gratefully, I accepted. As we were walking toward the faculty and staff cafeteria, I was struck by the amount of friendliness exhibited by all who passed us by and the amount of activity on campus. What amazed me the most was the small size of the student union, as well as the student, staff, and faculty cafeteria. Regardless, the atmosphere appeared very cozy and protected. Everybody knew each other and spoke to each other as if they were family. I, myself, felt as if I had known the faculty for a while, as they communicated with me as if I was a colleague. The administrative assistant, in particular, was very open with me. She related how proud she was to work for Sue and with the students. She was very grateful for the opportunity to hold the position that she had. She shared that prior to holding that position, life was hard for her. She was grateful that Sue had given her a chance, and being on a college campus made her feel that her life was significant. She explained that everyone worked well with each other, and that the campus environment was more like a family then anything else.

Everyone took a genuine interest in the students and in their success. Faculty, in particular, did not allow students to slack academically and would intervene with a
student if they were having a hard time. She stated that Sue was often seen walking around campus, communicating with students, and getting involved if there were problems. She went to every basketball and football game, and was extremely supportive and dedicated to student success. She explained that the campus environment was like a nurturing, protective family atmosphere, building a cocoon around their students.

Frankly, I did not doubt what she was saying; my friend who attended this university years ago stays in regular contact with Sue and has continued personal relationships with faculty and staff that supported her as a student. She spoke very highly of Sue, which is why she referred her to me as a possible participant. As stated earlier, Sue was the first to agree to be interviewed, and without reservation, she had no problem referring me to other African American female presidents who might be interested. Through personal e-mail communication, she related that she would help me in any way that she could. I did not have to go through her secretary, as she communicated with me personally. Before meeting Sue, I knew that she was a very supportive individual and dedicated toward African American students’ success.

As I observed my surroundings, I noticed that a sense of Black pride and culture was everywhere. Displays of Black leaders, as well as the students’ dress, food, and exhibits of Black fraternities and sororities were everywhere. I had the opportunity to speak with many staff members and students—mostly they were curious about me. By the third day, almost everyone who had met me remembered my name and greeted me with warmth and respect.

Sue finally arrived for our interview around 2 p.m. She apologized, but explained that as president, unexpected things come up, and almost daily. I must say that out of all the
presidents that I interviewed, Sue was the most reserved. While she seemed happy that I was there, and willing to participate, it was very hard at times to get her to open up and relax. I found myself continually reminding her that she was going to remain anonymous and that she can share her story without reservations.

Each interview lasted about thirty minutes over the allotted time scheduled. All interviews were conducted in her office. By the second interview, I found that Sue began to relax, and we developed a great rapport.

While Sue’s demeanor was very reserved, I observed that she was very respectful and friendly to her staff, faculty, and students. Students, especially, seemed at ease when they spoke with her. Out of all the institutions that I visited in this study, this campus environment by far was the most quaint and friendly of them all. Perhaps, it was because the campus was very small, and everyone acted more like family. There appeared to be no political distance or discourse between faculty, students, staff, and the president.

Interview Findings

Family Background

Like Sheila and Yolanda, Sue grew up during segregation. She grew up in an all-Black community in the South with her younger brother and sister, near a university where both of her parents worked. Both of her parents graduated from the same HBCU. Her father taught electricity, her mother taught in a lab and eventually continued her education to teach early childhood education. Sue indicated that she lived in a two-college town, saying; “they were two distinct cultures, very separate, and to a great deal equal.” Like Sheila and Yolanda, Sue related, “I tell people that there was never a
question whether or not I would go to college. It was always where I would go, because I
grew up in an environment where that was really the minimum expectation.”

Sue feels that because she grew up in a two-college town that many of her
experiences were similar to Whites:

Many of the experiences I had growing up were so much parallel to my White
counterparts on the other side of town because the university really served over the
educational hub, not just for kids that grew up on the campus, but for the kids who
worked in the Black community, as a whole. So, I saw opera and ballet, and I
participated in all kinds of oral contests at the time that I was growing up.

The university served as a hub between the White and Black communities, giving Sue
the feeling that her experiences were similar to Whites. Sue contributed her experiences
growing up to her strong educated family. She shared that her grandfather was one of
four Black physicians in the southern state that she resided, and her grandmother was also
educated:

My grandmother had gotten her degree from Wilberforce back during an era when
women were not educated, and Black women, in particular, were not educated. So, I
grew up in a fairly protected and fairly educated community. My grandmother was
always advocating for one cause or another for as long as I can remember. She was
one of the founders for African American Girl Scouts, and she was a founder of the
Delta sorority. She got away with a lot of stuff because she was a physician’s wife,
and even in a segregated community, physicians had enjoyed some level of respect.

Sue explained that the entire family was educated and served as advocates for
education. She explains:
So, education was kind of what you did. My mother being an early childhood person, coming up in a fairly liberal family, we had the opportunity to debate, have dialog, and question and challenge things. That was something we did around the kitchen table. So, in terms of education and how I grew up, I grew up in an environment where I didn’t know we were supposed to be better than White people. Well, we didn’t work at trying to be. We didn’t know Whites existed, for the most part. So, everything in the community was supportive, building self-confidence and success in the kids of our African American community. There are a lot of success stories regarding the kids that grew up in my community. I have achieved well. So, it was— it was really a village raising a whole bunch of kids.

Sue related that their self-confidence was high, which is why for the most part, they did not need to be told that they had to be better than Whites. They were raised to believe that education was the key to success and expected to do well, and because she came from a well-educated family, there was never a question of not having the same opportunities for educational attainment than Whites. Sue believed that her life was very much parallel to the Whites that lived on the other side of town.

Growing Up During Segregation

Sue grew up in a predominantly Black community in the South before the Brown vs. the Board of Education case and the Civil Rights Act. Jim Crow laws were still being used to control and inhibit African Americans from the same rights and freedoms of Whites. However, Sue did not reflect that segregation effected her greatly. She indicated that she was in a protected Black environment until she was in undergraduate school. She indicated that the integration process began around her sophomore year in high school,
and it was by choice. "I had some friends who made the decision to integrate. My brother and sister coming up behind me integrated to a Catholic school. But, I made the decision not to be one of the people who made that transition at the time. I really didn’t think about White people existing or any other ethnic group. We were protected even from a lot of racism that was spinning around the country at the time. I think I must have been a sophomore in college when Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed. That was probably the first time that I came to the realization that being Black was in some way threatening and a risk."

**Growing Up in a Predominantly Black Community**

Sue grew up in a predominantly Black suburb in the South. She indicated that she lived in a very nurturing, supportive Black community. The entire community played a positive role in building self-confidence and success in their children. They protected them from the racist turmoil of the time; they became a village raising strong, confident and successful Black children.

**Black Identity Formation**

Sue, like Sheila, grew up in a predominantly Black environment. She had no problem with her identity as a Black female. The influence of her parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and the community members provided her with a strong sense of self, self-esteem, and self-confidence through a protective environment. She explained, "I went from a protective environment as an 18-year old, then I went to a HBCU (historically Black college and university), which was also very protective, but again, you were expected to be a high achiever. You were a high achiever because you’re a high achiever, not because
you had to be better than any other ethnic group. The opportunities were there to do the same thing.”

**Educational Experiences**

Sue attended predominantly Black elementary, junior high, and high schools, mainly because she grew up during segregation. Integration became law while Sue was a sophomore in high school; however, when given the opportunity to integrate after the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision, Sue decided to remain in segregated schools.

Sue was considered a good student and did very well in her classes. “I was in everything. I won a lot of declarations and oratory contests across the country...I won a lot of writing contests and had lots of opportunities to shine, if you will, to get an early start as a diva. I had a lot of leadership roles. I was editor for the school newspaper, editor for the yearbook, and was always in a leadership role and always convincing people to think outside of the box.” She explained that even though she excelled academically and was involved in many extracurricular activities, that she stayed in trouble. “When I graduated they gave my dad the diploma, they were so glad to see us both go because my parents had a reputation for indulging me. I was always in trouble, but never wrong. I was just challenging the system, and I was on the right side of it and people were not used to kids doing it, but my mom and dad, they kind of allowed me to do it.”

I asked Sue to give an example of the sort of things that she would challenge. She recalled, “I was twelve years old. I organized a protest against the city for closing swimming pools, rather than integrating them. Some friends and I wrote letters to the editor of the local newspaper. We stood outside of the public pool with signs protesting.
So, it was those sorts of things that got reinforced by my parents, and I kind of continued
to do, even as a grown person.”

As indicated earlier, Sue graduated from a protective all-Black elementary, junior
high and high school. After graduation, she made the decision to enroll in a historically
Black college and university. “So, at my HBCU, I had the same kind of protected
environment I had in K-12 and the community. And again, for the most part, we didn’t
even really think White people existed or any other ethnic group. My HBCU was very
protective, but again, you were a high achiever, not because you had to be better than any
other ethnic group. The opportunities were there to do the same thing. I was editor of the
yearbook, in clubs and sororities and things like that.” Sue graduated from her
historically Black college and university with a Bachelor’s degree in early childhood
education.

After working several years as a teacher, Sue decided to return to school to obtain her
Master’s degree. She applied to a predominantly White school in the Midwest and was
accepted. She left her position in the South to start graduate school. She indicated:

That was an interesting experience. I was one of 1,500 African American graduates
and undergraduates out of 38,000 students. It was the first time I had ever been the
minority. I understood for the first time how the Black children being bused into the
integrated school in which I taught felt. I couldn’t understand why they were so angry
and frustrated. I understood for the first time, what it felt like to be a minority, to be
isolated, to be in a culture that was very different from the one you grew up in. I
realized that the difference between me and those kids were that they were locked
into an environment from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. everyday. I could get into my car and drive to different parts of the city.

Because Sue felt isolated, she sought out support from other African Americans attending graduate school, as well as support from outside of her academic community. “A majority of my support system continued to be three or four of the kids from undergraduate school. I had one at MIT and Boston College. So, there were four or five of us that ran up telephone bills. We were friends in undergraduate school, and we continued to be the primary support system for each other through graduate school. Additionally, my dad was always good to go to and bounce off in critical times.”

As a result of the racial turmoil and effects of the Civil Rights Act, predominantly White colleges and universities began to open their doors to minority groups. Sue refers to this as “evolutionary mode,” where they brought in faculty that “fancied” themselves on the curve of liberal education. “There was a lot of free and open dialog about looking at pedagogy relating to disadvantaged children. Everything was about disadvantaged kids in the ghetto and the whole bit, so because I was a reluctant orator...I got a lot of questions about what I thought, and about how Black people feel. I had to say I can’t speak for all of them, but this is how I feel given my background and my experiences.”

Sue’s major frustration with the whole experience in graduate school was being considered the spokesperson for all Blacks in most of her classes:

But, because I was not reticent to talk about things, I also enjoyed a certain degree of favoritism. I was the person you picked if you had to have a Black on your team because they felt I would represent them well. I got to do a lot of things, like become part of an evaluation team for five ethnic group programs. Because they were always
bound and determined to always send a diverse group, they were reasonably sure if they sent me I wouldn’t embarrass them. So, from that aspect, there were really no challenges.

The historically Black college and university that Sue attended prepared her well for her Master’s degree in curriculum and development. “I realized that having finished my Bachelor’s degree at an HBCU with a degree in early childhood education, I was well-prepared, if not better prepared, in terms of knowledge and content and pedagogy because the program was very rigorous. I was better prepared then any of my classmates.” The one thing that her master’s program offered that was different from her undergraduate program was the amount of resources available to her. She also related that it was incredible to attend a school where the faculty were well-published and considered gurus in their field of study.

Sue became a political activist while attending graduate school. She recalled a young Black man running for city council. During this time, she decided to work on his campaign making phone calls, attending community meetings, and conducting focus groups for people who were involved in urban renewal. “It really got me in tune with this whole issue of politics and political power to make a difference. So, that kind of ignited me during my stay in graduate school. I took this piece with me as I continued to develop and move on.”

For the most part, Sue indicated that she had a great education in graduate school with no real major incidents. She excelled academically. However, she recalled having an exchange of words with a Black male professor:
The one Black professor there was on a power trip with me. I understand it now—I didn’t at the time, and I gave him the fellowship back. He wanted me to do something I thought was totally inappropriate. He wanted me to knock on freshman doors and find out why Black kids were not going to college. I had made up my mind that I did not come to graduate school to have that as a responsibility in terms of the fellowship. I refused to do it. He took the position of it was that or nothing, so I gave it back to him.

Once she gave back the fellowship, she was given the opportunity to work in a daycare program and tutor a young Black girl who had sickle-cell anemia. "I had an opportunity to work with a child who had a life threatening chronic disease, and so that had a great impact on me."

Sue’s interaction with faculty, staff, and students in her graduate program was very positive. "It was a good year, and I did come away with a Master’s degree. But, I came away with a lot more in terms of growing up and becoming something more than that protected person that I had been for all those years."

After Sue completed her Master’s degree, she married and moved back to the South. She held several teaching and administrative positions in elementary and secondary schools and colleges before going back to pursue her doctorate degree. She explained that the primary reason that she decided to pursue a doctoral degree was because, although she held a variety of administrative positions at the college and university level, she lacked a doctorate degree and that did not sit well with faculty or staff. She served as the dean of administrative services, which included financial aid, admissions, and registration. A year and a half later, she was promoted to assistant provost and then later
moved to assistant provost for academic affairs with the responsibility of evaluating and recommending all new faculty members. She recalled that it was at this time when faculty, in particular, became resentful and outraged because Sue held these positions without having earned a terminal degree. She decided that it was time to pursue a doctoral degree so that she would have more credibility. Sue worked full-time, while enrolled in her doctoral program, attended school at night, and cared for her terminally ill husband. “I got through most of my coursework before my husband actually got sick. My husband died before I was able to finish. I got sick of seeing doctor, doctor, doctor, and I did not have one. And so, after my husband died, many of my colleagues pulled together to help me finish my degree. They gave me time to write and supported me through the program. So, I finally graduated with a Ph.D. in educational administration.”

Figure 3: Uniqueness of Sue’s Experience that Shapes her Identity.
Professional Career Path

After Sue graduated with her undergraduate degree in early childhood education, she took a position as a first grade teacher at an elementary school located in the South. She stated that “this was the first year that major busing of Black children began. This was an interesting environment for me to be in, just having recently discovered my ethnicity through King’s death and all of that.” Sue lived in an all-Black community, far from the elementary school that she worked at. “The school was located on top of a hill in an all-White, middle-class community. They bused in Black children from the lower South side, from the poor section. It was a thirty-five or forty minute ride everyday for those kids into this community and up on this big school on the hill.” Sue explained that she was one of four Black teachers, out of a total of thirty. “It was the first time that I had ever really seen and dealt with firsthand, the issue of inequities and inequality. I saw Black kids victimized by people who were afraid of change, just the most incredible, insensitive kinds of things that happened to them. They weren’t abusive, but there were things, like they left them on the buses for 30 minutes until the White kids got there, and then teachers would get angry because the Black kids came in late.”

It was during this time that Sue became an advocate. “I realized that these Black children were disfranchised from the system in a way that I never experienced. I always enjoyed stardom, if you will. But, I realized at that point that everybody did not come up with the same kind of supportive environment, and so, I became an advocate.” Sue became a rebel in some aspects by displaying her cultural heritage. “I rolled my hair on sponge rollers and then take it out and it was damn near the biggest afro you ever seen. The Black teachers would comment, ‘I know when we are having a staff meeting because
you always wear your hair in an afro.’ White teachers told me that first-year teachers are
to be seen and not heard.” Sue explained that part of the reason they commented on her
actions is because she never followed the norm, especially during holidays, like
Valentine’s Day or Presidents’ Day. She mentioned that all the teachers would put out
decorations commemorating those days on their bulletin boards outside on the quad, but
she decided to do something different. “On my boards, there were images of the slave
master beating the slave and the whole plantation life. I taught my kids all about it.
Looking back now, I realize that some of the teachers might have felt very threatened and
very upset about the drastic differences, but I really became an advocate for Black kids
then.” Sue sums up her first year experience as an elementary school teacher in this way:
The teacher piece I don’t think was so much as a female piece because in elementary
schools there is an acceptance that you’re all females. I think the Black piece was
there, but I was busy fighting causes that I didn’t internalize it or personalize it. As I
look back now, I realize there probably was no overt discrimination because I was an
African American teacher. But, there was certainly some resentment because I would
meet the issues and not be quiet and not settle. At the end of my first year, I felt I
needed a little more credibility, and that is when I decided to enroll in graduate
school. When I got ready to leave to go to graduate school, I believe the principal
went ‘yes’ as I walked out the door.

After Sue received her master’s in curriculum and development, she got married and
moved back to the South with her husband. She recalled acquiring a position as a teacher:
When I got there, I ended up in the same kind of school I had been in prior to
pursuing my master’s. But, I was the only person in early childhood education, and so
I ended up as lead teacher in the school for the first year that they were having kindergarten. It was the same school I had done my student teaching in when I was an undergrad. So, it was a good environment to be in. I taught for three and one-half years.

Sue took a one-year absence from her teaching position to have her first child, then she came back to teach another year. The following year, she was appointed assistant principal. However, she explains that taking the position did not come without opposition. She attributes her appointment to a new, young superintendent; “his was the first time they had appointed a superintendent outside the system.” Sue related that he was determined to make a name for himself, and in doing so, he set his goal that all the kids in 4th and 5th grades would be reading above the national level and computing at or above the national norm. In order to do so, he began to bus kids, not just the White kids, but the Black kids as well. Sue attributes this goal to why she was appointed assistant principal:

I had been in the system for four years when he sat down and talked to me and pulled my personal file. I could not believe the size of my personal file, I was dumbfounded. He opened it up and started reading through stuff. He said, ‘You know, I’ve been warned not to appoint you to this position. But, I am going to do it, and I am going to tell you why.’ He pulled out a letter I had written—a protest letter I had written when the school system decided it was going to implement gifted education. I had protested saying that I believed that the system was too fragile to introduce yet another category of kids that would separate our kids and that I firmly believed that any kid through
competent and caring instruction could realize their potential. I thought a gifted program would start to discriminate.

It was this very letter that the superintendent used to legitimize her appointment. She explained that after her appointment, she had to fight battles because it was felt that she had obtained the position without coming up through the ranks. “So, that invited, of course, some distain.”

Sue set out to try to assist the superintendent with his goal; however, by doing so, she made enemies, as everybody did not agree with the new changes that he was implementing. More specifically, people disapproved with the amount of busing it took to achieve his goal. “I had screwed myself with everybody who was anybody, and the cracker up and decided to move to Arkansas to become superintendent there. I said to myself, ‘oh, Lordy. He left me out there in the middle of my crusade without any support,’ and, of course, folks were waiting for him to leave, so they could have a field day with me.” She indicated that those were very challenging times, but she made it through because people could not question her competence:

People would always say things like well, ‘She’s right. She calls a spade a spade; she speaks her mind.’ It was always that kind of beef. I never learned, maybe, I did not want to learn the art of diplomacy—didn’t play games well. I figured if you know the situation, then why have a lot of committees and tasks forces to get from A-Z? We know what the issue is and know what it takes to fix it, why we got to have consent? She further elaborated, “That had been both the bane and the gem of how I moved through my life—never got scared and never intimidated by anybody. If you were wrong, you were wrong.”
Sue worked for that particular elementary school for six years; afterwards, she indicated that she moved around. “At one point, I had been at eleven schools in eight years, which read like I can’t keep a job. But, in essence, it wasn’t true. It was just the way the configuration worked. But, I knew everybody everywhere.” Regardless, Sue felt very positive about managing various schools because she was able to build a support system. “It was wonderful; my support system got bigger and better all the time. When people got in trouble with the principal, they called me. If their children got in trouble, they called me. I helped you get into school; I helped you get out of school. I kept kids out of jail.”

After being an assistant principal for about six years, she attempted to apply for principal positions. At one point, she was hired as an interim principal for about eight months, but did not get the position on a permanent basis. “There was a senior principal who I understood took issues with the appointment, and so, they appointed it to her as the principal the next year; they put me back as assistant principal at the time.” Sue was not particularly discouraged about not getting the position, but at the same time, she felt determined to move on. As such, she managed to secure a position as principal in one of the oldest elementary schools in the South. “So, I was smack dab in the middle of an old colonial town, all the children zoned for my school was the upper echelons of the community. All the poor White and Black children were zoned for out of the county.” Sue found out later that she was given the position to depolarize the staff. “So, there I ended up once again with the opportunity to crusade and make a difference—to integrate the staff.”
Sue related that once she became principal, she began to get in trouble all of the time. Referring to her tenure there as “three horrific years,” Sue relates:

I got in trouble for things like, well, let’s see. I got in trouble the first time because a White male judge absolutely refused to have his daughter put in a Black teacher’s room. He said to me that he was sure I pulled myself by the bootstrap and that I might appreciate what it meant to always expect excellence in everything. And that is what he wanted for his children. So, I had to let him know that I was not first generation educated. I tried to be diplomatic, but he was also the school board attorney. So, that was the first time I was in trouble, but, of course, the tone was set.

Even though Sue felt that she did exactly what she was hired to do, there was a lack of support to accomplish her goals. “I had a superintendent that did not have a really good spine.” Because of this lack of support, Sue claims that she got in trouble all the time. She explains:

I got in trouble during my first year. It was the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, and we were working to recognize it. So, when Black teachers asked me what to do, I told them well, you got a vacation day. So, the word spread that they were going to take vacation time. As the word spread, none of the Black teachers worked on that day. And, of course, I got credit for staging a sick-out. It was those kinds of things. I got in trouble for that. I got in trouble for integrating classes—you know, actually putting Black kids who could compete in gifted level math. I got in trouble for having an activity that put gifted and Title 1 kids together. I got in trouble for having guest speakers to tell the slave story; they would do performances for the kids. And I got in trouble because I did not wear red, white, and blue for Flag Day. And I got in trouble
for not moving closer to the school and leading protests. So, that was three years of really interesting dynamics. I had more Black teachers in my school. But, I got to the point where I got tired of fighting.

After what she describes as "three horrific years," she moved on to become principal of several schools. After twelve years in that position, she indicates, "I finally finished up with the largest elementary school. That was the end of that era."

Sue left her position as an elementary school principal to become an administrator at her current institution after meeting the president, who was a African American male. She stated: "I met him through the political organization he had founded specifically designed to influence the elections of African Americans."

Sue mentioned that they often engaged in hour-long conversations regarding administration and meritocracy, and within eight weeks, she received a call from his secretary to schedule a meeting, as he wanted to meet with her. "So, I went over to the campus, sat in his office, and he told me he was looking to begin some new positions. He was interested if whether or not I was interested. Well, I figured my life expectancy as a principal was probably at an end. I been there as a principal for twelve years or so, didn't want a central office, and didn't have any expectations of becoming superintendent in that division."

The president gave Sue three positions to choose from: Director of the Strategic Planning Initiative, Executive Assistant to the President, and Dean of Administrative Services, which included financial aid, admissions, and registration. Sue explained:

Well, I felt that not having any higher education experience, and certainly not knowing the culture of the campus, that the director of strategic planning was an
asked to fill position. I didn’t want to be in that kind of position. I knew the president well enough to know that I did not want to work with him day in and day out; our personalities were too much alike. I was used to controlling budgets from my positions as principal, so I told him I am interested in the dean of administrative services position, but I needed to think about it.

Sue disclosed that a month or two passed before she heard from him again, and then he called, inviting her to come see him. “I told my husband, now, he is going to offer me the position, and my husband remarked that, ‘no, he probably is not going to give you the position.’ I said, yeah, he is going to offer me the position, so I need to know now, do I take it? My husband encouraged me to take the position if he made the offer. So, I went to his office and he offered me the dean of administration position.” Sue indicated that the position paid a hundred dollars less than her principal position, but she decided that a hundred dollars less was not significant enough to turn down the position. “I told him that I would accept the position, and so I moved from that era to the next era.”

For Sue, taking on the position was a serious responsibility, especially since she had no experience working in higher education. She admits that she knew nothing about financial aid, admission, or registration. “My first assignment was during an administrative summer retreat. I was to prepare a ten-minute presentation on how I was going to improve administrative services to all these mid-level and senior administrators, who I never saw before. I thought this was really stupid, how am I going to do this? So, of course, I took the generic approach, and that is how to improve efficiency and effectiveness; just kind of use the politics of its good right now, but how can it be improved.”
Sue remarked that two weeks before she actually started the position, the financial aid
director quit. She stated, “financial aid is the one area out of the three that you can’t
bullshit your way through. So, there I was out there in the middle of nowhere. There was
a new office manager in financial aid, and as it turned out, she was very bright and a
quick study. And so, she and I learned financial aid together.”

In order to make sure she was doing things correctly, Sue visited various university
campuses that were using the same computer student information system. She spent
weeks shadowing employees working in financial aid. She utilized manuals and learned
the language. “I spent the day with those people. I took their manuals—everything that
had any piece of language in it and brought it back so that I would at least be able to
sound like I knew what I was doing, even if I didn’t.”

The lack of knowledge in her new position was only one of the many challenges she
had to tackle. She explained “the interesting thing about being brought to an institution of
higher education without a terminal degree is that there is very little respect for the
knowledge if you don’t have the degree. So, very early on, I realized that there were a lot
of people who wanted to reduce me as a non-entity because I did not have a terminal
degree.”

The president, however, had confidence in Sue. She admitted “he stuck me in a
situation where you had to sink or swim. The first assignment was to chair the committee
for effectiveness and efficiency for strategic planning, and that included all of the
administrative units, his office included. I didn’t know the people. I didn’t know the
culture, and I didn’t know the discipline. The woman that the president assigned as the
director of strategic planning was immediately not on board with me, and for whatever reasons, just decided she was going to make it difficult."

Regardless, Sue prevailed, and within the first six months, she learned what she needed to do to be effective in her position. She was in that position for about a year and a half, and then the president promoted her to assistant provost.

Sue became assistant provost for academic affairs with the responsibility of evaluating and recommending faculty. "You couldn’t hire a faculty member unless I signed off on them. So, even if the dean had interviewed and recommended a faculty member, if I didn’t sign off on the recommendation, they couldn’t be hired. I had authority to go into the classroom and evaluate faculty members and write them up. I was also put in charge of the Center for Teaching and Learning." Even though the president felt that Sue was competent enough for this position, other individuals were not so pleased that someone without a terminal degree can be considered for an assistant provost of academic affairs position. However, Sue relates, “the upside of having this position was the perception that I was the favorite child, and that I could influence the president regarding certain decisions. I used this perception to advise and guide deans and others about how to manipulate through the process. So, I had a certain level of respect from those people at that level. I stuffed envelopes for programming and things with everybody else.” As a result, Sue developed a relationship network across the campus for several reasons. Sue explains, “number one, I didn’t go tattling, and number two, I helped them resolve issues so they wouldn’t get into trouble.”

Though Sue had developed a relationship network across campus, and a certain amount of respect, she encountered difficulties with several of her colleagues:
The woman who was provost at the time was just furious that I had these kinds of responsibilities without a terminal degree. Although I reported to her, there was an understanding, a dotted line from me to the president, which I never used. It was not necessary—just the perception that I could run and tell was enough for me to be able to get things done. I was able to negotiate regarding mid-management and senior-level management issues. It was probably the best example of network level management that I've ever seen.

The biggest challenges for Sue during her position as assistant provost for academic affairs were the provost and the faculty. "There was a real resentment from those who are part of the academy. Those people who still thought that things were sacred relative to a terminal degree." Sue explained that she was very successful in this position, but knew that she really needed to go back and get her doctorate degree. Finally, when the president of the university indicated that she needed to obtain a doctorate degree, Sue enrolled in a program and completed her degree. "He said to me at one point, 'you know, you need to go ahead and get into a doctoral program. You need to complete the degree. I can't continue to send you to represent me or continue to promote you without you having the degree.'" Once she obtained her doctoral degree, Sue was promoted to vice-president of administrative services. She held that position for several years before becoming president of her current university.
Table 4: Sue’s Career Path.

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**Leadership Style**

With the exception of being a teacher for several years, Sue held administrative positions throughout most of her career. She admitted that when offered the opportunity to become president, she first needed to see if it was a good fit. Before making the decision to apply for the position, Sue drove to the campus with two colleagues to see if the college would be a good fit. “I didn’t just want to be a President; I wanted to be in an environment where I could build and make a difference. I spent the day on the campus talking to students, visiting offices, walking the campus, and learning about the history and feeling the atmosphere.”
After Sue secured the position as president, she realized that even though she had extensive experience as an administrator, that it was hard being the first female African American college president:

It's very difficult being the first female and following a male who had been president for twenty-eight years. It's hard to follow a long-sitting president. One of the things I tell people all the time is that you got to understand the dynamics of following a long-sitting president—it's very different than coming behind a president that has been here four or five years. The standing president created a community of people who were used to doing things a certain way. So, they are either delighted that you are going to follow what they did, or absolutely hate you if you didn't.

Sue explained that she did not do a good job of understanding how close the community was. "I should have worked within the community first before working my network and my connections on a bigger scale. So, I had to backtrack and back slam in terms of courting and captivating the local community as well." For Sue, her first year was very challenging. She also inherited a Board of Regents that was not used to functioning as a governor's board. "What they wanted was someone who would fix it all, and then let them take the credit for it." However, Sue felt in addition to many accomplishments during her first five years, the most significant change was the ability with the help of colleagues to change the Board of Regents. "We actually strategize to change the board in becoming more of a governor's board, as opposed to a management or administrative board. We also managed to develop a relationship."

Sue sees herself as a visionary. "I am able to think outside of the box. I can see ten, fifteen, and twenty years down the road." She feels that this type of leadership is critical
in order to transform her university. “I think that’s what distinguishes the difference between management and leadership. I am a visionary, and I am strategic. I am results-oriented, which I think is necessary, but I don’t think I am necessarily results-driven. I see the outcomes and I understand what I want the outcomes to be. But, I don’t like to do the details to get there.”

She related that a good leader is tolerant and patient. However, she was not always that way. “I had a real impatience and intolerance for people who did not get things done fast enough. Sometimes, that has created the best and worst in life for me. I didn’t wait for the variable to equalize or certain kinds of things to happen. I am goal-oriented and results-oriented.”

Sue’s greatest strength is her ability to bring people together and build a team. “I use incredible insight into putting together a team that is effective in efficiency. I am able to put the kinds of teams together to make me successful, and I am not threatened by other people’s knowledge, or those who have been around for a while. If I find out you can do the job—and by doing it, I mean, in a way I am going to be satisfied—then I pretty much leave you alone to do it.” Sue provides opportunities for her faculty and staff to grow. “I tell them come to work for me to build your own signature, and I will give you the greatest recommendation you will get from anybody, and send you on your merry way.” Sue truly wants her faculty and staff to grow. “If my staff develops, grows, and moves on to become successful, that makes me look good, and I am ok with that style of leadership. My expectations of my faculty and staff are high.” Sue attributes her faculty and staff’s success to her ability to engage people in the process of planning and executing. “I know
what people's strengths are, and I do know how to put people together so that they give their best.” Sue empowers her faculty and staff in order for them to perform at their best.

Sue talked about transformational leadership in this manner: “This is about changing culture. It’s about changing people’s mindset and behavior. It’s about undoing old ways of practice. I am the person responsible for facilitating that change. It’s about taking a risk. You don’t know how difficult it is or the great lengths people will go to protect what is their safe environment.” Sheila indicated that she learned to pick her battles. “I found out that it is not always about being right, sometimes, it’s just about making people feel good. I think I catch more flies with honey than vinegar. I can appreciate the value of that.” Sue knew how to get the work done and was highly skilled in moving the agenda for her university forward, by knocking down the barriers to get things done.

The Essence of the Experience

Sue’s essence of her experience lies in the confidence that she maintained to accept some of the challenges that she was faced with in not only K-12, but when she became an administrator in higher education without any prior experience in the field. Throughout her narratives, Sue related that she one of the few African American women who worked at predominantly White elementary and secondary schools when she entered a career in education. She was also compelled to be the Black voice and advocate in situations that she felt that were unjust. Moreover, she wanted to instill the same sense of confidence and pride in her Black students, while educating her White students, by honoring the historical journey of Blacks in America, and displaying through plays and billboards leaders within the African American culture. Even though she knew that she was taking a risk by becoming an advocate for African Americans, Yolanda’s confidence and pride of
being a Black woman prevailed. Her confidence and unwavering integrity was significant in facing the challenges that she encountered during her journey to the presidency. The confidence that she had in herself was founded on the belief that she was competent and intelligent enough to take on professional roles and challenges that she otherwise would not have considered.

Her confidence is also exhibited through her spirituality and her purpose. Sue related that even though she is not a highly spiritual woman, she believes that her path has been planned by God. “I believe, in some level, that I was put here for the purpose of making it easy for other people. I have been blessed in all kinds of ways, including materialistically. I just as soon give it away to make a difference to somebody.” Sue enjoys the satisfaction of making a difference. “It is the ability and the opportunity to challenge the system without fear of repercussion to make a difference in the institution and the students.”

Summary

Like the other two participants, Sue never set out on this journey to become a university or college president. However, unlike Yolanda and Sheila, Sue entered the field of higher education administration through a non-traditional trajectory. She never held a full-time faculty position, nor did she have a terminal degree, while serving as dean and assistant provost for academic affairs. She was challenged by the political responsibilities associated with her various administrative roles, as well as the resentment toward her by the provost and faculty who felt that she was not qualified to hold those positions without a terminal degree. Regardless, Sue prevailed and managed to win the
respect of a majority of her colleagues and the college president by building a strong network throughout the campus community.

Within the context of leadership, Sue operates to ensure predictability of results. She refers to herself as a visionary and a risk taker who is goal driven, but not necessarily detailed-oriented. Her leadership strength focuses on inspiring others and organizing effective teams. She readily acknowledges the abilities and strengths of her faculty and staff, and utilizes their strengths to get the task done, and inspire them to work to their fullest potential. She gives them the freedom to get the work done and encourages them to take their special talents and grow, so that they, themselves, can become leaders.

Sue also recognized early on how important buy-in from the campus community was to achieving specific goals, as well as the importance of building relationships with the external constituents as well. Sue knew that she needed to build such alliances with persons or groups within the community, so that the university could be supported and flourish. While learning to be tolerant, patient, intelligent, analytical, strategic, and goal-oriented, Sue motivated her faculty and staff toward achieving results that are consistent with the established goals of transforming the university for the better.

The essence of Sue’s experiences was, to some degree, her confidence in saving the next generation of young African American children and to serve as a role model to them. She believes that her presence, not only in higher education, but throughout her entire career, was to make herself available and present in order to assist and advocate for underserved children. She feels that being a president is a challenge in itself, but when she thinks of the difference that she is making for her students and the institution, it is easier for her to get over the difficult times.
Like the other two participants in this study, Sue grew up during an era in which overt racism was practiced. However, with her strong sense of self, living in a protected environment, and with the support of a critical mass of African Americans, she evolved into a resilient, determined, and confident woman. This resiliency and strong identity has aided Sue in weathering the storms that she has endured throughout her entire administrative career.

Overview

These oral narratives have served to outline the personal and professional perspectives of Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue in order to provide a clearer understanding of their pathway to the college presidency. The following chapter offers a comparison of the three cases and analysis.
CHAPTER 7

COMPARISON OF CASES AND ANALYSIS

The primary objective of this study was to explore the experiences of three African American women who are college and university presidents. An examination of their history, educational preparation, career paths, and experiences was conducted to identify their perceptions of barriers, strategies, and leadership characteristics employed in acquiring the position of president. Specifically, I sought to answer:

1. What were the perceived challenges faced by the African American women in this study?
2. How were the perceived challenges overcome?
3. How did those perceived challenges and the women's responses to them shape their leadership style?

My objective in this chapter is to establish across the three cases, a recap of the common themes and sub-themes portrayed by the women in this study as they journeyed to their current positions as university president. While common themes and sub-themes were constructed across the cases, their individual cases provided insight into their challenges and successes. The individual cases were presented as separate chapters so as to provide a foundation of understanding by introducing the women to the reader. These introductions were provided to offer a sense of who the participants are and to unfold their journeys to become presidents in higher education. As the reader, you were privy to
some of the intimate feelings, the hardships, and the joys that framed the three African American females’ experiences as they journeyed to the presidency of their respective universities. The stories documented in this study are the sole experiences of the three women who participated. As such, their stories may not represent experiences of other African American women in higher education, nor are they stories that you, the reader, may fully understand or comprehend. Yet, they are stories told through the voices of the women I interviewed. Through their voices, they depicted the unique realities of their life experiences and backgrounds.

As mentioned in chapter three, the researcher guaranteed the anonymity of the presidents. Therefore, fictional names were given to the three African American women presidents who participated in this study. I used Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue’s own voices through transcribed interview narrative texts to discuss their experiences within the context of the themes that were constructed through the analysis of the data. Quotations and other data collected from the participants’ profiles and oral interviews were included to ensure that the uniqueness of each respondent was maintained and that their individual voices were heard; editing of the interview text was minimal.

The findings were discussed in four chapters: 1) within-case analysis of the first participant, Sheila; 2) within-case analysis of the second participant, Sue; 3) within-case analysis of the third participant, Yolanda; and 4) across-case analysis. The within-case analyses were organized as: 1) context of the setting; 2) biographical information; 3) observation findings; 4) interviews; 5) documentary evidence; and 6) concluded with a summary. The participants provided details about their lives within the context of their: 1) family background; 2) the communities where they grew up; 3) segregation; 4) Black
identity development; 5) educational experience; 6) professional career path; and 7) leadership style.

Across the cases, the themes that described Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue's experiences, both inside and outside of higher education, are displayed in Figure 4:

Figure 4: Emerging Themes in Experiences of three African American Female College Presidents

Though many of their experiences were similar, the differences illustrated in Figure 4 represent the uniqueness of each woman in this study, while many factors contributed to shaping their individual identities. The issues of race and gender are depicted in the background surrounding the square. These issues significantly impact the structure of
background surrounding the square. These issues significantly impact the structure of institutions and are forces present in the experiences of African American women in this study. While gender is often an ongoing issue for women, in general, as shown in this study, African American women are doubly impacted because of their gender and race. The center figure overlaps the bigger circles, which represent the various themes of family background, communities where these women grew up, segregation, identity development, educational experiences, professional career path, and leadership style.

While the seven major themes were first examined separately, for the cross-case analysis, it was evident that the themes could also be explored in relation to one other. For example, family background and Black identity development could be seen as honing the women’s resiliency to rise above the issues encountered through segregation. In addition, the childhood community and educational experience prepared them for their eventual professional career path. These themes in combination resulted in their eventual leadership styles. However, an analysis of each major theme also resulted in sub-themes that will be compared and contrasted in this chapter.

Family background was used to conceptualize the women’s experiences through their formative years. Within this category I examined the sub-themes relating to their family’s influence on positive self-esteem, Black identity development, and transmitting resiliency, as well as their mothers’ and grandmothers’ roles in identity development, the role of the public school, the role of the Black church, the role of community influence on Black identity development, and lastly, the subjects’ handling of segregation.

The theme pertaining to educational experiences highlighted the participants’ motivation for attending college, which included the following sub-themes: their mothers’ and grandmothers’ influences toward attending college, and their undergraduate
and graduate college experiences. Sub-themes for graduate college experiences included: experiencing racism at predominantly White universities, and developing African American support networks.

I also examined the category of their professional career paths and experiences. The sub-themes under this category included: experiences transitioning from undergraduate college to professional employment, balancing family and career aspirations, and an overview of their career paths. A discussion of their academic experiences included: gender/racial discrimination, sexuality and sexual harassment, a lack of collegiality, and mentors and support systems.

Leadership style was used to conceptualize how their experiences shaped them as leaders. The sub-themes under this category included: transformational leadership, spirituality, and the essence of the participants’ experiences. Lastly, while the essence of their experiences was individualized and is discussed further in this chapter, the overall essence of the study revealed their need to contribute to uplifting the Black race. These sub-themes represent the differences and commonalities in the participants’ lives that were significant for understanding both their experiences as they journeyed to the presidency, and also how these experiences shaped their leadership style.

Interpretation of the Findings in Relation to the Three Research Questions

Question 1: Perceived Challenges

All three participants faced several challenges as they journeyed to the presidency. One of the biggest challenges was that the women in this study grew up during a time in our country’s history when race relations were dismal. Jim Crow laws enforced between 1876 and 1964, segregated Blacks from Whites in the southern and the border states of
the United States. The most important and damaging components of such laws required that public schools be segregated by race and that most public places were to have separate facilities for Whites and Blacks.

School segregation was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1954 in *Brown v. Board of Education*, followed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which repealed all the other Jim Crow laws. All the women in this study revealed that they were often protected from the effects of the Jim Crow laws during their formative years because they lived in loving, nurturing homes; Sheila and Sue lived in all-Black communities, while Yolanda lived in an integrated farming community. Only Sheila and Yolanda had minor experiences with the effects of the Jim Crow laws when they were younger. Regardless of how minor her encounter was, however, for Sheila, the impact made a lasting impression, causing her to become wary of White people.

**Graduate College Experiences**

Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue are trailblazers; they are pioneers and among the first to enter predominantly White graduate schools after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Higher Education Act of 1965. Several factors caused the women in this study to pursue graduate work. The common factors among them were the desire to broaden their knowledge and skills, to advance professionally, to challenge themselves, and to build careers in education. However, it was also during their pursuits of graduate degrees that they began to encounter the effects of racism. Because they were among the first Black females to attend predominantly White universities, they encountered subtle and not-so-subtle forms of racism; as a result, they faced difficulties at a variety of levels. Such treatment included: 1) expectations of being a spokesperson for all Blacks; 2) being called derogatory names; 3) having their intellectual qualifications and authority called
into question and challenged; 4) having Whites judge them according to negative
stereotypes; and 5) the marginalization of their research.

Several factors may account for their experiences related to racism once they entered
graduate school. The first could be attributed to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was
enacted by the government to combat race and sex discrimination in higher education.
Affirmative action was another program instituted to bring greater equity to higher
education by promising equal opportunities, regardless of race and gender. However, the
downside was that misconceptions and stereotypes may have been based on
misunderstandings that arose from affirmative action. In other words, in Sheila, Yolanda,
and Sue’s cases, being Black and female implied that they may not necessarily have been
qualified; instead, being Black and female was perceived by some as a passport for
receiving preferential treatment. Collins (1991) remarked, “relying on the visibility of
African American women to generate the invisibility of exclusionary practices of racial
segregation, this new politics produces remarkably consistent Black female
disadvantages, while claiming to do the opposite” (p. 14).

The disadvantages relayed by Collins (1991) leads to a second factor relating to
double discrimination, which perpetuates “negative White reactions, individual and
institutionalized, to Black female characteristics” (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998, p. 16). The
ideology of the slave era fostered negative controlling images of Black womanhood;
these images have found their way into the academy. Morton (1991) argued that schools
and scholarship produced and disseminated by faculty have, historically, played a part in
generating negative images of Black women. The literature indicated that for Black
women, issues of gender are always connected to race because the two are inseparable
(Myers, 2001; Collins, 2000; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Benjamin, 1997; Moses, 1997).
Professional Experiences

All three of the participants identified racial and gender bias as the most troubling challenges they faced while employed in the academic workplace. Even though their experiences varied, the most commonly cited challenges were: feelings of isolation, a lack of information about tenure and promotion, an unsupportive work environment, gender bias (including unequal pay), and an expectation to work harder than Whites, an expectation to handle minority affairs, sexual harassment, and within-group bias.

As suggested in the review of the literature, the climate at both predominantly White universities and historically Black colleges may provide obstacles for Black women in the form of race or gender stereotypes in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. Moses (1997) asserted: “Black women faculty members and administrators face numerous barriers to their growth and success in academe. Issues such as support, retention, research, teaching are affected by the climate for Black women at both predominantly White institutions and historically Black ones” (p. 24). As a result, Black women faculty and administrators who work at either type of institution must deal with the effects of racism and also sexism.

Numerous experiences that the participants in the study encountered as they worked in higher education are supported by the literature. The phenomenon of within-group racial bias has been described as using a variety of terms, such as colorism, skin-tone bias, and subgroup prejudice (Okazawa, Robinson, & Ward, 1987; Maddox & Gray, 2002). In general, even among African Americans, racism can exist based on physical features that are considered to be associated with Whites. Sheila, for example, believed that her colleague and good friend felt that she was being promoted because she was light-skinned and not because of her hard work. Her colleague viewed that as an
advantage, compared to darker Blacks whose features are more associated with racial 
stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.

Regardless of the institutional obstacles that the participants in this study faced, they 
all prevailed and succeeded in their academic careers. Both Sheila and Yolanda made 
tenure. Even more impressive was the fact that Yolanda was the first Black faculty 
member at a predominantly White university to become a full professor. Even though she 
revealed in her narratives that she had to work harder and that she had no guidance, she 
managed to win teaching awards, publish, and become involved in many organizations; 
in so doing, she won the respect and admiration of her colleagues.

Sue’s major issue when she became an administrator was the perceived lack of 
credibility because the positions she held required a terminal degree, which she did not 
yet have. In spite of these limitations, she was successful and was promoted rapidly. 
Eventually, Sue was required to obtain her doctoral degree to continue to move up the 
administrative ladder.

As indicated in the narratives, Sheila, Sue, and Yolanda all took different pathways to 
the presidency. Sheila, who worked at a historically Black college, was the only one that 
followed the more traditional route to the presidency by working her way up from 
faculty, chair, director, and dean. Yolanda became a president after serving over twenty 
years as a faculty member at a predominantly White university. Sue obtained an 
administrative position at a historically Black college after working over fifteen years in 
elementary and secondary education, only serving ten years in various administrative 
positions before she became a president.
Question 2: How the Women Overcame Challenges

One of the most emerging and illuminating findings of this study was the role of positive self-definition in the participants' management of their experiences. Through their strong sense of self, they were able to reject externally defined, controlling images of Black womanhood that have been advanced by the dominant culture since slavery. Racial and gender oppression taken as a collective appears to be the catalyst behind the experiences of the African American women in this study. For example, while the three women experienced racism during their graduate school experience, in the workplace, their story shifts to one of various experiences of racial and gender bias.

Historically, members of the dominant majority in the United States enacted traditions that opposed having African Americans, in general, and women, more specifically, to participate as members of the academy. The narratives in this study revealed that this was originally the case for Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue as they began their journeys into higher education; race and gender seems to have shaped their experiences. As a result of the Civil Rights movement and the Higher Education Act of 1965, these women were able to erode the powerful barriers of racial and gender bias that existed in academe. Even though the narratives revealed some opposition to their presence at predominantly White institutions, Sheila, Sue, and Yolanda never lost sight of their goals and strong senses of self.

All three participants also recognized the significant impact and role that their families and extended family members played in shaping their identities. Each of them attributed their development of a strong Black identity, morals, values, positive self-esteem, resiliency, pride, and a sense of self-worth to their families. They credited their parents with instilling in them the value of hard work and a sense that they could do
anything that they put their minds to, as well as the belief that being Black, and a woman, was no excuse not to succeed. They believed that if they failed, they failed because they did not try hard enough. Their parents set high standards, and one of those standards was to obtain a college education. As all three members related, it was not about whether they were going to college, but a matter of where.

All of the women in this study excelled academically throughout their educational experiences. They attributed part of their scholastic excellence to attending predominantly Black schools from K-12, as well as historically Black colleges during their undergraduate years. More importantly, they credited their families with providing the support network that assured that they would achieve a college education. McAdoo (2002) suggested that African American children who grow up in loving, nurturing homes that value education and place high expectations on academic achievement, tend to succeed and overcome racial impediments that they may encounter during their educational and professional careers. Thus, Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue’s experiences while growing up mirrors that which is suggested in the literature. Each participant had significant role models in their parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles who earned a college education during a time when it was far more difficult for African Americans to do so. All of these variables added up to transmitting resiliency to the next generation, with little room for excuses.

Public Schools’ Influence on Black Identity

Additionally, these women were encouraged by a public education system staffed by representatives of their communities. As a consequence of attending Black schools and the positive influences and expectations of their teachers who possessed masters’ and doctoral degrees of their own, these women were ingrained with a positive image of what
they could achieve academically. Tatum (1997) indicated, “Black southern schools, though stigmatized by legally sanctioned segregation, were often staffed by African American educators, themselves visible models of academic achievement. These Black educators may have presented a curriculum that included references to the intellectual legacy of other African Americans” (p. 85). All of these factors aided Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue to develop a strong sense of self. According to Tatum (1997), “if young people are exposed to images of African American academic achievement in their early years, they won’t have to define school achievement as something for Whites only. They will know there is a long history of Black intellectual achievement” (p. 85). This was the case for the women in this study, as they all mentioned that they felt that their lives were parallel to Whites and really did not compare themselves to them. They did not see race as an issue or a problem until the Civil Rights movement of 1964. By then, they were completing their undergraduate educations.

The Community Influence on Black Identity Development

For all three women in this study, family became the origin of their awareness regarding their strong racial identity. However, another major influence for Sheila and Sue was their exposure to the Black community. Not only did their parents and extended family members lead by example, but their exposure to a strong Black community also aided in their development. For example, Sue indicated, “everything in my community was supportive of building self-confidence and success in the kids of our African American community. It was really a village raising a whole bunch of strong successful Black kids. There are a lot of success stories regarding the kids that grew up in my community.” They both expressed having men and women in their community who were positive role models.
Churches’ Influence on Black Identity Development

In addition to the community’s influence on identity development, the literature identified that one of the greatest sources of strength for African Americans, often at the center of the Black community, is the Black church (Gregory, 1995; Hill, 2003). Sheila and Yolanda explained that the Black church was a source of gaining inner strength and confidence, and that it provided activities to help build self-esteem, values, and stressed the importance of an education.

Having strong connections with their Black families, communities, schools, and churches during their early developmental experiences, each of the participants in this study grew up with a distinct sense of identity as a Black woman. As a result, they developed ways to use their strong Black identity and positive self-esteem to preserve their sense of self during their interactions with the dominant society.

Mothers’ and Grandmothers’ Influence

Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue also recognized the significant role and long-term impact that their mothers and grandmothers had on their self-esteem, strength, and personal development. Each of them credited the women in their lives in helping them define themselves and leading them to becoming strong Black women growing up in a White, male-dominated society. By incorporating what they garnered from their female role models during their youth, they learned ancestral legacies, which aided them in developing resiliency, which ultimately guided their participation in the dominant culture. From the messages, “be the best,” “do the best you can,” and “you are better than anybody else,” they learned to work hard to accomplish their goals and to defy the negative images that surround African American women in society.
Developing African American Support Networks

Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue all came from protective Black environments and attended predominantly Black colleges during their undergraduate studies. As such, they experienced somewhat of a culture shock when they began graduate school. They were among the first to integrate in predominantly White colleges during their graduate studies; therefore, they felt a sense of alienation and isolation that are not uncommon to Black students. In order to eradicate these feelings, they immediately sought out a social network of other Black students attending their schools. Yolanda referred to it as the "Black community," and indicated that as long as you have some kind of community, it works. It was through their Black community, home place, or safe place that they felt engaged, accepted, supported, connected, and encouraged. According to the literature on Black identity development, students develop best where they feel valued, protected, accepted, and socially connected (Tatum, 1997; Cross, 1995).

By establishing their individual support network, Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue were able to maintain a steady pace toward their goal of obtaining a master's and doctorate degree. Each of them accomplished a goal that relatively few African Americans during the time were able to achieve. In describing the experiences of African American women at predominantly White colleges, Lewis (1993), in her study, sums it up eloquently when she noted that “Black women banded together and created a rich, nurturing, social, and intellectual environment which allowed them to be in control of their own educational growth” (p. 79).

Collins (2000) identified various ways that Black women seek safe places: some are in Black women relationships with each other, such as friendships. In some cases, family interactions, Black churches, and Black women sororities are spaces created for resisting
stereotypes and creating a positive identity. Figure 5 identifies the ways that Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue established support networks while attending a predominantly White university. By seeking out other African Americans, they found ways to band together with other Blacks on their campuses and create an environment that ultimately assisted them in controlling their own educational destiny.

Figure 5: Support Networks Established: Maintaining Black Identity/Self-Esteem

Individual Support Networks

Support from family members
Support from friends and sorority

Mentoring

The importance of mentoring and support systems for the success of African Americans in higher education is supported by the literature. Furthermore, researchers identified mentoring as a vital ingredient in the success of faculty and administrators in
higher education (Johnsrud, 1993). Many scholars asserted that mentoring is a means by which senior faculty members can provide moral support, assistance in developing expertise, and guidance in gaining access to resources (Gregory, 1995; Benjamín, 1997; Wenniger & Conroy, 2001; Myers, 2002; Battle & Doswell, 2004; Blackwell, 1989; Turner & Myers, 2000; Moses, 1997). Blackwell (1989) stated “mentoring means using one’s own experiences and expertise to guide the development of others; it is a close interpersonal relationship that offers encouragement and constructive criticism” (p. 429).

Sheila felt that her family served as her mentor network; that combined with her high self-esteem, led her to believe that she did not need an academic mentor. Yolanda’s mentor was a White male who was president at her university; he became involved in mentoring Yolanda after she made tenure. Sue’s mentor was a Black male who was president at her university. Yolanda and Sue’s mentors were instrumental in providing them with the expertise and resources they needed in developing their leadership skills.

Moreover, the support that these women received from their extended families also played a major role in their successes. Even more compelling was how all three continued to develop their careers while integrating work and familial responsibilities. All of the women in this study developed some type of coping strategy to manage family and work conflicts. A salient experience that emerged for all three women was that their marriages ultimately ended in divorce; albeit, they still managed to navigate their way to the college presidency due, in part, to their extended family support networks.

Through the narratives in this study, Sheila, Sue, and Yolanda used their own voices to demonstrate their intellect, how they resisted oppression, and redefined Black womanhood. They indicated that through the encouragement of their churches, schools, communities, and support networks, they developed a strong sense of Black identity, self-
esteem, confidence, strength, and perseverance. Moreover, they learned to work hard, stay focused, and refine their career objectives by being resourceful, persistent, and self-reliant. Ultimately, these qualities assisted them in navigating through future obstacles they encountered as they learned to successfully participate in both Black and White cultures. They learned how to survive not only through their strong will and determination, but through their sense of self and the rejection of the negative images that hinder the success of Black women within the dominant culture. They found through resiliency and self-determination creative strategies to manage obstacles and still emerge as strong Black women. They maintained their positive self definition through the rejection of stereotypes that negatively depict African American women, by finding a safe space, by maintaining strong support networks through their families, mentoring, and in rejecting marginality. All of these methods were employed to preserve their constructed definition of self when their environment became challenging.

Question 3: How Challenges Shaped Leadership Styles

The participants identified several factors as they journeyed to the presidency that shaped them as leaders. According to Valverde (2003), people of color constantly face oppressive forces within many institutions, and those who do become leaders tend to practice transformational leadership. This was the case for Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue as they had to fight being judged by the color of their skin and gender in order to be recognized for their individual accomplishments. They each made conscious decisions to become inclusive leaders, including everyone from the bottom up to develop networks and alliances with their faculty and staff.

In the following analysis, I will use a triangulation of data sources to illustrate the leadership style of each participant. For each case, I present the self-assessed style from
the interviews, followed by notes from my observations, and then by documentary information gleaned from the university Web site, which included biographical information of each president, as well as institutional data regarding the university (Appendix II).

Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue indicated that they were encouraged by family, friends, and colleagues to apply for their president positions. In their interviews, each disclosed that they never set out on their career journey with the aspiration to become a college or university president. Each participant became the first female president in the history of their universities and did not become president until they were in their fifties. Sheila and Yolanda worked twenty-two years in higher education before they obtained their presidential positions. Sue worked in higher education for about ten years prior to her position as president.

Up to this point, Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue demonstrated that they had a strong sense of self and personal empowerment; they challenged themselves to be all they could be, and they knew what they were capable of doing and did not let any obstacles deter them from accomplishing the goals that they established for themselves. It is this personal self-empowerment and inner strength that Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue bring to their current positions as president.

Interview with Sheila

During her interview, Sheila described her management style as that of a transformational leader; she utilized an inclusive leadership style where she incorporated everyone in the decision-making process. In her interview, she stated:
I try to utilize the inclusive leadership style where it does not have to be my way, but the right way. So I try to let people do the job for which they are being paid and use me as a sounding board. I share information, so I find inclusiveness in that when I make decisions; I make them based upon the best light of others, not just myself. I don’t follow people around, but I have high expectations for them, and so my style is to let them perform and let them tell me what’s going on. But, they need to be able to answer the questions, so I’m sort of probing, penetrating. But, I include them in the big decisions that I have to make that might have a bearing on the school, the budget, or whatever. So I like to hear their decisions. I think a leader has to find something good in everyone in her charge, and she has to be a champion for people who can’t speak for themselves. And so, that is the part about being for the underdog. You have to be able to articulate your vision for everybody and for people to understand it and be on board with it. A good leader does not look over the entire group. A leader has to understand that part of their responsibilities for being in charge are to make sure that employees follow the rules, but you do it with humanity; do it with human kindness.

In her narrative, Sheila disclosed that she utilized the input of faculty, staff, and students, before making big decisions that impacted not only her, but the entire institution; thus, including everybody on the campus community. She looks for the good and special talents of all employees, and she believes that she has to treat employees with human kindness; she values them as individuals. Sheila also remembers what it felt like to be an African American female, low-ranking faculty member, and not being treated as an equal at an institution that was predominantly male. Due to her own personal experiences, she made the decision to treat people with human kindness, to value individual performance, to build relationships built on trust, and to give everyone an
opportunity to grow and be heard. Sheila presented an optimistic attitude and looked for what was positive in herself, her employees, and the students. As she indicated during her interview, she stated:

There are lots of gates that we keep here, and so the students have to meet those challenges—and that’s what I love about it here. It prepares them for the challenges they will face in society. Those who come here will get a quality education. They get opportunities to travel. They never did that here before I became president. I have sent students to Germany, Belgium, and all over Europe. I tell them when they come; they have to have an international experience.

When Sheila became president, she had a vision to transform the university, not only structurally, but its faculty, staff, and students. Part of her vision is to elicit strength. She sees herself as the strength for all of her faculty, staff, and students. But, she also feels that she needs to encourage them to do the same for themselves and each other. She indicated in her narrative:

I think basically it (my vision) comes from the strength of the family, and that’s the reason why here at my university; I have to be that strength for the students, and I encourage my faculty and staff to be that also—just be the strength of a family. Because if they don’t have it, it’s doubtful that they will go beyond a mid-level kind of position, they won’t see it for themselves.

In the literature, Hacker and Roberts (2003) noted, “one of many added values of a transformational leader is drawing on inner strength; knowing how to get the most out of self and the internal self is a challenge. Self-mastery is empowerment; knowing yourself, your purpose, vision, and values enables one to lead others” (p. 39). As Sheila indicated,
she knew that she not only had to draw on her own inner strength, but encouraged her faculty, staff, and students to do the same.

Part of Sheila's inner strength comes from being resilient. During her interview, she admitted that it took a lot of energy, risk-taking, and self-esteem to be a transformational president. In her narrative, she stated:

One of the leadership characteristics that I have is resiliency. There are so many crises that come up, and it hits you from everywhere. If it is not one thing, it is another, and you have to be able to not let it take you down, but remain flexible. When things get you down, you find a way to go on. You put a smile on your face and go to the next level. It is a good characteristic to have as a leader, and it is a value I brought from home. You pick it up more and more as you take on more responsibility. Being resilient keeps me in a good state; otherwise, I would be depressed from one moment to the next.

During her interview, Sheila summed up her presidency by explaining:

That spells my presidency, transformation literal university—little college into a university. A college that suffered environmental damage, transformed into a pretty little school. Groups of students who came from places that you would not be able to believe one could come from and to do well and see them go to new and different heights. So I believe I am transformational. My whole presidency has been spent trying to do that, transform something into something else; always for the better. As so, I believe that I am a transformational president.

Popper and Mayseless (2002) explained that "transformational leaders who are both role models and oriented toward the development and encouragement of their followers have a strong motivation to give (a pro-social orientation) and are capable of giving in an
empathetic and sensitive way similar to that of a good parent” (p. 212). This is indicative of Sheila’s leadership characteristics. She was able to encourage, develop, and motivate her faculty, staff, and students by seeing not only what each had to offer and utilizing an inclusive approach, she also made them feel valued. Through her empathy, passion, and sensitivity to others, she was able to help her faculty, staff, and students see their potential.

Observation of Sheila

As one form of triangulation, I juxtaposed the interview data with my observational data of Sheila. In so doing, I was able to gain some insight of Sheila’s transformational leadership style she described in her narrative. Specifically, I observed her leadership style through her interactions with faculty at the presentation I attended. She felt compelled to share her overseas experience providing counsel to a national education program, and encouraged her faculty to participate in a fellowship program that would allow them to go overseas. She knew each faculty member by name, and they appeared very comfortable addressing her. In addition, I observed students who came into the office with ease, and Sheila also addressed them by name. I had the opportunity to meet with faculty who were waiting for their monthly brown bag luncheon, which she hosts with individual departments, and their team members. The purpose of these sessions is to provide faculty and staff an opportunity to discuss issues and concerns with the college president. These sessions also allow Sheila to build a trusting relationship with her faculty and to include them in the decision-making process; thereby alleviating obstacles that might keep them from successfully doing their job, as well as helping them feel valued and important. This forum is an opportunity to have their voice heard on campus.
Documentary Evidence of Sheila

Another source of triangulation was provided through biographical documentation and institutional data collected from the university’s web page (Appendix III). Though Sheila described her leadership style, she did not talk about the many awards and recognition that she received as a result of her leadership that was evident on the university’s web page. For example, she has been recognized as the university’s greatest ambassador, as she was instrumental in securing an unprecedented amount of money from a renowned performing artist, and was responsible for securing millions of dollars in grants. She also recruited the largest number of presidential scholars and honor students in the history of the college, and added many new academic programs; one of the academic programs that she implemented is the only one of its kind in its state. Moreover, she was instrumental in securing several accreditations for the institution. Under her leadership, her university has been recognized as one of the best in the state. Additionally, she was identified as one of the 50th most influential women in her state and received an outstanding leadership award.

Interview with Yolanda

Like Sheila, it was also important for Yolanda to build positive relationships with her faculty, staff, students, and community. She related to them by seeing herself as the product of the university, as well as encouraging her campus community to do the same. She was able to encourage them to grow and accomplish more than what was expected of them and to reach their fullest potential. She convinced her faculty, staff, and students that the roles they played were important in order to become major contributors to the larger mission and purpose of the university. She was able to bring the entire university
together to share a vision, which moved the university into becoming one of the first historically Black colleges and universities equipped with the latest technology. She stated:

I became a real beliver in this institution. I saw myself as a product of it, and I had to sell it. I had to sell my students, my faculty, and my programs, which meant that I had to know what they were, I had to know what we needed next, and I had to look at our weaknesses. Everyone had their own agenda. I had to listen and make sure that we all shared the same mission and that was to educate the students; to raise money to provide the university with critical resources to change the campus landscape; and to offer additional spaces for their academic endeavors, the renovation of buildings, and to provide new academic programs.

One of Yolanda’s visions was to not only transform the university technologically, but to provide the resources for her staff to feel comfortable in an environment that encourages teaching and research in their respective fields. Yolanda also explained in her narrative that it was important to gain the trust and loyalty of her faculty and staff. She knew that without it, she could not take the university to the next level. She had to learn that she couldn’t get anywhere without people supporting her. She had to take “I” out of her vocabulary and turn it into “we.”

Yolanda also felt that several factors have aided her in becoming an effective transformational leader, and one of them is her skill as a labor arbitrator, mediator, and a fact finder. She also noted that going through the academic ranks prepared her to lead effectively.

According to Northouse (2004), “transformational leadership refers to the process whereby an individual engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level
of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower. This type of leader is attentive to the needs and motives of followers and tries to help followers reach their fullest potential” (p. 170). Yolanda exhibited continued support of her faculty, staff, and students. She encouraged them by trying to provide a comfortable educational environment that fostered growth through teaching and research. By being supportive of her faculty’s needs, her students benefited by receiving the latest technology, having additional new programs to choose from, and receiving an outstanding education. Under her tenure as president, Yolanda’s institutions gained worldwide recognition as being one of the best liberal arts colleges in the South. Popper and Mayseless (2002) noted, “one of the major characteristics attributed to transformational leaders is their ability to present a vision, a future goal, or a new direction, to demonstrate their enthusiasm about their vision and to inspire others to share the vision” (p. 212). Yolanda was instrumental in inspiring her faculty, staff, and students to share her vision, and, in so doing, was able to take the university to new heights.

Observation of Yolanda

As one form of triangulation in the analysis, I juxtaposed the interview data with my observational data of Yolanda. In so doing, I was able to gain some insight of Yolanda’s transformational leadership style that she described in her narrative. Specifically, as a participant observer, I had the opportunity to speak with a staff member who mentioned how the university has changed tremendously since Yolanda took over the helm, and that for the first time in its history, it has national recognition and cohesiveness among the faculty, staff, and students. He mentioned that Yolanda has her finger on the pulse of the university and is very involved, regularly speaking with students in the dining halls,
attending football games, and meeting with staff and faculty. He spoke very positively about Yolanda’s leadership and displayed pride in having her as a president. Yolanda ultimately transformed a university that was struggling financially, technologically, and academically into one that is not only a top liberal arts college in the South, but one that is also nationally recognized.

Documentary Evidence of Yolanda

Another source of triangulation was provided through biographical documentation and institutional data collected from the university’s web page (Appendix III). Yolanda’s vision for the university and her goal to become a product of it and move it forward were evident on the university’s web page. For example, one of Yolanda’s accomplishments as a leader is through the recognition the university received by the *U.S. News and World Report* as one of America’s best colleges. Her vision included providing the resources, the freedom, and the environment which made it possible for professors to teach and do research in their respective fields. As a result, the students were able to acquire a quality education, which has gained national recognition. She has also been a role model for her students, faculty, and staff as evident by her numerous leadership awards. She received the Twentieth Century Educator award, W.E.B. DuBois Award, and the Maya Angelou Torchbearer Award in Education, to name just a few.

As a result of her tremendous fund-raising ability, Yolanda raised millions of dollars for her university, and was heralded as one of the best fundraisers, nationally. She is also credited with becoming the first HBCU to issue laptops to their students and providing state of the art technology in the classrooms. Additionally, she led the university during a three-year period of strategic planning in technology and faculty/staff development,
resulting in an integrated approach to a liberal arts higher education. As a result, Yolanda now has a highly-qualified faculty, and admissions applications to her university have tripled. During her tenure, the amount that her university received from grants also tripled, allowing her to award incentives to faculty for producing funded proposals. In addition to her leadership in educational reform, are the renovation and construction of state-of-the-art facilities. This is evident in the new technology center, library, track/stadium, and academic complex that have recently been constructed.

Interview with Sue

Sue started off on a different footing as the first female president. She remarked in her narrative:

It’s very difficult being the first female and following a male who had been president for twenty-eight years. It is hard to follow a long-sitting president. One of the things I tell people all the time is that you have got to understand the dynamics of following a long-sitting president—it’s very different than coming behind a president that has been here only four or five years. The standing president creates a community of people who were used to doing things a certain way. So, they are either delighted that you are going to follow what he did, or absolutely hate you, if you didn’t.

I inherited an institution that had the reputation of being stellar. So, when I got here, I found out that was not true. So, in order to survive it, I had to reveal some of it. I had to make some decisions that were very controversial because we were sliding down the tubes. By the time I got here, it was bottoming out, and given that I was the first female and do not have a shrinking lily personality, I was an easy target for the naysayers of the community.
As a result, Sue had to work hard to transform the culture. She felt that the first things she needed to focus on were captivating the local community and changing the Board of Regents to act as more of a governing board. Sue, like Sheila and Yolanda, sees herself as a visionary, “I am able to think outside the box, I can see ten, fifteen, and twenty years down the road.” She feels that being a visionary is an important distinction between management and leadership.

In her narrative, she related:

I am a visionary, and I am strategic. I am results-oriented, which I think is necessary. But, I don’t think I am necessarily results-driven. I see the outcomes, and I understand what I want the outcomes to be. But, I don’t like to do the details to get there.

In order to transform her university, Sue needed to motivate the faculty, staff, and students. She needed to build a team of administrators and faculty that could assist her with her vision for the university. As such, Sue stated:

Probably the greatest strength I have is the ability to build a team. I think I have incredible insight into putting together teams that are effective and efficient. I am a quick judge of character and competency. I am able to put together the kinds of teams that make me look successful. And I am not threatened by people who have been around for awhile. If I find out you can do the job, in a way in which I would have done it myself, and then I leave you alone. I will provide opportunities for you to grow, get the experience—the whole bit. I tell people come and work for me. Don’t come and work for me forever and a day. Come to work for me to build your own signature. I don’t expect you to retire; I want you to develop. If my staff develops and
grows and moves on to become successful, that makes me look good, and I am ok with that style of leadership. My expectations for my faculty and staff are high.

Popper and Mayseless (2002) noted that another characteristic of a transformational leader is the “ability to help their followers think differently and be creative and original” (p. 214). Intellectual stimulation is one of the factors of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In order to promote intellectual stimulation, the leader must be creative, open, and encouraging of others to so the same. According to Popper and Mayseless (2002), “transformational leaders are also very confident in their abilities and willingness to explore the unknown” (p. 214).

With confidence, Sue explored the unknown when she became the first Black female president to follow a long-serving male president. To her dismay, the tone had been set for twenty-eight years, and now, she took on the daunting task of having to change the institutional culture. She started by cultivating a team of talented people who could use their intellect and creativity to help her turn the university around. She also provided her faculty and staff with opportunities to develop themselves to their fullest potential. Bass and Avolio (1994) explain that transformational leaders are concerned with the performance of their followers. As a result, they assist in developing them to their fullest potential. Transformational leaders also have a strong set of internal values and ideals and are effective in motivating others to support the greater good of the institution, rather than their own self-interests. Sue not only motivated her faculty and staff, but she also had high expectations to achieve more than they could in their own self-interest. Northouse (2004) uses the term “inspirational motivation” to describe a factor used by transformational leaders (p. 175). He further explained that “this factor is descriptive of a leader who communicates high expectations of their followers, inspiring them through
motivation to become committed to and part of the shared vision of the organization” (pp. 175-176).

Sue admitted that becoming a leader was not an easy task, as she indicated that a good leader needs to be patient and tolerant. But, she was not always that way. In her narrative, she explained:

I had a real impatience and intolerance for people who did not get things done fast enough. Sometimes, that has created the best and worst in life for me. I didn’t wait for the variable to equalize or certain kinds of things to happen. I am goal-oriented and results-oriented.

However, Sue realized that she had to learn to pick her battles. She stated:

I found out that it is not always about being right, sometimes it is just about making people feel good. I think I catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. I can appreciate the value in that.

By inspiring her faculty and staff and by making them feel worthy and valued, she was able to change the culture. She remarked:

It’s about changing people’s mindsets and changing people’s behavior. It is about undoing old ways of practice. I am the person responsible for facilitating that change. It is about taking a risk. You don’t know how difficult it is, or what great lengths people would go to protect what is their safe environment.

Observation Evidence of Sue

As one form of triangulation, I juxtaposed the interview data with my observational data of Sue. In so doing, I was able to gain a more in-depth insight into Sue’s transformational leadership style. Specifically, I observed how open her office was to
students and faculty, who came in at random. On occasion, the president’s office became crowded with students who were working on projects or attending meetings. Sue addressed the students by name as she passed them by, whether it was in the hallways or her office. I could see that Sue fostered a very open and inclusive environment for faculty, staff, and students to be able to voice their concerns and work together, which was evident by how they felt comfortable coming in and out of her office to speak with her when she was available. It was apparent that Sue had managed to build a trusting relationship between her faculty, staff, and students. Sue had also developed a very positive environment in which the entire campus not only works together, but exhibits pride and confidence in their university and president.

Documentary Evidence of Sue

Another source of triangulation was provided through biographical documents and institutional data collected from the university Web site (Appendix III). The documents assessed provided further evidence that Sue’s vision and tenacity has resulted in notable achievements and accomplishments of her leadership goals. In spite of some resistance to change from constituents when she took over the helm as president, she has held steadfast in staying the course designed to improve and enhance the status of the university. For example, she improved the infrastructure, met accreditation standards, both retention and graduation rates improved significantly, enrollment is at an all-time high, and she introduced four new majors of study, and expanded the university’s overall visibility across the country. In addition to transforming the university, Sue also serves on several national boards, most notably, President Bush’s Board of Advisors to the White House
Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the United Negro College Fund, and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

In essence, the data analysis demonstrates that Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue are all transformational leaders. Utilization of this type of leadership was especially important in being chosen as the first Black female presidents at their institutions because it enabled them to change their campus climates to ones that were inclusive and supportive. According to Wenniger and Conroy (2001), “a transformational leadership style enables a mission to be redefined and helps members of the organization to renew their commitment and to restructure systems to accomplish goals; its primary tools are collaboration and relationship building” (pp. 272-273). Valverde (2003) asserts that “for those strong persons who do choose to work to create a better campus for all types, then the leadership style they will need to practice is transformational” (p. 52).

Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue are strong, pioneering Black women who took their challenges head-on and became not only the first African American women presidents of their universities, but also took on the incredible tasks of changing their institutions’ cultures. They had to substantially change their institution, its mission, structure, policies, and procedures. They accomplished this goal by allowing the faculty, staff, and students to actively participate in developing new ways of doing things, and having a say in decision making, encouraging growth, empowering faculty and staff to perform their best, and providing the necessary support and resources. All the participants acknowledged the value of building relationships based on trust and valuing individual performance. Their rational for transforming their universities were to make them more relevant, accommodating, and welcoming.
Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue internalized a strong sense of self during their childhood and, thus, developed a high self-esteem and confidence that aided them in overcoming obstacles as they journeyed to the presidency. Transformational leaders' success hinges on the development of self-efficacy, which may be defined as a generalized self-perception on the domain of leadership (Kark & Shamire, 2001). As a result, they are able to align the organization and empower people with a vision, maintain trust, communicate effectively, and encourage creativity and learning (Oden, 1999).

From the participants' interviews, observations, and supporting documents, I was able to gain insight that assisted in addressing their leadership style. As a result, I used the contributing factors of a transformational leadership style identified by the participants, as well as those drawn and taken from the supporting documents and observations, to illuminate their definition of a transformational leadership style.

According to Wenniger and Conroy (2001), transformational leaders are “social architects who must develop a new vision and a set of blueprints for moving the institution toward that vision” (p. 262). By becoming the first African American women to become presidents of their universities, Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue had to work hard in aiding their faculty, staff, students, and governing boards to let go of the past and look toward their vision for the future. They became social architects in renovating and rehabilitating their institutions, which were used to an existing organizational structure that was traditionally governed by men.

By practicing transformational leadership, each participant acknowledged the value of individual performance, building trusting relationships, operating in a democratic manner, equalizing resources, frequently exchanging information, allowing for individual growth, and accepting that change is constant. Through the use of these practices, their
faculty, staff, and students, benefit from equal treatment, an opportunity to be heard, and being judged on their performance—not stereotyped perceptions. They were concerned with the emotions, values, and input of others. As such, these three women believed in treating people with human kindness and finding something good in everyone.

Each participant felt that these tenants were necessary to create a better university. For example, they were able to take their university to the next level by improving the infrastructure on their campuses and increasing academic standards, performance, and technology. They each rewarded talent and inspired their faculty, staff, and students to reach the top, and to one day, see themselves as leaders.

Their effort to transform the university was to focus on the students and serve the community. They worked at making the university more welcoming, accommodating, academically challenging, and relevant. In this manner, all students, regardless of color, will become successful, and, in turn, the university will not only prepare students academically to represent the university and become future leaders of tomorrow, but to better serve society as well. Overall, their goal was to bring along the next generation of African Americans to become productive members of society, to better their institutions, and to serve their local communities. Each of the participants were strong transformational leaders because they knew how to delegate and motivate; they were resilient role models, motivated, focused, determined, positive, and disciplined. In short, they were able to create a sense of community and to inspire all who worked and lived within the community to be successful (see Table 5).
Table 5: Identifies Data Pertaining to Presidents' Views of Leadership Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformational Leadership Style</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Trusting Relationships</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering Collaboration among Faculty, Staff and Students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treating Faculty, Staff and Students with Kindness</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Door Policy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets with Staff, Faculty and Students Regularly</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned with Emotions Values and Input of Others</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacts with Faculty, Staff and Students Regularly</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved infrastructure</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Enrollment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added New Programs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Endowments</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Academic Rankings</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Visibility</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spirituality

In the literature, spirituality is mentioned as one of the major themes that African American women utilize for survival and strength. As such, they feel that all experiences have spiritual meaning and significance (Peterson, 1992). Hacker and Roberts (2003) stated, “when a leader seizes upon this belief with conviction, the workplace will take on a collective meaning; when spirit is engaged in the daily work, transformation becomes a possibility” (p. 35). Only Sheila and Sue talked about the importance of spirituality and how it played a role in their success, with Sheila being the most vocal about her spiritual strength. According to Denby (2002), “spirituality can be manifested in a belief structure of perpetual optimism and the ability to recover from adversity” (pp. 33-34). Sheila eloquently explained how her spirituality, in many ways, kept her optimistic and assisted her in balancing what she described as her long suffering with joy. Sue felt that no matter what her experiences were, whether they were positive or negative, they had prepared her for the next one and attributed to her strong sense of spirituality that drives her positive attitude. She felt that, in some respect, God had a purpose for her and that purpose was to become president of a higher education institution.

Essence of the Experience

As can be noted through the cross-case analysis (Table 6), the three participants had similar experiences relating to their family background, their educational experiences, and their leadership styles. While these similarities existed, the essence of their experiences varied, as were detailed in-depth in the individual chapters.

For Sheila, the individual essence of her experiences was resiliency, Yolanda’s was emphasized through her Black identity, and Sue’s was through her unyielding self-
confidence. However, the women in this study shared a common essence of their overall experiences as they journeyed to become university presidents; they felt that they were spiritually given a purpose to uplift the Black race. Like the pioneering Black women who started their own schools as a means to uplift their race, Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue, standing on the shoulders of those pioneers who came before them, are attempting to accomplish the same goal with a new generation of African Americans who live in very different times. Though they have it easier, the context of racism and sexism has not changed, and, as a result, the participants in this study felt compelled to not only be role models, but to encourage the next generation to be all that they can be; to become future leaders without excuses and to transmit the same sense of strong Black identity, self-esteem, and resiliency that they learned from their upbringing.

Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue attempted to accomplish this by creating a campus community that was family-oriented. Each of them became personally involved to ensure that the students attending their universities were successful; they created an environment where staff and faculty all became involved in monitoring, nurturing, and mentoring each student, but with the same tough love that they received at home. They provided resources and community networks to assist students in their academic and professional journeys. In essence, they all wanted each of their students to go out and make a difference, to challenge themselves to do all the things that they can do in this world to make a better place for future generations of Black Americans, and bring the next generation along to become productive, intellectual, future leaders.
Table 6: Emerging Themes from Cross-Case Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sheila</th>
<th>Yolanda</th>
<th>Sue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Background/Influence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black identity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive familial female role models</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsider within knowledge of White culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended segregated public schools</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of the Black Church</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encountered segregation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black community</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Experiences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's/Grandmother's influence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uplift race</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a HBCU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate college experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a PWI</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encounters with racism</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed support networks</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Path After Bachelors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediately started a family</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediately start graduate school</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediately started on career track</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Career Path to Presidency</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional academic career path</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Traditional academic career path</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Career Experiences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender/racial discrimination</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality/sexual harassment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of collegiality</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced within-group racism</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors/support systems</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Style</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essence of the Experience</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uplift Race</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</table>

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Summary

In this chapter, through comparison of cases and analysis, I examined the professional pathway of the three participants in the study. From the across-case analysis, the seven categories were viewed as structuring the themes that emerged from the data only, and were not designed to be evaluated into self-contained compartments or generalized to all African American women in higher education.

Literature was also reviewed that described theoretical and conceptual frameworks that expanded the understanding of the influences of family background, the communities where the participants grew up, segregation, Black identity development, educational experience, professional career path, leadership style, and the essence of their experiences. The themes, along with the sub-themes, provided insight into understanding the paths that the three women took to arrive at their presidencies.

Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue were strong Black women who, like the pioneer women who came before them, showed courage, strength, resiliency, and determination to overcome racism and sexism. Their individual identities were shaped early on in childhood with the nurturing, love, and care of their parents and kin. They grew up with a strong Black identity and pride for who they are and survived and persevered through the effects of segregation, integration, and the Civil Rights movement.

Overview

The uniqueness of each participant’s experiences that shaped their identities was discussed through oral narratives in chapters 4, 5, and 6. According to Patai (1988), “life stories range across many themes and moods and, therefore, do not fit comfortably into narrow categories. Indeed, no perfect way exists either to gather or to present life stories,
and the ease with which criticisms can be made on methodological grounds should be self-evident” (p. 17). Thus, the merit of telling the three participants’ stories in narrative form was to let the reader see, or in effect, hear, for themselves a sense of who each of the participants were and how they evolved. As Tedlock (1983) noted, “oral narratives usually evoke, rather than describe emotions, and they evoke, rather than describe, the cultural context within which the speakers’ lives are lived” (p. 51).

It is my hope that the life experiences of each woman in this study evoked an emotional reality of the complexity of being an African American woman in society and higher education. Through providing the reader with an historical context that grounds this complexity, I hope to raise the consciousness about how race and gender have socially constructed the images of women of color as a whole, but specifically, African American women. As Collins (2000) noted, African American women’s experiences simultaneously reflect the problems faced by other groups of oppressed people; yet, it is also their unique history that must be explained in its own right. In addition, by looking across the cases, I was able to illustrate the commonalities in their experiences, so as to demonstrate that their individual experiences, woven together, produce a mosaic that can serve to inspire others.
CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the implications of the literature pertaining to the experiences of African American women in higher education, one might conclude that experiences of the women in this study are much the same as their contemporaries in the 21st century academy. Black women today have better political, economic, social and academic access, and opportunities guaranteed to them under federal law, compared to the women in this study.

For most young Black citizens in the many generations of the United States prior to the end of the 1940s, the grand idea of a college education was not within their reach. Previously, the halls of higher education were a realm accessible only to the wealthiest of American children who were members of the dominant culture. This was especially true within the Black community, where higher education was primarily the birthright of the elitist bloodlines.

As mentioned in the literature review, one of the elements that provided immense higher education opportunities for African Americans was the original GI Bill in 1944 (United States Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). Over the next twelve years, the GI Bill would send over 7.8 million veterans to colleges and universities across our nation. The dedicated Black students rising from within these ranks usually held employment, while attending college, and brought with them the desire to move ahead in our society.
through hard work and the sheer willpower to persevere in an oftentimes hostile educational climate (United States Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.).

The three major events that propelled the greatest numbers of African Americans into colleges were the GI Bill of 1944, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Higher Education Act of 1965. All three legal manifestations set the stage for the largest influx of minorities into higher academia known to date. It was, in essence, in what I consider the Great Black Education Migration. This wave of newly-educated Black men and women, among them the parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles of the participants in the study, served as catalysts for Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue, as they contemplated their future academic excellence, while still in childhood.

This influence on many Black families raising children in the 1950s and 1960s, created an expectation for their offspring to attend college, which was not so much an exception, but the rule. As a result, children and young adults of the period displayed an adaptability to accept the existence of hardships of daily life in an America with race, gender, and class biases instilled by the existing power structure, yet, it did not hinder them from excelling both academically and professionally. Education was then perceived as a venue through which the American dream could be achieved by nearly anyone. An entire postmodern culture of African Americans raised their children to desire a standard of academic excellence previously unthinkable during the American experience of their African descendents.

At this juncture in the history of Black America, an inherent cultural standard was adopted in which most excuses for failure to complete a collegiate degree were found to be unacceptable. Additionally, any sacrifices which needed to be made in order for one to
acquire a college education, such as working while studying, were viewed as normal. Race, gender, and class offered no credible hindrance for failure. It is this climate of higher purpose that fostered, among others, the strong, determined, creative, and resilient women who have been the hallmark of my study.

From the menial labor positions in the years before the war, these Black men and women became the physicians, engineers, lawyers, White-collar employees, and educators who would inspire their children's generation to greatness. Like an Olympic torch flame, which is created from the cauldron of fire in the previous Olympic Games, this inceptive torch of higher education attainment was ignited for the average African American young person. These offspring of America's economic halcyon years included Sheila, Sue, and Yolanda.

Resilience is a mindset that manifests itself as the capacity to struggle with hardship and "accumulating small successes that occur side by side with failures, setbacks, and disappointments" (Project Resilience, 1996). The race, gender, and class of Yolanda, Sheila, and Sue may have permitted lesser women to reason that they would not be able to survive the many challenges that would litter their paths to the lofty administrative offices of academia. However, these proud, iron-willed women excelled both academically and professionally in a well-established power structure of the academy that did not offer many images of themselves in administrative positions or in faculty positions outside of historically Black colleges and universities.

As referred to in the literature review, specific traits usually display themselves as inherent "internal" processes in persons who are said to be "resilient." These traits manifest themselves as "feelings of confidence and self-worth" (Jones & Gooden, 2003,
An internal protective factor in a resilient individual is the ability to take control, be proactive, and make decisions about what to do rather than letting things happen to them. Often, markers of endurance tend to be coupled with the ambitious, loving, and goal-oriented family structures of their childhoods. However, we must not undervalue the ongoing emotional pain that is often the long-term effect of difficulty and hardship. It is our acknowledgement that such pain and sorrow have been overcome, which magnifies the achievements of these three great women. As the expected goal of higher education fulfillment had been passed to them, they took up the responsibility with enthusiasm, ignoring those who felt that they could not achieve their goals simply based on misperceptions and stereotypes of their race, gender, or class.

Although this research alone cannot provide the academy with an approach to eliminate institutionalized racism and sexism, the findings suggest that there are effective strategies that can be employed by successful African American women who ascend to administrative positions in higher education. Additionally, the results lifted the veil of substantial discrimination, which not only existed in the past, but according to the literature, manifests itself identically in the academy today. Moreover, from a historical perspective, we are better able to understand the significance of Black women’s struggles in a contemporary context. The following discussion of implications for practice centers on strategies that African American women can use to overcome the obstacles they face in higher education. Also, how the academic community can begin to acknowledge the unique experiences of women of color, and, in turn, offer educators an awareness to identify the specific barriers encountered by Black women within the academy.
Implications

The purpose of this study was to unfold the journeys of three African American women in the positions of college and university presidents, along with their history, educational preparation, career paths, and experiences. An important step toward understanding the perceived obstacles they encountered during their journey was to examine the events in their lives that shaped their personal identities, which subsequently influenced them to overcome the challenges they faced. During data collection and analysis, it became obvious that who these women are today, lies within the context of their upbringing and development of a strong Black identity, self-esteem, stellar determination, persistence, confidence, and sense of self. Developing these characteristics was not an easy feat, especially given the historical roles and social constructs that race have played in shaping the lives of Blacks in the United States.

The experiences of the African American women in this study indicate that race and gender is the background canvas that their academic encounters were etched upon. At times, race and gender operated both collectively and independently to shape and influence their experiences. Because of the long history of discrimination of Blacks in America, particularly the unique history of the severe oppression of Black women, it is conceivable that traces of deep-rooted sexist and racist ideologies permeate institutions of higher education. As a result, a tradition of negativity surrounds African American women, they are viewed as unintelligent, and incapable of making a serious contribution in higher education; this interpretation is supported by the literature (Gregory, 1995; Benjamin, 1997; Collins, 2000; Myers, 2002; Moses, 1997; Morton, 1991; Williams, 2001; Alfred, 2001). How the social constructs of race and gender operated was
dependent upon a particular situation or circumstance in the experiences of Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue.

Even though they grew up during a more volatile historical context surrounding race relations in the United States, the challenges they encountered remain the same today. The narratives of the women in this study revealed that they encountered obstacles, such as racism, sexism, being viewed as less intelligent, having to work harder, being called racial slurs, as well as being the spokesperson for their race and marginalization of research. Later, as they began their careers, the challenges they were presented with varied, but nevertheless, race and gender remained the backdrop of their experiences.

Race, class, and gender oppression continue because of the negative stereotypes and images of African American women that perpetuate the dominant group’s ideology of Black women as inferior. As a result, predominantly White institutions have been shaped and influenced by race relations in the United States, and because the academy is a microcosm of the larger society, made up of members of the dominant majority and minority groups, it stands to reason that negative stereotypes in regard to people of color also exist within higher education. Knowing this, the narratives of Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue revealed some of the strategies they employed as they journeyed to the presidency. By being aware of the dominant group’s preconceived negative images of African American women, Black women need to develop a strategy to become successful in higher education. The participants in the study, through their narratives, afford the reader these strategies:

1. Through the awareness that racism and sexism exist in institutions of higher education, Black women must have realistic expectations of how it effects them.
Black women must not develop a pessimistic attitude, but rather, acknowledge that racism and sexism exist and set forth to deal with both. The women in this study, as well as the review of the literature, indicated that Black women will have to work harder than their White counterparts to prove themselves as competent students, professors, and administrators. Though it may not seem fair, knowing this will minimize the impact of the experiences encountered and allow for African American women to stay the course.

2. Because institutions of higher education are comprised of individuals in society who may continue to harbor negative perceptions and stereotyped images of African American women, it is important for Black women to remain resilient, maintain their innate dignity, have a strong sense of self-worth about themselves and their intellectual abilities, and to not let others define them.

3. For African American women in higher education, it is important to oppose active assaults on one’s self-esteem and self-worth. By establishing a support network where one is valued and respected, it becomes easier to resist the potential of internalizing the negative racial and gender stereotypes encountered in the academy.

4. Even though it is evident by the women’s narratives in this study, as well as the literature, that racism and sexism are very real problems for African American women, it is important that racism does not effect Black women personally. Instead of regarding racism and sexism as obstacles, they need to learn how to change how the issues are perceived. For example, instead of viewing them as structures built to bar their passage to success in higher education, interpret them
as challenges that can be overcome, personally and professionally. They must acknowledge the reality that racism and sexism still do exist, and they must continue to move forward without losing their cultural identity.

5. The literature, as well as the participants in this study, supported the importance of mentorship. African American women may need to seek mentorship in their universities. If not available within their departments or division, it may be necessary to seek out individuals throughout the campus community, regardless of race or gender, to assist them in meeting their professional needs.

Climbing the academic ladder in higher education is a challenge for women of color. Therefore, it is necessary for Black women to approach their academic career with a strategic plan. In order to build a competitive strategy, it is important to develop a long-range plan which builds on one’s strengths, analyze the competition, and analyze the type of institution you are interested in working for. It is important to develop a goal, know what the essentials will be in order to attain that goal, have a timeline, and be flexible to change. Thus, self-analysis, having a clear perspective of your limitations, strengths, and developing a strategic plan to accomplish one’s goals is a great way to start the academic journey to the presidency. As Atwater (1995) eloquently noted during the “journey toward tenure and other promotions as well as long-term job satisfaction, it is important that African American women maintain self-confidence because this will help transform predominantly White research institutions” (p. 285).

Considerable discussion continues regarding the need to create a more diverse and inclusive campus environment. To assist not only African American women, but all women of color in becoming successful in their academic departments, senior level
administrators may need to develop a university-wide support program for faculty of color. Support could come from developing a mentorship program, as well as professional development opportunities. In addition, administrators at predominantly White universities could benefit from increasing the numbers of African American women faculty and administrators. Increased numbers will hopefully eliminate marginality, the feeling of tokenism and isolation, and allow for a more open and inclusive campus climates where everyone is exposed to faculty of color. This may, in turn, begin to break down some of the negative stereotypes, not only exhibited by faculty, but students as well. It will also provide for positive role models for students of color, thus encouraging them to seek careers in higher education. It is not enough to simply tolerate diversity; it must be embraced and accepted.

In summation, I recommend a two-tier plan of inclusion and diversity enhancement to include the following:

1. Administrators, faculty, and staff can benefit from making an acknowledgement that the social construction of racism, sexism, and classism do exist within the institution of higher education. Consequently, they may begin to implement strategies to ensure that this vast group receives the appropriate inclusion and diversity training. These mechanisms will assist them in obtaining an awareness of the challenges faced by all racial groups and explanation of their inherent cultural norms. Additionally, there should be an increase in the numbers of women and minority faculty members, as well as minority students.

2. Faculty can approach diversity and inclusion training with an open mind. Hence, faculty members may become aware of their individual biases and preconceived
ideas regarding people of color. In addition, faculty can implement multiculturalism into their curriculum in order to foster a more acceptant educational environment comprised of diverse groups.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study was undertaken in an effort to understand the perceived challenges faced by the African American women in this study, how they overcame those challenges, and how their challenges shaped them as leaders. A crucial step toward that understanding was examining the life events that shaped them as Black women and how those events influenced them as they journeyed to become university and college presidents. During the data collection, a strong sense of Black identity that developed during childhood became the canvas in which these women not only defied the oppressive negative images of Black womanhood, but became essential in developing their strong sense of self, self-esteem, determination, and resiliency. The context of their identities is pivotal to understanding the influence that race and gender had on their academic roles and how they overcame the effects of both. Through exploring the life experiences of Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue, I have made a concerted effort to provide a clearer understanding of events that explained how the participants in this study managed to become successful, despite the historical contexts in which they were raised and the obstacles that they faced in higher education. Based on the analysis of the data and the discussion of the results, the recommendations for future research include the following:
1. Since the study was limited to only three African American female college and university presidents, I recommend future studies be conducted with a larger sample of participants in order to verify the findings.

2. African American women presidents were selected from historically Black colleges. It would be helpful if additional research were conducted on Black women presidents employed at predominantly White and private institutions in order to gauge how their experiences and Black identities may play a role in leading predominantly White faculty, staff, and students.

3. As discussed earlier in the study, limited empirical research is currently available regarding the experiences of African American females in higher education. This study raised a distinct awareness of how Black identity development is influenced in the Black women who participated in this study. However, additional research is needed on Black identity development in women because how one constructs their personal identity prior to entering higher education, largely determines how they will manage their academic roles and the experiences they may encounter. The ideal study would examine the voices of African American women through a theoretical or conceptual framework that depicts the lived experiences of African American women in higher education.

4. The narratives of the African American women in this study indicated that they encountered issues pertaining to their race and gender when they attended predominantly White universities during their graduate experience. Even though they were the first Black females to attend graduate school after the Civil Rights movement, in the literature review, I discussed ongoing obstacles that people of
color continue to face in higher education due to racism and sexism. However, the voices of White faculty and administrators have not been heard. Therefore, I recommend that future studies include interviews with White colleagues of African American women faculty and administrators to better understand what their experiences and concerns are regarding African American women in academe.

5. Another area warranting research is exploring the experiences of both Black and White women as they journeyed to the presidency. For example, how did family background play a role in the identity development of White women? Did they encounter sexism, and if so, how did it shape their experiences and leadership styles? A study of this type may increase the understanding through a comparative analysis of how the constructs of race, class, and gender influenced the academic experiences of African American women and how gender created challenges for both races. In other words, this type of study may paint a clearer picture of the varying experiences of both White women and Black women in higher education.

6. Though limited, various studies have been done detailing the obstacles that African American women face in higher education, which paints a dismal and hopeless reaction for other African American women who may aspire toward careers within the walls of the academy. However, little research exists regarding the success of African American women in academe, especially in top administrative positions. More research needs to be conducted on the success of African American women in higher education and what factors contributed to their success.
7. This study can also be expanded to include women of African descent on an international level in various continents in order to increase an understanding of the fundamental challenges and experiences that may be faced by women of African descent worldwide in higher education. The study can further expand to include a comparative analysis to African American women.

8. Finally, I recommend that additional research be conducted to understand how specifically, the constructs of race, social class status, and gender influences the academic experiences of African American women.

Concluding Remarks

After giving careful consideration to the research for this dissertation, it appears that systems remain in place which maintain race, class, and gender hierarchies. Stereotypes pertaining to people of color are perpetuated by the various institutions within which all Americans interact daily. These well-entrenched social roles maintain obstacles for women and people of color. Do not underestimate the role that higher education plays in reproducing cultural biases. Research that examines the impact of race and gender stereotypes has indicated that African American women are at the bottom of the social ladder, outside of and within the academy (Gregory, 1997; Berry & Mizelle, 2006; Thompson & Louque, 2005; Mabokela & Green, 2001; Jones & Gooden, 2003; Rothenberg, 2007).

Given the research from the literature, this dissertation, and an in-depth, long-term study of this topic overall, along with my own personal experiences, I have concluded that the barriers of racism and sexism remain. Because the archaic dogma of Jim Crow
laws and social mandates are now considered to be ‘politically incorrect’ among polite
public company, racist thought and its innate agenda have had to go underground. Black
women today have better political, economic, social and academic access, and
opportunities guaranteed to them under federal law, compared to the women in this study.
However, the barriers of racism and sexism remain. Modern-era Jim Crow laws still exist
by covert agreement and may be carried out with consequences that could be damaging to
people of color today as they were prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Water fountains
and other physical amenities in the hallowed halls of academia do not carry signs of
WHITE ONLY. However, the path to the offices of college and university presidents for
women of color is littered with these unwritten and unspoken academic roadblocks.
Professional minefields are proffered aplenty for the aspiring minority academic
administrator. Consequently, people of color and Black women, in particular, still spend
their entire careers creatively side-stepping silent Jim Crow laws.

As a socially constructed and maintained institution, the academy is silently harboring
racist ideals of European-Anglo supremacy, along with a dogged determination to hold
Black women and other people of color in check, despite their racial groups’ obvious
contributions to this country and their individual natural talent displayed within the walls
of higher education. The results of this study lead me to ponder: are Black women
pursuing doctoral degrees and positions in the administration in higher education still
treated with the same supremacist disdain as they would have found at any cross-burning
and lynching carried out by White supremacists, in Mississippi, in 1956?

Think of the emotional turmoil suffered by a Black woman standing by, watching her
husband being lynched, with tears running down her face as she gathers her children
around her, whereby she realizes to lash out, to be vocal, to scream for mercy, may endanger her children's lives and their future as well. The same could be said for today's Black woman in the academy, as she must be careful about what she says and how she reacts to modern racism, lest she destroy her own future and career in academia; silence is golden. The emotional burden imposed on targets of color remain, the denial of a pursuit of personal happiness through hard work and demonstrated talent have not changed, and the message is every bit as clear to Black women in academia in 2006; like the mammy during slavery: follow directions, ask no questions, do not complain, and stay in your place!

Such sexist and racist disdain continues to infect many personal, professional, and faculty and administrative relationships with Black women in higher education. This infection results from the classic controlling images assigned to Black women in this country since slavery: inferior, the mammy, the jezebel, the matriarch, and the modern-day hoochie. The resulting modern perceptions of Black women are, no doubt, tainted with such imagery that is still reinforced in our society tens of thousands of times each day by 21st century mass media, and verified through independent research, as well as the individual experiences of Black women in the academy.

The academy uses covert methods of discrimination to perpetuate their own sophisticated agenda of denying administrative ascension to people of color. The research demonstrates that some within the academy use their positions of power to maintain the status quo. In such a Willie Lynch-inspired world, opportunities for advancement belong only to those who share their racial heritage. Research (Collins, 2000; Thompson & Louque, 2005; Moses, 1997; Battle & Doswell, 2005; Berry & Mizelle; 2006; Myers,
2002; Benjamin, 1997) has indicated that the power structure of higher education perceives women of color as a threat to their orderly universe... I mean university. Higher education was the last to comply with affirmative action and the first to say that we do not need it any longer, hence the recent Supreme Court battle in Grutter vs. Bollinger (02-241, 539 U.S. 306 (2003). Race and gender 'relations' in higher education have been somewhat mollified through affirmative action, but its greatest beneficiaries have historically been White women (Public Affairs, n.d.). This still does not resolve the problems of how Black women are treated in the academy. We are continually forced to do the Jim Crow side-step shuffle.

Knowing that these are the silent struggles facing Black women in academia, we, as individuals, and collectively, must remain true to ourselves and the dignity of our lineage, as demonstrated by the women in this study. Many millions of Black women have lived entire lives of retched persecution, and some have perished to put my generation on the path to become a president of a university. And while a few African American women have succeeded in becoming presidents at predominantly White universities, the fact remains that barriers still exist that will maintain such low numbers. It is only through the power of self-definition, a collective voice, and integrity that African American women in academia continue to use the strategies employed by the three women examined in this study of perseverance, inner strength, self-determination, strong Black identity and resiliency, to not only resist the negative, controlling images of Black womanhood, but to maintain our presence within the academy for the benefit of the next generation. Therefore, we women of color continue to move through the academy, with the music playing in our heads, as we perform the silent Jim Crow shuffle.
Sheila, Yolanda, and Sue knew that through administrative positions in higher education, they could make the most dramatic difference in the perceptions of the youth in their charge, as to the potential of following in their footsteps. Throughout the many decades of their illustrious careers, these three women have brought their creativity, steely determination, fellowship, and leadership styles to prepare the African American women of my generation to step forward and light the way for my children's generation. Their stories have provided me with inspiration, which I proudly pass to my teen-aged daughters. I possess the impassioned spirit to carry this heavy torch for the young people who will be influenced by all of our struggles and challenges that have been and still have yet to be overcome. The flame continues to burn brightly for us to achieve all that the American dream has to offer, as the torch is being passed to me.

In 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" (Lemert, 2004, p. 22). I would argue that the problem remains in the twenty-first century. Therefore, the future generations of Black college students need to be prepared to take their proper places in higher academia, armed with the lessons in resiliency offered by my generation: determination, high self-esteem, righteous purpose, and an unwavering firmness of character. These tools will be vital because we are aware that the glass ceilings of race, class, and gender will continue to be the obstacles accepted only by those lacking the capabilities represented by the women in this study.

It is for my daughters and their children to come that I stand ready to nurture and lead in the exalted tradition of quiet strength and enduring grace offered by my predecessors, reaching me from the slave quarters of antebellum America to the offices of university and college presidents.
APPENDIX I

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Department of Educational Leadership

Informed Consent

Title of Study: Voices of Three African American Female College Presidents: A Qualitative Study of Their Journeys
Investigator/s: Maria Myles-Williams & Dr. Robert L. Ackerman
Protocol Number: 0412-1408

Purpose of the Study:
You are invited to participate in a research project about the experiences of African American women as they journeyed to become university and college presidents. The purpose of the research is to explore historical background, educational preparation, career paths, and current experiences of African American women presidents.

Participants:
You are being asked to participate in this study because of your unique position as university or college president; you possess the knowledge and experience relevant for this study.

Procedures:
Your participation will involve three face-to-face interviews. The expected length of time of your participation is approximately 1 1/2 hours. There may be a potential for follow up interviews to clarify the data (approximately 30 minutes), and a follow up conference to approve interpretations of your interview (approximately 30 minutes).

This study will be conducted during the spring 2005 semester, beginning January 17, 2005 through May 13, 2005. Research subjects will be invited to participate in the research study by Maria Alves-Williams, a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, under the direction of the graduate program committee, chaired by Robert L. Ackerman, Ed.D (Principal Investigator).

Benefits of Participating:
Benefits from participation include the opportunity to provide your unique insight into the experiences that led you to become a university or college president. Your participation

327
and response will enable the researcher to identify distinctive themes that can enlighten and contribute to the career path of African American women in higher education.

Title of Study: Voices of Three African-American Female College Presidents: A Qualitative Study of Their Journeys
Investigator/s: Maria Myles-Williams & Dr. Robert L. Ackerman
Protocol Number: 0412-2794

Risks of Participation:
There are only minimal risks associated with this study. Minimal risks may include feeling uncomfortable when responding to some of the questions asked.

Costs to the Subjects:
There will be no financial compensation to participate in this study.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time.

Confidentiality:
All information gathered for this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All data will be stored in a locked facility at the University of Nevada Las Vegas for at least 3 years after the completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be destroyed.

Signature of Participant ______________________________ Date __________

Signature of Researcher ______________________________ Date __________
# APPENDIX II

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What were the perceived challenges of AA Women in the study?</strong></td>
<td>What is your historical background? Socio-economic, family history and attitude regarding education, how did family play a role? Where grew up? How did you develop in childhood? What type of grade school and high school did you attend? Any challenges growing up? Mentors growing up or anyone in particular that influenced you, any role models? What factors played a role in your education? What were experiences in the community? What were experiences once left the community? What undergraduate and graduate schools did you attend? Undergraduate and graduate experiences, any challenges and barriers while pursuing a higher education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How were those challenges overcome?</strong></td>
<td>What were your experiences as a faculty member or administrator? What factors played a role in professional rise? What challenges/barriers have you faced during your academic career or professional career? How did you overcome those challenges/barriers? How did you remain resilient? Did you have a mentor, and if so what was the relationship? How did mentor play a role?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How did perceived challenges and response shape the leadership style of the participants in the studies?</strong></td>
<td>Was it your goal to become president, when did you first begin to aspire toward that goal? What educational preparation and career goals, that led to the presidency? What leadership characteristic do you feel you possess, and what leadership style do you utilize? What strategies did you use to becoming a college/university president? What is your experience as an African American female university president?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX III

DOCUMENTS COLLECTED

For each participant the following information was gleaned from the university website:

University mission statement
Biographical information of each participant
Historical background of university
Institutional data regarding the university
Demographic information of each university
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331

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345


349
VITA

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350

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