

In Her Own Voice: A Narrative Study of the Persistence Strategies of Eight African American Women Vice Presidents for Student Affairs at Predominately White Institutions

by

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Abstract

This narrative study explored the personal and professional experiences of eight African American women vice presidents for student affairs (VPSA) employed at predominately White institutions (PWIs) and the persistence strategies they used while working at a PWI. Through the use of narrative inquiry methods, I utilized a purposeful sample of eight full time African American women VPSA to reflect accurately the true experiences of this marginalized group. All participants varied in their educational background, career progression and gained experience in student affairs by their exposure to different facets of university administration. With this newfound information, higher education institutions will be better able to attract and retain African American women administrators to their institutions, thus increasing the scope of diversity. Further, this information could serve as a framework for developing a more diverse presence of student affairs administrators within higher education. The results of this study can provide insights to help higher education institutions develop and improve the recruitment and retention programs for diverse student affairs professionals. Further, each narrative provides other minority student affairs leaders strategies in order to overcome the challenges of being Black and female in a higher education institution.

In this study, I used several constructs to facilitate this study such as (a) professional experience, (b) persistence, (c) challenges (d) race and gender, and (e) institutional climate. These constructs served as themes in exploring the experiences that African American women in student affairs encounter. Black Feminist Thought, a critical social theory, aimed to document

the experiences and thoughts of African American women. Through extensive interviews the following themes emerged from the data of the challenges and persistence strategies: overt racism and sexism, sacrifices with personal life, perception of lack of credibility, maintaining political alliances, staying relevant with professional associations, support networks, perpetual spirituality, promotion of a diverse institution, maintaining a sense of self, and love for student development.

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List of Abbreviations

AAW	African American Women
BFT	Black Feminist Thought
HBCU	Historically Black College and University
IRB	Institutional Review Board
NASPA	National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
PWI	Predominately White Institution
SSAO	Senior Student Affairs Officer
VPSA	Vice President for Student Affairs

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it”

-Maya Angelou

Historically, African American women have dealt with an interesting dichotomy of being Black *and* female-both of which have often subjected them to discrimination and oppression (Collins, 2004; Gregory, 2001; Henry, 2010; Simien, 2006). Additionally, issues related to gender were the most prevalent barriers standing in the path of women desiring access to educational and employment opportunities in higher education (Holmes, 2003). During pre-civil war and civil rights era, obtaining education for African American women proved to be a method of freedom from a society that presented itself with hatred and hostility (Benjamin, 1997; Bright, 2010; Noble, 1993).

Despite the negative backlash of obtaining education, there were African American women whose determination and resilience led to opportunities in college administration and teaching (Benjamin, 1997; Moses, 1989; Mosley, 1980; Rusher, 1996). For example, educator and civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune in 1904 founded a training institute for African American girls (which would later become Bethune-Cookman University) and Lucy Diggs Slowe, became the first African American female administrator in higher education, Dean of Women for Howard University, in 1922 (Benjamin, 1997). A more recent example is Ruth Simmons, who in 1960, became the first African-American President of one of the

Sister colleges, Smith College. Although more attention has been given to women in educational leadership, very few studies have focused on issues pertaining to African American women administrators in higher education (Becks-Moody, 2004; Rusher, 1996; Tedrow, 1999).

The study of African Americans in college and university administration has traditionally focused on lower to mid-level positions (Ball, 1995; Bower, 1991; Jackson, 2004; Mosley, 1980). One group in the academy warranting specific attention for their contributions is African American women senior student affairs administrators (Henry, 2010). The role of African American women in student affairs has contributed to the overall collegiate experience of many African American students. Over the years, the number of African American women in higher education has grown substantially (Benjamin, 1997; Rusher, 1996). Researchers and scholars of African American women administrators at predominately White institutions (PWIs) continue to ask whether race or gender is more salient in their efforts (Mosley, 1989; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Additionally, questions are also raised about how African American women persist and succeed at institutions of higher education (Holmes, 2003; Moses, 1989; Rusher, 1996). Collectively, literature suggests that for African American women, race is more salient in their efforts to retain their position and seek promotion (Hinton, 2001; Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

Traditionally, white males are overrepresented at the high administrative levels, while African Americans are overrepresented at the low administrative levels (Jackson, 2007). Thus, the number of African American women in senior student affairs positions is minimal. As a result, many higher education institutions in the United States have made commendable attempts to deal with the issue of administrative diversity (Jackson, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the efforts made at higher education institutions to increase diversity, including predominately White institutions (PWIs), Black administrators remain at the bottom of professionals at both colleges and universities in regards to recruiting, promotion, and retention (Guillory, 2000; Owens, 2003). Hence, African American administrators eventually become disenchanted with PWIs, and move to HBCUs, or leave academe altogether (Davis, 1994; Jackson & Flowers, 2004). Literature highlighting the challenges of African American women senior student affairs administrators encounter and the persistence strategies utilized to overcome these experiences are limited (Becks-Moody, 2004). Therefore, this study sought to explore the experiences of African American women senior student affairs administrators at PWIs and the persistence strategies they use to overcome conflicts.

Education scholar Yolanda Moses (1989) posed these questions in her now widely cited paper, *Black Women in Academe: Issues and Strategies*: (1) Who are the Black women on campus today? (2) Are their experiences adequately documented? (3) Are Black women administrators treated similarly to Black men, white men, and white women? In this ever diverse and growing society, these questions remain important to examine whether diversity efforts at PWIs are being maintained (Guillory, 2000).

Black women have been participating in American higher education for more than a century. However, research on the issues African American women encounter is limited, even though affirmative action policies passed 20 years ago demand the increase of this population in the academy (Owens, 2004). For the most part, Black women have made great strides towards occupying higher positions within academia. However, some scholars maintain that they continue to face countless personal and professional challenges (Gregory, 2001; Henry & Glenn,

2009). Research about African American women administrators in higher education disproportionately focuses on the opinions of African American female students, faculty, and staff (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Moreover, the quantity and quality of research that has been generated on African American women student affairs administrators has been limited to recruitment, retention, promotion, and job performance (Henry, 2010).

There are a limited number of studies that focus on African American women administrators (Becks-Moody, 2004; Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Camblin, 1998; Mosley, 1980; Rusher, 1996). Hence, higher education literature reveals little about the overarching experiences that have contributed to or shaped the success for African American women practitioners and scholars. In an effort to provide a more hospitable environment for Black women administrators, it is important for America's institutions of higher education to understand and focus on their needs and concerns (Gregory, 2009; Jackson, 2003; Moses, 1989).

African American women administrators in particular, and women of all historically marginalized racial groups, must often confront the intersectionality of singular discrimination in terms of race and gender (Collins, 1991; Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Camblin 1998; Moses, 1989; Mosley, 1980; Sandler, 1986). Intersectionality is defined as a theory to analyze how social and cultural categories intertwine (Knudsen, 2007). Within this paradigm the relationships between gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, class and nationality have been examined. There have been reports of African American women having limited advancement opportunities, feelings of powerlessness, tokenism, isolation and alienation, chilly and inhospitable working environments, subtle and overt forms of race and sex discrimination, and lack of mentorship and networking opportunities (Carroll, 2000; Holmes, 2003; Moses, 1989). These challenges have included the intersectionality of the issues of racism and sexism in terms of feelings of isolation,

perceptions of lack of trust and support, and tokenism and struggles over power and influence (Carroll, 2000; Collins, 1991; Mosley, 1989).

To increase the number of African American administrators working within higher education, institutions should make the environment conducive for a diverse population. Becks-Moody (2004) wrote, “higher education has the responsibility to foster an academic climate that is conducive to African American women administrators” (p. 4). The challenges that African American women senior student affairs administrator in higher education encounter and the persistence strategies they use are vital for the focus of this study. Wolfe (2010) described persistence strategies “as the methods an individual takes in order to maintain or promote their current status within an atmosphere of good competition” (p. 20).

It is reported that more African American males hold administrative positions than do African American females (Crawford, 1983; Jackson, 2003; Moore, 1982, 1983). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand the challenges African American women VPSAs face and what persistence strategies they use to succeed in an educational environment, particularly PWIs (Crawford, 1983; Jackson, 2003; Moore, 1982, 1983).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the personal and professional experiences of eight African American women senior level student affairs administrators who were employed at predominately White institutions (PWIs) and the persistence strategies they used while working at a PWI. Participants identified various persistence strategies they used to overcome their individual professional challenges. I identified several constructs to facilitate this study such as (a) professional experience, (b) persistence, (c) challenges (d) race and gender, and (e)

institutional climate. Each construct served as basis in exploring the experiences that African American women in student affairs encounter in their profession.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided this study in understanding the experiences and persistence strategies of African American women administrators PWIs. These research questions aimed to address the experiences of African American women senior student affairs administrators in higher education. I grouped these experiences based on the literature of African American administrators in higher education: (a) experience, (b) challenges, (c) persistence and (d) institutional context. Specifically, I investigated the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges that African American women senior student affairs administrators face with persisting at a predominately White institution?
2. What are the persistence strategies that African American women senior student affairs administrators use in order to succeed at a predominately White institution?

These questions served as the foundation for understanding the experiences of African American women senior level administrators at PWIs. This study also sought to explore persistence strategies that participants perceived as being necessary to improve both personal and professional development at their institution. These findings may add more in-depth understanding African American administrators in a PWI.

Significance of Study

The personal and professional experiences of eight African American women senior student affairs administrators who were employed at PWIs served as the focus of this study. The results should help current Black student affairs administrators at PWIs better understand the experiences of this traditionally marginalized group. By using collective narratives and Collins'

(2000) Black Feminist Thought from women who were employed in this field, the majority population will be able to understand the challenges and the double oppression of racism and sexism that African American women are often subjected to in higher education. It is important to recognize that in the United States Black feminism remains important because “Black women constitute as an oppressed group” (Collins, 2000, p. 25).

While women, particularly African American women, are more visible on campuses across the country, they hold smaller numbers of senior student affairs positions in the academy (Owens, 2004). Therefore, there are limited research studies regarding African American student affairs administrators in higher education; more specifically senior student affairs administrators. The absence of African American administrators at colleges and universities sends a message to African American students that may affect whether they will feel welcomed at the institution (Jackson, 2001; Jackson & Flowers, 2003). African Americans administrators play a significant role in the development of their race as well as other underrepresented groups within institutions of higher education. Higher education researchers and scholars maintain that African American women administrators at institutions of higher education typically experience discrimination related to race and gender (Holmes, 2000; Moses, 1989; Zamani, 2003), lack of support systems and networks (Henry & Glenn, 2010; Patton & Harper, 2003), and unwelcoming, insensitive, and isolative environments (Gregory, 2009; Watts, 2003).

Further, this information could serve as a framework for developing a more diverse presence of student affairs administrators within higher education. The results of this study can provide insights to help higher education institutions develop and improve the recruitment and retention programs for diverse student affairs professionals. Further, each narrative provides

other minority student affairs leaders strategies in order to overcome the challenges of being Black and female in a higher education institution.

Theoretical Framework

Black Feminist Thought, a critical social theory, developed by educational philosopher, Patricia Hill Collins, aimed to document the experiences and thoughts of African American women. However, while widely used, it is increasingly difficult to define, as Black Feminist Thought encompasses a diverse and often contradictory set of meanings (Collins, 2000). The experiences and ideas of Black women served as the focal point of analysis for Black Feminist Thought. Moreover, Black feminist thought (BFT) contextualizes the Black woman experience when it comes to racism, sexism, and overall experiences (Henry, 2006). As a critical theory, BFT played a pivotal role in understanding these Black women administrators because the lives of Black women have been shaped by many outside influences that have encouraged them to create new stories, lifestyles, cultures and the overall experiences of their existence (Collins, 2000).

Collins (2000) argued that black women are uniquely situated in that they stand at the focal point where two exceptionally powerful and prevalent systems of oppression come together: race and gender. According to Collins (2000), the BFT has three key components:

First, the framework is shaped and produced by the experiences black women have encountered in their lives, even though others have documented their stories. Second, although the stories and experiences of each woman are unique, there are intersections of experiences between and among black women. Third, although commonalities do exist among black women, the diversity of class, religion, age, and

sexual orientation of black women as a group are multiple contexts from which their experiences can be revealed and understood. (p. 469)

As my interpretative lens, BFT illuminates just how black women have a dialogue with themselves in an effort to answer the question: Do I understand what's going on? This theory not only helps elaborate on the experiences of African American women administrators but also asserts the need for Black women to define their own sense of self-identity based on their personal experiences, beliefs and values (Henry, 2010). This theory asserts that African American women are held together by a common thread, which links all Black women together. One theme that is common among Black women are the struggles against racism, sexism and classism, which affect their independence and self-reliance.

Research Methods

In order to address accurately the experiences of African American women administrators, I used qualitative research methods. Specifically, the use of narrative inquiry served as a methodological framework to understand the lived experiences of the participants. Creswell (2007) stated that “we conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study” (p. 40). Sharing the stories or providing a voice for these African American women administrators is the essence of this study. As a result, narrative inquiry allowed me to explore the personal experiences of African American women and gain new perspectives.

Narrative inquiry seeks to explore the everyday life world of those studied by ascertaining their descriptions of experiences as well as their internalized meanings (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). The basic purpose of narrative research is to disseminate the lived

experiences of individuals down to a phenomenon; which in my case equates to the experiences of African American women administrators and how they persist with being in the minority. In essence, narrative inquiry focuses on individuals' life stories (Marshall & Rossman, 1998). The strength of narrative inquiry derives from the elicitation of the participant's voice, while reducing the researcher's own interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 1998).

Assumptions

In conducting this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. The participants' experiences and challenges will reflect similar stories, at both private and public PWIs.
2. The participants will answer the questions honestly and to the best of their ability.
3. The experiences and challenges of each participant may vary due to the institutional culture.

Scope, Limitations, and Researcher Role

The scope of this study included qualitative data collected for this narrative study. The participants in this study were African American women senior level student affairs administrators from various higher education institutions throughout the country. The researcher conducted in-depth phone interviews with each participant.

There were limitations associated with this study. Due to these limitations I focused on collecting thick and rich descriptive narrative data from the participants, which in turn assisted me in my ability to gain more knowledge about Black women in student affairs. Collecting thick and rich descriptive narrative data served as a form of credibility in the study. According to Denzin (1989), thick and rich descriptions are deep, dense, detailed accounts of the experiences of the participants. The first limitation was the sample of the participants. Since all the

participants were limited to African American senior level women administrators in student affairs, the data collected reflects those women who are currently holding those positions. The second limitation includes the researcher as a human instrument of data collecting. As a result of this, error and bias can occur. The third and final limitation included a small cohort of African American women VPSAs to choose from for my sample size. More specifically, that there was not a large number of participants who would be eligible to participate in my study, therefore it was expected that my pool was limited. This, in turn, limited the transferability of my findings.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions of terms and concepts were used throughout the study:

African American: An American of African and especially of Black African descent.

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

Challenges: Anything, as a demanding task, that calls for special effort or dedication.

Culture: The shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them (Lederach, 1995).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU): Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are educational institutions founded primarily to serve African Americans, although they are not exclusionary in their admissions. More specifically, HBCUs were established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans.

Institutional Culture: Used widely in describing the personality of institutions. Every organization, every department, every little informal work team has a culture.

Mentor: a trusted counselor or guide.

Narrative Study: Qualitative research method that seeks to explore the everyday “life world” of those studied by ascertaining their descriptions of experiences as well as their internalized meanings (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Persistence Strategies: Methods an individual takes in order to maintain or promote their current status within an atmosphere of good competition (Wolfe, 2010).

PWIs - predominately White institutions: Institutions of higher education where the majority of the student population comprise of individuals with White population.

Racism: Belief in or doctrine asserting racial differences in character, intelligence, and the superiority of one race over another.

SSAO: Senior Student Affairs Officers. These positions typically comprise of Dean of Students, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, and Vice President of Student Affairs. In the context of this study, the term administrator refers to a person in a managerial or policy-making capacity that may have a line or staff function (Jackson, 2004).

Seven Sister Colleges: Private, northeastern women’s colleges that are recognized for their academic excellence and distinguished alumnae (Perkins, 1993). The seven are listed as: Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, Radcliffe, Bryn Mawr, and Barnard.

Sexism: Discrimination against people on the basis of sex.

Student Affairs: organizational structure or unit within an institution responsible for students’ out-of-class life and learning (Winston & Miller, 2001).

Underrepresented Groups: Insufficiently or inadequately represented groups of individuals.

White Privilege: A set of advantages enjoyed by White people beyond those commonly

experienced by non-white people in the same social, political, and economic spaces (Fields & Pence, 1999).

Summary

African American women administrators play a significant role in the growth of diversity at institutions of higher education. However, due to race and gender discrimination, retaining such administrator positions can be a challenge. This qualitative study sought to explore the challenges and persistence strategies African American women senior level student affairs administrators at PWIs experience. With the assistance of narrative inquiry and Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000) as the methodological and interpretative lenses, respectively, my participants had the opportunity to share and interpret their stories as they serve as a minority leader at a PWI.

This study is presented in five chapters. The current chapter, chapter 1 provides a solid introduction to this research by exploring the history behind African American women and their relationship to higher education. This current chapter also states the problem, purpose of the study, the significance of study, the theoretical framework in which the study was designed, and the research questions. Chapter 2, the literature review, explores the historical context of African American women in higher education, the role of African American women in student affairs, and the challenges that African American women face in higher education along with their methods of persisting through these challenges. Chapter 3, the methods section, describes in detail the theoretical perspective used for this study and the BFT. Additionally, BFT provides an explanation to others not Black *and* female the experiences African American women are different from the White and other cultures. BFT allows the reader to get a grasp on understanding why the experiences of African American women are different from those of other

women and those of African American men. It is steeped in the historical progression and ideology of black people in the United States (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Chapter 4 highlights the unique experiences of each participant in this study. In addition, this chapter explores emerging themes that are represented as a result of the data analysis. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the findings of the study as well as provides recommendations of further research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Black women in the academy differ in their experiences, backgrounds, appearances, educational levels, demographics, occupations, and beliefs. What connects them all is their struggle to be accepted and respected members of society, and their desire to have a voice that can be heard in a world with many views.”

-Alicia C. Collins

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the personal and professional experiences of eight African American women senior level student affairs administrators who were employed at predominately White institutions (PWI) and the persistence strategies they used while working at a PWI. I identified the various persistence strategies used by these Black women administrators to recognize how they overcome their individual professional challenges. I used five constructs to facilitate this study: (a) professional experience, (b) persistence, (c) challenges (d) race and gender, and (e) institutional climate. These constructs served as characteristics in exploring the experiences that African American women in student affairs encounter.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the challenges that African American women senior student affairs administrators face with persisting at a predominately White institution?
2. What are the persistence strategies that African American women senior student affairs administrators use in order to succeed at a predominately White institution?

This chapter provides a review of literature related to the experiences of African American women student affairs administrators. It serves as the foundation for the development

of this study. This chapter provides a historical overview of African Americans in higher education; American women administrators and their significant contributions in higher education; overview of student affairs; African American women administrators in student affairs; challenges of African American women administrators at PWIs; persistence strategies at PWIs; and recommendations for entry level African American women administrators in student affairs. For the purposes of this study, I will use the words Black, students of color and African American women interchangeably.

Introduction

The impact of African American women in higher education is rarely examined, even though Black women have been participants in higher education for more than a century (Moses, 1989). As the United States becomes a more multicultural and diverse society, so do the demographics of America's higher education institutions. This reflection of growth will soon recognize that the "descendants of European immigrants will no longer determine the dominant culture" (Guillory, 2001, p. 111).

Institutions of higher education have a civic responsibility to meet the growing demands of a diverse population (Guillory, 2001; Moses, 1989). Those who lead them play a vital role in shaping the culture of these institutions through decision making, personnel practices, and their own personal leadership styles (Drummond, 1995; Jackson, 2001). Therefore, leadership in institutions of higher education should reflect the diversity found in the general population. However, there are limited numbers of African American administrators and faculty members at PWIs. Figure 1 and figure 2 illustrates the number and percentage of White and Black executive level administrators at degree-granting institutions in fall 2007 and fall 2009.

<i>Primary Occupation</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>
Executive/administrative/managerial	217,518	173,948	21,047
Category Percentage	100%	79.9%	9.7%

Figure 1. Administrators in degree-granting institutions, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2009

<i>Primary Occupation</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>
Executive/administrative/managerial	230,579	182,459	21,828
Category Percentage	100%	79.1%	9.5%

Figure 2. Administrators in degree-granting institutions, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2007

Based on the statistics above from the National Center of Education Statistics, from 2007 to 2009 the percentage of African American administrators holding executive level positions decreased .2% from 9.7% to 9.5%. Unfortunately, despite of the increasing number of African American students attending higher education PWI institutions, the percentage of African American administrators in student affairs fails to reflect the number of diverse students entering higher education institutions (Harvey & Anderson, 2005; Jackson, 2003). More specifically, African American women administrators in higher education lack in critical mass (Henry & Glenn, 2008; Moses, 1989).

Discussing the challenges and experiences of African American women in higher education cannot be accomplished without examining how the past influenced and continues to influence their experiences in the academy (Becks-Moody, 2004). For the purpose of this study, student affairs administrators is defined as persons who had one of the following titles: senior student affairs officer, assistant senior student affairs officer, associate senior student affairs officer, dean of students, assistant dean of students, associate dean of students, financial aid director, registrar director, housing director, counseling services director, career planning office

director, security office director, student union director, student health office director, and admissions director (Reason, Walker, & Robinson, 2002).

African Americans and American Education

From early Colonial Times to the Civil Rights movement, African Americans have been fighting for equal treatment in educational attainment (Spring, 2010; Urban & Wagoner, 2009). Prior to the Civil War, many states, particularly those in the South, developed laws prohibiting the education of Blacks, which made teaching slaves to read and write illegal (Collins, 2001). Although these laws were intact, many African Americans forged forward in hopes of attaining an education in secret. Despite laws against educating Blacks, many Christian organizations such as the Methodists and Quakers made it their mission to promote learning and education to freed slaves (Collins, 2001).

By the end of the antebellum period, many states had established some form of public school system that allowed many free Black children to take advantage of formal education (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). However, ex-slaves were beginning to develop their own form of education in light of the racial and class discrimination that was brought to them. According to Urban and Wagoner (2009), southern Blacks took matters into their own hands and began developing their own Black training schools, common schools and high schools, as well as their own black educational institutions. Universal schooling was of great importance for many ex-slaves (Anderson, 1999; Urban & Wagoner, 2009).

Achieving equal opportunities in education proved to be a feat for many African Americans (Anderson, 1999). As a means of maintaining control, many Whites in the Colonial era developed a variety of methods to control the education or lack of education for African Americans (Spring, 2010). One of the educational methods was deculturalization.

Deculturalization is defined as “the educational process of destroying a people’s culture and replacing it with a new culture” (Spring, 2010, p. 7). Deculturalization was not just limited to African Americans. According to Spring (2010), this form of education was placed on Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and immigrants from Ireland, Southern and Eastern Europe.

Unfortunately, in the South “educational segregation resulted in unequal educational opportunities” (Spring, 2010, p. 46). In addition, resistance to educational integration extended to higher education as well. Education has remained one of the most prevalent themes in American education history as it relates to the life, struggle, and protest of Black Americans (Collier-Thomas, 1982). In many instances, education has been a means for African Americans to acquire first class citizenship in society (Spring, 2010; Thomas, 1982).

At the turn of the century, many ex-slaves attempted to create an educational system that would support their emancipation (Anderson, 1999). The emergence of Blacks in higher education was greatly inspired by the passing of the Morrill Act of 1862. The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 spurred the development of several land-grant colleges, and the subsequent Morrill Act in 1890, which required states to either admit students regardless of race or to designate separate land-grant colleges for people of color (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). These are two key pieces of legislation that also made a significant impact on the educational opportunities that became available for Black women (Bright, 2010). These acts were the impetus for several predominately White institutions to begin opening their doors to Blacks. They also led to the establishment of many historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), which were created exclusively for the education of Blacks (Bright, 2010; Spring, 2010). According to Urban and Wagoner (2009), the Morrill Act of 1862:

Not only provided additional funding for the colleges and universities that had been established according to the provisions of the 1862 Act, but set forth a new requirement for Agricultural and Mechanical (A&M) land-grant institutions seeking increased federal support: every state seeking Morrill Act funding had to either provide equal access to the existing A&M colleges or establish separate institutions for the “people of color” in their state. (p. 188)

Further, the Morrill Act of 1862 is described as a piece of federal legislation that fostered access to public higher education (Thelin, 2003).

In the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, Louisiana native Homer Plessy, who was considered one-eighth Black and seven-eighths White, was arrested for refusing to ride in the coach of the train (Anderson, 1999; Urban & Wagoner, 2009). This particular case introduced the notion of “separate but equal” doctrine among American school facilities (Spring, 2010). Further, while this court decision established the “separate but equal” doctrine this eventually led to more legal restrictions on Blacks, known as “Jim Crow Laws” (Perkins, 1993, p. 721). According to Perkins (1993), these particular laws blocked meaningful progress for many African Americans in the South, which included educational progress.

Years later, following the implementation of the Morrill Act of 1862 and *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board of Topeka* served as a major federal case involving institutional discrimination. Thelin (2003) maintains that *Brown v. Board of Topeka*, “presented data and commentary on the inequities and injustices of discrimination in higher education on the basis of income and race” (p. 269).

In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned the separate but equal doctrine by eliminating the required separate education in America. At this time, the federal judiciary

identified separate education as unconstitutionally unequal (Spring, 2010). Before this court ruling (1954), many educational facilities had the mentality of separate but equal. However, in Little Rock, Arkansas Governor Faubus tried to prevent the desegregation of nine African American students who were selected to attend the all-White Central High School (Anderson, 1999). In an effort to go forth with the integration, Eisenhower sent the National Guard to implement the desegregation (Urban & Wagoner, 2009).

Following this, the 1960s marked an era in which America endured a time of turmoil and political activism, especially in the schools (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). President John F. Kennedy, elected in 1960, presented a youthful sense of activism that was a stark contrast from his predecessor, Dwight Eisenhower (Anderson, 1999). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 contained several titles enforcing the civil rights of Black Americans. Thelin (2003) suggested that one title in particular in the Act, Title VI, focused on the segregation of Blacks in schools. The integration of black students would eventually play a major role in the adjudication of civil rights claims for many groups (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). One particular report that illustrated the issues that many African Americans were facing in education was The Coleman Report. The Coleman Report was a social science study that provided substantial support for the civil rights movement (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). This report subsequently played a fundamental role in the facilitation of African Americans in higher education. Moreover, while African Americans were fighting for their rights of educational equality; women were fighting for their own educational rights.

Women in Higher Education

Throughout the first two hundred years of the United States, formal education of females was not universal (Zamani, 2003). By 1860, there were 45 institutions of higher education that

offered collegiate degrees to women (Thelin, 2003). Since the nineteenth century, the struggle for racial justice paralleled that of gender inequality in education for women (Spring, 2010). In the last two decades, literature has changed significantly to address the rise in numbers of women administrators in higher education (Harvard, 1986). Unfortunately, in higher education, women have an interesting duality of being both “invisible and extra-visible” (Bagilhole, 1994, p. 17). This duality has often led to women feeling inferior in the academy (Benjamin, 1997). During the 1960s several federal laws improving the economic status of women were passed. One such law was the Equal Pay Act of 1963. This act of legislation required equal wages for men and women doing equal work.

Over time, schools for special populations began to emerge (Perkins, 1993; Zamani, 2003). Such populations included women. According to Zamani (2003), one of the important goals for many women colleges was to inspire a sense of social responsibility. As a result, several private colleges in the Northeastern region of the United States began to emerge as a catalyst for women who craved for educational stimulation (Benjamin, 1980). These women colleges, affectionately known as the Seven Sister Colleges “were founded in the nineteenth century in response to the leading private, elite male institutions’ refusal to admit women” (Perkins, 1993, p. 718). These colleges consisted of Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, Radcliffe, Bryn Mawr, and Barnard.

As time progressed, the United States supplied opportunities for women entering higher education (Zamani, 2003). Such legislation included the passage of the 1963 Equal Pay Act, which served as an amendment to the National Fair Labor Standards Act, the first act of federal equity legislation for women (Glazer-Raymo, 1999). The women’s movement in the 1970’s brought an important mission to emancipate women. However, these needs spoke primarily to

middle-class White women, not to African American women (Zamani, 2003). From early nineteenth century to the civil rights movements, African American women strove for educational attainment (Perkins, 1993).

African American Women in Higher Education

The history of African American women in America can be described as “a struggle for survival and identity, and the desire to protect and support her family” (Gregory, 1999, p. 3). The history of African Americans and women in higher education is a story of a nation’s “struggle to overcome overt institutional racism and sexism” (Jenifer, 2005, p. 5). As a means of providing support, Black women turned to educational opportunities. Ever since the Emancipation, African American women have had a special calling to teach (Gregory, 1999). As a result of this, the education of African Americans has traditionally served multiple purposes (Gregory, 1999). One such purpose is illustrated by Coleman-Burns (1989) who states that Black women’s primary purpose of education was to “prepare members of the next generation to take their rightful place as tomorrow’s leadership” (p. 152). African American women’s involvement in education began during slavery, when determined slave women discreetly learned to read and then secretly facilitated classes or schools to impart their literary knowledge to other slaves (Bright, 2010; Noble, 2003). Historically, African American women have been involved in educational processes in meaningful ways despite challenges to their efforts (Becks-Moody, 2004). Noble (1993) described the entrance of Black women in higher education as an undeniable pursuit of fulfilling a mission. This mission was for African American women to educate not only themselves but their children as well. Black women’s entry into higher education provided more of a means of “race uplift” and financial freedom in an effort to acquire freedom from discrimination and legal segregation (Noble, 1993, p. 87).

The field of education was the most desired subject of study for many Black women (Bright, 2010). Numerous Black women entered institutions of higher education to become teachers to educate the Black community. During this time most Black women sought higher education for both personal and community empowerment (Noble, 1993; Simmons, 1997). And like other areas of American life, education has not been free from racism and sexism. Both African American women and men have fought to gain the right of education. Unfortunately, Black women have been the center of such discrimination. As Collier-Thomas (1982) suggested:

Historically, Black women have shared with black men the discrimination and deprivation that characterizes their sojourn from slavery to freedom. They have shared with white women some legal proscriptions which have limited their access to public institutions. However, despite the common problems, their historical experiences in every area of American life have been in very specific ways different from that of Black males and White females. (p. 174)

This illustration of the varied differences between African American women and their counterparts provides an insight that is described as the double consciousness (Collins, 2000). Double consciousness, a term coined by W.E.B. DuBois' (1903) in *The Souls of Black Folk*, famously “described black Americans as possessing what he called a double consciousness, caught between a self-conception as an American and as a person of African descent” (McWhorter, 2003, p. 13).

Further, in the antebellum period, many higher education institutions began to emerge as an educational ground for Black women (Collier-Thomas, 1982). These institutions consisted of Lincoln University in 1854, Wilberforce University in 1855, and various other universities and schools established for Black individuals (Perkins, 1993). By 1920, several universities

emerged particularly for African American women such as Scotia Academy, Spelman, and Bennett (Collier-Thomas, 1982).

Zamani (2003) stated, “in the late 1800s, only a relatively small number of White institutions admitted African Americans, and those that did were located primarily in the North” (p. 11). One such institution was Oberlin College. Oberlin College would later achieve recognition for its double attainment of the coeducation of both women and African Americans (Thelin, 2004). Higher education attainment for African Americans began around 1833 when Oberlin College in Ohio began widely accepting Black students into their curriculum (Evans, 2007). As a result of their willingness to accept African Americans into their school, Lucy Stanton became the first Black woman to complete the requirements for the L.D. degree. According to Evans (2007), the L.D. degree or literary degree grew as a type of degree due to the misconceptions that literary courses were ladies courses, which were perceived to be less academically challenging than the bachelor’s courses designed for males.

African American Women Administrators in Higher Education

While African American women in the United States faced racial and gender, not all of their experiences are highlighted in negativity. Although their journey has been difficult, significant contributions have been made, and as a result many have reaped the benefits of Black women accomplishments. There have been Black women in higher education that have prevailed against discrimination and have made significant contributions to higher education. In addition, Black women continue to provide significant contributions despite being employed in lower policy making positions (Harvard, 1986; Jackson, 2003). These women, Anna Julia Cooper, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Lucy Diggs Slowe all played a significant role in the emergence of African American women in higher education.

Anna Julia Cooper

Anna Julia Cooper was born enslaved in approximately 1858 (Evans, 2007). An educational visionary, she forged forward in her quest for educational freedom despite the racist and sexist barriers in the United States. As a result of her resiliency, she earned a bachelor's and master's degree at Oberlin College and earned a doctoral degree from Sorbonne University in Paris (Evans, 2007). As Evans (2007) stated "rather than basking in her own scholarly success, Cooper worked to improve higher education" (p. 1). According to Evans (2007) because of Cooper's exposure to the university or collegiate setting, she made it her life's mission to introduce more African American women into this exclusive world known as the Ivory Tower. Cooper believed that all human beings have the right to grow (2007) and she maintained that attaining education, particularly higher education was a means of growing. As a skilled lecturer and publisher, Cooper maintained her role in higher education for well over 70 years (Evans, 2007). One particular Black female administrator that made significant contributions for minority leaders was that of Lucy Diggs Slowe.

Lucy Diggs Slowe

In 1922, Lucy Diggs Slowe assumed the position as Dean of Women for Howard University in Washington, D.C (Perkins, 2002). At that time, the role of African American women in education was limited solely to educating other black students in the field of housekeeping and elementary school teachers' preparation.

Slowe believed strongly that African-American women had a vital role to play in race relations and leadership. As a result, she sought to develop the leadership skills of black college women (Perkins, 1996). She set the precedent for future African American administrators in student affairs by providing avenues in which they could grow professionally, particularly

African American women administrators who worked at PWIs. Slowe's educational and racial philosophy concerning women is noteworthy because unlike other prominent black women educators of her era whose motivation and rhetoric were often religious, Slowe's desire to enhance black women's status was more pragmatic than spiritual (Perkins, 1996).

Dean Slowe was influential in increasing the leadership roles of African American women in higher education, students, faculty and administrators (Perkins, 1996). Slowe's philosophy of educating African American women for the modern world laid the foundation for future African American student affairs professionals. Her work provided a personal and professional framework for future African American students in higher education to think beyond the norm of what society expected of them (Perkins, 1996).

Slowe is important not only because of her prominence at Howard University, but also for the impact of her educational philosophy on the higher education of African American women in general (Perkins, 1996). Due to Slowe's determination in educational leadership in student personnel, she ushered in the establishment of two important organizations for the advocacy of African American college women: the National Association of College Women (NACW) and the National Association of Women's Deans and Advisors of Colored Schools (NAWDACS). Perkins (1996) asserted:

As one of the earliest black women formally trained in student personnel, during her fifteen years tenure at Howard, Slowe became an outspoken advocate for self-determination, respect and advancement for college-trained African American women. Slowe took seriously the charge that African American women had a vital role to play in race leadership and, as a result, she sought to develop the leadership skills of black college women. (p. 7)

Through Slowe's contributions in higher education, African American women in student affairs have grown substantially in the roles of high-level African American administrators at colleges and universities. According to Perkins (1996), as the first formally trained student personnel dean on a black college campus, Slowe attempted to convince the presidents of the other black institutions that this position was an important one and should be filled by a person formally trained with a bachelor of arts degree in a relevant discipline, rather than the traditional matron who was usually appointed to police the morals of the women students (Perkins, 2002). The legacy that Lucy Slowe established has ushered in thousands of African American women into student affairs hoping to shape the minds, hearts and values of students. Despite the role that Slowe established for African American women administrators and higher education's efforts in increasing the representation of African Americans and other minority professionals in higher education, African American women in student affairs continue to struggle with the notion of racism, sexism, and overall personal and professional development (Carroll, 2000; Guillory, 2000; Moses, 1989; Watson, 2001).

Mary McLeod Bethune

Educator and civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune is one of the many African American firsts in African American education (Evans, 2007). In 1904 Bethune founded a training institute for African American girls in Daytona Beach, Florida, which would later become Bethune-Cookman College. Bethune dedicated her life to improving educational access for Americans in general and African American women in particular (Evans, 2007). Born into a family of 17 children, Bethune was the first to be born free of slavery (Evans, 2007).

While Slowe, Cooper, and Bethune-Cookman contributed significantly to higher education for African American women with their various views of education, they all

understood that attaining such opportunities was both a human right as well as a civil right (Evans, 2007). Evans (2007) asserted that:

Anna Cooper, Mary Bethune, and other contemporaries articulated educational philosophies that had four central themes: demand for applied learning; recognition of the importance of social standpoint and cultural identity in scholarship; a critical epistemology that both supported and resisted mainstream American ideals; and moral existentialism grounded in a sense of communal responsibility. (p. 8)

While these women all had varying educational ideologies, their main mission was to increase the educational opportunities for their Black students (Evans, 2007; Perkins, 2002). And as higher education attainment progressed in the United States, the focus moved from academic development to student personnel development (Nuss, 2003). Thus, the growth of a new genre in higher education: student affairs.

Student Affairs in Higher Education

The development of student affairs parallels that of American higher education (Nuss, 2003). Contemporary student affairs programs can be traced back to the Colonial colleges (Leonard, 1956) where dormitories and dining halls served as an essential focus in collegiate life (Nuss, 2003). During this time, many colleges implemented the *in loco parentis* doctrine as a means of supervising students. *In loco parentis* described the university or college acting in place of the parent (Winston & Miller, 2001). Winston and Miller (2001) stated, “colleges and universities were seen to have parent-like responsibilities for students” (p. 10). However, over time, the relationship between students and their respective colleges and universities changed (Nuss, 2003). Once *in loco parentis* was eliminated, the role of the student affairs professional

changed from one that was viewed as a disciplinarian to one who educates (Garland & Grace, 1993; Nuss, 2003).

The administration of higher education is separated into three main areas: (1) academic affairs, (2) student affairs, and (3) administrative affairs (Jackson, 2001; Sagaria, 1988). Student affairs typically consists of positions such as vice president for student affairs, dean of students, directors of financial aid (Jackson, 2001). These roles are often denoted as being senior student affairs administrators (SSAO). Consequently, African Americans in student affairs can have a profound effect on the recruitment and retention of minority students who attend PWIs. Jackson (2001) stated, “the presence or a lack of African Americans in the administration of a college or university provides a sense of whether an African American student will or will not feel welcomed at the institution” (p. 94). African Americans at PWIs have not received equal consideration for positions, particularly positions of power and authority (Cruse, 1994; Drummond, 1995; Harvey, 1999; Jackson, 2003).

Once student affairs became a prevalent profession within higher education, professional associations began to emerge to facilitate administrator’s professional development. Such associations were once distinguished based on gender and race (Nuss, 2003). As Nuss (2003) suggested, “the fact that student affairs in the early 1900s were organized by gender and race influenced the development of these associations” (p. 70). The American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the National Association of Deans of Women (NADW) were developed in 1910 and 1916, respectively (Nuss, 2003). These associations focused on serving the needs of women in education.

Unfortunately, African Americans and other minority student affairs professionals were prevented from participating in these professional associations (Nuss, 2003). As a result, two

professional organizations were developed to meet the needs of African American student professionals. These organizations were the National Association of Deans of Women (1929) and the National Association of Deans of Men in Negro Education (1935). These two organizations ultimately formed the National Association of Personnel Workers (NAPW). Founded prior to the separate but equal decision, Barrett (1991) noted that this association's main focus was on the "hopes, aspirations, and goals of Negro education" (p. 2). Finally, in 1994 NAPW changed its name to the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASAP). Essentially, only a small segment of the literature specifically examines the intersection between race and gender among women in student affairs administration (Henry & Glenn, 2008; Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2010). However, as literature suggests, African American administrators, particularly Black women administrators, can have a profound effect on the development of minority students (Henry, 2010; Jackson, 2003).

African American Women in Student Affairs

Gregory (1999) stated, "The present condition of African American women has been shaped by historical and societal forces which has influenced the ways in which African American women view the world, themselves, and career" (p. 19). As a result of this, institutions of higher education are becoming more diverse, thus PWIs hiring practices of minority administrators are slowly becoming a major focus of increasing diversity. Hence, an increase in the literature that examines African American women administrators has attempted to increase the numbers and decrease the negative experiences for this population (Jackson, 2002; Rusher, 1996). Affirmative action has played an important role in the hiring of many African American administrators in higher education (VanderWaerdt, 1982). The policy of affirmative action provides a useful framework for addressing the past and present hiring practices at

colleges and universities, specifically executive-level administrative positions (Jackson, 2003; Jackson, 2008; Konard & Pfeffer, 1991; Washington & Harvey, 1989). The goal of affirmative action is not to advantage people of color, or disadvantage Whites, but to give equal opportunities and access to government funded initiatives (Kaplin & Lee, 1995). However, some institutions were slow to increase their diversity policies. VanderWaerdt (1982) stated:

Although colleges and universities have scrambled to accomplish a representation of women and minorities on par with the national average, and to provide equal opportunity, few institutions have stepped boldly forward to take affirmative action to dramatically increase the representation of women and minorities on their campuses. (p. 4)

In the landmark decision *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), the Supreme Court ruled that colleges and universities may administer carefully designed admissions programs that to some extent take race and ethnicity into account to foster diversity of their student bodies (Jackson, 2003; Jackson & Flowers, 2003). Using guidelines set by Bakke and other court decisions, higher education institutions have pursued the values to create a racially and ethnically diverse academic community (e.g., admissions, student aid, and faculty recruitment), attempting to comply with legal developments that have complicated and obscured the legal landscape (Eatman, 2000). Since the passing of this decision, higher education institutions have made considerable steps in embracing diversity.

There has been little empirical research on African Americans in executive-level administrative positions and virtually none using national level data. As Jackson (2002) stated, “for the most part, African Americans, like other people of color, often assume administrative positions that have direct connections with the diversity of the university” (p. 12). In addition, Jackson (2001) maintains that oftentimes, African American administrators came into higher

education serving as directors of TRIO programs, affirmative action officers, and/or directors of minority student affairs. TRIO programs is an umbrella term for federally funded educational opportunity programs established by the Higher Education Act of 1965 which helps low income individuals enter and graduate from college. However, within the past few decades, some literature has been focused on the role of African American administrators in higher education, particularly student affairs in the recruiting and retention processes those institutions of higher education employ (Guillory, 2001; Jackson, 2001; Mosley, 1980; Owen, 2004). The sheer paucity of Black women among the faculty and administration in colleges and universities tends to force Black women into a small, isolated community (Carroll, 1982; Moses, 1989). Although Black women have had a rich tradition of participating in higher education leadership in the U.S., their status as high level administrators today is not impressive (Moses, 1989). Consequently, few studies have been conducted regarding African Americans in student affairs (Brown & Globetti, 1991).

Many misconceptions surround the status of Black women on campus, in large part, because there is little research specifically concerning Black women in academe, how they are progressing, and what issues are of concern to them (Moses, 1989; Watson, 2001). African American women administrators in higher education, particularly PWIs, often refer to themselves as “invisible beings” (Mosley, 1980, p. 306). This is due to being Black *and* female in an environment where White males dominate the profession. It is evident that Black women are underrepresented throughout all spectrums of institutions of higher education (Jackson, 2004; Watson, 2001).

The intersection of racial and sexual discrimination has been cited about Black women as it relates to their progression in higher education (Smith, 1980). Yet, when research on African

Americans in higher education is conducted African American women and men are treated as a monolithic group (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). On the contrary, African American women in higher education are not a monolithic group. They are faced with many unique challenges, concerns, and cultural heritages.

There were common emotions that many African American administrators shared including isolation, invisibility, hostility, indifference, and lack of understanding of their and other minority individuals' experiences, especially for those working at a predominately White institution (Bagilhole, 1994; Carroll, 1982; Guillory, 2001; Moses, 1989; Owen, 2004; Pollard, 1990). Oftentimes these emotions are felt by Black women administrators from their White counterparts. There seems to be no one with whom to share experiences and gain support, no one with whom to identify, no one on whom a Black women can model herself (Carroll, 1982). Moses (1989) maintained that in order to create a more hospitable climate for Black women on the campuses of this country, we must know about their needs and concerns.

In the past, African American women in higher education have traditionally been employed in lower policy-making positions, where they typically do not have any influence over the programs or services for faculty and students (Jackson, 2003; Smith, 1980). There are relatively low numbers of Black women holding high administrative positions in colleges and universities. According to Collins (2000), due to the lack of critical mass among African American women administrators, many associate their experience in higher education with an outsider-within mentality. This outsider-within mentality occurs when Black women are in positions of influence, such as an administrator, yet still suffer from isolation due to the lack of critical mass (Collins, 1999; Collins, 2000). African American women administrators have to

implement survival or persistence strategies to guide them in their professional and academic endeavors.

Further, it is vital to recognize that African American women are not a monolithic group since not all Black women are the same. Each of their experiences, challenges, concerns are unique (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). And despite their extraordinary progress with educational attainment, Black women represent a small cohort of individuals earning bachelor, master, and doctoral degrees and career progression (Crocco & Waite, 2003). As stated by Crocco and Waite (2003), this singular issue of focusing on educational advancement created a contradiction for many Black women because:

On the one hand, these women's educational attainment brought them respect due to their contributions; at the same time, these accomplishments distanced [them] from other Black women and men, producing a sense of isolation and marginality, even within their own community. (p. 74)

The following section illustrates the challenges that many African American administrators in higher education encounter.

Challenges at Predominately White Institutions

One only has to glance around at higher education administrators and notice the disproportion of African American women (Carroll, 2000; Sandler, 1992; Watson, 2001). As a result of this, there has been little information written on African American women in higher education administrative positions (Ramey, 1995; Watson, 2001). Given the small amount of literature on this topic, Black women face challenges as they strive for and maintain their student affairs administrative positions (Jackson, 2001). Traditionally senior level administrative positions in higher education at four-year institutions are filled by White American males

(Jackson, 2001; Jackson, 2003; Ramey, 1995). There has been some increase in the number of women in higher education; however, African American women continue to lag behind in these roles (Jackson, 2001; Moses, 1989; Watson, 2001). More recently, when faced with the challenges of small pools of minority candidates, many institutions have implemented diversity programs called “grow your own programs” (Booth, 1987; Jackson, 2003). Grow your own programs are leadership development programs for already present minority leaders within institutions of higher education (Wolfe, 2010).

Employing a variety of coping strategies for Black women in academia has been key in facing the significant challenges they face in their academic and professional advancement (Bagilhole, 1994; Henry, 2009; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). One coping strategy was to establish connections with other Black women administrators and/or faculty to lessen the racism and isolation pain (Moses, 1989). At PWIs, many of the challenges and obstacles that African American women encounter result from a lack of critical mass and supportive networks (Henry & Glenn, 2009). Unlike White women and Black men, Black women have to deal with a double consciousness of both race and gender (Collins, 2001). This double consciousness affects how Black women perceive themselves as they struggle in an environment where they have no voice (Collins, 2000; Harris, 2007).

Black women administrators face numerous barriers in their career progression (Moses, 1989). These women are typically affected by a chilly and unwelcoming environment (Sandler, 1999). In order to effectively overcome these challenges, PWIs need to understand their experiences to increase the recruitment and retention practices of Black women (Moses, 1989). Women face all of the challenges that are faced by men in establishing and building their career (Nichols & Tanksley, 2004). In light of their success, Black women face challenges that are

such as feelings of isolation, lack of credibility from colleagues, and overt racism and sexism (Moses, 1989; Watson, 2001).

Manzo (2001) has suggested that one of the challenges African American women in higher education experience include the challenge to develop strategies to help women master the challenges necessary to reach leadership positions. According to Hagens and Long (2002), the number of women in traditional academic fields such as higher education has grown substantially within the past 30 years; however, few reach the top administrative levels.

In addition, the experiences of Black women in higher education, especially those employed at PWIs, are characterized by feelings of alienation, isolation, and social marginalization (Aguirre, 2001; Alfred, 2001; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). African American women's marginalization "translates into a feeling of invisibleness" (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001, p. 166). The following factors have been identified as major challenges for African American women in higher education: racism, sexism, balancing personal and professional life, recruitment and retention issues, and isolation.

Racism

Race and ethnicity also influence the careers of women in student affairs (Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2010). Historically, African American women have been discriminated against in PWIs because of their race (Guillory, 2000; Watson, 2001). Lorde (1984) defined racism as the "belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (p. 450). Due to this racial discrimination, many Black women continue to believe that institutions of higher education, particularly PWIs remain an alienating place to work (McRae, 1991; Watson, 2001). For many African Americans, the notion of white privilege within higher education has posed an issue for them. White Americans have not consciously considered the

issues of race and how it affects every aspect of African Americans lives (Holmes, 2003).

Scheurich and Young (1997) identified four forms of racism which included: (1) individual racism (overt and covert), (2) institutional racism, (3) societal racism and (4) civilization racism. According to Holmes (2003), “what is known is that working in a White institution often takes a mental toll on Black women who must continuously brace themselves against possible attacks predicated largely on race translated by the color of their skin” (p. 52).

Although much literature on African American women in higher education generally covers women’s issues, there still remains the discrimination that many Black women face of the double barrier of gender and race (Essed, 2000; Watson, 2001; Williams, 1989). Unfortunately for many Black women administrators, racial discrimination has posed itself as an isolating experience for many working at PWIs (Watson, 2001). Oftentimes, this isolating experience is due to the lack of critical mass which in many cases can lead Black women administrators to feel as though they are tokens. According to Russell and Wright (1990), most women from underrepresented groups who are generally chosen for administrative positions are seen as tokens; meaning that they receive differential treatment in comparison to their White counterparts. It also appears that people of color rarely get considered for top-level positions such as president or provost (Jackson, 2001). Those who were able to obtain administrative positions at PWIs are often seen as high achievers, but also as *tokens* (Lindsay, 1997; Moses, 1989; Sandler, 1992). Black women administrators often find themselves being the minority at a PWI and because of this, the majority group denotes their presence as tokens. And due to the fact that they find themselves in these positions, African American women feel as if the majority sees them as spokespersons for all Blacks rather than as individuals (Moses, 1989).

Despite decades of efforts on the part of the postsecondary institutions, African American women still face special problems navigating their careers in the academy (Singh, Robinson, Williams-Green, 1995). Further, women administrators are promoted at slower rates and their earnings are lower compared to their male colleagues (Johnsrud & DesJarlais, 1994; Singh, Robinson, Williams-Green, 1995). According to bell hooks (1984):

In studies on the experiences of African Americans at multiple levels in society, African American women's struggles were masked with those of African American men. This approach does not give appropriate attention to the African American woman experience. One ignored the gender related issues, while the other did not consider elements of racism.

Collins (2009) reiterated that for African American women many of their experiences are centered on the double oppression of racism and sexism. Racism and sexism are forms of oppression that are not independent of each other. If a Black women experience racism then she is most likely to sexism (bell hooks, 1984).

Sexism

Gender discrimination exists on many American higher education institutions (Hensel, 1991). For African American women administrators in higher education, there still remains the fact that in addition to racial discrimination, sex discrimination is oftentimes a prevalent experience as well; thus they are confronted with special challenges (Singh, Robinson, Williams-Green, 1995; Watson, 2001). For most African American women, racism and sexism are not always distinguishable. Often they exist in tandem (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). For example, Jackson (2001) asserted that Black males have had the opportunity to attend larger institutions of higher education, consequently, gaining more occupational opportunities. Because of the paucity

of Black women administrators, it tends to force this small community into a small and isolated cohort (Carroll, 2000). Given that these individuals are forced into a small and isolated community, there is no one with “whom they can share experiences and gain support” (Carroll, 2000, p. 120). Unfortunately, the notion of sexism is not often motivated by their White counterparts. In other words, sexism for Black women is not just at the hands of White males. Oftentimes, African American women feel as though members of their own ethnic group, particularly Black males, express a lack of support for Black women (Sandler & Hall, 1991).

Balancing Personal and Professional Life

The ability for women in student affairs to negotiate education and career progression depends on their ability to develop strategies that provide some personal balance between education, work, the role of motherhood and the impact of having children (Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2001). Black women are not excused from these experiences. African American women in higher education are also challenged with many responsibilities both personally and professionally (Moses, 1989). Since the Jim Crow era, Black families invested in the education of both their sons and daughters, hoping that both would use their education to advance their race (Crocco & Waite, 2003).

As DuBois (1935) wrote, “Black folk connected knowledge with power believing that education was the stepping stone to wealth and respect” (p. 638). With this newfound mission to uplift the Black community, African American women committed themselves to building their professional careers. Needless to say, this had profound effects on balancing their personal lives. Crocco and Waite (2003) stated:

Too much professional success, specifically earning advanced degrees, challenged this balancing act between self and others, leaving Black women caught between their responsibilities to others and their own desires for leadership and recognition (p. 73).

Johnson (1998) maintained this concept by suggesting:

In this age of declining resources and rising expectations that we improve the quality of higher education, it is very difficult for senior-level administrators in major research universities to balance competing interests in their efforts to accomplish their institutional mission without compromising academic excellence and diversity. The complexity of such an administrative position is further compounded if the administrator happens to be an African American woman in a predominately White university. (p. 279)

Literature suggests that while African American women in higher education evolve into senior level administrators, they continue to face many challenges. One obstacle for Black women administrators is the experiences they face when balancing family, work and community responsibilities (Moses, 1989). Moses (1989) asserted that “Black women tend to engage in more teaching, counseling of students, and committee work than do White males” (p. 18). As a result of this, Black women administrators tend to have less time to focus on their own academic and career progression.

Recruitment and Promotion Issues

Recruitment of African American administrators begins with the institution’s recruitment and hiring practices (Cruse, 1994; Drummond, 1995; Jackson, 2001). Since the passage of the civil rights initiatives of the 1960s and 1970s, minority and female employment at institutions of higher education has increased (Becks-Moody, 2004). However, these numbers are still lacking. Rusher (1996) asserted that:

Due to a recognition of obvious shortages at ethnic and cultural diversity, and the effects of racism, and sexism which has plagued the career development of Black females, recent commitments in higher education has been to diversify staff profiles by hiring and promoting various minority groups members and women. (p. 21)

However, once Black women administrators are recruited to PWIs, the positions they are typically recruited for are not a true reflection of their intellect and administrative ability (Jackson, 2001). According to Rusher (1996), the institution's president must ensure that African American women are not only recruited into entry level positions at their institutions but are also maintained and encouraged for upper level administrative positions.

Due to this lack of respect and promotion, Black administrators are deficient in professional networking with other administrators and faculty members (Henry & Glenn, 2009). Rusher (1996) maintains that networking is extremely useful in recruiting and retaining minority staff. Another promotion issue facing many African American women administrators is their being overly committed to other university obligations, thus limiting their own academic achievements (Collins, 2000; Guillory, 2001). And regardless of institution, many colleges and universities have a motto of research and service to students, whether faculty or administrator. Gregory (1999) stated:

The truth is that somebody has to teach undergraduates, advise students, serve on committees, mentor students, and be responsible for a host of other responsibilities that are not rewarded by tenure and rarely recognized during promotion. That "somebody" is usually a person of color who is committed to mentoring students and sincere service to one's campus and community. (p. 45)

These types of responsibilities are generally bestowed on student affairs administrators. And due to the promotion issues, there is a lack of critical mass among Black women in student affairs. Oftentimes, this results in women feeling they were hired to be tokens (Becks-Moody, 2004; Sandler, 1992).

Isolation

Isolation is another challenge that African American women, especially administrators, encounter in higher education (Howard-Vital, 1989). Becks-Moody (2004) maintained that “African American women administrators are often the only woman at senior levels at most institutions, especially at predominantly white universities” (p. 23). Feelings of isolation are prevalent for African American women administrators when they are unable to access networking opportunities (Myers, 2002). In addition, Carroll (1982) noted that Black women in higher education are isolated, underutilized and often demoralized. And while this population of higher education professionals has made great strides in higher education, their numbers do not reflect such achievements, especially at the senior level positions. This has caused many African American women, as well as their colleagues, to question why they were hired at predominantly white institutions (Allen, 1995). Due to their lack in numbers, Black women administrators are often challenged with making sacrifices in order to achieve career progression (Collins, 2000; Sandler, 1992). Moreover, Black women in higher education frequently face double discrimination; one for being female and one for their racial and ethnic different (McCurtis, Jackson, & O’Callaghan, 2008; Sandler, 1986; Sandler, 1992). Oftentimes, minority women are not viewed at PWIs as having specific concerns. The majority of programs aimed at the recruitment and retention of Black administrators focus on the needs of Black men (Sandler,

1986). Due to the lack of African American women within higher education departments, this often includes the feelings of isolation.

As Sandler noted in her 1986 article, *The Campus Climate Revisited: Chilly for Women Faculty, Administrators, and Graduate Students*, Black women administrators are frequently ignored with their contributions in policy making decisions, thus believing their colleagues lack of concern for their credibility. Further, although Black women are attaining advanced degrees and achieving successful career progressions, they continue to face lack of respect from colleagues (Aguirre, 2000). Receiving lack of respect from colleagues remains one common finding in the literature about challenges of African American women in higher education (Aguirre, 2000; Allen, Guillory, Suh, & Hammarth-Bonous, 2001; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001; Turner & Meyers, 2000). Oftentimes, Black women administrators refer to working at a PWI as a chilly climate. Chilly climate refers to “the ways in which men and women are treated differently by faculty, administrators, advisors, and others, both in the classroom and in outside learning experiences” (Sandler, 1986, p. 6). And due to this chilly climate, it makes it difficult for PWIs to recruit and retain Black administrators. In order to increase the number of diverse administrators at PWIs they should provide an environment of comfort (Guillory, 2001; Moses, 1989; Sandler, 1992).

The following section provides different persistence strategies used by African American women in higher education. African American women holding senior level positions in higher education, particularly student affairs, experience a wide range of challenges. Despite these challenges, Black women have persevered and maintained in the academy by developing coping or persistence strategies to overcome (Owens, 2004).

Persistence Strategies at PWIs

Developing effective persistence strategies is crucial to the success and progression of many African American women administrators in student affairs. As noted by Harvard (1986), successfully overcoming both racism and sexism is extremely “paramount to the successful career development of Black women administrators” (p. 12). Unfortunately, it is evident that universities are still perceived by black women to be ivory towers as the structures and culture fail to acknowledge or value their contributions to society (Henry & Glenn, 2008; Henry, 2010). An ivory tower is a metaphor that refers to the working at a PWI. While the literature suggests that it is essential for Black women to connect with one another in order to overcome the obstacles they face within the academy, the effects of systemic racism and their underrepresentation in the profession makes this recommendation extremely difficult to implement in some settings (Henry & Glenn, 2008). There have been studies that found co-occurring discrimination related to race and gender (Zamani, 2003), lack of support systems and networks (Patton & Harper, 2003), and unwelcoming, insensitive, and isolative environments (Watt, 2003). To overcome these issues, African American women administrators are developing coping or persistence strategies, both institutional and individual, to help aid in these challenges.

A study by Harvard (1986) suggested that in order for Black women to successfully surpass the many challenges of being a minority leader at a PWI, they should network with others to avoid isolation, seek a doctoral degree, and learn to successfully deal with both racism and sexism. Further, in order to persist through the challenges, African American women need to be smarter, work harder, and be more articulate than their White counterparts to combat racism and sexism (Carter, Pearson, & Shavlik, 1998; Nichols & Tanksley, 2004). As hooks

(1981) maintained, African Americans in higher education need to create what she refers to as a homeplace. In this space, African Americans are able to “reaffirm one another and healing wounds in order to become whole again” (King & Watts, 2004, p. 111). The following sections provide persistence strategies Black women administrators have used while working at PWIs.

Mentoring

One way in which African American women administrators in higher education overcome professional and personal challenges at PWIs has been to participate in mentoring activities. Jackson (2003) stated, “mentoring programs can be used to help retain people of color by providing needed social interactions that promote a deeper personal and professional affiliation with the institution” (p. 12). African American female students who need and seek mentoring relationships often discover that those relationships are difficult to develop because of cultural differences between black women and white faculty (Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

A study conducted by Noble (1988) revealed that having a mentor was reported to enhance Black faculty and administrator opportunities for promotion and tenure, as well as, provide important information needed for professional mobility. However, due to the lack of African American administrators and faculty on campuses, these responsibilities of being a mentor are great due to the overwhelming professional demands Black women face. Therefore, Black female student affairs professionals may have to seek the support of Black faculty or other Black women employed in seemingly unconnected functional areas within student affairs; such as a Director of Student Health Services connecting with the Director of Career Services (Henry, 2009). In addition, while mentoring proves to be an effective method of career progression for African American women in higher education, mentors are least likely to be in their units,

suggesting that these women have to search elsewhere to find support (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001).

Minority administrators often face challenging barriers on PWI campuses (Crawford & Smith, 2005). Barriers such as isolation, loneliness, and lack of critical mass tend to play a significant role in the Black woman administrators' success and promotion. Thus, developing a supportive network of alliances to promote healthy relationships is vital. As a result, mentoring has grown as an important professional and personal development tool for many senior level Black women administrators (Henry, 2009; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Patton, 2009; Tillman, 2001). Mentoring provides the catalyst to upward mobility in employment, success in education, and personal development (Crawford & Smith, 2005). According to Jackson (2003), "the mentoring process provides for positive daily interaction". (p. 46)

Well-developed mentoring programs provide the opportunity for African Americans to grow professionally through interactions with committed individuals in senior level positions (Jackson, 2002, 2003). Therefore, mentoring has been introduced as a tool to develop job satisfaction. Crawford and Smith (2005) asserted that "mentoring would give African American women female administrators greater responsibility and visibility and would encourage young African Americans to choose higher education as a career" (p. 53). Levinson, Darrow, Klein, and McKee (1978) indicated that mentoring is viewed as crucial for enhancing an individual's skills and intellectual development as well as using influence to further an individual's entry and advancement. Given that African American women are grossly underrepresented in higher education, specifically student affairs, it is essential to recognize that they are more likely to have stronger career progression towards a policy making position while having a mentor.

Interestingly enough, African American professionals are more likely to identify core family members as their primary role models (Ellis, 1983). Additionally, the majority of African American women administrators declared that family members were their driving force for succeeding academically and professionally. Moreover, to successfully combat the institutional racism and sexism at PWIs, mentoring provides an effective means for Black women administrators to achieve in their career goals (Nichols & Tanksley, 2004).

Nevertheless, Patton and Harper (2003) revealed that while African American women overwhelmingly enjoy the guidance of other African American women administrators, since there are not many women administrators who resemble them, they have a difficult time locating potential mentors. As a result of that, career opportunities may not be readily presented. In addition, Patton and Harper (2003) maintained:

Participating in a mentoring relationship with someone who looks like them, who has similar personal, professional, and scholarly interests and is devoted to their holistic experience and personal success...is keenly important for African American women and other students of color. (p.68)

African American women within PWIs are typically viewed as outsiders or others to their White counterparts; therefore, they are rarely included in any university networks (Collins, 2000; Moses, 1989). Therefore in order to overcome this disadvantage, Black women typically rely on building supportive networks through mentoring.

Mentoring programs can also be used to help retain African American administrators by providing needed social interactions that promote a deeper personal and professional affiliation with the institution (Jackson, 2003). Well-developed mentoring programs provide the opportunity for people of color to grow professionally, through interactions with committed

individuals in senior level positions (Jackson, 2002, 2003). Additionally, spirituality has been a pivotal motivator in sustaining African American women administrators at PWIs. The following section provides an overview of how spirituality helps overcome institutional stressors.

Spirituality

One of the greatest sources of strength and what is often the center of the Black community is the Black church (Collins, 2000). According to Gregory (1999), the Black church's role is to provide spiritual, moral, emotional, social, political, and economic support. For many years, Black women have traditionally been extremely active in the Black church. For African American women, developing a strong spiritual foundation helps cope with the everyday struggles while existing in an oppressive environment (Watt, 2003). Additionally, Patton and McClure (2009) stated that because African American women are "often overlooked, racially isolated, misrepresented, and misunderstood, they often turn to spirituality as a transformative, regenerative, and uplifting space" (p. 42).

Due to the lack of Black women on campus, administrators, faculty, and students alike, African American women have to develop positive ways to cope with challenges such as "prayer, bible study or other rituals that invite the spirit in their daily life" (Watt, 2003, p. 31). Connecting through spirituality is an important facet of the lives of African American women. Spirituality has been documented as useful in helping Black women combat "the everyday struggles that come with living in a socially and politically oppressive system" (Watt, 2003, p. 29). From this perspective and within the common context of their underrepresentation, spirituality may be employed as a connective strategy to assist Black women in overcoming the issues of isolation and marginalization they experience in higher education (Henry, 2009). In

addition, Black women use spirituality as a means to fight oppression and build their resiliency (Watt, 2003).

Although the term spirituality is a difficult concept to articulate due to its multiple interpretations, hooks (2000) defined spirituality as the commitment to a particular paradigm that gives honor to the principles of interconnectedness and the inner being. Further, Berkel, Armstrong, and Cokley (2004) posited that most African American women make no differentiation between spirituality and religion. For African American women, spirituality continues to be a strong influence as it is a means of negotiation and understanding of the issues, struggles, and forms of oppression that they face on a daily basis (Mattis, 2002).

Professional Associations

Connecting through involvement in professional organizations, that is participating in local, regional, and national professional organizations, provides a place where African American administrators and their colleagues can fulfill social and psychological needs that are not typically met on campus (Henry & Glenn, 2003). In academic settings, supportive networks and hospitable academic environments are important for Black women administrators particularly since these women often actively seek networks that provide sources of professional, social, and religious outlets (Gregory, 1999). Historically, professional conferences and workshops have provided a forum for Blacks in general, and Black women in particular, to share and exchange ideas related to their personal and professional development (Henry, 2009). Studies on African American women administrators have indicated that support systems are important facets for a successful and satisfying career in higher education (Gregory, 2009; Henry & Glenn, 2008). In addition, familial relationships, professional associations, and church activities are factors that can affect career mobility (Henry, 2009).

These support systems provide a source of support, strength and encouragement for African American women administrators in hopes to help them cope with the conflicts which may arise in higher education (Gregory, 1999). African American women in student affairs can rely on professional connections such as the African American Women's Summit. This summit provides a forum for African American women in student affairs to hear from "seasoned professionals, to explore the internal and external dimensions of their lives, and discuss how those dimensions guide their professional practice and form the foundation for authentic and transformative leadership when they converge in a holistic manner" (NASPA, 2010). In addition, this summit has been offered as a pre-conference workshop at the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association's (ACPA) annual conventions for a number of years (Brightharp, Henry, Hinton, et al., 2005; Henry, 2009; Henry, Brightharp, Powell, et al., 2008; Henry, Brightharp, Howard-Hamilton, et al., 2007; Henry, Brightharp, Brazzel, et al., 2006; Howard-Hamilton, Henry, Hinton, et al., 2004).

Attending such professional associations such as NASPA's African American Women Summit enhances career mobility by providing greater access to professional opportunities (Henry, 2009). By enhancing relationships with other professionals in the same field, this can serve as beneficial service for Black women for many purposes: (1) assist African American women in asserting her intellectual ability and legitimacy as a scholar; (2) collaboration for future research opportunities; and most importantly (3) serve as a means for preventing isolation due to lack of critical mass (Gregory, 1999). These types of opportunities have become especially important for a number of African American women in higher education who find themselves in a position where they are surrounded by others who do not look like them. As

such, African American women student affairs administrators should be encouraged to “form sister circles and share counterstories in settings which help [them develop stand points] and form healthy identities not based on gender or racial stereotypes” (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 101).

Students, Faculty, and Other Professionals

With the increase of students of color on college campuses, institutions of higher education, particularly PWIs have not paid much attention to the recruiting and retention of African American faculty and administrators (Henry, 2010). Decisions to include African Americans into student affairs administration, particularly in senior-level positions, appear to have far-reaching effects on the experiences of African American students at institutions of higher and postsecondary education (Jackson, 2003). Black female faculty and administrators on PWIs can significantly influence the lives of students (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). The lack of Black women in higher education can also have a detrimental impact on non-minority students, faculty, and staff (Gregory, 1999). The presence of Black administrators on campus, particularly PWIs, may increase the success for students of color at their respective institutions (Jackson, 2003). This has resulted in more African American students attending PWIs rather than historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) (Allen, 1992; Harvey, 2002).

It is important to have non-minority students interact with African American women administrators so they realize Black women are qualified as administrators, faculty, or even doctoral students (Guillory, 2000). In addition, considering the importance that African American administrators play in warming the chilly climate for African American students, it is crucial that higher education institutions learn how to effectively recruit and retain them (Jackson, 2002).

The presence of African American students has triggered the need for more African American student affairs professionals and faculty, yet the proportion of African Americans in these positions continues to remain small (Brown & Globetti, 1991). It is important to note that higher education needs to increase the presence of African American administrators on campus in an effort to help with the social needs of students from underrepresented populations (Brown & Globetti, 1991). Rarely do students of color see Black administrators, especially Black women administrators, in executive level positions at PWIs, so in an effort to matriculate and succeed, these students typically rely on each other for support (Carroll, 2000).

Among the scarce literature that exists regarding African American women in student affairs, some researchers have acknowledged the significant roles that these women play in facilitating the learning and development of not only students of color, but all students (Henry, 2010; Jackson, 2003). Noble (1990) stated that “today more than 70 percent of all black students study in predominately white colleges” (p. 98). There are two ways in which African American women administrators in higher education can influence the lives of students, particularly students of color: (a) Mentorship with students and (b) enrollment and persistence (Henry & Glenn, 2010).

The presence of African American women administrators in higher education can have a substantial influence on the number of students that matriculate through their academic careers (Jackson, 2003). The experiences of these African American administrators is important because when African American and other minority students see other African Americans on campus, they believe they can also succeed and hold professional positions (Patitu & Hinton, 2001).

Despite all the significant contributions African American female administrators make in higher education and to the academy, many senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) continue to

struggle with two forms of oppression: racism and sexism (Collins, 2000). Current research regarding the experiences of African American women in higher education clusters staff, faculty, and students together, overlooking the unique contributions and challenges of each cohort (Henry, 2010). Still the paucity of information on this subject has indicated that African American women administrators in higher education still face the issues of racism, sexism, homophobia, and overall lack of support (Henry, 2010; Patitu & Hinton, 2001). With the increasing amount of positive contributions African American women administrators in student affairs have with their students, isolation may still exist.

Institutional and Campus Climate

Campus climate plays a significant role in how African American women administrators are perceived at PWIs. According to Harvey (1986), campus climate is a “term used to describe the culture, habits, decisions, practices, and policies that make up campus life. Since the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the ruling in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), diversity on America’s PWIs has remained on the forefront (Cohen, 1998).

The degree to which the climate is hospitable determines the comfort factor for African Americans and other nonwhite persons on campus” (Harvey, 1986, p. 128). Although certain landmark court cases, mainly *Bakke*, *Hopwood*, *Gratz v. Bollinger*, and *Grutter v. Bollinger*, have increased the numerical representation of persons of color attending predominantly white institutions of higher education, fostering a campus climate that is welcoming for all is still difficult for many institutions (Hurtado, 1992).

Theoretical Framework

Collins' (2000) *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* served a significant role in identifying the interpretative lens for my study. Throughout this book, Collins described the differences between White feminism and Black feminism (Allen, 2009; Becks-Moody, 2007; Hine, 1993). Further, I also utilized hooks' (1984) *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. This helped set the foundation for understanding the historical context of feminism as it relates to White middle class women and Black women. As educational scholars have maintained, African American women administrators working at PWIs tend to feel as though their voice is not acknowledged (Harvey, 1987; Moses, 1989; Watson, 2001). Therefore, in an effort to ground my dissertation study, I choose the approach of the Black feminist thought as a point of view.

Feminism lacks a strong, definitive definition. Originally, feminism in the United States dealt with the everyday plight of White women (bell hooks, 1984; Hine, 1993). bell hooks (1984) asserted that the central theme of modern feminist thought:

implies that women share a common lot, those factors like class, race, sexual preferences, etc. do not create a diversity of experience that determines the extent to which sexism will be an oppressive force in the lives of individual women. (p. 5)

Further, Black women are in an unusual position in society due to the overarching position they bear due to sexist, racist, and classist discrimination (bell hooks, 1984). For this reason the unique differences that African American women face shape and form their consciousness and how they view their world. Hence, the lived experiences of this marginalized group play a central role in the development of feminist theory (Harris, 2007).

As an interpretative lens, BFT is rarely used to interpret and address the challenges faced by African American women (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Thus, I feel it is fitting to describe how the intersection of race and gender influence the experiences of Black women. Understanding why the experiences of African American women are different from those of other women and those of African American men is steeped in the historical progression and ideology of Black people in the United States (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). BFT, developed by educational feminist Patricia Hill Collins, promises to offer an understanding of the intersecting identities of African American women by explaining the ways their needs can be addressed effectively (Collins, 1999).

It is a theory that centralizes and validates the intersecting dimensions of race and gender that are uniquely experienced in the lives of African American women (Henry & Glenn, 2009). With BFT, Collins (1990) sets out to provide a critical theory that is based in the voice of Black women. In addition, this theory sets to share the experiences of African American women as well as their thoughts about themselves, their community, and society based on their gender, race, and class (Henry, 2010). Collins (1990, 1998, 2002) maintained the discussion of BFT suggests that marginal positions in academic settings have been occupied by African American women for an extended period (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Such marginality includes occupying the outsider within status, which means that African American women have been invited places where they are the dominant group (majority population) but they remain outsiders because they still feel invisible and have no voice when dialogue commences (Collins, 1999).

According to Howard-Hamilton (2003) BFT provides an important element of depth to our understandings about the struggles and needs of Black women in academia. Further, Collins (2009) contended that the BFT is grounded on the premise that the majority of Black women

share certain commonalities, perceptions, and experiences. According to Collins (2002) at the core of BFT is the concept of standpoint, which suggests that the inherited struggle against racism and sexism is a common bond among African American women. Traditionally within higher education African American women administrators in particular and women of all historically underrepresented racial groups in general, must deal with the double oppression of racism and sexism (Barksdale, 2006; Collins, 1991; Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Camblin 1998; Moses, 1989). Fundamentally, Black feminist theory provides an overarching view of the shared experiences of Black women.

As a historically oppressed group in the U.S., Black women have produced social thought designed to oppose oppression (Collins, 2000). BFT is “important because women constitute as an oppressed group” (Collins, 2000, p. 25). Collins (2000) set out to emphasize the agency of BFT in fostering both empowerment and conditions of social justice; it provides a more complex analysis of oppression and places greater stress on the connections between knowledge and power relations. Collins (2000) captured the thoughts and experiences of African Americans in order for these women of color to feel empowered. Through the use of narratives, quotes, and social theories, African American women and other Black feminists were captured. These words of wisdom allowed Collins to conceptualize BFT as a theoretical philosophy. Originally, Collins (2000) was committed to “making BFT intellectually rigorous, well researched, and accessible for only a few fortunate enough to receive an elite education” (p. viii). However, after much consideration, Collins (2000) quickly realized that she could not write a volume that was geared towards the experiences and thoughts of African American women without having the vast majority of Black women understand its foundation.

Additionally, BFT is viewed as a critical social theory oriented toward collectively seeking justice for Black women in the U.S. and for other oppressed groups elsewhere (Collins, 2000). As Black women face the interesting intersectionality of race and gender, race is far from being the only significant marker of their oppression (Andersen & Collins, 1998). Class, gender, sexuality, religion, and citizenship all make an impact on how the U.S. social landscapes view Black women. Furthermore, racial segregation remains a fundamental feature of the U.S. social landscape, leaving many African Americans with the belief that the more things change, the more they stay the same (Collins, 2000; Collins, 1998).

Summary

From the founding of American higher education in 1636, it has remained an institution that both overtly and inadvertently discriminates against African Americans and women (Jenifer, 2005, p. 41). The increase in a diverse student population, coupled with affirmative action policies set in place has increased the number of students and faculty members at PWIs. However, the number of Black women student affairs administrators in senior level positions still remains low (Drummond, 1995; Jackson, 2003; Moses, 1989). Despite the many challenges that they face in the academy, this population has overcome by utilizing successful persistence strategies to achieve career progression. Although the academy has a long way to go in recruiting and retaining African American women student affairs executive-level positions, PWIs have a long way to go in increasing the diversity of their administrators.

This chapter provided a comprehensive literature review of the challenges and persistence strategies that African American women in higher education encounter. Additionally, the literature review provided historical analysis on the emergence of African Americans in higher education, women in higher education, student affairs, African American

women in student affairs, challenges, and persistence strategies. The following chapters will review the methods, data collection, the findings, and the conclusion.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

“The notion that African American women leaders are an invisible group relegated to the sidelines and easily combined with other groups is a convenient fiction that conceals the power and importance of their exercise of leadership.”

-Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis

To address the research questions posed in this study, I utilized a qualitative research approach. Further, narrative inquiry served as the methodological approach to explore the contours of the participants’ lived experiences and how they made meaning of their lives as student affairs professionals. Black feminist thought (BFT) served as the interpretative lens to frame and explain the experiences and perspectives of eight African American women (AAW) senior student affairs administrators at their respective predominately White institution (PWI). This interpretative paradigm seeks to understand the subjective ways the participants interacted with their social world (Van Manen, 1997). Furthermore, I used narrative inquiry because it details “appealing interpretive tools which are designed to examine phenomena, issues, and people’s lives holistically” (Dauite & Lightfoot, 2004, p. xi). Clandinin and Connelly (2004) agreed with this thought explaining that narrative inquiry “is the best way of representing and understanding experience” (p. 18). Therefore, to understand their individual experiences, participants shared their personal and professional stories. Further, to gain a better understanding of the experiences of these women, I used elements of BFT (Collins, 2000) to validate the participants’ interpretation of their professional experiences.

Although America’s institutions of higher education have become more diverse, AAW administrators in student affairs, specifically those who hold senior level positions such as vice

president for student affairs are lacking (Jackson, 2003). Due to these low numbers they face many challenges (Bright, 2009; Jackson, 2003; Watson, 2001). If PWIs want to increase institutional efforts of creating a racially diverse administrative staff, they need to understand the unique issues Black women face (Moses, 1989). As a result of understanding their issues, PWIs in turn, could create an institutional environment that is welcoming for a diverse population of student affairs administrators. In this chapter, first, I explained the purpose and significance of this study. Next, I discussed my rationale for using narrative inquiry and BFT as the analytical and theoretical framework for this study, respectively. I concluded the chapter with a discussion of the data collection and analysis process, validity and reliability, and the limitations of the study.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the personal and professional experiences of eight AAW senior level student affairs administrators who are employed at PWIs and the persistence strategies they used while working at a PWi. I identified various persistence strategies used by these Black women administrators to recognize how they overcome their individual professional challenges. I used five constructs to guide this study: (a) professional experience, (b) persistence, (c) challenges (d) race and gender, and (e) institutional climate. These five constructs played an integral role in exploring the experiences that African American women administrators face at PWIs.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the challenges that African American women senior student affairs administrators face with persisting at a predominately White institution?

2. What are the persistence strategies that African American women senior student affairs administrators use in order to succeed at a predominately White institution?

Significance of Study

The personal and professional experiences of eight AAW senior student affairs administrators who were employed at PWIs served as the focus of this study. The results of this inquiry can help Black student affairs administrators at PWIs better understand the experiences of this traditionally marginalized group (Bright, 2009; Collins, 2000; Gregory, 2000). By using collective narratives from AAW who currently hold senior level positions in student affairs, PWIs will be able to understand the experiences and challenges that AAW are often subjected to in higher education (Collins, 2000; Henry & Glenn, 2009). Further, this information serves as a framework for developing a more diverse presence of student affairs administrators within higher education. The results of this study provide insights to help higher education institutions develop and improve the recruitment and retention programs for diverse student affairs professionals. Further, each narrative provides other minority student affairs leaders strategies in order to overcome the challenges of being Black and female in a higher education institution.

Methodological and Theoretical Framework

In this study, qualitative research narrative inquiry provided the analytical lens to descriptively understand the experiences of the participants. Rather than using numbers to reflect their experiences which would be quantitative in nature; I believed that data should be presented in the forms of quotes, interview transcripts, memos, documents and journal reflections in search of truly understanding their experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2009). Additionally, Maxwell (2005) maintained that the strengths of qualitative research include its

inductive approach, meaning that it focuses on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers.

Furthermore, qualitative research can be used as an intentional tool to learn about people's feelings, thoughts, and experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Creswell (2007) stated that "we conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study" (p. 40). A qualitative approach provided AAW administrators the opportunity to express their experiences and reactions in their own words while allowing themes to emerge and be developed for further research (Wolfe, 2010). Additionally, incorporating narrative inquiry allowed me to better understand the personal experiences of my participants by allowing them to tell their stories and interpret the meaning of their stories.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry has many different facets and researchers note that the term "narrative" has multiple meanings and is often synonymous with the word story (Riessman, 2008). Creswell (2007) defined narrative research "as a study of stories or descriptions of a series of events that accounts for human experiences" (p. 234). Furthermore, narrative study seeks to elicit the everyday life world of those studied by ascertaining their descriptions of experiences as well as their internalized meanings (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). The strength of narrative inquiry derives from the elicitation of the participant's voice; it focuses specifically on the individual's life stories, while reducing the researcher's own interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Historically, narratives derived from the stories of Aristotle's examination of Greek tragedy. Through these stories, a classic structure of narratives or storytelling occurred. This structure included, "a beginning, middle, and an end" (Riessman, 2008, p. 4). Merriam

(2009) added to this idea that the key feature in this type of qualitative research is the use of stories as data, more specifically first person accounts of participants' experiences having a beginning, middle, and an end. With narratives, the plot provided the reader with a variety of emotions that the storyteller shared. As time progressed, the purpose of narratives evolved from the storyteller interpreting the stories to one of the participants telling stories.

Narratives allow for meaningful shaping of stories by directing these stories in purposeful patterns rather than telling them in a random and disconnected fashion (Reissman, 2008). As a result, narratives can tell an entire story, using interviews, observations, and documents. Writing a narrative text contains several levels that overlap. Reissman (2008) asserted that these levels include:

Stories told by research participants (which are themselves interpretive), interpretative accounts developed by an investigator based on interviews and fieldwork observation (a story about stories), and even the narrative a reader constructs after engaging with the participant's and investigator's narrative. (p. 6)

At the center of narrative inquiry lies the way individuals experience their life through stories (Merriam, 2009). Clandinin and Connelly (2004) agreed that narrative research "is a way of understanding experience" (p. 20). More specifically, narrative inquiry emphasizes the stories that people tell and the language used to tell the stories (Merriam, 2009). Hence, capturing the personal and professional experiences of AAW student affairs administrators was the focal point in the study. For the purpose of this study, I used an oral history form. To collect descriptive narratives, I used oral history as a method of interviewing. Oral history is identified as "the collection of data through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and written document analysis" (Becks-Moody, 2004, p. 56). Additionally, I used in-depth interviews to

capture the participants' overarching experiences. Oral histories, or as they are sometimes referred as life stories, are concerned with the personal experiences of participants; thus, maintaining all focus on the actual occurrences of that experience (Linde, 1993).

I wanted to understand each of my participants' unique stories about their experiences as an AAW administrator working at a PWI. Using narrative inquiry allowed me to understand the challenges and persistence strategies and the meanings of those constructs. In turn, participants had the opportunity to interpret their experiences in their own words. By conducting in-depth interviews, I was able to comprehend and understand the persistence strategies each participant used to overcome the challenges they experienced as a minority at a PWI.

Black Feminist Thought

Black Feminist Thought (BFT), a critical social theory developed by educational philosopher, Patricia Hill Collins, aimed to document the experiences and thoughts of AAW. Although widely used, BFT is increasingly difficult to define as BFT encompasses a diverse and often contradictory set of meanings (Collins, 2000). The experiences and ideas of Black women served as the focal point of analysis for BFT. Moreover, BFT contextualizes black women experience when it comes to racism, sexism, and their overall experiences (Henry, 2006). As a critical theory, BFT plays a pivotal role in understanding these Black women administrators because the lives of Black women have been shaped by many outside influences that have encouraged them to create new stories, lifestyles, cultures and the overall experiences (Collins, 2000).

BFT aims to empower AAW within the context of social injustice sustained by intersecting oppressions. Further, as a critical social theory, BFT encompasses bodies of knowledge and sets of institutional practices that actively grapple with the central questions

facing U.S. Black women as a group (Collins, 2000). Some scholars maintain that BFT helps Black women survive, cope, and resist their differential treatment by providing a voice to this marginalized group (Collins, 2000). BFT provides a voice by sharing that as a group African American women live in a different world than those not Black *and* female.

Due to the prevailing nature of racism, Black feminism serves as an intellectual voice of AAW due to their exposure to the common experiences of racism and sexism (Hine, 1993). BFT provides the interpretative lens for understanding that as a group AAW lives in a different world from those who are not Black *and* female.

The connection between narrative inquiry and BFT includes capturing the professional experiences of individuals, which in my case equates to the experiences of African American women administrators and how they persist with being a minority leader at their respective PWI.

Subjectivity

As a Black woman in higher education, I understand the dynamics of racism and sexism at PWIs. So naturally, while I was in the selection phase of choosing a dissertation topic, I gravitated towards investigating race and gender. After much intensive research, I found myself grappling between race and gender of African American students at PWIs or AAW administrators. However, I noticed the lack of literature focusing on AAW administrators who hold senior level administrative positions at PWIs. Due to the lack of literature present, it occurred to me that while the number of AAW administrators has increased over the years, many still encounter a myriad of challenges. One such challenge includes not having a “voice” (Watson, 2001).

Due to understanding the issues of this marginalized group, it was important for me to acknowledge the oppressive nature that oftentimes Black women encounter. Maintaining a focus

on understanding the dynamics, thoughts, emotions, and overarching experiences of the Black women drove my motivation for this study. Therefore, I turned to Patricia Hill Collins' (2000) Black feminist thought (BFT). BFT coupled with narrative inquiry provided a foundation in giving a voice to African American women administrators by exploring the prevalent sexism and racism that many of them encounter while working at a PWI. Exploring these issues of racism and sexism at PWIs in turn formulated my analytical lens. Therefore, BFT and narrative inquiry come together by serving as my interpretative lens for exposing the lived experiences of African American women through their own words and environments (Collins, 2000).

Assumptions

In conducting this study, I assumed the following:

1. The participants' experiences and challenges will reflect similar stories, at both private and public PWIs.
2. The participants will answer the questions honestly and to the best of their ability.
3. The experiences and challenges of each participant may vary due to the institutional culture.

Research Design

I used a qualitative approach to this study. Wolfe stated (2010), "qualitative research methods allow for the participants to fully explain their experienced, perceived, and constructed realities through recollection" (p.61). Using qualitative research allowed me to seek answers to questions by examining the individuals that inhabit higher education settings (Berg, 2009).

Setting

Before interviewing each participant, I wanted to focus on rapport building. I relied on a three of strategies to establish rapport. These strategies included: (1) mirroring the tone of the

respondents by using a friendly and relaxed voice, (b) showing the participants respect by keeping an open mind, and (3) asking basic warm up questions about themselves. Additionally, I interviewed each participant in their own environment, thus allowing the respondents to feel comfortable to exhibit more natural responses. As Marshall and Rossman (1995) stated, human behavior is influenced by the setting in which it occurs, meaning that participants should be interviewed in settings where their thoughts and feelings are explored. Therefore, I interviewed each participant in their own office at their respective institution.

Participants

Prior to interviewing participants, I gathered a purposeful sample of eight senior level African American women administrators at various PWIs across the United States as potential participants. 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 the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Using a purposeful sample of AAW senior student affairs administrators allowed the data to accurately reflect the true experiences of these participants. All eight of the participants held the role of Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA). According to Creswell (2007), the number of participants for narrative interviews is adequate with one or two participants in the study; however, a larger pool of participants can be used to produce rich descriptive data and to form a collective story. After emailing 25 potential participants, I received eight affirmative responses agreeing to participate in the study.

Participant Recruitment

In an effort to obtain potential participants, participant recruitment was a three-part process. First, I attended the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) annual African American Women Summit at their national conference. This session

provides an outlet for African American women in student affairs to share their experiences as an administrator in higher education. At that time, I had the opportunity to network and meet with Black women in student affairs, share my purpose of my dissertation study, and ask if they would like to participate. At the end of this process, I obtained five business cards of Vice Presidents for Student Affairs (VPSAs) who were interested in participating in my study. The second method of participant recruitment included the assistance of NASPA research database. Within NASPA's research division, I requested a membership form to obtain a list of all African American women administrators with the title of Dean of Students, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, and VPSAs. In order to obtain information from the membership database, I had to fax a request form, my approved institutional review board (IRB) form, support letter from my chair, and the purpose of my study. After submitting this packet, I received an email stating that I should receive an excel spreadsheet of my requested information in two weeks. Once I received this spreadsheet, the list consisted of 25 African American women senior student affair administrators from both PWIs and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The spreadsheet listed each administrator's full name, email address, institution name, institution address, and official title. From the 25 names received, I sent an invitation email to all 25 requesting their participation in my dissertation study. As a result, one participant agreed to participate in my study.

I gathered six participants for my study from the first and second method of data recruitment. I accomplished my third method of participant recruitment by the process of snowball sampling. Berg (2009) described the basic strategy of snowball sampling as "first identifying several individuals with relevant characteristics" (p. 51). Merriam (2009) maintained this thought of snowball sampling by locating key participants who met the criteria of African

American women senior student affairs officer and asked each one to refer additional participants (Merriam, 2009). I accomplished this by asking each participant at the conclusion of their interview for names and referrals of other African American women VPSA's who they believed would add to the validity of the study (Berg, 2009). Patton (2009) stated that snowball sampling allows expert informants in a particular field to provide insight on a certain phenomenon through in-depth interviews. This process allowed me to gain an additional two participants, thus bringing the total number of participants to eight. In order to maintain the participants' institutional confidentiality, I created a pseudonym for their respective university. These institutional pseudonyms include: Southeastern University, Sycamore State University, East Coast State University, Shrine University, Madgeville University, West Coast University, Myrtle Oak University, and Armstrong University.

All participants varied in their educational background, career progression and gained experience in student affairs by their exposure to different facets of university administration. I purposefully wanted to conduct interviews in the summer semester prior to fall semester or quarter knowing how busy a Vice President's schedule can be during those times. The participants' profiles are highlighted in the following profile table (Table 1). When each individual agreed to participate, I provided a list of possible dates and times for the interview.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Profiles

Participants (Pseudonym)	Administrator Title	Institutional (Pseudonym)	Years as an Administrator
Maria Jones	VPSA	Southeastern University	30
Leanne Clark	VPSA	Sycamore State University	25
Audra McCall	VPSA	East Coast State University	23
Lena Thompson	VPSA	Shrine University	37
Renee Miller	VPSA	Madgeville University	25
Helen Dubois	VPSA	West Coast University	6
Michelle Washington	VPSA	Myrtle Oak University	20
Jasmine Johnson	VPSA	Armstrong University	20

VPSA denotes vice president for student affairs

All names are pseudonyms

Ethics and Participants' Procedures

I took several steps to ensure the protection of the participants. I was able to begin the participant recruitment process with the approval from Auburn University's Office of Institutional Review. Each participant received an informational letter via email explaining the purpose of the study and how the study would be used (see Appendix A). Once participants agreed to participate in the study, I sent each of them a biographical and demographical form (see Appendix B) along with the informed consent form (see Appendix C) to fill out and electronically deliver back to me. To acquire final approval and to confirm participation, each participant received the informed consent form based on the standards of the institutional review board (IRB). I used biographical and demographical forms to construct biographical profiles,

generate background information prior to interview, and to allow each participant to create a code name to protect their identity and the name of their respective institution. I followed all guidelines required for the protection of human subjects as outlined by the IRB, after providing all participants with their respective pseudonyms.

Data Collection

As participants granted final approval of participation, I scheduled the initial interviews. The primary method of data collection included open-ended, semi-structured interview questions. Further, I used an audio recorder to obtain and ensure interview data accuracy. I interviewed each participant at least twice. I began each interview explaining the purpose of study and the objectives of the investigation. All interviews lasted between 60 to 120 minutes. It was important to use multiple sources of data collection to maintain dependable data (Merriam, 2009). These multiple sources included field notes, thoughts, and interpretations of the interview through journaling. The reflective journal, field notes, and thoughts assisted in formulating follow up interview questions and the analysis phase of the dissertation.

After each interview, I carefully transcribed the audio recordings into a word document verbatim and emailed each participant their transcribed interview for their review, verification, and validation. Along with the transcripts, I attached a letter (see Appendix D) requesting each participant to review the document, make changes, and answer additional follow up questions. I asked followed up questions via email. As a means of member checking, participants reviewed their transcriptions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the purpose of member checking is to provide “not only a test for factual and interpretative accuracy but also to provide evidence of credibility” (p. 373). In addition to member checking, the follow up interview served as a means for participants to provide additional commentary to previous questions. By providing additional

commentary, participants were able to clarify and elaborate on previous questions as well as answer new questions. After reviewing the data collected from the initial interview, I decided that in order to develop more comprehensive narratives of the participants' experiences, I needed to ask follow up questions.

Once I conducted all interviews and collected all biographical and demographic forms, I took two steps in ensuring participants' protection and transcriptions. To ensure protection of participants, I stored all recordings and transcriptions at two locations: (a) my personal computer and (b) my personal flash drive, which remained locked in a personal safe when not in use. Furthermore, I created pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality of participants' identities. Separated, color-coded folders stored the interview transcripts to distinguish the participants without putting their names on the folder. All methods of document protection were denoted in the IRB guidelines.

Interviews

Interviews play an important role in qualitative research. More specifically, qualitative interviewing "is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 1). In a qualitative research interview "knowledge is produced socially in the interaction of interviewer and interviewee" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 82). Through qualitative interviews, I came to understand the experiences of my participants and reconstruct their events (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). I developed the interview questions in advance in an effort to gain an understanding of the personal and professional challenges and persistence strategies of each AAW administrator. Developing interview questions ahead of time proved helpful while reviewing the literature and Collins' (2000) BFT.

Followed up questions emerged for the second interview after I analyzed the data from initial interview. In order to explicitly understand the stories and experiences of AAW administrators in student affairs at PWIs, I created open-ended interview questions. Collecting personal stories in the form of interviews and conversations allowed me to accurately gauge the experience of their lives as senior student affairs administrators. Since the purpose of the study focused on understanding the challenges and persistence strategies, open-ended questions allowed each participant to reflect and elaborate on their own individual experiences without being subjected to closed-ended question restraints.

A qualitative research interview, especially a narrative interview, requires an important relationship or type of rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. It was important for me to immediately gain rapport with each participant to ensure that each were comfortable to share their individual experiences. I conducted each interview informally by beginning with a social conversation on the participant's background. Obtaining the demographic and biographical form prior to the interview allowed me to get a basic understanding of who each participant was. After reviewing this information, I started each interview asking the participants about their academic and professional preparation. It was important to ask appropriate questions while conducting narrative research in order to capture the story of the participants (Creswell, 2007). Further, I previously developed an interview guide to ask questions (see Appendix E). All interview questions aimed at understanding the participant's background, career progression, race and gender, and institutional culture.

Journaling

Journaling served as the second method of data collection. One part of journaling included creating a reflective journal. As stated by Ortlipp (2008), reflective journaling has now

become a widely accepted process in qualitative research. A reflective journal “allows the researcher to present the reader with a transparent account of how the study was constructed” (Freeman, 2011, p. 96). During this process, I reflected on various aspects of the research study. For example, I reflected on my own experiences as an AAW administrator in student affairs, the data collected from interviews, my personal assumptions of the data, and lastly my overall goal of the study. I used these notes generally for the aid of helping me focus on what was relevant. Throughout this study, I used my reflective journal from the start of selecting my dissertation topic to the end of writing my final dissertation draft. This process allowed me to reflect on why I am studying this topic and to reflect on the data collection process. Although time consuming, I had to develop a daily routine of writing in the reflective journal. From this, I was able to formulate follow up questions during and after the interview due to the writing in my reflective journal.

By reflecting on what was presented to me, I used my notes from my journal as a foundation to form new questions. I asked myself a series of specific questions. These questions included: (a) Who am I becoming as a researcher? (b) What purpose am I making in data collection, fieldwork and data analysis? (c) How am I working to align my research questions for my dissertation?, and (d) How are my ideas evolving in my dissertation? These questions helped me decipher which data were important for my study and whether I was on the right track with respect to answering the research questions. As a result of this reflective exercise, this produced rich and descriptive data the data since this thoroughly answered all interview questions.

Audit Trail

To ensure consistency and dependability in my qualitative study, I used an audit trail as my third method of data collection (Merriam, 2009). A method suggested by Lincoln and Guba

(1985), an audit trail can assist readers with the actual accounts of the study and the researcher's thoughts and comments. I used the audit trail (see Appendix F) for three purposes: (1) documentation of all research activities, (2) track of data collection process, and (3) explanations on why certain data analysis procedures used (Creswell & Miller, 2000). As Merriam stated (2009), "an audit trail in a qualitative study describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (p. 223). More specifically, during this process I kept a journal of my reflections, questions, and decisions made while the study progressed.

Data Analysis

It is important to note that collecting and analyzing data in qualitative research should be a simultaneous process (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, I made a routine to transcribe and write notes in the margins of each interview after conducting the interviews. Merriam (2009) stated that "without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed" (p. 171). I achieved this by searching for responses that aligned with my research questions. Therefore, I sought key phrases that specifically explored the challenges and persistence strategies of African American women administrators in higher education.

Creswell (2007) detailed qualitative analysis as consisting of three essential steps. These steps include "preparing and organizing the data for analysis, reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion" (p. 148). I used these three steps of data analysis before, during, and after data collection. To make the data analysis procedures concise, I shortened each step

into (1) preparation of data, (2) coding, and (3) final report. Each section is fully explained in the following chart (see Figure 3).

Table 2

Data Analysis Procedures

Data Procedures	Tasks
Pre-Analysis (Preparing and Organizing Data for Analysis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carefully transcribed all interviews in word document. ▪ Reviewed each transcription by reading each word document and listening to audio recordings multiple times. ▪ Separated each transcription into individual folder to separate participant’s data.
Coding (Reducing Data into Themes by Coding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Created start list of a priori codes. ▪ Reviewed each interview transcription and highlighted key phrases based on research questions and the five construct variables. ▪ Utilized open-coding and axial coding based on Corbin and Strauss.
Open-Coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Read through each transcription and marked notes in margins. ▪ Identified quotes that aligned with construct variables: (a) professional experience, (b) persistence, (c) challenges (d) the intersectionality of race and gender, and (e) institutional climate. ▪ Employed theory driven process of identifying codes based on research questions: (1) what are the challenges that African American women senior student affairs administrators face with persisting at a predominately White institution? and (2) what are the persistence strategies that African American women senior student affairs administrators use in order to succeed at a predominately White institution? ▪ I identified a priori codes based on the literature review of African American women administrators at PWIs prior to fieldwork.
Axial Coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Codes from open coding were teased out and collapsed in coding categories. ▪ Identified emergent themes from the data collected from in-depth interviews. ▪ Atlas.ti was used to condense the number of codes in the categories. ▪ A codebook was developed to assign definitions to each code.
Final Report (Representing Data in Final Report)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interpreted and summarized the data. ▪ Presented findings from narratives based from research questions on African American women’s challenges and persistence strategies. ▪ Incorporated elements of Black feminist thought as an interpretative lens.

Preparation of Data

In the first step, preparing and organizing data, I carefully transcribed all interviews into a word document after each interview. After transcribing the interviews, I began reviewing each interview by reading the transcriptions and listening to the audio recordings multiple times. Reading the transcriptions over and over again allowed me to become familiar with the data presented (Marshall & Rossman, 1998). While reading, I wrote comments in the margins which made the data easier to organize; hence making the data manageable (Marshall & Rossman, 1998; Pearsol, 1985). Miles and Huberman (1994) called this process data reduction, which focuses and organizes data so that conclusions can be drawn and verified. Next, I separated each transcribed interview into its own individual file folder to separate each participant's data.

Coding

In the second step, reducing data into themes, I utilized a series of coding strategies to manage the number of codes that I created from the interviews. Codes are defined as “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). I created a priori codes by reviewing relevant literature on AAW administrators working at PWIs, reviewing notes from my journal entries, and research questions. A priori codes are codes that are developed before examining the current data. Miles and Huberman (1994) maintained this process of creating codes by suggesting developing a “start list” (p. 51). A start list is a method of creating a priori codes prior to fieldwork. From these sources, five a priori codes emerged to communicate the overarching experiences of Black women senior level administrators at PWIs. These a priori codes were (a) professional experience, (b) persistence, (c) challenges, (d) the intersectionality of race and gender, and (e) institutional climate.

My coding strategies comprised of two steps as identified by Strauss and Corbin (1990): (1) open coding and (2) axial coding. This analytic process was characterized by the grounded theory approach (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory is a set of rigorous research procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories. These concepts are related to each other as a theoretical explanation of actions that continually resolves the main concern of the participants in a substantive area (Creswell, 2007; Glaser, 1967). Each strategy allowed me to make sense of the phrases being coded by strategically placing each code into its own unique coding category.

Open Coding. Open coding is the “process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). Creswell (2007) described open coding as “the language of the participants, which are identified with short descriptors, called *in vivo codes*” (p. 290). Open coding was done by reading through each individual transcription and marking notes in the margins that I believed correlated to what the participants wanted to share as it relates to their unique experiences at PWIs. Strauss and Corbin (1990) maintained that the process of reading through the text helps look for “salient categories of information supported by the text” (p. 150). As such, these categories pertained to theory, concepts, and statements made by the research questions. In turn, identifying the a priori codes helped me make the transition from open coding to axial coding by developing a coding system.

While conducting open coding I identified quotes in the transcribed interviews that aligned with the a priori codes. Each a priori code served as a pass in exploring the experiences that African American women in student affairs encounter. Moreover, the passes guided the original research questions which included: (1) what are the challenges that AAW senior student affairs administrators face with persisting at a predominately White institution? and (2) what are the persistence strategies that AAW senior student affairs administrators use in order to succeed

at a predominately White institution? Once initial codes were developed, I replayed audio recorded interviews while following transcripts in order to understand and recapture what was being discussed in the interviews.

Axial Coding. Axial coding provided another method of coding. Axial coding is a “set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding by making connections between categories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). As Creswell (2007) stated, from the axial coding process categories emerge and are assigned *in vivo* category labels. Once open coding was completed, I teased out the codes and collapsed them into coding categories. Strauss and Corbin (1990) advocated this technique of coding by suggesting the researcher review the transcriptions line by line while labeling quotes. Once I coded the transcripts, I reviewed the codes to establish what other codes needed to be added. The development of emergent codes came from the data through the process of axial coding. By reviewing the data emergent themes formed based on a systematic coding system. According to Bogden and Biklen (2009):

Developing a coding system involves several steps: You search through your data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics your data cover, and then you write down words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns. These words and phrases are coding categories. They are a means of sorting the descriptive data you have collected so that the material bearing on a given topic can be physically separated from other data. (p. 171)

Further, I used Atlas.ti as a tool to help locate, code, and annotate my findings while evaluating their importance as it related to the challenges and persistence strategies of my participants. Atlas.ti is a windows-based program that enabled me to organize my data, along

with my codes, into a project (Creswell, 2007). After identifying all codes, I assigned each code a definition in the codebook (see Appendix G).

Final Report

The third and final step, writing the final report, is an important phase in the data analysis process. Writing the report is central to interpreting and summarizing the massive amount of complex data collected (Marshall & Rossman, 1998). In writing the final report, I focused on using the narratives each participant shared to present the findings from the research questions and provide an analysis of the data to develop a synthesis of persistence strategies for African American women administrators. Additionally, elements of BFT served as an interpretative lens to frame and explain of the experiences and perspectives of eight African American women VPSAs at predominately White institutions (PWIs).

Credibility

I took several steps to ensure the quality and credibility in this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined credibility as “an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants’ original data” (p. 296). Credibility has also been noted to be one of the most important factors of establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Collecting thick and rich descriptive narrative data served as a form of credibility in the study by having multiple forms of data with the same results. According to Denzin (1989), thick and rich descriptions are deep, dense, detailed accounts of the experiences of the participants.

I established credibility for this study two ways: (1) member-checking and (2) triangulation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that “member checking is of critical importance to the inquirers, the respondents, and the consumers” (p. 374). In addition, member checking is

“not only a test for factual and interpretative accuracy but also to provide evidence of credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 373). Merriam (2009) maintained this thought by emphasizing that the process of member checking is to take the initial data analysis back to participants and ask whether the interpretation “rings true” (p. 217). Therefore, after each interview, I emailed participants their transcriptions to ensure what they shared was accurately transcribed in order to maintain the true essence of the data and establish validity. Member-checking is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do in addition to identifying my own biases and misunderstandings of what I have observed (Maxwell, 2005).

Data triangulation provided another method of establishing credibility by using a variety of data sources. Data triangulation consists of checking the consistency of data via multiple sources. This included comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information derived at different times and by different means within qualitative methods (Denzin, 1978). I utilized data triangulation by conducting multiple interviews as well as reviewing all transcriptions during and after the interviews to ensure validity of the data presented. This strategy helped reduce the risk that my data conclusions only reflected biases of a specific method, while allowing me to gain a broader and secure understanding of the experiences I was investigating (Maxwell, 2005). Additionally, using a variety of experts served as another form of triangulation. Their individual experiences can be verified against those of other participants thus initiating a rich picture of the attitudes, needs or behavior of those being studied (Shenton, 2004).

Limitations

I identified three limitations with this study. Due to these limitations I focused on collecting thick and rich descriptive narrative data from the participants, which in turn assisted

me in my ability to gain more knowledge about Black women in student affairs. Collecting thick and rich descriptive narrative data served as a form of credibility in the study. The first limitation was the sample of the participants. Since all the participants were limited to African American women VPSAs, the data collected reflected those women who are currently holding those positions. The second limitation includes the researcher as a human instrument of data collecting. As a result of this, error and bias can occur. The third and final limitation included a small cohort of African American women senior level administrators in student affairs being that the sample size of the study was small. More specifically, given that there is not a large number of participants who would be eligible to participate in my study, my pool was limited.

Summary

This chapter discussed the research methods used as well as the research questions by which I guided my study. In this qualitative research approach, the study of AAW in student affairs was guided by both a narrative inquiry and BFT. Findings from this study intend to facilitate more higher education institutions to understand the experiences of Black women administrators so they could foster a comfortable environment to increase recruitment and retention of this population. Secondly, findings in this study foster the facilitation of Black women administrators in student affairs to have a blueprint to succeed in this field. The chapters that follow describe the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND RESULTS

“It is often difficult to separate the influence of race from that of sex; there is no doubt, however that the combination levies a heavy toll on the black woman who tries to exercise her authority and responsibility in groups. Herein lies the most significant challenge to black women [leaders]...and to all who are concerned with the development of social and psychological theories of organizational leadership.”

- R. G. Dumas

Chapter Four illustrated the results of the data gathered from eight senior level African American women (AAW) student affairs administrators. As detailed in Chapter three, I used a qualitative research approach to provide a narrative of the experiences of the participants. Further, I served as the primary instrument of data collection using semi-structured in-depth interviews to explain their experience of the phenomenon of persistence at a predominately White institution (PWI). Data from the study resulted from phone interviews between myself and the participants. To ensure natural responses, I interviewed all participants in natural settings (the administrators’ personal offices).

The framework for this chapter aligned with the literature found for African American women in higher education. The focus of this chapter is two-fold: (a) introduction of participants’ descriptions and (b) presentation of narrative findings from the research questions. Throughout this chapter, I used African American, people of color and Black interchangeably.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the personal and professional experiences of eight African American women senior level student affairs administrators who are employed at PWIs and the persistence strategies they used while working at a PWI. I identified

various persistence strategies used by these Black women administrators to recognize how they overcame their individual professional challenges. I used five constructs to facilitate this study: (a) professional experience, (b) persistence, (c) challenges (d) race and gender, and (e) institutional climate. Institutional climate served as understanding how participants navigated the political nature of higher education. Each construct represented the experiences that AAW in student affairs encounter.

Research Questions

I used two research questions to explore and understand the challenges and persistence strategies of eight AAW administrators at their respective PWI. Once data were gathered and analyzed through coding, I organized the data into various themes. I gathered descriptive statements using direct quotes from participants throughout the study to provide rich and thick descriptions of their experiences, challenges, and persistence strategies. Further, the participants' verbatim interview responses served to support my interpretations of their persistence strategies.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the challenges that African American women senior student affairs administrators face with persisting at a predominately White institution?
2. What are the persistence strategies that African American women senior student affairs administrators use in order to succeed at a predominately White institution?

These research questions addressed the experiences of my participants in senior level administrative positions as a minority leader in higher education and how they perceived their place in an environment where there are a lack people of color. This study also sought to explore persistence strategies that participants perceived as being necessary to improve both personal and

professional development at their institution. These findings may add a more in-depth understanding of what it is like to be an AAW administrator at a PWI and also expand the researcher's understanding of the qualitative findings.

Meet the Participants

I conducted two semi-structured interviews with eight AAW senior student affairs officers (SSAO). I asked each participant key questions about their personal and professional challenges being a SSAO at a PWI including their persistence strategies. This process provided an opportunity to construct their narratives and also added rich data, which assisted in interpreting the responses and developing the information into a meaningful narrative. The chart below presents a demographic summary of the participants (Table 2). Additionally, I created pseudonyms for each participant's name and institution to ensure confidentiality.

Each participant profile provides an illustration of how African American women are not a monolithic group. However, many of their experiences are the same. For example, while each participant share that they are Black *and* female, they varied in their career progression, experiences as a minority leader at a PWI, and ideologies on student development.

Table 3

Participants' Demographic Profiles

Participants (Pseudonym)	Administrator Title	Institutional (Pseudonym)	Years as an Administrator
Maria Jones	VPSA	Southeastern University	30
Leanne Clark	VPSA/DOS	Sycamore State University	25
Audra McCall	VPSA	East Coast State University	23
Lena Thompson	VPSA	Shrine University	37
Renee Miller	VPSA	Madgeville University	25
Helen Dubois	VPSA	West Coast University	6
Michelle Washington	VPSA	Myrtle Oak University	20
Jasmine Johnson	VPSA	Armstrong University	20

VPSA denotes vice president for student affairs

DOS denotes dean of students

Maria Jones

Maria Jones serves as a high level student affairs administrator at Southeastern University. She has been a very dedicated and determined administrator who has been at her current position as Vice President for Student Affairs for 11 years. Collectively, she served as a student affairs administrator for 25 years. Jones attributed her persistence as a senior level student affairs administrator at a PWI to maintaining competence, being politically astute and having a strong inner-constitution. She attributed her success to understanding that in her role as Vice President no two days are the same. As a result, she has been willing and ready to tackle any challenges that may arise. Further, she described “problem solving, trouble-shooting, and crisis management” as a few characteristics of what she needs to do to keep the Southeastern

University's Division of Student Affairs moving. In addition, Jones described her tenure as a student affairs professional as "lucky" due to being able to work and continue to get promoted to director level positions even without a Master's degree.

Further, her experience spans many different facets of higher education administration. Jones explained that her ability to gain career progression has been obtaining good professional training and diverse experiences in student affairs. Additionally, with her many years as a student affairs officer, Jones worked in student activities and orientation. Her responsibilities as a student affairs practitioner allowed her to run a cross-cultural center, work in residential life and student learning, and work in an Educational Opportunity Program; all of which she believed contributed to her path to become a Vice President. As Jones stated, "Understanding the significance in committing yourself to bring the best of what you have every day to your work is valuable in career progression."

Jones was aware that building a diverse community is vital in the recruitment and retention of other AAW administrators in higher education. However, she believed that despite the lack of critical mass of African American administrators at her institution, her race or gender should not play a factor in how she is perceived. Jones then stated that as long as she is a competent administrator while performing her role as Vice President, her success as an SSAO will not waver.

Leanne Clark

Leanne Clark served as Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students (DOS) for Sycamore State University. Clark is relatively new in her position, serving her second year there. However, she has served in higher education collectively for 24 years. As with Jones, Clark has an array of experience working in student affairs, ranging from residential life to

academic counseling. A seasoned administrator, Clark is dedicated to serving her students and community while extending various student service programs to her first-generation, low income students.

Clark attributed her persistence as an administrator while working at a PWI with being a great listener and observer; in addition, generating relationship building and strong collaborative efforts with allies. Originally interested in the field of business and trade, Clark was not introduced to student affairs until her graduate studies. As she stated, “Yeah it was an unintentional move, which you get a lot in student affairs as well but I think it is because at the collegiate level it really doesn't exist other than your own development and leadership in student activities so you don't quite understand it.”

Further, Clark maintained that gaining mentors in the field has been beneficial to her career. Clark recognizes that the double discrimination (Rusher, 1995; Henry & Glenn, 2009; Watson, 2001) of being both Black *and* female has a profound effect on the career progression of many AAW administrators. As she admitted, “Any error is major. They are always looking at everything that you do under a microscope and you're criticized a lot heavier.” As far as the intersection of race and gender, Clark acknowledged “Yeah, because it's a true reality, [in regards to White men and women and Black men] but I do think there is a difference with African American women. Specifically because there is still elements of race but then you have those struggles of women vs. men.” Despite the awareness of this intersectionality, Clark has refused to let being a Black woman at a PWI interfere with her student affairs career progression.

Audra McCall

Audra McCall served as a senior level student affairs administrator at East Coast State University. McCall has longed considered herself to be a “lifelong learner.” She has achieved

tremendous success as an administrator because of her willingness to step outside the box and learn new things. McCall's attraction to student affairs began with her being involved in student government in college. Having administrative experience at both PWIs and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), her career expands from working in multicultural affairs to counseling services. As a result of her drive, she was able to acquire the position of VPSA at the age of 29. Over the years, she has accumulated many loves besides education, such as earning certificates in photography, law, and counseling mediation; all of which she has incorporated in her administrative work. Like many of the participants, McCall's career progression is interesting because she has decided after 39 years of administrative experience to transition from VPSA to a full time faculty member at her institution's College of Education.

McCall is a woman on a mission. She teaches the concept of having multiple plans, especially for employment purposes for Black women. She stated, "You must have plan A through D." Maintaining a pay it forward attitude, McCall thrives on helping others reach their true professional potential, whether it is being President of an institution or VPSA. More specifically, she loves to mentor young Black men, believing that if you catch young black men when they are young and nurture and mentor them, it will yield more successful, as she stated, "brothers."

McCall truly believes that she serves as a role model for not only minority students but White students as well. She stated, "I think it's important that there are White kids to see Black people and Black women in leadership roles." Further she stated that "students look up to me, too, and particularly the female students, regardless of their race. They look up to me." As far as the issues that Black women face, McCall mentioned the challenges of racism and sexism. For example, "getting respect as a leader at a PWI from males can be a challenge" she

states. To combat these issues, McCall maintained that for Black women to gain viable credibility in this field being academically prepared is essential. McCall referred to being academically prepared as having “street credit.” Additionally, McCall credited her persistence working at a PWI as having a strong foundation of her family roots. Her family has always instilled a sense of pride in her based on their family name. Further, she explained that having confidence is important because “you need to be comfortable in your own skin because if you are comfortable in your own skin, it makes a world of difference.”

Lena Thompson

Lena Thompson served as Vice President for Student Affairs for Shrine University. Thompson’s academic and career progression is interesting and quite different from the other participants. While the majority of the participants never considered student affairs as a career track until graduate school or post-graduation; Thompson’s career in student affairs was relatively traditional since she knew she always wanted to be in this field. Like McCall, her career ranges from working at a HBCU and PWI plus experience in academic affairs and student affairs. Her motivation in choosing student affairs equated to her “love and passion for 18-22 year olds.” As a result of her passion for educating and inspiring young adults, Thompson can always be seen interacting with her students at various student populated areas around Shrine University.

In her tenure of being in student affairs and academic affairs, Thompson has acquired tremendous success such as being the first African American female president of a major professional association, gaining the position of VPSA before the age of 40 as well as receiving her doctorate in two years. Yet, despite all of her academic and career success, she has never had a formal mentor to rely on.

Thompson stated that in order to stay ahead of the game at PWIs, she maintained that she “must play the political game that others play.” Further, she noted, that if an administrator denies being politically savvy, she or he is not being a solid administrator. However, in spite of playing the political game, others can see how she is a Christian, first and foremost. Thus, letting her devote dedication to spirituality dictates her character. And while she mentioned that I need to “stop and smell the roses” of how political student affairs can be for African Americans and other minority administrators, it can still be a rewarding experience.

Thompson attributed her persistence working at a PWI, as she stated to, staying in “perpetual prayer” establishing strong close professional connections, and maintaining familial influences. Further, Thompson added that being an AAW student affairs administrator consists of maintaining a steadfast determination, a non-defeatist attitude, and staying confident.

Renee Miller

Renee Miller served as Vice President for Student Affairs at Madgeville University. Being a first-generation college student in her family, she has been immensely successful in her academic and career progression. Further, serving as an administrator for over 20 years, Miller also stands as the youngest participant in my study. In her 20 years of experience, Miller has maintained a healthy number of student affairs and academic affairs experiences ranging from housing and residential life to teaching educational administrative courses. Like many of the participants, Miller’s initial career path did not consist of a traditional student affairs track. Her career path initially led her down a different educational sector: K-12. However, Miller’s work experience as a graduate student introduced her to student affairs and what it has to offer; thus changing her career focus.

Throughout Miller's tenure as an administrator, she described her philosophy on giving back to her African American students on her campus as having a "pay it forward" attitude. Further, Miller prides herself on her constant interaction with her students on her campus by explaining that she views herself as a role model. Maintaining a strong connection to her students, particularly minority students, is what drives Miller to be the best Vice President she can be. Further, Miller explained that she "takes the time to be intentional about getting to know the names of the African American students on campus." And while Miller truly understands the importance of her students growing intellectually, she also wants to her students to grow personally and professionally. As Miller stated, "looking at the academic progress and academic success of students", both minority and majority students is important goal for VPSAs.

Such challenges Miller has encountered include feelings of isolation and being the only one at the table. Yet, despite these challenges she continues to overcome and persevere. For example, she attributed her persistence working at a PWI to being flexible and being a great communicator. Moreover, she reiterated that staying confident is essential as there are certainly stressors to being an AAW administrator in higher education. Other ways Miller has maintained her persistence included being connected to the community, strong familial relations, and having as she put it "other African American supporters on campus." Miller understands that in order to maintain diversity on a PWI there needs to be "intentional and purposeful structures set in place in order to increase the population of a diverse group." In addition, showing that Black women are a value and asset to the institution is essential as well.

Helen Dubois

Helen Dubois served as Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students at West Coast University. Having been an administrator for over 25 years, Dubois attributed her success

as an administrator to opening her division to a wide range of diverse individuals as her staff members. Like Leanne Clark, Dubois' position as an administrator at West Coast University is unique being that she holds dual positions of Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students. Interestingly, Dubois runs a division that holds the only cohort of African Americans on her campus; which Dubois is extremely proud of. Embracing diversity and understanding the value of having a diverse student affairs division is what she has worked very hard for.

Throughout her tenure as a student affairs administrator, Dubois has been cognizant of the double discrimination of being Black *and* female (Rusher, 1995; Watson, 2001). Additionally, she understands that while African American women tend to feel isolated at PWIs, they are extremely visible due to the color of their skin. Throughout the years, Dubois has made substantial contributions while maintaining her student affairs administrative positions. One contribution included developing an academic preparedness program to increase the retention rates of minority students.

Dubois admitted that the issue of credibility has been both a stressor and barrier for her as Vice President. "Even though you bust your buns and do the best you can" she added, White people and others at PWIs oftentimes exacerbate the mistakes of African Americans. In addition to the lack of credibility she has experienced, Dubois claimed that the blatant racism at PWIs is an issue for many Black women administrators. She admitted, "I think people aren't aware that they are racist, but I think they set a higher bar for us and that is why you just have to bust your ass." Despite these barriers, Dubois developed strong connections with colleagues and familial support as a means of persistence while working at a PWI. She credited frequent sister circle meetings via conference call or in-person meetings at the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) conferences as her saving grace.

Michelle Washington

Michelle Washington served as Vice President for Student Affairs at Myrtle Oak University. Her tenure as a SSAO ranges 10 years. In addition to serving as an administrator in student affairs, Washington also is an ordained minister. Her spirituality provides her the balance necessary in this oftentimes stressful environment. Washington's inspiration to become a student affairs administrator occurred during her undergraduate years when she experienced a traumatic experience with her Dean of Students. Having been a student who academically succeeded in high school but struggled in college, she sought help from her Dean of Students. However, instead of motivating her, Washington stated that her Dean of Students informed her that she "didn't belong in college." Despite this unfortunate incident, rather than having a defeatist attitude, that was her pivotal moment where she decided that she wanted higher education to be her career path.

Since then, Washington has provided students the opportunities to succeed by implementing programs that helped students decrease their dropout rate. In addition to her great record of reaching out to students, Washington describes herself as a woman a faith. As she stated, "I rely on my faith as a way to keep me focused and strong, give me direction and wisdom." Interestingly enough, when asked about the issues that African American women administrators face, Washington replied without any hesitation "jealousy, especially from White women." However, she further explained that jealousy can stem within the Black community. For example, Washington stated "I think there is some Black on Black issues...who does she think she is?" type of mentality.

Washington attributed her persistence working at Myrtle Oak University and other PWIs prior to having a strong faith in prayer and finding continuous support from really good friends;

as she stated “individuals she can be herself with.” Further, she reiterated the importance of Black women being secure in themselves and in their skills because job security is not guaranteed.

Jasmine Johnson

Jasmine Johnson served as Vice President for Student Affairs at Armstrong University. Originally from the East Coast, Johnson is relatively new as the senior student affairs officer at Armstrong University; only being in that position for three years. In addition to her role as Vice President, Johnson also serves as faculty member teaching higher education administration for graduate students. Her transition into student affairs is not a traditional one being that her focus was on psychology. After obtaining her doctorate degree at 26 in psychology, Johnson’s only introduction into the field of student affairs was working in counseling centers and multicultural awareness programs while in graduate school.

Known as the hands-on Vice President, Johnson recognizes that she is in a position where not only undergraduates are looking to her but graduates and professionals as well. Therefore, she tries to do a lot of outreach work, as well as being an active participant in African American and multi-ethnic student organizations. Knowing that students are looking up to her, especially the minority students, she finds herself taking on the position as role model, which is a role that she welcomes with open arms. Moreover, being the one that is always looking to make an impact for students, Johnson always finds time to listen to the students’ needs. Whether they are student leaders or not, she is motivated to understand their concerns as they develop and transition through college. Johnson is aware that Armstrong University is a fairly diverse institution; however, she recognizes that Black students are having a difficult time being accepted into this university as freshmen, hence, her dedication to being an active VPSA.

In her career Johnson has been fortunate to have a few mentors who have groomed her and helped her understand as she stated the “politics of a PWI and how to gain support for the initiatives that [a Vice President] wants to carry forward.” As with Helen Dubois, Johnson believes that one issue that Black women administrators face at PWIs is the perception of a lack of credibility. She stated, “Right from the beginning you have to establish yourself as credible, reliable, creative, and you’ve got to be able to step up when it’s time.”

Johnson has attributed her persistence working at a PWI to connecting with family, being spiritual and daily meditation. Coming from a large family, Johnson values the supportive network of having family around. Additionally, she attributed her success as a Vice President to continuous outreach and engaging multiple populations. Further, Johnson has a very supportive President and Provost who believes that she is capable of performing her job. As far as the intersectionality of race and gender, Johnson understands that within student affairs, this is a mostly White male environment. Therefore, she maintained that it is essential that Black women have a “certain level of comfort with yourself.”

Black Feminist Thought

As a critical social theory, developed by educational philosopher, Patricia Hill Collins, Black feminist thought (BFT) is aimed at documenting and understanding the experiences and thoughts of AAW. In this theory, Collins contextualizes black woman’s experience when it comes to racism, sexism, and their overall experience (Henry, 2009). One main concept within BFT that Collins maintains is the intersectionality of race and gender within the Black women’s community. Looking at BFT theory and based on the data collected, this framework served as an representation of the challenges faced by AAW senior level administrators in higher education. One connection made from the data and theory involved the intersectionality of race and gender.

In the interviews, I gave all participants the chance to express their challenges and institutional issues they face while working at a PWI. Based on their responses, I found direct connections to what Patricia Hill Collins suggested. These connections are as follows:

- Intersectionality of race and gender: all participants reiterated the issue of overt racism and sexism while being a minority leader at a PWI.
- Outsider-within status: the majority of participants expressed that they are often invited to participate in university-wide committees, believing that the committee needs a person of color on it; however, they oftentimes feel as though their White counterparts disregard their credibility as leaders, thus inducing the feeling of isolation.

Black feminist thought provides an important element of depth to our understanding about the struggles and needs of Black women in academia (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Traditionally within higher education, AAW administrators in particular, and women of all historically underrepresented racial groups in general, must deal with the double oppression of racism and sexism (Barksdale, 2006; Collins, 1991; Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Camblin 1998; Moses, 1989). Fundamentally, BFT provided an overarching view of the shared experiences of my participants.

Findings

There were numerous themes that emerged from the data that provided insight into the challenges my participants face and the persistence strategies they use as an AAW senior student affairs officer at a PWI. These themes represented the experiences of most if not all the eight participants interviewed for this study (Appendix G). The quotes presented in the next section are in their original form. Each quote and subsection is related to each other by understanding the personal and professional experiences of eight AAW minorities at PWIs. After each

interview question, I asked the participants to explain their own challenges and persistence strategies. After this, the overarching story expressed that the participants face a myriad of challenges such as racism and sexism, personal and professional sacrifices, isolation, and being underestimated by their White colleagues. However, despite these challenges, participants also shared that they have used a variety of persistence strategies to overcome these challenges. These persistence strategies included maintaining strong connections on campus, support networks, and perpetual spirituality.

Challenges

Question One: What are the challenges that African American women senior student affairs administrators face with persisting at a predominately White institution?

Higher education for years has been a place that reflected an underrepresentation of African American women administrators (Moses, 1989). Further, “African American faculty and administrators has historically been underrepresented within PWIs and deal with academic isolation, marginalization of their scholarship, and racial hostility” (Patton & Catching, 2009, p. 713). Several themes emerged from this question asking participants about their challenges. Again, many of these challenges connect with Collins’ BFT as BFT focuses on the experiences of Black women, a marginalized group, and how they view their world. Additionally, BFT offers an understanding of the intersecting identities (race, gender, and institutional climate) of African American women (AAW) and how their needs can be met effectively (Collins, 1999). Several challenge themes emerged as a result of interviewing the eight participants. These themes included: *Overt Racism and Sexism*, *Sacrifices with Personal Life*, and *Perception of Lack of Credibility*. These themes further addressed the research questions by providing insight

into the many personal and professional challenges they encounter being an AAW administrator at their respective PWI.

Overt Racism and Sexism.

When asked about the issues that the participants face due to being a minority leader at a PWI, all participants mentioned the overt racism and sexism in higher education. As BFT theorizes, the intersecting dimensions of race and gender are unique to the experiences of AAW (Collins, 2009; Henry & Glenn, 2009). Participant Maria Jones supported this thought by emphasizing how the issues of race and gender as a senior level administrator at a traditionally White Southern institution can have on Black women in senior level positions. Jones stated:

Well, there is the gender and the race issue, right? There are some people who think you can't do your job because you are a woman, there are some people who think you can't do your job because you are African American and there are some people who think you can't do it because you're both. So often time with the deficient, even though you're a [White] male or female you can walk into a room and people will assume yes this person can do the job off the bat until this person shows them differently. But with us, they don't necessarily assume that, we have to prove to them that we can do the job.

Jones goes on to add that while non-minority staff at PWIs may often second guess African American administrators' ability to be an effective administrator; she mentioned that when they are aware of their abilities, "then we become Super Negros."

Furthermore, Helen Dubois reiterated that since being in student affairs, she has on more than one occasion been surprised at the lack of inclusion some student affairs administrators allow, especially with a diverse staff. Dubois added:

I think it is blatant racism, I think people aren't aware that they are racist, but I think they set a higher bar for us and that is why you just have to bust your ass. Cause I've seen, not just here but at other institutions as well, people who do mediocre work isn't as noticed, but if an African American do mediocre work it's a huge thing. Especially in student affairs.

Dubois then added, “And most people in student affairs tend to be fairly progressive, fairly... to be the blatantly racist, it's so unusual.”

Like Dubois, Renee Miller included racism as a form of stress working at a PWI. Miller mentioned that oftentimes being a minority leader at a PWI, she feels invisible; although she and her colleagues are equal in credentials and experience. This notion formed a connection with BFT's outsider-within mentality. Miller stated:

You encounter ignorance, whether it is from your colleagues, parents, students. It's individuals who sometimes want to bypass you and you are like, excuse me, I'm here. I think the whole issue of being invisible for the fact that they treat you differently than they do other colleagues; those things are very frustrating because you're like, ok, I have the same credentials, I definitely have the years of experiences so why am I having to deal with this low level non-sense that you sometimes have to address and deal with. It's one of those things where you are like, it's their ignorance, you address it and you move on. Because you can't stay very stagnant in that way because you are not going to be able to progress to move forward.

Leanne Clark added that politics play a role in navigating the PWI environment by emphasizing that African American women administrators are as she stated “always battling against the politics and race and gender.”

Clark reiterated that in addition to racism, sexism is a major issue as well:

So I think that [racism and sexism] is a reality. For me it is about race and sometimes it can be a woman's issue, particularly if you have a really sexist boss. But when you deal with a large number of colleagues who appear to be overly critical all the time and they are of a different background, it seems like it is about race.

Michelle Washington continued the conversation with the blatant racism that African American women experience at PWIs. Washington reiterated that it is important that minority administrators need a safe zone to escape from the prevailing racial hostility. She added:

Find your safe place for that [racism and sexism]. On these campuses you will face, in higher education you will face, the same issues that our society deals with. Regardless of your credentials, regardless of how you present yourself, you will face many many issues related to your race and your gender.

Washington then expressed that although Black women administrators face these issues, it is important for them to be mindful of how they react due to their visibility:

I feel like we cannot give credence to this weak, emotional, angry, stereotypical Black woman syndrome. But at all times, we got to watch in everything that we do, how we dress, what we say, how we carry ourselves, how we respond and not respond. We've got to show the epitome of who we are, as leaders, as change-agents, as credible credentialed intelligent wise women and be proud of that.

Further, Washington expressed that regardless of the racism, PWIs need to be cognizant enough to recognize that regardless of this discrimination, African American women are bringing in their unique experiences in higher education. She added:

I'm bringing my race, I'm bringing my gender because this is what makes me who I am. And all of that wholeness, I can make contributions to this work that you yet don't know, if you can't look pass anything but my race.

Lena Thompson shared her thoughts by stating that in her experience as an AAW at her institution, she believed that racism and sexism played a pivotal role in her career progression. Interesting enough, she believed that the majority of the prejudice comes not only from White women, but from people of color as well. Thompson explained her challenges:

Oh, racism and sexism for sure. We get it from, I'd have to say, White females first and foremost. And then White males. And I do feel that there are a small segment of African American males or males of color, that have a little bit of resentment towards us as well.

Thompson expressed that she has communicated with other African American women administrators at her institution that share a similar story. Thompson also believed that the gender issue may be bigger than the race issue:

My colleagues talk about it all the time. As a matter of fact, I had lunch today with an African American male who expressed the same story. However, I think that the gender issue is probably bigger than the race issue.

Audra McCall reiterated that in addition to racism, sexism is an issue that African American women face. McCall stated:

Well, I think that the issue of women in leader position roles is a challenge in all these places. Getting the same kind of respect as a leader from males is a challenge, and continues to be a challenge. And, of course, the more you bring to the plate, the more prepared you are, you to have slice and dice with them sometimes for them to understand that we won't be a pushover.

Audra McCall added, “You know, a male and a female can do exactly the same thing under the same set of circumstances. You know, and the guy is viewed as strong and the woman are viewed as a bitch.”

Thompson added that in her experience race has played a role at her PWI with their commitment of recruiting and hiring African American administrators. Thompson shared:

The bottom line is that the commitment for hiring people of color or African Americans is not a top priority at this institution. Period. So what has to happen is that there has to be a university commitment and it has to start with the President. I just think there's an overall fear of hiring strong people. Let alone hiring strong black women. Because I think the first time that she disagrees with you, you give her the title that's an angry Black woman.

Michelle shared that in her experience, the overt racism faced at PWIs can turn into jealousy. Unfortunately, much of the jealousy isn't just from her White counterparts but from Black women as well. Washington stated, “Jealousy. I think it's mostly White women. Ah, I think there is some Black on Black issues. Who does she think she is? You know, that kind of foolishness.”

Sacrifices with Personal Life.

When I asked each participant to identify any sacrifices that they have experienced to obtain their senior level administrator position in student affairs, many of the participants mentioned the lack of establishing a family-that is having a husband and children. These sacrifices occurred due to obtaining advanced degrees needed to establish a long-standing career in student affairs. Since working at a PWI, many African American women administrators feel as if they need to work hard or even harder than their White counterparts. As Maria Jones stated,

“Well, I certainly always wanted to have children, I don't have any, I'm not going to have any, certainly not biological children. I think if we all go back and change one thing that's what it would be.”

Lena Thompson has experienced the same missed opportunity due to her concentrating on her career. When asked what sacrifices she has faced, Thompson mentioned:

A husband and a family. I'm from a large family so I wanted to have a family and I wanted to get married and wanted to have children and whereas my career was important, I wanted to still be a Vice President for Student Affairs. I was well ahead of the game because I was focused and I looked at my career as being, what I needed to do and I got plenty of time to get married. Except I woke up one morning and I 40 [years old]. And I didn't have a husband and I didn't have any children and I realized that I hadn't put any energy into that part of my life. That personal part of my life. I was just driven by the academic part. And so I think I gave those things up, intentionally first, I just didn't do what I needed to do so my advice to you and to others, is if you plan to have a family at some point you're going to need to put as much energy into that as you're putting into your calling as a student affairs professional because it's easy to not do that. If you look at the number of student affairs professionals, and I mean both White and people of color, who'll find, especially for women that we are not married or we are divorced.

Like Jones and Thompson, participant Renee Miller, also concentrated on her academic and career progression, therefore, putting her personal life on hold. However, she mentioned:

I don't know if it was by design but I got married later in life. I would definitely say personally those were probably the biggest sacrifices that I've made because I was very

focused on my career and getting my education. And so, some people are able to do those simultaneously, I wanted to get this done first before the next thing.

Leanne Clark reiterated that gender plays a role in establishing a family as well. She shared that while women sacrifice their personal life, men do not have to experience personal setbacks until they have to endure the same pressures. She also stated that African American men have a very different experience. She explained, “I look at particularly African American men who do well in the field, they move really quickly.” In other words, Clark believes that African American men can have the same academic and career goals as African American women but they may achieve career advancement easier due to not being overwhelmed with familial duties.

While Jasmine Johnson has a family (husband and child), she has experienced many sacrifices due to the demands of moving for jobs; thus being away from family. Johnson stated, “You know that biggest sacrifices when I took this position, my youngest daughter was in the middle of her junior year in high school. And our original plan had been for all of us to move here.”

Isolation.

Since many of the participants are the only senior level person of color sitting at their President’s table, carrying the role of VPSA can oftentimes be a lonely experience. All participants are aware of the intersection of racism and sexism within higher education, especially PWIs. Due to the visibility of being one of the few African American women administrators, forming relationships on campus has been difficult with other minority administrators; thus inducing the feeling of isolation. Maria Jones stated her experience as a Black women administrator at a PWI:

So it can be kind of lonely. But back in the day, I'll be the one picking up the phone saying hey Black folks let's all go to happy hour. I can't do that now on my job because if I do that then the people who aren't Black will say, well how come she is not creating the same opportunities for us - to spend time with her off campus. So it can be a lonely place to be in.

Renee Miller continued with this conversation of isolation and shared:

There are certainly stress being the only one at the table. I think that you have to try to compartmentalize stress, though, and not let it overwhelm you. But yeah, it is very stressful being the only one at the table or being at a predominately White institution, but you know there is stress in life in general and I think as long as you can keep it in perspective, and as long as you are confident in what you are doing and the decisions that you make and how you go about your job; you know you kind of get past that.

Lena Thompson added that while it is a lonely feeling, being one of the few minority leaders at her PWI, it is important to have reliable colleagues that can provide sound advice:

It's been a pretty lonely existence for me. I have friends; I've made some professional, close professional connections. But even then, I don't have a whole host of people because it's difficult, especially as an African American female. We have a long way to go, girl. White women are going to do everything they can to tear us apart. White men don't believe we belong there. Hopefully you'll have other colleagues who are African American who will be willing to give you advice and help and support and that's been mine. If I have an issue, I'll pick up the phone, I'll call across country and say what about this, what about that.

Lack of Credibility from Colleagues.

When asked what barriers and issues they experience as African American women administrators at PWIs, the majority of the participants mentioned that lack of credibility from their White colleagues resonated as a challenge. Leanne Clark mentioned that being a Black female administrator you are being underestimated due to the cultural differences. Clark noted:

I think being underestimated all the time. You don't always talk the same language. I think it's ok but obviously some people don't because if you have an image of what a person should look like when a person show up and how they should speak and how they should act and evaluate that for halfway of success, that's a problem.

Clark added, "Oftentimes, I feel I am being underestimated, I think whatever the task is. And then I find people that when I feel I'm being underestimated, I'll challenge it."

Clark further added that there are perceptions that her colleagues have about Black women. However, she added that it is disheartening when Black women need to prove themselves against the stereotypes:

Some of the misperceptions that are there, the preconceived ideas about you as a Black woman when you show up until you can show them that we are not all the same. Many of us can be successful, so I think that is the greatest struggle. I don't like starting a new job because I always have to start over to prove who I am. And that is the hardest part.

Clark maintained this conversation by explaining that African American women administrators are faced with the interesting dichotomy of being both visible *and* invisible (Bagilhole, 1994). Therefore, it is important that they remain cognizant that their every move is being watched. Clark added:

They are always looking at everything that you do under a microscope and you're criticized a lot heavier. I can actually say that I have witnessed, particularly in this role several African American staff who made in my mind comparable mistakes to their colleagues, they have a lot shorter rope for mistakes and for tolerance and for being employed.

Helen Dubois explained the feeling of credibility. She stated:

You know what, I think that it's an issue of credibility even though you bust your buns you do the best you can. I think at PWIs they are much more forgiving to White people and others making mistakes than they are to Latinos and African Americans. So I think it's an issue of credibility.

Dubois added that due to the issues of credibility, oftentimes she has to second guess her actions as the senior officer. Dubois noted, "I have to second guess constantly. I have to make sure that the people that I work with are doing the very best that they can be doing...that they can do their absolute best work."

Like Dubois and Clark, Jasmine Johnson reiterated how it is important for African American women administrators to establish themselves as credible administrators due to the politics of PWIs:

There is credibility, right from the beginning you have to establish yourself as credible, reliable, and creative. You've got to be able to step up when it is time to step it up. You know sometimes things don't go the way or fall the way you want them to and you've got to be able to swallow some of that. Sometimes you have to fight it and a lot of times you have to swallow.

Johnson added that the lack of credibility is a barriers that African Americans face:

I haven't had a whole lot of barriers but the largest barrier have been conceptual barriers. You've got to demonstrate much more than your White counterparts and I don't care whether they are White men or White women, you've got to demonstrate at a much higher level that you are capable and that you can get the job done. It's a tough experience because this is a field dominated by White males at the top.

Despite the lack of credibility from White colleagues, Lena Thompson believed that African American women administrators need to be strategic in handling this challenge:

We have to be careful, and somewhat strategic. I just believe that for our White colleagues things just open up for them, people automatically accept them. They don't have to work as hard and I'm sorry if this sounds the way it does, but I think it's true. We don't have people who are automatically out there in our corner. We have to seek mentors rather than people saying you know I'm going to help you do this, this, and this. I think we have to be a lot more strategic and we have to work a lot harder at it. And we have to prove that we are worthy of handling all administrative tasks.

Persistence Strategies

Question Two: What are the persistence strategies that African American women senior student affairs administrators use in order to succeed at a predominately White institution?

Establishing persistence strategies for the eight African American women administrators at PWIs is an important factor in maintaining career progression and professional success in student affairs. Persistence strategies are methods individuals takes in order to maintain or promote their current status within an atmosphere of good competition (Wolfe, 2010). Despite the challenges Black women face in higher education, developing persistence strategies within

their field proved to be an effective method for overcoming the institutional barriers of racism and sexism. Several themes emerged as a result of answering the research question on persistence strategies. The following themes included: *Maintaining Political Alliances, Staying Relevant with Professional Associations, Professional Competency, Support Networks, Perpetual Spirituality, Promotion of a Diverse Institution, Maintaining a Sense of Self, and Love for Student Development*. These themes provided answers the research question to how each respondent persisted against their unique challenges at PWIs.

Maintaining Political Alliances.

When asked about their persistence strategies, all participants responded that it is important to maintain political alliances. While the field of higher education is competitive, in order for senior level administrators to remain visible members on campus, having the right individuals in their corner is necessary. To the participants, this meant constant networking and having a good relationship with the President as well as the institution's stakeholders. These factors have an effect on whether they stay at their institution as well. Maria Jones supported that maintaining strong political alliances has had a profound effect on her tenure as a senior level administrator, specifically with the President of her institution:

As a Vice President, most of us report either directly to the President or indirectly to the President through the Provost. So that means we serve at their pleasure. Because I would want to make sure that person wanted me to work for them and I wanted to work for them. So that would certainly impact my decision. When I say to myself well we tried that and it doesn't work, then I know it's time for me to leave.

In addition to maintaining political alliances, Jones also added that in her opinion there are numerous requirements that AAW administrators should take while they are holding senior level positions in student affairs:

I think you've got to be politically savvy, I think you've got to have a strong inner-constitution, not let the crazy stuff bug you, and you've got to like what you do, I think you got to commit to yourself to bring the best of what you have every day to your work, I think you have to understand the importance of both managing up well and managing down well.

Leanne Clark added to the conversation that being an African American woman administrator, there are certain soft skills that need to be mastered. One such skill is maintaining people skills. Further, having a positive and progressive relationship with important constituents on campus is important for sustainability. Clark added:

Being a good listener. Relationship building, that's a big one. I mean you have to build relationships even when you don't want to. They say collaboration, I think its labor intensive and it's on you. It's on you all the time.

Like Clark, Jasmine Johnson believed that relationship building is essential. One way of building strong relationships is through the President and Provost. Since VPSAs have a direct link to the President, maintaining the same values and goals as the chief officer of the university is important. Johnson stated:

I have a very supportive President and a very supportive Provost. I think for the most part, the senior managers have been very supportive and that has been very helpful. It is a White male environment so you have to have a certain comfort level with yourself.

Further, Thompson explained the importance of being cognizant of who has influence at the institution. Thompson stated:

So you will have to decide who those people are, you have to discern who are the power brokers on this campus. And if something that is not right went down, who can save me, and those are the people that you have relationships with.

When asked about maintaining strong political alliances, Lena Thompson spoke about the importance of being able to play the political game in higher education:

I have to play the political game that others play. You know, it's no sense in telling you that I'm not political, but any administrator who says that I'm not political is not a very good administrator. So, when things get tough, when the battles are being fought, about the budget, or about territory, or about whatever the topic may be, I have to act in accordance with the environment with what's going on around me. Sometimes you just have to come into room fighting. And I'm not saying that Christians don't fight, what I'm saying is generally we don't fight dirty. But if I have to fight dirty, I can fight dirty.

Thompson added that this political game is important in regards to maintaining a relationship with a President who is committed and devoted in ensuring a diverse staff:

We need to [increase diversity within the staff] not just for student affairs but for across the university. It needs to come from the top. We need to have a President who believes in bringing in a number of people of color.

When speaking of maintaining political alliances, Audra McCall noted that the President of the institution is the most important person with whom to have a professional relationship.

She added:

Well, as a vice president, the most important person is the person to whom you report.

The most important person to the vice president is the president. So it is important that you and the president, from my standpoint, be in line. You don't have to agree on everything.

Staying Relevant with Professional Associations.

The student affairs field is a profession that is constantly growing. Since many of these administrators have direct contact with students, it is important that all administrators, especially those who hold senior level positions, stay current with the literature on topics such as student development. One way of staying relevant is participating with professional associations. One such professional association is the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). All participants reported that they are frequent attendees of NASPA, particularly the African American Women Summit and various senior level institutes. Not only are these associations' conferences important in staying competent in their field, but for many of the participants, attending such conferences enables these women to connect or reconnect with other Black women who have similar experiences. Staying relevant with professional association also connects back to BFT due to providing a voice of the experiences of African American women in academia.

Leanne Clark shared that participating in professional associations such as NASPA has been a method of maintaining connections with other minority administrators. This method allowed her to have candid conversations with Black women senior level administrators and other student affairs personnel about the issues of being a minority leader on her campus. Clark maintained:

I connect through NASPA, I do the new professional institute and things like that. I meet with colleagues who are very different from me and they are like, can I call you? Can I talk to you? And some of them keep up with me really well.

Like Clark, Helen Dubois also expressed that participating in professional associations as a method of persistence and connecting with others helps fulfill her social needs that she lacks at her institution:

NASPA is our chance to get together and talk about stuff that you cannot talk about with anybody else. And it's just, no one seems to understand the craziness that you are dealing with unless someone else is doing the same job, so we really look forward to seeing each other once a year.

Renee Miller further explained this notion by mentioning that the increase of minority student affairs practitioners participating in NASPA has definitely made an impact on how student affairs units view minority leaders. She stated:

Well I think one of the things that we are going to see is that there will be more African American women in senior level positions. I've been going to NASPA, I remember my first time as a grad student in New Orleans, and certainly it looks very different than it did 20, 24 years ago; which I'm glad to see that progress and that change. I'm seeing more African American women enter at that senior level and the women, it's interesting because they are my age, so as I talk to them, we all, you know, it's a very close network among us across the country that certainly they are going to be Presidents and Chancellors and you know as the retirement with the baby boomers is coming and everybody is reading and anticipating that, that many of us are preparing by getting our

doctorates, getting our terminal degrees so that we can be in positions if we choose, we choose to be a candidate for those positions.

Maintaining Professional Competency.

The maintaining professional competency theme emerged as participants revealed an important method of persevering as a minority leader at their respective institution. This included being academically prepared, continuing in professional development opportunities through professional associations, as well as maintaining a sense of awareness in understanding that as a minority you are always being watched. Audra McCall addressed the importance of being academically prepared by obtaining graduate degrees. She stated, “You have to be, obviously, academically prepared. Even though you can get to a senior level without having obtained a degree, you are not going to have the street credit. It’s just the way it is.”

Additionally, Miller expressed that while she is aware of her race as a minority administrator, she placed more emphasis on professional preparation and competence on the job, “You know, it's interesting that you bring that up because I try to attend as many seminars, institutes, forums, that focus on leadership, African American female leadership, African American professional leadership.”

Like Miller, Leanne Clark expressed that maintaining a sense of professionalism is essential in persisting at a PWI. Miller added that in addition to being academically prepared, minority leaders need to be aware of their surroundings and be “on”:

I'm very careful, I'm always aware. I can't have a bad day and Lord forbids, if I really do have a bad day I have to find a way to home because I can't face all these people having a bad day. I have to always be on. It's a great challenge. The only thing that saves me is that I think I have a President who understands.

Further, Dubois added that to being invisible, it is important that African American women need to understand the institutional culture of the PWI that they are employed at. She stated, “It’s working your ass off. And knowing the culture, really knowing culture, being able to read people, and catch yourself before you react.”

Helen Dubois added one of her mentors shared sound advice with her about being Black *and* female in the academy:

He says we are just very visible and he always says to continue to be principled and hardworking and always be honest and represent yourself well. He was sort of old school but he really always felt don’t compromise your values and you have to always stay two steps ahead and don't ever assume that you're not Black and that everyone understands that you are like a person.

Lena Thompson expressed the same sentiment by adding:

You know you have to be smarter than them. You gotta read everything. You gotta be on top of your game. You work hard, you come early, you stay late. You work on weekends. You maintain relationships with powerful people at the institution to secure your spot. And you make sure that those people know that through their relationship with you, you know it’s relationship building. You build relationships with people on campus and you make sure that these people, as you put it, have your back.

Michelle Washington noted that while many people within PWIs do not believe that African American women senior level administrators are capable of managing their workload, it is important that Black women to have a strong sense of emotional preparedness and not let their thoughts interfere with others’ opinions. Washington stated:

Given that we are still in a society that doesn't necessarily view African Americans in general, African American women as credible leaders, we have got to learn and I continue to learn how to manage our leadership in a way that our emotional state doesn't interfere.

McCall added:

If you are African American, you need to work on the issue of being emotionally prepared because people are going to whip up on you. And those people who are going to beat up on you are going to look like you, some of them, and others are not going to look like you. So it's time to be emotionally prepared and have emotional maturity; even when something pisses you off. One expression I always use, when I leave my house in the morning, I leave my – I hang my ego up in the garage and don't pick it up until I come home. And then when you come home, and the children get you, you know to leave it in the garage.

Support Networks.

Throughout all the interviews, participants mentioned that maintaining supportive networks was important to overcoming the challenges that they face. Many of these networks included obtaining mentors and consulting with family and friends. As Jones stated, she maintains her persistence in her position by having a strong connection to friends and family:

I think persistence is finding those friendship networks even if they are not on your campus, in some other place. My family is not here, certainly I can get my mom on the phone or my sister or my dad and luckily for me, both my sister and my dad are in higher ed.

Jones further added that mentors provide great insight on potential career opportunities:

A mentor of mine had me apply for a Vice President position many years ago which I didn't get but in the preparation of the interview I learned a lot in that it helped me when I really was ready for a Vice President position.

Another method of gaining a supportive network has been through the incorporation of sister circles. Sister circles are formal or informal meetings with a group of African American women in either academic or student affairs professions (Perkins, 1993). VPSA Renee Miller mentioned that participating in sister circles has allowed her to regain a positive attitude about being a minority leader at a PWI. Miller stated:

We have formed what we called sister circle, and there are about 5 or 6 of us or we meet every year together at NASPA and we've been doing it for about, probably about 5 years now. A core of us met as aspiring senior women administrators. And so we have been together, we all are VP's now, and we have stayed together as a group. We don't get to see each other usually but once a year, maybe twice, but usually once which is NASPA and we have even extended our circle, but it's almost like a group of women, we are very cautious about who enters that circle, we keep to very tight.

She continued to mention that her sister circles are:

Very authentic, very genuine, we share a lot there, and so we take a lot of risks, but then again, the leader in our group she was a VP at the time and she was a faculty member at this institute we were a part of for NASPA and now she is a president so we're still continuing interacting with her to possibly move to that president track.

Helen Dubois mentioned that she and other African American professionals, in education and the private sector, come together every year for a weekend and discuss the issues they are facing. Dubois explained:

You know, we talk about everything. We talk about all sorts of things. We talk about politics, but we talk about life experiences, but on the last day we really talk about the whole time we have been together and what it means.

Mentors have been another method of persistence for the participants. Miller stated that mentors have been a great source of gaining support. Participant Helen Dubois added to this conversation stating that she has been fortunate to have a great and reliable mentor in one of her old colleagues:

One of my biggest advocates and a strongest mentor was Dr. Will Cooley (pseudonym). He told me that Black people are very visible and while it might be two or three, some people will see it as hundreds and he said that you need to always understand that. He said don't make any apologies for it, hire who you want to hire, just know that's how they see it. And I always think about that, cause my leadership team, I have an administrator, who is assistant dean for community engagement, she is Haitian, so she looks like me, then I have my second in charge, Melissa (pseudonym), African American. He always said that we are much more visible because of our color.

Dubois added that having a mentor has been beneficial in navigating the chilly walls of the PWI (Sandler, 1999). Dubois stated:

But I will say that I personally, do meet with individuals outside my institution and I find that support to talk about what I am experiencing or I will call my mentors and say this is what I'm experiencing and so I do it on a more individual bias. Not only with those in higher ed but like I've said I've been able to connect with some community folks that have been great and been helping to provide some insight as it relates to being a woman administrator.

Like Dubois, Leanne Clark has been fortunate to have mentors who have provided substantial advice on not just being a minority leader at a PWI but also just helping with being a senior student affairs officer (SSAO). Clark noted:

Yeah, well I've had several [mentors] over time and I'm still connected with all of them.

So what happens depends on the situation, which one I will confide in and consult with. I find myself talking to them for advice that they are asking me and then I can reverse some of my information to them and figure it out myself.

Jasmine Johnson further spoke on her experiences with her mentors. One valuable lesson she has learned from her mentor is to understand the importance of being politically astute and aware of how the politics of an institution work:

I've had a couple of mentors and I've been lucky and interestingly one is a White man and the other is Black woman, those have been my strongest mentors. And I think in both cases, what they have helped me understand are the politics of a PWI and how to gain support for the initiatives that you want to carry forward. And I would say for the White male, a couple of things, one is understanding the politics of the university but also finding yourself beyond the walls of the university. And for the Black female, it really understands the perceptual concerns of being a Black female in the academy.

Michelle Washington addressed how her mentors have taken on many different forms in academia. Washington stated:

My mentors are great support. Some of them are Presidents, some of them are Vice Presidents but I can't tell you that I have someone who actually helps to cover me and to guide me in this profession; in the sense of continuity and consistently in a mentor relationship.

When asked of the ways Black women administrators persist and in what ways they cope with the challenges, all participants mentioned the importance of maintaining connections through family and friends.

Michelle Washington attributed strong friendships with colleagues and lifelong friends as a method of overcoming the stress of being an African American woman administrator at a PWI. Washington noted, “Friends, really good friends, really people you can be yourself with. That you don't have on the performing face that you have on at work.”

Audra McCall echoed how having family, friends, and faith is important when overcoming the stressful environment of being Black *and* female at a PWI. McCall shared:

This is going to be the 3 F's, faith, family and friends. And that's because those are the things that, when times get really bad. I think one of the things I think you learn over the years is to try to keep in touch when times are good because they are not always going to be good.

Lena Thompson shared that she also has a strong foundation with friends, family, and faith. These three are interchangeable in helping Thompson find peace. Many of her friends share similar stories and backgrounds. Thompson explained:

So I called my colleagues who are Vice Presidents, generally African American, doesn't matter if they are male or female for the most part. And I share my issues, problems, concerns with them. And they share their issues. I mean we just call. One of my colleagues will call and they will say, ok, Lena, how is it going? Whatever happened with such and such? You know, let me share something with you something that happened and let me help you think it through. So, those are the things: faith, family, and close colleagues at other institutions who are in similar positions.

Familial support has been extremely important for Helen Dubois:

Both of my sisters and my husband of course, and my amazing colleagues I have across the country. Every once in a while we do a conference call with 5 or 6 of us...one would call and another lady would call from another PWI and she would say I need you guys we gotta talk this through, I need some advice. So you know we do a conference call, we all on the line together.

Additionally, Michelle Washington expressed how family provides a great source of support. Washington shared:

I honor family I think it is important. I'm defined by my career so I like my friendships and my family and I want to keep them whole. I want to keep them authentic for lots of reasons, one because I honor it but two because they fuel me, they give me rejuvenation and energy and perspective and all that. So my faith, my family, and then my colleagues at other institutions. Because at a Vice President's level, who are you supposed to talk to?

Additionally, Jasmine Johnson added that familial support has helped her persist while at a PWI. Johnson added, "My greatest success personally is my family."

Perpetual Spirituality.

Another aspect of persistence for Black women administrators is their steadfast spirituality. Religion has always played an integral role in the lives of the Black community (Watt, 2003). Marie Jones mentioned having faith as an important aspect of persisting. She expressed, "I can't imagine not every one of us, in some shape or another, hasn't talked about faith. So you know having a deep faith and a higher power and in your ability to do what is ask of you."

Like Jones, Leanne Clark attributed staying prayerful as a method of advancing against the political games of higher education. She added, “You know I stay prayerful.”

Clark also stated that with her spirituality she continues to stay “grounded in my faith, being connected with family and friends, getting away and just kind of forgetting about the environment for a while. Things like that.”

Jasmine Johnson also mentioned that as a part of her profession, she has become very spiritual. Johnson goes on to say, “And I am also very spiritual and up until I got here I was very, very involved in church, I haven't found a church home yet, but the spirituality is a part of my daily routine; meditation, I do meditation”.

As an ordained minister Michelle Washington has an unwavering faith that resonates in how she persists being an African American woman administrator at a PWI. As she stated, “I describe myself as a woman of faith.”

Washington reiterated:

I rely on my faith as a way to keep me focused and strong, give me direction and wisdom. And so when I find that things are tough and overwhelming, or whether is it just simply managing the time, or when it's making critical decisions, or whether it's managing criticism or whatever, I turn to my faith. It is one of the priorities that has to happen first, no matter what town I am in. Because it is really who I am and without that I think I probably wouldn't be able to manage well.

When asked how she handles the stressors on her job, Washington maintained:

Oh, you may laugh at me again, but I just shut my door and I get on my knees and I say “Ok, look here, I am having a struggle, help me please.” I wanted to see if there is any credence with this, and if it is not help me to let it go. And then I talk to the people that I

love and trust. I mean I don't have any magic bullets, I don't. I wish, sometimes I wish, I had some spectacular story to tell. I don't, I really don't. I handle my personal stress the same way I handle my professional stress. I go to the one who knows me best.

Further, Lena Thompson expressed that her method of persistence consists of regular sessions at church and prayer. Thompson noted:

Honey, prayer! If I could not go to church on Sunday and go to Bible study and prayer service on Wednesday, I couldn't make it through this. And I know, I don't know if anybody would give you that as an answer. But perpetual prayer, honey. That's the number one thing.

Thompson added that in addition to prayer, her family foundation has instilled a sense of spiritual connectedness to her religion. However, with this faith, she wants people to know that if she needs to play the political game, she will. Thompson explained:

I am a Christian and hopefully people see that in the way that I act and the decisions that I make and the way I treat all people. I'm very close to my family. So the Christianity part is really the basis for every single thing I do and the majority of what I say it's difficult sometimes to be a Christian in this environment. So, don't misunderstand me, I can shift into the next gear. Which I have to do quite often, especially as an African American female.

Lena Thompson added that she realized her drive does not come from her; it comes from a higher being. Thompson expressed:

That's not my own, it comes from God. I refuse to be defeated! And anytime you try to get me at my lowest point, and things for me last year was pretty tough. Try to get me at my lowest point, I will never let you know it.

Audra McCall shared her thoughts of the importance of spirituality by adding how important it is to her as well:

Believing that you have a purpose and that the Lord has helped you get through certain experiences because he has something else he wants you to do. You know, and so, you know, sometimes it's just like you pray, you pray, you pray.

Promotion of a Diverse Institution.

This theme emerged as a response on whether participants interact with those in the student affairs office who are Black as opposed to their White counterparts. Each respondent mentioned that at their institution, the Division of Student Affairs is the most diverse unit at their university. This is mainly due to their commitment to increasing the representation of a diverse staff. Maria Jones mentioned that at her institution it is important to have a strong institutional culture as well as a President who is devoted to increasing the number of diverse staff. Jones explained:

I think, reminding people that we have a commitment to diversity in terms of hiring. When I was getting what I felt was as flak from people in my division about trying to create more diverse pool of positions, I went back to the university statement saying, you know we are a university that does not discriminate and that we actively seek out and encourage diverse representation in our search processes. To let people know this is not my deal, this is what the university was committed to. So I think making sure the President and those who are hiring people continue to remind search committees that this is a commitment that the university has made.

Leanne Clark reiterated that it is important that the institutional mission centers on increasing diversity of not only students but administrators and faculty. Clark shared:

I have the most diverse division and everybody knows it. They talk about it all the time. And they are not all Black; I just have a diverse division. They are all kinds of people. They are different sexual orientation, different backgrounds, different ethnicities, everything. And it's a variety of difference here. And my division is the only one that is like that here.

Like Clark, Helen Dubois and Michelle Washington, are both proud that their institution embraces diversity. Dubois mentioned that “all of the African Americans are in my division” while Washington claimed that “we have a pretty balanced staff. And actually the division, student affairs is probably the most, has the most diversity in our teams.”

Many participants spoke on the growth of African American women in student affairs, particularly those in senior level positions. Jasmine Johnson maintained that in her experience, she believed that Black women in vice president’s positions will increase as society will become more diverse. Johnson stated:

I think you will see more and more African American female leaders. Interestingly, I spent a lot of time with other Vice Presidents for Student Affairs across the nation and there are a surprising number. I wouldn't say it's a great number, but a surprising number of African American females who head up student affairs offices. There are a number of us who are out there and I think that as you see some folks having some success, you also see this sense that there are more doors that are opening for young sisters and I think that is important.

Lena Thompson added:

Well, my department is probably the most diverse of all...it is the most diverse. Because I did it. I'm having a fight right now with one of my direct reports because I want this

African American woman to have an opportunity at a job that I know that they have set aside for a White male. It ain't happening under my watch, ok. So the lack of diversity, you know a lot of people were here when I came many have left but you need to know that I want diversity and when I talk about diversity now, I'm not just talking about race. I'm talking about ability, I mean disability, I'm talking about GLBT, although people get upset when you consider that a part of diversity, but I think it's diverse. I mean it's expensive to live here, it's big, and the money that you are going to get paid is going to help you scrape by.

Maintaining a Sense of Self.

Maintaining a sense of self is another persistence strategy theme that many of the participants mentioned. Being confident in oneself is important in navigating the often political environment of higher education. As Marie Jones stated:

Well, I think you have to have thick skin. Because you can't let stuff bug you because if you do you'll go crazy. Make sure you bring it every day. In addition, persistence for me in a job is making sure that there are enough other things that give me joy. That will keep me going through the things that don't give me as much joy.

Jones added:

You know, you always want to present yourself professionally so I think there is a lot of stress that comes with that. You always feel like you have to be 100% put together. There's a tendency for whatever reason for people to say well you know last year we hired an African American and that didn't work, so all of a sudden they started looking in different directions. One has nothing to do with the other. So I think there is a certain amount of stress feeling like you want your people to be proud of you. You know the

other African Americans on campus, you want them to be proud of you, you don't want the White folks to think that they have made a mistake in hiring you. You can be competent, you can be cocky, but if you don't know your stuff and if you aren't doing your job, none of that other stuff is going to help you.

Renee Miller added that when she believes in something, whether it is about student success or institutional policy, she does not back down. Not backing down is an important method of showing confidence. Miller stated:

Well one thing that I try to do is to be persistent, and so I don't shun myself away from the conversation or shut down even though that is very easy to do and I won't say that I've never done that but you know that only last for a few seconds and I'm back in the conversation to make sure that my perspective or my point of view is heard and to add to the conversation. And sometimes it may be that I need a sidebar with a colleague if I feel that that person is creating a barrier, if you will, to go back to that question, of me being able to be heard or to get my perspective on the table as we are having discussions or decisions are being made. So that is the strategy that I use and sometimes it's slowing things down if it's moving too fast. If I feel there is information that was pre-shared and I'm not understanding where something is coming from, I will ask questions to let's back up and explain to me the whys behind what we are doing or making sure that there is a connection so that I have an understand of what's going on.

Michelle Washington maintained that a sense of self is important because it shows others that Black women have a strong inner-constitution; that is, a strong awareness of who they are as individuals. Washington stated:

My greatest personal success is to have come to a place knowing who and whose I am. And where my strength comes from, where my wisdom comes from, where my abilities come from. Once I understood that, that to me has really reframed and refashioned my life in such a way, that things like work and profession is just an aspect of it.

Washington added:

When you are in certain roles, if you are at certain institutions, and that institution has a prominence in the community, when you become a senior officer there, it is hard to find people who just want you to be all of you, the great things, the not so great things. But it's all alright, it's who you are. So there is a distinction between having a companion, people who you can go and hang out with a bit and people who you can truly truly be you with. And you need that in order to manage your life and your stress and all of that. So those relationships are critical and very very important. And those are the ones that I think has to be cultivated.

Further, Leanne Clark expressed that being strong in her abilities to strategize as a method of persistence. She stated:

I really do. I am an observer, I've become, I think I've become a better listener. I thought I was listening but now I am listening all the time. And I'm just trying to see where the parts are moving. You have to watch where the parts are moving all the time, you have to keep up with the political game, who's on first and who has a competitive edge on that issue. It's a lot of strategizing.

Love for Student Development.

When asked what motivates the respondents to stay at their PWI as an African American women senior student affairs officer (SSAO), a large majority of the participants shared that

regardless of the challenges, they are present for the students. Marie Jones shared her story of why she loves being a SSAO at a PWI. She stated that she loves “making time out for students, because being in a VP job that doesn't come as naturally anymore, so making sure I also have time for that because that also give me joy.”

Renee Miller shared her sentiments for staying at a PWI:

So I try to do a number of things that are beyond my administrative role that I feel are very valuable to African American women and their success on the campus. Well I would like to think that they see me as a role model, I think part of it is, just in terms, how I conduct myself around campus. I do take the time to be intentional about getting to know the names of the students, the African American students on campus. I try to make sure I attend a majority of their events, so that they can get to know me beyond just my title and what I do here. That they feel very comfortable so that we are able to build a very trusting relationship.

Miller then added:

I think in addition to that, I try to make sure that when we are looking at academic progress, and whether there are issues on academic success that's going on campus, that those students are working with other staff members that we are keeping an eye on those students, cause we know they can be a high risk by being a minority student on a predominately White institution. I've helped to start student organizations on campus that have been successful at other schools I've been at that I saw were lacking here that can be beneficial to them. Each school I've been at we've had sister connections or sister type of groups that I take time to be a part of or I'll take time to make sure that the faculty, staff

and students come together a couple times within a semester. This is to ensure that our students can connect with other women of color on campus.

Helen Dubois expressed her thoughts:

I think for me I created a program at my previous PWI for African Americans students, and it was to improve the student success rate and retention rate for African American students and it's 100% retention. I talk about that a lot because it was something I felt somebody had to do.

Jasmine Johnson shared her thoughts on persisting at a PWI. Her internal drive is what keeps her a minority leader at her PWI:

So, I've never been a quitter. We have a vision here and that is creating the extraordinary student experience and that is what I love. I've had many jobs in my life. I was a dean, not a dean of students, a dean in an academic college and I look at it and I say what is it that has been the unifying factor. And it's all been about change. I love to see people and organizations fulfill their potential and change and so I think every day, I have a commitment to try and move the organization, to try and move the people to the best of my ability in a positive direction. And if I can't do it here, I've do it somewhere else.

Like Miller, Michelle Washington attributed her staying at a PWI to reaching out to students and being a role model. Washington shared her thoughts on being a role model to African American students at her campus:

I absolutely do! I think that's the least I can be. And I try very hard to actualize that; I will spend lots of time mostly one on one, I'll meet them in big groups and things like that. Of course I support their programs but remember I support everybody's program.

Further, Washington added:

Because of the role I'm in I have to be careful about that. And so I try to do that wisely but then I will get connected and invite [African American students] to my office. I will take them out to lunch or breakfast and do whatever is necessary to sort of help them realize that I feel like I am a role model and whatever I can do assist, I will want to assist.

Additionally, Audra McCall loves sharing her knowledge with her fellow students. She shared:

You know, I would like to think that over the course of the years, you know, I have helped to shape the lives of some young folks. I think that what is a passion for me is shaping the mind part and character of young people.

McCall added:

I mean, it certainly is an effort as a vice president, you are a role model. But you are a role model for male and female students of all races. But I think absolutely because I think it's important that there are white kids to see Black people and Black women in leadership roles.

Another part of student development included helping students realize the importance of being around a diverse student population, as well as, a diverse student affairs staff. Miller supported this claim by mentioning that this is the reason she maintains her position as a minority leader at her PWI. Miller noted:

I enjoy working with students. I believe that it is vital to have administrators of color at PWIs to diversity the staff and how the experiences can enrich the campus community. I also feel that it is essential to be able to have diversity in key roles to illustrate to our students of color that diversity is embraced and valued at the institution through these positions.

Miller added that her love for students and their development is priceless:

All students need to be able to experience being in a diverse environment, even if the representation is small. The exposure and experience is priceless.

Helen Dubois supported this method by stating:

There are students here who need to see an African American in these types of positions, not just African American students. It cannot be thought that there are positions/jobs we don't belong in. It is especially helpful for students of color to see diversity in administration.

Further, Leanne Clark maintained that while it is difficult at times to explicitly describe why she stays at a PWI, she reiterated her love working with students:

I am at a high serving minority institution. It is apparent that I serve as a mentor and role model for all students, but particularly African Americans. The day to day education and interaction with some of my peers can be strenuous. Some days, I have the experience as those depicted in the movie "The Help." I have worked at an HCBU and it's a different battle. You really have to weigh your options. I guess it all boils down to my love for education and my belief that all humans are entitled to learn and receive an education. I believe as a leader you have to have a good education, strength to carry on and courage to make the hard decisions and stand by them.

Summary

I developed findings for this chapter based on the data analysis presented. The focus of this chapter is two-fold: (a) introduction of participant's descriptions and (b) presentation of findings from the research questions. The first section provided an introduction of the participants in order for the reader to get an idea of who each administrator is. The second section focuses on the research questions about challenges and persistence strategies and the

themes that emerged from the data through the process of coding. This process helped formulate narratives of the challenges and persistence strategy narratives of African American women administrators. I addressed both research questions of the challenges that African American women encounter at a PWI and the persistence strategies they use to overcome such challenges. These answers to the research questions are presented in the form of themes that represent the data gathered from the interviews. In the following chapter, Chapter 5, I will summarize the findings, implications, and provide suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, and CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the personal and professional experiences of eight African American women (AAW) senior level student affairs administrators who were employed at PWIs and the persistence strategies they used while working at a PWI. I identified the various persistence strategies used by these Black women administrators to recognize how they overcame their individual professional challenges. I used five constructs to facilitate this study: (a) professional experience, (b) persistence, (c) challenges (d) race and gender, and (e) institutional climate. Each construct served as a characteristic in exploring the experiences that African American women in student affairs encounter. Moreover, incorporating literature about African American administrators in higher education served as a foundation for holistically understanding the experiences of Black women administrators.

To guide the study, I used narrative inquiry as the qualitative research method. To explore and create narratives from participants' responses, I used semi-structured interviews. I structured the data from each participants' explanation of their experiences and the researcher's interpretation of those descriptions.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the challenges that African American women senior student affairs administrators face with persisting at a predominately White institution?

2. What are the persistence strategies that African American women senior student affairs administrators use in order to succeed at a predominately White institution?

This chapter presents a summary of the findings. The total amount of narrative accounts consisted of approximately 15 hours of in-depth, semi-structured and transcribed interviews with eight participants. Further, I will describe the emergent themes from participant interviews, and narratives of participants'. Additionally, I will provide implications, recommendations for further research, and conclusions that may be drawn from the study.

Study Overview

This research study was an exploration of the personal and professional narratives of eight full time AAW senior level student affairs administrators employed at PWIs. The study addressed (a) the challenges that AAW vice presidents for student affairs (VPSAs) face at their PWI and (b) the persistence strategies AAW VPSAs use in succeeding in their own institutional survival. I also used Collin's (2000) Black Feminist Thought (BFT) as an interpretative tool to investigate the findings in order to gain a better understanding of African American women's experience as minority leader within a PWI. I chose university administrators as a sample because of the degree of influence administrators hold over institutional policy and culture (Wolfe, 2010).

Statement of Problem

Despite the efforts made at higher education institutions to increase diversity, including predominately White institutions (PWIs), Black administrators remain at the bottom of professionals at both colleges and universities in regards to recruiting, promotion, and retention (Guillory, 2000; Owens, 2003). Hence, African American administrators eventually become disenchanted with PWIs and move to HBCUs or leave academe altogether (Davis, 1994; Jackson

& Flowers, 2004). Literature highlighting the challenges African American women senior student affairs administrators encounter and the persistence strategies they use to overcome these experiences are limited (Becks-Moody, 2004). Therefore, this study sought to explore the experiences of AAW senior student affairs administrators at PWIs and the strategies they use to overcome conflicts.

Education scholar Yolanda Moses (1989) posed these questions in her now widely cited paper, *Black Women in Academe: Issues and Strategies*: (1) Who are the Black women on campus today? (2) Are their experiences adequately documented? (3) Are Black women administrators treated similarly to Black men, white men, and white women? In this ever diverse and growing society, these questions remain important to examine as to whether diversity efforts at PWIs are being met (Guillory, 2000).

Black women have been participating in American higher education for more than a century. However, research on the issues African American women encounter is limited, even though affirmative action policies were passed 20 years ago demanding the increase of this population in the academy (Owens, 2004). For the most part, Black women have made great strides towards occupying higher positions within academia. However, some scholars maintain that they continue to face countless personal and professional challenges (Gregory, 2001; Henry & Glenn, 2009). Research about African American women administrators in higher education disproportionately focuses on the opinions of African American female students, faculty, and staff (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Moreover, the quantity and quality of research that has been generated on African American women student affairs administrators has been limited to recruitment, retention, promotion, and job performance (Henry, 2010).

There are a limited number of studies that focus on African American women administrators (Becks-Moody, 2004; Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Camblin, 1998; Mosley, 1980; Rusher, 1996). Hence, higher education literature reveals little about the overarching experiences that have contributed to or shaped the success for African American women practitioners and scholars. In an effort to provide a more hospitable environment for Black women administrators, it is important for America's institutions of higher education to understand and focus on their needs and concerns (Gregory, 2009; Jackson, 2003; Moses, 1989).

African American women administrators in particular, and women of all historically marginalized racial groups in general, must often confront the intersectionality of singular discrimination in terms of race and gender (Collins, 1991; Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Camblin 1998; Moses, 1989; Mosley, 1980; Sandler, 1986). Intersectionality is defined as a theory to analyze how social and cultural categories intertwine (Knudsen, 2007). There have been reports of AAW experiencing limited advancement opportunities, feelings of powerlessness, tokenism, and isolation and alienation. Additionally, AAW administrators at PWIs experience chilly and inhospitable working environments, subtle and overt forms of race and sex discrimination, and lack of mentorship and networking opportunities (Carroll, 2000; Holmes, 2003; Moses, 1989). These challenges have included the intersectionality of the issues of racism and sexism in terms of feelings of isolation, perceptions of lack of trust and support, and tokenism and struggles over power and influence (Carroll, 2000; Collins, 1991; Mosley, 1989).

To increase the number of African American administrators working within higher education, institutions should make the environment conducive for a diverse population. Becks-Moody (2004) wrote that "higher education has the responsibility to foster an academic climate that is conducive to African American women administrators" (p. 4). The challenges those

African American women senior student affairs administrators in higher education encounter and the persistence strategies they use are vital for the focus of this study. Wolfe (2010) described persistence strategies “as the methods an individual takes in order to maintain or promote their current status within an atmosphere of good competition” (p. 20).

The results of this inquiry can help Black and other minority student affairs administrators at PWIs better understand the experiences of this traditionally marginalized group (Bright, 2009; Collins, 2000; Gregory, 2000). By using collective narratives from African American women who currently hold senior level positions in student affairs, PWIs will be able to understand the experiences and challenges that African American women are often subjected to in higher education (Collins, 2000; Henry & Glenn, 2010). Further, this information could serve as a framework for developing a more diverse presence of student affairs administrators within higher education. The results of this study can provide insights to help higher education institutions develop and improve the recruitment and retention programs for diverse student affairs professionals. Further, each narrative provides other minority student affairs leaders strategies to overcome the challenges of being Black and female in a higher education institution.

Summary

As each participant shared her narratives through open-ended, in-depth, candid descriptions of the challenges and experiences as an AAW student affairs officer at a PWI, several themes emerged. The persistence strategies themes centers around two research questions on the challenges and persistence experiences. The first research question on the challenges of being a minority leader at a PWI, produced three themes: (1) Overt Racism and Sexism, (2) Sacrifices with Personal Life, and (3) Perception of Lack of Credibility. The second research question, persistence strategies, consisted of seven themes including (1) Maintaining

Political Alliances, (2) Staying Relevant with Professional Associations, (3) Support Networks, (4) Perpetual Spirituality, (5) Promotion of a Diverse Institution, (6) Maintaining a Sense of Self, and (7) Love for Student Development.

Challenges

Participants voiced an array of challenges that they face while working at a PWI. For all participants, the majority of the challenges they experienced dealt with the overt racism and sexism at the hands of their colleagues due to being a Black woman senior officer in student affairs. While each participant was aware of the blatant racism and sexism that oftentimes minority administrators' experience, they were surprised at the lack of inclusion, especially in student affairs which can be seen as a division that accepts all differences. In addition, participants felt that they are always battling against politics and race and gender. In some cases, the participants expressed that sexism plays a bigger role than racism due to the fact that they are women holding traditionally executive-level roles in higher education.

Despite the overt nature of racism and sexism, each participant understood that they present a unique experience to PWIs based off of their culture. However, with the racism and sexism, all respondents understood that they needed to be cognizant of how they react due to their visibility. Additionally, participants shared their need of having a safe zone in order to express their feelings of racism and sexism. These safe places can occur either on campus with other colleagues or within their community.

Many respondents shared that sacrifices with their personal life is another challenge that they experience as it relates to their career progression as an AAW senior level officer at a PWI. These sacrifices with personal life include not having the opportunity to establish a family. Due to their determination of obtaining a senior level position in student affairs, participants had an

idea of what they wanted their life to be like, however, they concentrated on career progression thus lowering the priority of starting a family. As one participant exclaimed, “If you look at the number of student affairs professionals, both White and people of color, especially for women, they will not be married or divorced.” Two of the respondents who got married during their time of career progression unfortunately resulted in divorce, while two other participants married later in life.

Isolation proved to be another challenge that the participants experienced while working at a PWI. Three respondents reiterated that oftentimes it is a lonely experience being the only person of color sitting at the President’s table. Due to the visibility of the participants being one of the few minority administrators in student affairs, three participants shared how hard it is to form relationships with other minority staff and faculty at PWIs thus inducing the feeling of isolation. In spite of this feeling, these participants felt it was important to have reliable colleagues that can provide sound advice in order to channel those feelings of isolation.

In addition to the feeling of isolation, another challenge respondents experience as an AAW administrator at a PWI includes the lack of credibility from colleagues. These feelings equated to feeling underestimated due to the cultural differences whatever the task may be. Participants shared that oftentimes their White colleagues carry preconceived ideas about Black women thus underestimating their ability as a higher education leader. Despite the feelings of being underestimated, one participant shared that Black women are faced with an interesting dichotomy of being both visible and invisible, therefore it is important that they remain cognizant that their every move is being watched. Unfortunately with the lack of credibility from colleagues, participants shared that they oftentimes have to second guess their decisions as a senior professional. Respondents shared that in order to combat these misconceptions, Black

women need to establish themselves as credible, reliable, and creative professionals at the beginning.

Persistence Strategies

Participants shared a myriad of persistence strategies that they use to overcome the challenges of being an African American woman at a PWI. All respondents mentioned that maintaining political alliances was an important method of persisting at their institution. Many vice presidents for student affairs' direct superior is either the President or Provost of the institution; therefore, it is important that they share the same values. One participant shared that in her opinion there are numerous requirements that African American women administrators should take and one of them is definitely being politically savvy and having a strong inner-constitution. In addition to be politically savvy, mastering soft skills such as being a good listener and relationship building is essential. Being politically savvy and maintaining political relationships is an important factor in whether the participants remain at their institution. Having a President who is committed and devoted to increasing staff diversity is essential to many of the participants.

Another persistence strategy participants use at PWIs is staying relevant with professional associations. Many participants connect through programs such as the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) African American Women Summit, NASPA's professional institutes, and seminars. This proved to be an opportunity for many Black women in student affairs to connect and network with colleagues and talk about things that they cannot talk about with other people on their campus. Participating in professional associations allows participants to also stay up-to-date in their field, thus keeping them current on relevant knowledge. Further, as time progressed, participants shared how they enjoy

attending such conferences such as NASPA due to the increase of African American women in senior level positions.

Maintaining professional competency is another persistence strategy used by the participants. This includes being academically prepared, continuing in professional development opportunities, as well as maintaining a sense of awareness in understanding that as a minority leader they are always being watched. Being academically prepared is important for many African American women to maintain their credibility. As one participant shared, “Even though you can get to a senior level without having coming with a degree, you are not going to have the street credit.” Another method of staying professionally competent is focusing on leadership development, specifically African American women leadership, thus building a strong professional network. In addition to being academically prepared and honing in strong leadership skills, respondents maintained that minority leaders need to be aware of their surroundings and be “on.” This means that they are cognizant about their visibility being one of the few and therefore remain neutral on their emotions. In addition, being a diligent, hardworking and “on top of the game” student affairs professional is the best way to reflect the values of the dedication of Black women leaders in higher education. Lastly, due to the issues of racism and sexism, being emotionally prepared or possessing emotional maturity is essential.

One major persistence strategy that all participants shared was the establishment of support networks. These networks include family, friends, support from colleagues who share similar stories, which are often called sister circles, and mentors. Mentors played a significant role in assisting participants with potential career opportunities, while the sister circles serve as an outlet for venting, storytelling, and best practice sharing. These sister circles have allowed many participants to regain a positive attitude about being a minority leader at a PWI. Mentors

have also been beneficial in navigating the chilly walls of PWIs by having someone to confide in. Further, some of the mentors have assisted African American women senior officers in understanding the importance of being politically astute and having a sense of how politics work at PWIs. Family and friends for many Black women serve as the foundation for who they are as an individual, so it's no wonder why the aforementioned two are another form of support networks.

Another foundation in the Black community is faith. Having perpetual spirituality is another theme that emerged from the participants' stories. Many respondents shared that they were women of faith. Maintaining a deep faith in a higher power as well as having thick skin is important in persisting at a PWi. Staying prayerful, staying grounded in faith, and daily meditation is essential to being an AAW administrator at a PWi.

The AAW senior level officers believed that the promotion of a diverse institution is another persistence strategy that they use to overcome the challenges of being a minority leader at a PWi. To the respondents that meant aligning themselves with an institution that is dedicated to increasing the diversity of staff. Consequently, many participants reiterated that their division of student affairs is often the most diverse division within their institution. That is, they understand the importance of embracing individuals from all different backgrounds, sexual orientations, and different ethnicities. Oftentimes this increase in a diverse staff is implemented by the chief student affairs officer.

Many participants viewed their own persistence strategy as maintaining a sense of self. More specifically being confident in one's ability to be a minority leader at a PWi. Those who have worked in higher education for many years as an administrator at a PWi understand the importance of having thick skin and understanding strengths and weaknesses. Instead of

allowing the environment to shift or influence their way of thinking, the participants chose to focus on building and sustaining their competency as an administrator by not focusing on the negativity of the overt racism and sexism at their institution. Participants suggested that many African Americans are negatively stereotyped; therefore maintaining a sense of self is important because it shows others that Black women have a strong inner-constitution. Consequently, the participants in the study feel that it is paramount to continue to be the true you. That is, learn that in order to succeed, African American women need to learn how to manage stress so that negative misconceptions will not be cultivated.

Lastly, when each participant was given the chance to share why they remained as an African American senior officer at a PWI, many participants expressed their love for student development. More specifically, respondents expressed that regardless of the challenges they may experience, they maintain that they love working with students and facilitating their personal and academic growth. With this love of student development, this preserves their position as a student affairs professional whose first mission is to be an educator and then an administrator to students. Additionally, some participants shared that it is important for White students to see Black women in senior level positions.

Implications

The findings of this study suggest several implications. African American women administrators play a significant role in the growth of diversity at institutions of higher education. However, due to race and gender discrimination, retaining such administrative positions can be a challenge. Future research in the area of AAW senior officers in student affairs would greatly benefit with a larger study of participants; thus expanding the number of narratives and thick and rich data. The information gathered may be helpful in developing

resources, services, and programs to fit the needs of minority administrators at PWIs. With this newfound information, higher education institutions will be better able to attract and retain African American women administrators to their institutions, thus increasing the scope of their diversity.

Findings also reveal that many Black women student affairs administrators rely on various persistence strategies to help them overcome the challenges of being a minority senior officer at a PWI. Many of these persistence strategies include relying on supportive networks to navigate the oftentimes negative environment of racism and sexism. Some respondents elaborated on the importance of establishing mentors or sponsors to overcome the feelings of isolation. Future implication is pivotal at understanding this dynamic because these perceptions provide an opportunity for institutions, both PWIs and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), to provide an opportunity for administrators and policy makers to form institutional wide support groups for minority administrators. Preferably, these supportive networks can be in the form of luncheons, institutional professional organizations, or university wide mentor-mentee programs. Additionally, these programs can benefit entry level AAW student affairs administrators by establishing mentoring programs with senior officers.

With the increase of students of color on college campuses, institutions of higher education, particularly PWIs have not paid much attention to the recruiting and retention of African American faculty and administrators (Henry, 2010). However, Black female faculty and administrators on predominately white campuses can significantly influence the lives of students (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). As the participants shared, it is vital that all students see that Black women are capable of obtaining senior level positions that hold authority. Future implications stress the need for institutions of higher education to be strategic in increasing the scope of

diversity by committing to the hiring of diverse staff members. There is a myriad of stakeholders within PWIs such as students, parents, and alumni of color who would benefit from interacting with a diverse environment.

Further, findings revealed that maintaining professional competency as a method of persisting for Black women at PWIs is important. Maintaining competency includes being academically prepared and remaining strong in leadership development. Future implications, in terms of practice, are that African American women in student affairs at PWIs can partner with their institutional diversity and multicultural offices in coordinating leadership development programs focusing on the needs and concerns of African American women administrators.

Recommendations for Future Research

Semi-structured, open ended interview questions guided this study to explore the challenges and persistence strategies of African American women senior student affairs administrators at PWIs. This study has made significant contributions to the study of African American women administrators in student affairs. Upon completion of the study, the following recommendations for future research are made:

1. To continue exploring the persistence strategies of all minority student affairs senior level administrators at PWIs.
2. To continue exploring the persistence strategies of African American women administrators through the use of quantitative research methods.
3. To continue with the interpretative lens of Black feminist thought in an effort to identify the recruitment, retention, and promotion patterns of African American women administrators at PWIs that hold senior level positions.

4. To utilize a mixed-methods approach to determine whether racial and gender differences have an effect on the persistence strategies of males and females at PWIs.
5. To explore the persistence strategies of entry level Black administrators, both male and female, at PWIs and their survival rates.
6. To continue exploring the persistence strategies of minorities at a majority institution. For example, exploring the leadership and persistence strategies of White administrators at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).
7. To conduct a comparison study on private and public institutions in regards to the survival rates of Black women in student affairs.
8. To explore the differences between African American women and African American men with their career progression at PWIs emerged strong within the study. A closer examination of gender differences is needed to increase the understanding how differently they use persistence strategies.
9. To explore how support networks influence the persistence of African American women or other minority leaders at a PWI in student affairs. These networks can range from family, friends, sister circles, and mentors.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the professional challenges and the persistence strategies used by eight AAW senior level student affairs administrators at PWIs. As a group, all participants represented vice presidents for student affairs at their respective student affairs divisions. I interviewed eight participants first by conducting in-depth interviews via telephone followed by a second follow-up interview via email. The data resulted in hours of transcribed data of narratives about being a Black woman in higher education. The findings of the study not

only revealed their persistence strategies, it suggested that an individual's internalization of culture and environment were influences to their method of persistence. Collins' (2000) Black feminist thought was integrated as the interpretative lens in order to capture the experiences of Black women with the outsider-within perception.

All the women in the study displayed a myriad of persistence strategies as they managed the adversarial situations as minority leaders at their PWIs. Persistence strategies included maintaining political alliances, participation in professional associations, support networks, perpetual spirituality, maintaining a sense of self, and love for student development. It is important to point out that while many Black women administrators use these strategies to help overcome their challenges; they are not blind to the fact that the intersectionality of racism and sexism exists within higher education.

While African American women in the United States faced racial and gender discrimination of being Black *and* female, not all of their experiences are highlighted in negativity. Although their journeys have been difficult, significant contributions have been made, and as a result many have reaped the benefits of their accomplishments. Despite the small numbers of Black women in senior level positions, African American women continue to persevere against their professional and institutional challenges. Consequently, this study can have significant results for all student affairs practitioners and others in policy making positions in higher education settings. These findings can facilitate an environment that will help institutions embrace an inclusive academy by understanding their needs thus providing resources and services for retention. Hence, PWIs need to concentrate on building their diverse staff and understanding their needs, thus reexamining their institutional mission of diversity.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Letter to Participants

Dear Colleague,

My name is Dahlia G. Hylton; I'm a graduate student from the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology at Auburn University. I had the pleasure of meeting you at the 2011 NASPA African American Women Summit in Philadelphia. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study to explore the challenges and experiences of African American women senior student affairs administrators at institutions of higher education. More specifically, explore the persistence and success strategies of African American women senior student affairs administrators. Based on our conversation, it has been determined that you will be a fantastic candidate for my study. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently listed at your respective institution as Vice President for Student Affairs or Dean of Students.

As a participant, you will be asked to participate in an interview that should last no more than 90 minutes. Open-ended interviews will be conducted in order to accurately obtain an understanding of how African American women senior student affairs administrators in higher education persist and succeed at their institutions of higher education. If you agree to participate, two interviews will be scheduled at your convenience in the summer and fall 2011 semesters. I understand that your academic school year starts August 22; therefore, I would love to conduct your interview before that time. Interviews will be recorded and any audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription is completed.

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

If you would like to know more information about this study, an informed consent form can be obtained by sending an email to me at hyltodg@tigermail.auburn.edu. I will be sending you an informed consent form via email and postal service. If you decide to participate after reading the letter, please contact me via email or telephone and we can set up an appointment to schedule the interview.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 334-328-4874 or my advisor, Dr. Maria Witte, at 334-844-3078.

Thank you for your consideration,
Dahlia Hylton

Appendix B

Biographical and Demographic Form

Prospective Participant Biographical and Institutional Data

Part I: Biographical Data/Personal Data:

Name: _____ Code Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email address: _____

Office Phone: _____ Cell Phone (optional): _____

Age:

- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60+

Marital Status: _____

Number of Children _____

Years of Administrative Experience:

Positions Held Before Current Position		
University	Title	Number of Years

Educational Background:

Undergraduate		
University	Degree Received	Date

Graduate		
University	Degree Received	Date

Part II: Institutional Data

Institutional Data						
Institution	City & State	Enrollment	Size of Administrative Staff	% of Female	% of African American	% of African American Women

Part III: Position Data

Position Data				
Current Title	College/Division	# of years at institution	# of years in current position	# of years as an administrator

Please attach job description

Appendix C

Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Consent Form

**(NOTE: DO NOT SIGN THIS DOCUMENT UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL STAMP WITH
CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)**

INFORMED CONSENT
For a Research Study entitled

“In Her Own Voice: The Experiences and Challenges of African American Women Senior Student
Affairs Administrators at Predominately White Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and
Universities”

You are invited to participate in a research study aimed to explore the experiences of African American women senior student affairs administrators at Predominately White Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. More specifically explore the persistence and success strategies of African American women senior student affairs administrators. This study is being conducted by Dahlia G. Hylton, a Doctoral Candidate, under the direction of Dr. Maria M. Witte, Associate Professor and Graduate Program Officer at Auburn University in the department of Educational, Foundation, Leadership, and Technology, Higher Education Administration. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently listed at your respective institution as Vice President for Student Affairs or Dean of Students and are 19 years of age or older.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in open-ended interviews and observational sessions in order to accurately obtain an understanding of how African American women senior student affairs administrators in higher education persist and succeed at Predominately White Institutions (PWT's) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's). If you agree to participate, two interviews will be scheduled at your convenience in the fall 2011 semester. The interviews will consist of a series of topics related to, but not limited to, your experience as a female administrator, the role of race and gender in your position as an administrator, and your persistence and success. Interviews will be conducted using digital audiotape recordings. In addition to digital audiotape recordings, notes will be taken to gauge the overall experience. The recordings and notes will be strictly confidential. Your total commitment will be approximately 1 1/2 hours per interview.

Are there any risks or discomforts? The risks associated with participating in this study may include breach of confidentiality. However, all data collected will be anonymous. Your name will never appear on any document. Instead, pseudonyms will be used in place of the participant's names. Quotes will be used to support themes in the study.

Are there any benefits to yourself and others? If you participate in this study, you can expect your experiences to further add to the research on African American student affairs administrators.

Will you receive compensation for participating? There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Are there any costs? There are no costs associated with participating in this study.

Participant's initial's _____

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Appendix D

Email to Participants Requesting Review of Transcripts

Good afternoon colleagues,

First, I want to again thank you for your time. I truly enjoyed our conversation. To start the member checking process, I have attached a copy of your interview transcription. Please review the transcription to ensure that these are the responses you want and you have shared everything that you wanted to share.

If you want to add more thoughts, please feel free to add or change any responses. Please be reminded that some of your quotes may be used in my study. Again, no identifying factors will be used for others to recognize it is you.

In addition, could you please answer these two last questions for me:

- 1.) What factors encourage you to remain an African American woman SSAO at a PWI?
- 2.) What motivates you not to quit?

When you are finished, please email me back your ok for me to proceed with my Chapter 4.

Thank you again and I look forward to your email.

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Appendix E

Interview Questions Guide

Background:

1. Describe your professional and academic preparation towards your current administrator position. (Researcher looking at Biographical Form)
2. Why did you decide to become a student affairs administrator? What attracted you to the field?
3. What steps did you take to obtain this administrative position?
4. What is a “typical day” for you in your current position?
5. Describe your working conditions, i.e. compensations, resources, hours spent at the job, support, and etcetera.
6. Describe for me your “typical day” persistence strategies for you in your current position?
7. How has your personal life impacted your professional decisions?
8. Please describe your purpose for entering and staying in this profession.
9. Do you have a mentor? If so, what advice has he or she given you as a minority leader at a PWI?
10. Are you are mentor to an African American woman in student affairs? (mention session at NASPA and the importance of providing mentor experience)
11. What would affect your decision to stay or leave an institution?

Experiences:

12. What sacrifices, if any, have you experienced to obtain your position as an administrator?
13. What way, if any, do you try to be an agent of significant change for African American women or any minority women in Higher Education?
14. Do you view yourself as a role model for African Americans students on your campus? If so, in what way do you try to reach out to them?
15. What growth do you see for African American women administrators in Higher Education in the next decade?
16. What personal changes/lifestyle changes have occurred since you became an administrator? How do you handle these changes?
17. What are you greatest success, professionally and personally?
18. How differently do African American women and men navigate their professional lives in higher education?

Institutional Culture:

19. What do you make with the diversity or lack of diversity at your institution?
20. How do you try to present yourself (or interact with) others in your workplace?
21. How do you interact with other African American administrators at your institution?
How does your interaction differ with your white counterparts at this institution?
22. What issues, if any, do African American women administrators face at Predominately White Institutions? Are these issues the same at Historically Black Colleges or Universities? If so, what are the issues?
23. What are the characteristics that are necessary for the success of administrators at this institution? In what ways are these characteristics different for African American women administrators?
24. In what ways can your current institution represent the need for more African American administrators on campus?
25. What is your reason for the lack of African American administrators, particularly, women administrators at your institution? Within student affairs? (Question for administrator at PWI)*
26. What needs to be done at your institution to increase the representation of African American student affairs administrators?
27. If you could, what actions would you advise the University/College president to take in order to develop a better representation of working African Americans administrators at this institution and in the academy in general?

Challenges:

28. What are your greatest barriers, professionally and personally, that you can identify that has challenged your progress as an administrator?
29. What issues, if any, are you confronted with as the only African American woman at this level of leadership at this institution?
30. What type of stressors do you experience as an administrator? Are these stressors different due to being an African American administrator? Women? Explain.
31. As a female administrator, what sacrifices have you made since your current administrator position?

Persistence:

32. What persistence strategies do you utilize in your position?
33. What skills do you believe African Americans need in order to persist in an executive position such as this?

34. From what sources have you found support in coping at this institution?
35. What strategies do you contribute to sustaining your position in this institution?
36. In your opinion, how do African American women maintain their job security?

Professional Development:

37. What requirements do you believe are necessary in order to sustain as an African American administrator at a PWI?
38. What kind of career path would you recommend for a beginner African American women administrator?
39. In what ways do you stay competitive in your field, in comparison to your peers, at your level and those ahead of you?
40. What advice can you offer that will help a beginner African American women administrator working at a PWI? What experiences and/or challenges she may expect?

Miscellaneous:

41. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix F

Audit Trail

In my journey of exploring the persistence strategies of eight African American women senior student affairs administrators at PWIs, it was important for me, as a qualitative researcher, to reflect on my dissertation process. Being that I am a Black woman in student affairs, I chose an audit trail as my method of reflection, writing down thoughts, and most importantly as a step-by-step track record of what I find in my research.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the personal and professional experiences of eight AAW senior level student affairs administrators who are employed at PWIs and the persistence strategies they used while working at a PWI. I identified various persistence strategies used by these Black women administrators to recognize how they overcome their individual professional challenges. I used five constructs to facilitate this study: (a) professional experience, (b) persistence, (c) challenges (d) race and gender, and (e) institutional climate. Each construct served as characteristics in exploring the experiences that African American women in student affairs encounter.

Purpose of Audit Trail

To ensure consistency and dependability in my qualitative study, I used an audit trail as my third method of data collection (Merriam, 2009). As a method suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), an audit trail can assist readers with the actual accounts of the study and the researcher's thoughts and comments. I used the audit trail (see Appendix 6) for three purposes: (1) documentation of all research activities, (2) track of data collection process, and (3) explanations on why certain data analysis procedures used (Creswell & Miller, 2000). As Merriam stated (2009), an "an audit trail in a qualitative study describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry"

(p. 223). More specifically, during this process I kept a journal of my reflections, questions, and decisions made while the study progressed.

The following audit trail consists of five unique sections that illustrate my dissertation journey. The sections are as follows: (1) topic selection; (2) participate recruitment, (3) data collection, (4) data analysis, and (5) final dissertation write-up.

Part #1: Dissertation Topic Selection – This report tracks my steps in deciding my dissertation topic from December 2010 to May 2011. The following audit trail illustrates my journey in exploring how African American women administrators persist and succeed at a predominately White institution (PWI).

Fall 2010

Tuesday, December 7, 2010 – 8:00 p.m.

-During winter break 2010 and very near the end of my doctoral coursework, I decided that I needed to start thinking hard on what topic I wanted to explore for my dissertation study. I knew I wanted to study diversity within student affairs, especially with African American women.

-In fall 2010 academic year, I took my first qualitative course and I was instantly intrigued with exploring the lives of a certain population. Therefore, I knew I wanted to conduct a qualitative research course.

Friday, December 10, 2010 – 2:00 p.m.

-I typed “African American women in higher education” into my respective search engine and the first link that popped up was a dissertation on the experiences of African American women administrators in higher education in Louisiana schools.

-Read the parts of dissertation and immediately identified this as my “golden dissertation”.

-Saved dissertation to my jump drive for future review.

Thursday, December 30, 2010 – 10:00 a.m.

-By this day I have established that I want to do a qualitative study on African American women who hold senior-level administrative positions in student affairs.

Thursday, December 30, 2010 – 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

-I continued to research other dissertations that were related to African American administrators at PWIs. At this time, I found another dissertation that was very similar to what I wanted to write on. Lucky for me, this dissertation was conducted by a fellow colleague in the same college and department as I was in.

Spring 2011

*****Note:** The following dates from Tuesday, January 18, 2011 – Monday, May 2, 2011 tracks the steps I took while completing my qualitative project in my qualitative II course. My project consisted of exploring how African American women administrators persist and succeed at PWIs at a particular southeastern 4-year predominately White institution.*** This served as a pilot for my dissertation study.

Monday, January 3, 2011 – 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

-Conducted web research on scholarly articles on African American women administrators at PWIs.

Tuesday, January 18, 2011 – 4:00 p.m.

-The qualitative research project was introduced to the class ways to explore a certain topic qualitatively. I decided at that time that I wanted to concentrate on my dissertation topic: How African American women administrators persist and succeed in Higher Education at Predominately White Institutions.

Monday, January 31, 2011 – 8:06 a.m.

-Wrote an email to Dr. Paulette Dilworth requesting her participation in my research project for African American women in higher education.

Saturday, January 29, 2011 – 9:45 a.m.

-Sent email to Dr. C. Andrzejewski asking to meet to discuss direction of research project.

Monday, January 31, 2011 – 12:33 p.m.

-Confirmed meeting with Dr. Dilworth. Received an email from Jennifer Cook, Dr. P. Dilworth's assistant asking what time is convenient for me.

Wednesday, February 2, 2011 – 2:00 p.m.

-Meeting with Dr. C. Andrzejewski.

Monday, February 7, 2011 – 10:00 a.m.

-Conducted my qualitative interview with Dr. Paulette Dilworth, Assistant Vice President for the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs. The interview was held in her office on the 3rd floor of Mary Martin Hall. The interview lasted approximately one hour – this included introduction of project, 45 minutes of actual interview, and closing the interview.

Monday, February 7, 2011 – 5:00 p.m.

-Open observation was conducted at the MERIT meeting in the College of Education's Dean Conference room.

Tuesday, February 8, 2011 – 4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

-Participated in interview "stretching exercise" with classmates. This activity gave me a better insight on how to improve my interview skills.

Tuesday, February 15, 2011 – 2:00 p.m.

-Meet with Dr. C. Andrzejewski about the steps in conducting a guided observation, as well as, the types of documents to use in Part #1 of research report. The meeting only lasted about 10 minutes.

Saturday, February 19, 2011 – 3:00 p.m.

-Searched the Auburn University for the updated Strategic Diversity Plan Progress Report in hopes to obtain my document for my qualitative project. The purpose of this report is to review goals, strategies, and tactics proposed in the Auburn University Strategic Diversity Plan; document progress that has been made on each initiative; as well as document those initiatives

for which action will be taken in the future. The diversity plan is a fluid document which is reviewed periodically by the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs (ODMA).

Part 2: Qualitative Project- Data Collection Begins - This report tracks my steps in ERMA 7220 – Applied Qualitative Research from Tuesday, March 1, 2011 to Monday, April 4, 2011. The following audit trail illustrates my journey in finding how African American women in higher education persist and succeed at Predominately White Institutions.

Tuesday, March 1, 2011 – 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

-Participated in observation stretching exercise in class. This particular class exercise was difficult for me to grasp because I couldn't understand how to correlate certain random objects together.

Tuesday, March 1, 2011 – 6:00 p.m. – 6:45 p.m.

- Part 1: Data Collection returned to students. At this time we were informed that as doctoral students we needed to take more time reflecting on our reflexive journal.

Tuesday, March 8, 2011 – 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

- Data coding exercise; work on Atlas.ti software in computer lab. Atlas.ti is a great software to use when coding information for your qualitative interview.

Tuesday, March 15, 2011

Spring Break - Re-read information on how to code data from a qualitative interview.

Tuesday, March 22, 2011 - 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

-Information provided by professor on how to contrast a code book, realist tale, and assertions.

Tuesday, March 22, 2011 – 6:00 p.m. – 6:45 p.m.

- Discussion on what's included in dissertation chapters, specifically Chapter 3: Methodology. This was an extremely informative review on the steps it takes to complete your dissertation.

Tuesday, March 29, 2011 - 4:00 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.

- Continue working on data coding using Atlas.ti in the computer lab.

Monday, April 4, 2011 – 4:45 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

- Finished up Part 2: Analysis of Qualitative Project

Monday, April 4, 2011- 10:30 p.m.

-Emailed Dr. Andrzejewski about working on my dissertation chapter 3 outline.

Part 3: Qualitative Project Data Write Up - This report tracks my steps in ERMA 7220 – Applied Qualitative Research from Tuesday, April 12, 2011 to Monday, May 2, 2011. The following audit trail illustrates my journey in finding how African American women in higher education persist and succeed at Predominately White Institutions. In an effort to add more

relevance to the data collected, I use the data collected from interviews and observations and create stories (narrative, frequency, theoretical, and alterna-tales) to describe data presented.

Tuesday, April 12, 2011 – 6:15 p.m. – 6:45 p.m.

-Part 2: Data Analysis returned to students in professor's office. I was elated that all the work and effort put into this second part didn't go unnoticed. The feedback from the professor instilled in me a new sense of confidence for my part 3. We discussed my reflexive journal; while my work was getting better, I need to think more deeply about my role as a qualitative researcher and incorporate more of the class readings. In addition to reflexive journal, I needed to think about disconfirming evidence for my realist tale. Overall, reviewing part 2 gave a feeling of "I can do this" type of attitude.

Saturday, April 15, 2011 – 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

-On this day, I came to the library to get a heads start on my narrative tale and to take a chance on working on my frequency tale. I was able to complete the first draft of my narrative tale and briefly started on my frequency tale – did not finish this day.

Tuesday, April 19, 2011 – 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

-As a class, we broke up in small groups (two to a group) to peer review our narrative tale and frequency tale. The goal was to provide critical feedback that would aid us in improving our two tales.

Saturday, April 23, 2011 – 9:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

-On this day, I came to the library to finish my frequency tale. In addition, I completed my first draft for my theoretical tale and I started a brief summary of my alterna-tale.

Sunday, April 24, 2011 – 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

-On this day, I came to the library to revised my narrative tale. Re-read my theoretical tale and completed first draft of alterna-tale.

Monday, April 25, 2011 – 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

-Stayed on campus to re-read and add my information for my alterna-tale.

Tuesday, April 26, 2011 – 4:00 p.m. – 5:40 p.m.

-As a class, we used the same format and broke up in small groups (two to a group) to peer review our theoretical tale and alterna-tale. In addition, we discussed the materials that needed to be placed in our portfolio, the course evaluations, as well as, our final meeting place to discuss the class in general. Most importantly, we discussed the topic of passive tone writing.

Thursday, April 28, 2011 – 2:15 p.m.

-Set an email to Dr. A informing her that I will not be in attendance on the last class day. I asked her if I could turn in my portfolio to her early in her office.

Friday, April 29, 2011 – 11:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

-Completed my CITI training for ERMA 7220 – Applied Qualitative Research course and IRB.

Saturday, April 30, 2011 – 9:45 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

-On this day, I came to the library to make final revisions for my narrative tale, theoretical tale, and alterna-tale. In addition, I started on my audit trail and reflexive journal. Finalized audit trail.

Sunday, May 1, 2011 – 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

-On this day, I came to the library to do final readings on all four of my data tales: narrative, frequency, theoretical, and alterna-tale. In addition, I finalized my reflexive journal.

-Wrote my thoughts in reflexive journal about overall experience in course.

Monday, May 2, 2011 – 2:30 p.m.

-Turned in my final qualitative research portfolio to Dr. A in her office.

Spring 2011

Part 2: Dissertation Participant Recruitment – This section illustrates the steps I took to recruit participants for my dissertation study.

Note: Data participant recruitment for my dissertation included a three step process: (1) personal introductions at NASPA annual conference, (2) NASPA membership list, (3) snowball sampling

Wednesday, February 9, 2011 – 5:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

-At this time, a few colleagues of mine have started a writing group. This group served two purposes: (1) motivation and accountability and (2) sounding board for the peaks and pits of the dissertation process.

Thursday, February 10, 2011 – 3:00 p.m.

-Had a meeting with the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at my home institution. I shared with her my proposed dissertation study and she introduced to idea of me attending the African American Women Summit at NASPA. The original purpose of this meeting was to ask her about navigating the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) annual conference. She advised me to attend the African American Women Summit, which is pre-conference all day session, which focuses providing a networking and supportive environment for Black women in student affairs.

-At that time, she mentioned a few African American women VPSAs that could be possible dissertation participants for my study and she mentioned that they also attend this summit and that this would be a great opportunity for me to meet and network for professional development and dissertation purposes.

-I assured her that I would register and attend.

Wednesday, February 16, 2011 – 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

-I continued researching articles on the topic of African American women administrators who work at PWIs.

Wednesday, February 23, 2011 – 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

-I continued researching articles on the topic of African American women student affairs administrators who work at PWIs.

Wednesday, March 9, 2011 – 1:30 p.m.

-Picked up my business cards from the student center for NASPA's annual conference in Philadelphia.

Saturday, March 12, 2011 – 2:00 p.m.

-The morning of my flight to Philadelphia for the NASPA conference, I was filled with both excitement and anxiousness. I was excited about the opportunity of meeting new people in the student affairs field but anxious because this was my first conference ever.

-Landed in Philadelphia for the NASPA annual conference. While on the shuttle bus on my way to my hotel, I was fortunate to be on the same shuttle bus with other African American student affairs administrators who were attending the NASPA conference as well.

-While on the 40 minute ride from the airport to the conference hotel, business cards were exchanged and one lady in particular began asking me questions about my employment status. I shared with her that I was a graduate assistant and in addition a doctoral candidate in higher education administration. She then perceived to ask about my proposed dissertation topic, which I gladly shared with her. At that moment, she gave me a few names that I could possibly use for my dissertation participants.

-Due to this warm welcoming, I immediately knew that this was going to be a great experience for me professionally. Once at the hotel, I unpacked my belongings for the next day and reviewed the agenda for the African American Women Summit. It was important for me to have all my ducks in a row...business cards, portfolio, pens, and a smile.

Sunday, March 13, 2011 – 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

- I woke up preparing for the African American Women Summit. At the Summit, there was a panel of 6 current Black women who served as Vice President for Student Affairs. During this panel, the administrators reflected on their career progression, the challenges they face as Black women VPSAs at PWIs, and what keeps them motivated to persist on that position. Naturally, I was excited because this is exactly what my dissertation topic consisted of.

-During break, I had the opportunity to personally introduce myself to each of the panel members. At that time, I discussed my dissertation topic and asked if they would be interested in participating. All said yes. Business cards were exchanged and they assured me that when I am ready to conduct interviews to just contact them personally.

Monday, March 14, 2011 – 11:00 p.m.

-On this day, I attended a session at NASPA on Patricia Hill Collins Black Feminist Thought and its effect on African American women student affairs administrators. After this session, I chose Black Feminist Thought as my dissertation conceptual framework.

Tuesday, March 15, 2011 – 1:15 p.m.

-Final day in Philadelphia for the NASPA conference. As I sit in front of the hotel waiting on my shuttle bus to arrive, I notice the VPSA of an institution that I would like in my dissertation study. I approach her, introduce myself, and asked if she would be interested in my participating in my dissertation study. She agreed and proceeded to give me her professional and personal contact information.

-On my flight back to Atlanta, I felt confident that I had made the right decision on the topic for my dissertation. I left NASPA with a handful of professional contacts, but most importantly, 5 business cards from potential dissertation participants.

-The next step was the complete my IRB.

Saturday, March 19, 2011 – 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

-I came to my institution's library to begin the first draft of my Chapter 1. I started that process by examining my two "golden dissertations" and reviewing how they formatted their chapter 1. This started the first process of my dissertation writing.

Sunday, March 20, 2011 – 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

-I came to my institution's library to continue working on the first draft of my Chapter 1. The goal was to complete the first draft of chapter 1 by May 2011; therefore, giving me one month to work on a workable draft.

Wednesday, March 23, 2011 – 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 26, 2011 – 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

-I came to my institution's library to begin the first draft of my Chapter 1.

Saturday, April 2, 2011 – 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

-I came to my institution's library to begin the first draft of my Chapter 1.

Saturday, April 9, 2011 – 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

-I came to my institution's library to begin the first draft of my Chapter 1.

Saturday, April 16, 2011 – 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

-I came to my institution's library to begin the first draft of my Chapter 1.

Saturday, April 23, 2011 – 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

-I came to my institution's library to begin the first draft of my Chapter 1.

Wednesday, April 27, 2011 – 2:00 p.m.

-On this day, I had a meeting with Dr. Carey Andrzejewski about joining my dissertation committee as the qualitative member. Now that it is near the end of Spring semester, I wanted to solidify my committee so I can begin working on my comprehensive examination.

-At the end of the meeting, she agreed to be a part of my committee. She mentioned that she would now refer to my chair to discuss her comp questions for me.

Saturday, April 30, 2011 – 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

-I came to my institution's library to begin the first draft of my Chapter 1.

Summer 2011

Monday, May 2, 2011 – 10:00 a.m.

-On this day, I began the process of starting my IRB (Institutional Review Board) form. I had the opportunity to review two colleagues approved IRB's to assess the format and the language used.

Monday, May 2, 2011 – 3:34 p.m.

-Emailed my chair on the format of my comprehensive examination.

Tuesday, May 3, 2011 – 5:45 p.m.

-Dr. M. Witte (chair) emailed me informing me on the format of my comprehensive examination. She informed me that I will have a month to complete my exam.

Wednesday, May 4, 2011 – 10:00 a.m.

-Met with Dr. M. Witte (chair) on the protocol of IRB writing. She proceeded to give me examples of previous doctoral students who have successfully completed their IRB. She then instructed me that in order to complete the IRB, I would need to be at a computer that has both Adobe reader and writing capabilities.

-Later that evening, I logged my computer at work to see if I could write in the IRB form. Unfortunately, it didn't work. I immediately knew I needed to work on this in the College of Education's learning resource center (LRC) where I knew their computers were Adobe accessible.

Friday, May 6, 2011 – 8:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

-On this day, my goal was to complete my IRB form. Since I was in the library, I printed off the form on the Office of Institutional Review website and hand wrote what needed to be placed in each section.

-This proved to be an effective method for me because it allowed me to write and delete information that was tangible.

Monday, May 9, 2011 – 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

-Visited the LRC to type in my IRB form. At this time, I also worked on the appendices that were required for my IRB packet. This included my interview questions, participant information letter, and references. I was able to complete the form and print off the appendices for the IRB packet.

-I compiled the materials, form and appendices, into a labeled file folder to be delivered to Chair's office.

Tuesday, May 10, 2011 – 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

-Final review of IRB to ensure that I had completed all necessary guidelines for approval. My goal was to submit this packet to my chair on May 11, so I could possibly start interviewing (data collection) in July.

Wednesday, May 11, 2011 – 9:30 a.m.

-Submitted my final IRB packet to chair in her office. At that moment, my chair signed off on my IRB and assured me that she will have the department chair sign it as well.

-In addition, she reminded me that revisions were to be expected.

Tuesday, May 17, 2011 – 8:50 a.m.

-I emailed the human subjects office (IRB) to see if my packet had been delivered by my chair. Susan Anderson, IRB administrator emailed me back at 11:00 a.m. that same day and informed me that my IRB packet had been delivered and it was logged in.

Thursday, May 19, 2011 – 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

-On this day, I designated that day to working on gathering articles about African American women administrators for my Chapter 2.

Friday, May 20, 2011 – 3:42 p.m.

-Received an email from Dr. A. She emailed her qualitative comprehensive examination question.

Sunday, June 5, 2011 – 8:49 p.m.

-I received my official comprehensive examination questions from Dr. M. Witte (chair). I informed her that I will begin working on them in order to get them completed by June 22.

Thursday, June 9, 2011 – 11:14 a.m.

-Received great news today! I received an email from the human subjects office notifying me that my IRB had been reviewed but before it can be approved, additional information and revisions were requested. Fortunately, my revisions were minimal and I only had to revise three small sections: (1) need more information on my interview process, (2) type informed consent on letterhead, and (3) and change a few words to the appropriate word which reflects the study.

-Immediately, I began making the revisions to my IRB. Once I made revisions, I denoted all the revisions made on a memorandum highlighting the changes made and signing off on them.

Monday, June 13, 2011 – 10:53 a.m.

-Emailed my revised IRB copy to my chair. She reviewed the changes and we both signed the new IRB form.

Friday, June 17, 2011 – 8:17 a.m.

-Emailed my chair informing her that I have updated my chapter 1 and I would like to submit to her.

Monday, June 27, 2011 – 3:03 p.m.

-Received my approval email from the human subjects office informing me that my IRB has been approved. In the email, they informed me that I have until June 20, 2012 to collect my data because at that time my protocol will expire.

Tuesday, June 28, 2011 – 1:24 p.m.

-Received another email from human subjects providing me with a PDF copy of my approved IRB form.

Wednesday, June 29, 2011 – 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

-On this day, I used another method of data recruitment which included contacting NASPA's membership office requesting a list of African American women senior student affairs officers at both PWIs and HBCUs.

-In order to request this information, I had to fill out a request form from the NASPA website, fax my approved IRB form, proposal about purpose of study, and letter of support from chair.

Summer 2011

Part #3: Dissertation Data Collection: The following audit trail illustrates my journey in exploring how African American women administrators persist and succeed at a predominately White institution (PWI). During this process, I interviewed all eight of my participants in addition to transcribing the data into a word document. Data collection and data analysis served as a simultaneous process. Furthermore, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 were written.

Thursday, July 7, 2011 – 11:00 a.m.

-Since IRB approved, on this day I began emailing potential participants requesting participation on my dissertation study.

-Collectively, I emailed 25 participants. Originally, I was prepared to interview officers at both PWIs and HBCUs, so the participants I emailed represented that population. These names came from a spreadsheet from the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) membership division.

Thursday, July 7, 2011 – 11:45 a.m.

-Received an email from first participant at PWI agreeing to participate in study. I was very surprised by the prompt response.

Thursday, July 7, 2011 – 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

-During this two hour range, three more participants, all from PWIs, responded to my request agreeing to participate in my dissertation study.

Thursday, July 7, 2011 – 2:15 p.m.

-Emailed the four participants that responded agreeing to interview a list of dates and times for us to conduct the interview. My overall goal was to complete the interviews prior to September 1, 2011.

-My rationale with interviewing in that range was due to each of the VPSA's busy schedule. I knew once the fall semester started, it would be difficult to allot a certain amount of time to interview with them.

Thursday, July 7, 2011 – 4:00 p.m.

-Three participants from PWIs responded to the dates and times that they could interview with me. One interview was scheduled for Tuesday, July 26, 2011 and two interviews were then scheduled for Thursday, July 28, 2011.

-Once interviews were scheduled. I emailed each participant an email reminding them of our interview date and time along with a PDF copy of my informed consent and demographic form for their signature. In the email, I asked if they could sign and fill out the informed consent and demographic form and send it back to me one of two ways: (1) save in PDF and email back or (2) I could send a self-addressed envelope and they could return it through regular postal service.

Friday, July 8, 2011 – 11:00 p.m.

-My 4th participant from PWI responded agreeing to participate in my dissertation study.

-I'm both elated and worried about this. I'm elated due to the prompt responses of these women agreeing to participate in my study but I'm worried because the only ones responding are from PWIs and not HBUC's.

Saturday, July 9, 2011 – 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

-On this day, I went to the Auburn's RBD library to continue reviewing on my chapter 1, chapter 2 annotated bibliography, and chapter 3 outline.

Sunday, July 10, 2011 – 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

-On this day, I went to Auburn's RBD library to continue reviewing on my chapter 1, chapter 2 annotated bibliography, and chapter 3 outline.

-At this time, I'm feeling very proud of myself since I'm getting closer to writing my actual dissertation.

Monday, July 11, 2011 – 8:30 a.m.

-On this day, I decided that I needed an organized filing system to separate my interviews. At that time, I went to my institution's bookstore and purchased manila folders to separate the signed informed consents and their transcript interviews.

Wednesday, July 13, 2011 – 2:00 p.m.

-This day was designated to work on the direction of my chapter 3. However, I had a meeting with Dr. A about my comprehensive examination.

Thursday, July 14, 2011 - 3:36 p.m.

-My 5th participant, from a PWI, responded by email agreeing to participate in my dissertation study. On this same day, I emailed her a list of dates and times to schedule the interview.

Saturday, July 16, 2011 – 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

-Spent the day at the library working on completing my comprehensive examination.

Sunday, July 17, 2011 – 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

-Spent the day at the library working on completing my comprehensive examination.

Thursday, July 21, 2011 – 9:40 a.m.

-Emailed both Dr. Witte and Dr. A about the status of my comprehensive examination. I informed them that I will turn the exam in to their offices the following day.

Friday, July 22, 2011 – 10:30 a.m.

-Delivered three hard copies of my comprehensive examination to all three of my dissertation committee members.

Monday, July 25, 2011 – 8:30 a.m.

-Ran into my chair on the way to the bookstore. She asked me how my dissertation process was going and that she had a discussion with my qualitative committee member about the status of my comprehensive examination question. She told me that I needed to revisit her questions and correct my use of primary and secondary sources.

-After the talk, I left feeling as if I need to sit with my qualitative committee member to get a clearer understanding of what she wants. It's important for me to get this right so I can move ahead to my general comp orals.

Monday, July 25, 2011 – 10:00 a.m.

-I emailed my chair to set up an appointment to discuss the direction of my question three comprehensive examination. At this meeting, my chair explained the importance of using primary sources over secondary sources.

Tuesday, July 26, 2011 – 2:00 p.m. (central time)

-The day of my first interview. Since the VPSA's institution is located in the northern states, I couldn't drive to have an one-on-one interview. Instead we opted to conduct the interview via telephone. I made sure I used my house phone instead of my cell phone for two purposes: (1)

better service and (2) house phone has speaker on it. This is important so I can audio record the interview using my digital voice recorder. To help guide me with my interview, I created an interview guide with a series of pre-arranged questions. These questions were built on the five constructs that helped facilitate my study. These constructs are (a) professional experience, (b) persistence, (c) challenges (d) race and gender, and (e) institutional climate.

Tuesday, July 26, 2011 – 3:15 p.m.

-First interview completed. I was extremely excited about how open the interviewee was. She presented me with some great information.

-During the initial interview, I tried to be conscious of engaging active listening. Because all the interviews are being conducted via telephone, I won't be able to see the participant's body language but through active listening I can be aware of the pauses, word mumbles, and word inflections. Actively listening to this will enable me to understand what the participants put focus on as it relates to the questions presented to them.

-Once the interview was conducted and I listened to audio recording and started immediately transcribing the interview.

Wednesday, July 27, 2011 – 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

-Started carefully transcribing interview one. I previously bought a foot pedal from Amazon and it proved to be the most effective and best investment of my dissertation funds. By using the foot pedal, I was able to control the speed of the voice recording by rewinding and/or fast forwarding. This helped free my hands for typing. As a result, it expedited the process.

-While listening and typing the responses of the participants, this began the data analysis process. I carefully listened to what the participant had to say about her experience as an African American women administrator at a PWI. In addition, I intently listened to what they conveyed as their challenges and persistence strategies used to overcome the issues of being a minority in a majority organization.

Thursday, July 28, 2011 – 10:00 a.m.

-Second and third dissertation interviews were conducted on this day. I used the same active listening strategy for these two as I did for the first interview. Conducting two interviews on the same day was a challenge for me. I had to be cognizant of differentiating the data that I was receiving from the participants. I found myself taking mental notes on what the previous interviewee discussed.

-During this time, I noticed a theme emerging from the third interview. One participant shared the same information as the previous participant. That's when I realized that these women are experiencing the same challenges and issues.

Thursday, July 28, 2011 – 1:00 p.m.

-Third interview was conducted.

Thursday, July 28, 2011 – 5:00 p.m.

-Continued transcribing interview one. I'm beginning to realize that transcribing isn't a quick task. Carefully transcribing takes time and patience. Again, I'm glad I have my foot pedals.

Monday, August 1, 2011 – 10:00 a.m.

-This day was designated for my general orals. I made multiple copies of my comprehensive examination and proposal for distribution to my committee. During the next two hours, I proposed my dissertation topic, research methods, and answered any lingering questions about my comprehensive examination responses. After an informal dialogue between Dr. Maria Witte and Dr. Carey Andrejewski, I successfully passed my comprehensive exam.

-Now that I know that I have completed my general oral exam, my focus will now be on completing these interviews and interview transcriptions.

Tuesday, August 2, 2011-8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

-Completed transcribing interview one. Started carefully transcribing interview two. I used the same format as the transcribing interview one.

Wednesday, August 3, 2011-8:00 a.m.-9:14 a.m.

-Conducted interview four. I used the same interview guide used in the previous two interviews. This interview had a great flow however it had to be cut short due to a spontaneous meeting that the VPSA had to attend. We rescheduled the interview for a later date.

-Due to cutting the interview short, I had the opportunity to continue transcribing my interview two. I was determined to finish the transcriptions that night.

Wednesday, August 3, 2011 – 3:00 p.m.-10:30 p.m.

-Completed transcription for interview two. Started transcribing interview three. While transcribing interview three, I began to make connections with the information that the other participants shared.

Thursday, August 4, 2011 – 9:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

- Continued transcribing interview three.

Friday, August 5, 2011-9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

-Completed interview three transcriptions. I'm getting restless with this transcribing process but I'm trying to keep focus on continuing the data collection and data analysis process simultaneously. By transcribing the interview at the same time of collecting the data, it allowed me to be familiar with the data; thus helping me make mental notes and inferences to what the other participants shared.

Saturday, August 6, 2011-9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

-Started my day at the library to start interview four transcription. I'm starting to get the hang of transcribing large amounts of data. Again, I'm noticing the similarities between this interview and previous three interviews.

Sunday, August 7, 2011-1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

-On this day, I went back to the library to continue transcribing interview four.

Monday, August 8, 2011-8:00 a.m.-3:15 p.m.

- Continued transcribing interview four.

Tuesday, August 9, 2011-12:00 p.m.-4:45 p.m.

-Completed interview four transcriptions.

Wednesday, August 10, 2011-9:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

-This day was designated as a mental break day. I mentally stepped away from transcribing, reading, and reviewing notes.

Friday, August 12, 2011-10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

-Conducted interview five. After this interview, I used the often utilized qualitative method, snowball sampling, as a data recruitment method. By asking the participant at the end of the interview for referrals or expert informant (Patton, 2009; Biklen & Bogdan, 2007) who she believed would be an asset to my study. She gladly offered a generous number of Black women administrators. In addition to names, she offered contact information as well. I thanked her for her time and generous conversation.

-Once the interview was completed, I sent a request for participation email to the administrators asking permission for their participation. Within 20 minutes, I received an affirmative email of participation.

Friday, August 12, 2011-3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

-Conducted interview six. I'm feeling a bit tired so I decided to rest for the remainder of the day instead of starting on interview five transcription.

Saturday, August 13, 2011-9:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

-Again this day was designated as a library day. I began the day transcribing interview five.

Sunday, August 14, 2011 – 1:00 p.m.-4:45 p.m.

-I was at the library today and I utilized the time here to continue with transcribing interview five.

Monday, August 15, 2011-11:25 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

-I continued transcribing interview five. I was a bit slow today with transcribing. My goal was to finish transcribing today but it wasn't possible. I guess I will finish tomorrow after my seventh interview.

Tuesday, August 16, 2011-12:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.

-On this day, interview 7 with Michelle Washington was conducted via telephone. After the interview was complete, I finished transcribing interview five.

Tuesday, August 16, 2011-4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

-On this day, I started transcribing interview six. I'm getting excited because I'm almost done with the transcriptions and I know once I finish with this task, I can begin with the data analysis.

Wednesday, August 17, 2011-8:15 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

-I continued transcribing interview six.

Thursday, August 18, 2011

-On this day, I concluded interview four with Dr. Lena Thompson. This interview picked up from a few weeks back. She provided me with a rich descriptive account on what it is like being an African American woman at a PWI.

Saturday, August 20, 2011-9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

-On this day, I continued to transcribe interview six.

Sunday, August 21, 2011-1:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

-This day was designated for working in the library; I was able to complete interview six transcriptions.

Tuesday, August 23, 2011-10:15 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

-Since I was finally able to complete Lena Thompson's (Interview 4) interview, I am now able to begin with transcribing the data into a word document. I spent the majority of this day working on transcribing.

Thursday, August 25, 2011-9:30 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

-I continued to work on interview four's transcription. There is a lot that I have to transcribe due to the thick descriptive data.

Friday, August 26, 2011-9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

-On this day, I continued to work on the interview four.

Saturday, August 27, 2011-9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

-I completed the transcriptions for interview four.

Thursday, September 15, 2011-12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m.

-Conducted interview eight. I'm almost done with the first set of interviews. This interview lasted 80 minutes.

Thursday, September 15, 2011-3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

-Immediately after interview eight was completed, I started carefully transcribing the data into a word document.

Saturday, October 1, 2011-9:30 a.m.-1:45 p.m.

-On this day, I directed my focus on starting Chapter 2-literature review. I began this process by looking at the Chapter 2 outline that I created the prior summer. In an effort to not get so

overwhelmed, I designated each section its own document and concentrated on that particular section.

-I gathered both primary and secondary sources as a means of researching African American administrators in higher education. This included using scholarly journals, books, and articles. I quickly realized that literature on African American women in higher education is sparse. Therefore, I every article or book that I obtained, I sought more information in the reference section. By cross-referencing the literature, I identified various authors to seek out.
-So instead of writing, I just saved articles, check-out books, and used Auburn's Interlibrary Loan service to request more information on my topic.

Sunday, October 2, 2011-1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

-On this day, I continued to research African American women administrators in higher education. I began specifically researching the historical context of Black women in American education.

Monday, October 3, 2011-2:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. I continued to research the historical context of Black women in American education.

Wednesday, October 5, 2011-1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. On this day, I researched literature on African American women who has made significant contributions to higher education. After further review, I read that such pioneers in higher education like Mary McLeod Bethune, Lucy Diggs Slowe, and Anna Julia Cooper have all been an influence with Black women in higher education. Specifically, Lucy Diggs Slowe, who served as the first African American women student affairs administrator as the first Dean of Students for Women at Howard University.

Wednesday, October 5, 2011-6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. Tonight, I continued to write on African American Women who has made significant contributions in higher education. My main focus in this section was to identify that even though higher education was hard to obtain by many Black women, there were individuals who persevered through all the racist and sexist discrimination.

Thursday, October 6, 2011-9:30 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. On this day, I wrote on African Americans in American education. I focused on different laws such as Plessy v. Ferguson, Brown v. Board of Education, segregation in American Southern states, and the incorporation of the Morrill Act of 1892.

Friday, October 7, 2011-9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. On this day, I focused on women in general and the role they played in higher education. I wanted to discuss the importance of how women started attending higher education institutions. Therefore, I wrote on the seven sister colleges, how women are both visible and invisible in higher education, and the women's movement in American education.

Saturday, October 8, 2011-10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. I continued to research women in higher education. I wanted to understand how African American women played in attending higher education institutions. In other words, I wanted to know how Black women obtained entrance into institutions of higher education.

Sunday, October 9, 2011-1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. Now that I have a foundation of Blacks in American education and higher education in general, I wanted to move on to a more specific subject such as student affairs. I wanted to provide an overview of what student affairs is and the associations that African Americans in this field are a part of. In addition, I wanted to give the readers an understanding of the different administrative roles that higher education officers are a part of. To get this information, I went back to my trusty student affairs handbook that I had since I took student services course.

Monday, October 10, 2011-10:51 a.m.

-Sent an email to Dr. A asking her if I could meet in her office to discuss coding my data since I've completed all my interview transcriptions. I know I want to use Atlas.ti as a tool to help with the amount of data but I know that I need to first conduct open-coding. I just need to understand how open-coding will help me formulate emergent codes and themes.

Monday, October 10, 2011-1:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

-Emailed Dr. A about the coding process for my Chapter 4. As Merriam (2009) stated, data collection and data analysis is a simultaneous process. However with all the data that is presented, I'm a bit overwhelmed with all the information.

-Later that day, I continued to work on Chapter 2 literature review. This night, I researched literature that focused on the current status of African American women in higher education. In order to find this information, I utilized both Google scholar search engine and Auburn's library and typed "African American Women in Higher Education", this led me find information from authors such as Jackson, Carroll, Guillory, Gregory, Moses and Mosley. Again, I wanted the focus of this section to emphasis that while African American women in higher education, specifically student affairs, are intellectual and capable beings of acquiring senior level positions in student affairs, there still seems to be a lack in the literature presented.

Tuesday, October 11, 2011-11:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. On this day, I continued in my literature quest of finding information on African American women in higher education.

Wednesday, October 12, 2011-12:00 p.m.

-Stopped by Dr. A's office to discuss coding my data for Chapter 4. We discussed the differences between open-coding and axial coding in qualitative research. Once I left her office, I reviewed the 5 constructs that helped guide my study (a) professional experience, (b) persistence, (c) challenges (d) race and gender, and (e) institutional climate and decided then that I will again use these constructs as a guide to help with open-coding.

Wednesday, October 12, 2011-6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. On this day, I continued in my literature quest of finding information on African American women in higher education. Furthermore, I searched for information on challenges and persistence strategies that African Americans and African American women face at PWIs.

Thursday, October 13, 2011-3:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. I continued to research literature on challenges and persistence strategies that African American women face at PWIs.

Saturday, October 15, 2011-9:00 p.m.-1:30 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. I continued to research literature on challenges and persistence strategies that African American women face at PWIs. What I find interesting is that many of the challenges that I'm reading in the books and the articles are extremely similar to what my participants mentioned in the interviews. These challenges include feeling isolated, being the only African American senior officer at the table, lack of respect from colleagues. In addition to these institutional challenges, they are also faced with many personal challenges such as balancing personal and professional life.

Sunday, October 16, 2011-1:15 p.m.-5:20 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. With the research that I conducted the day before, I began to write all of the challenges in the chapter 2 document.

Monday, October 17, 2011-1:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. I continued to research and write information on African American women in higher education and the challenges that they encounter. At this time, I realized that it may be easier to break down the challenges in its own section so the text will flow and be easier to read.

Wednesday, October 18, 2011-10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. I used the same method on this day that I used on the day before. I continued to research and write information on African American women in higher education and the challenges that they encounter. At this time, I realized that it may be easier to break down the challenges in its own section those they the text will flow and be easier to read.

Wednesday, October 18, 2011-6:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. On this day, I figured I'd focus my attention on researching literature on persistence strategies of African American administrators in higher education. I wanted to focus on the fact that even though there are challenges that this marginalized population (African American women) encounter, in order to persist and move forward, these women develop effective persistence strategies in order to have successful career progression.

Thursday, October 19, 2011-10:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. I continued on focusing on the challenges that this marginalized population (African American women) encounter, in order to persist and move

forward, these women develop effective persistence strategies in order to have successful career progression.

Saturday, October 21, 2011-9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. On this day, I also researched information on the effects of the presence of African American women senior student affairs administrators have on the student population, faculty and staff at PWIs.

Sunday, October 22, 2011-2:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. On this day, I continued with my research on the effects of the presence of African American women senior student affairs administrators have on the student population, faculty and staff at PWIs.

Tuesday, November 1, 2011-11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. I realized that I didn't have any information on the importance of affirmative action for African Americans in higher education. Therefore, I dedicated this day to research information on affirmative action. I found a great book entitled *Affirmative Action in Higher Education* by VanderWest. It provided me with a wide range of information on this topic and its significance in higher education.

Wednesday, November 2, 2011-10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. I added more information to my chapter 2. After I read the entire chapter and I felt that more information was needed, I researched more information and added more text

Wednesday, November 2, 2011-6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review. This night served as a revision day. I read and re-read my finished chapter 2-literature review. Before, I submit the chapter 2 to Dr. M. Witte (chair); I wanted to make any of the changes that I could catch on my own. These changes included making sure citations were in APA format, the structure flowed, and the information was relevant to the purpose of the study.

Thursday, November 3, 2011-9:45 a.m.-3:45 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 2 literature review.

Friday, November 4, 2011-9:45 a.m.-3:45 p.m.

-On this day, I reviewed and re-read my Chapters 1, 2, and 3 (version 1). I'm prepared to turn in all three chapters to my chair for her review. I'm ready to move on to coding my transcriptions for Chapter 4-Findings.

Saturday, November 5, 2011-9:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.

-Emailed Dr. A telling her that I have finished with my Chapter 3 and that I want to hand her a hard copy of the chapter. She informed me that she should be in her office all week and that I am free to drop off the chapter to her any time after 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, November 6, 2011-1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

-On this day, I continued to read and re-read my transcriptions for the purpose of coding.

Monday, November 7, 2011-1:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

-Today I wrapped up the finishing touches of my Chapters 1, 2 and 3 (version 1), printed off a copies and hand delivered hard copies to Dr. M. Witte (chair).

Wednesday, November 9, 2011-2:00 p.m.

-Went to Dr. A's office to hand her a hard copy of my Chapter 3-version 1. She mentioned that it may be easier to submit revisions to me if it was an electronic copy and therefore with the use of track changes, she can send me the revisions.

Wednesday, November 9, 2011-2:34 p.m.

-As promised, I emailed Dr. A an electronic copy of my chapter 3-version 1.

Thursday, November 17, 2011-3:29 p.m.

-I emailed Dr. A about obtaining the full version of the qualitative software, Atlas.ti. Since I'm about to finish with my chapter 3, I need this software to help condense the amount of codes that my data will create.

Sunday, November 20, 2011-4:51 p.m.

-Emailed Dr. A checking on the status of my Chapter 3-Version 1 revisions; in addition, I expressed how overwhelmed I am with all the data in the transcriptions. The coding process is a bit more difficult than I expected.

Monday, November 21, 2011-10:45 a.m.

-Received an email from Dr. A stating that she hopes to get my Chapter 3-Version 1 revisions back to me soon. She also reassured me to keep writing; going through the transcriptions can be a bit overwhelming due to the large amount of data presented.

Monday, November 21, 2011-9:45 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

-I continued to read and re-read my transcriptions.

Tuesday, November 22, 2011-9:45 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

-I continued to read and re-read my transcriptions. I also updated my audit trail.

Wednesday, November 23, 2011-9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

-Today I focused on reading and reviewing two of the eight interviews transcriptions.

Monday, November 28, 2011-2:31 p.m.

-Emailed Dr. A to schedule a meeting with her to discuss the direction of my Chapter 4. She emailed me back stating that she needs to review my chapter 3 in more detail before we can sit down and have a discussion.

Tuesday, November 29, 2011-7:49 p.m.

-Received an email from Dr. A about the status of my first Chapter 3 revisions. She is a bit concerned that I don't have a firm grasp on the data analysis process. Immediately, I felt overwhelmed because I feel I do not understand which direction I should take with data analysis.

Wednesday, November 30, 2011-1:00 p.m.

-Emailed Dr. A and expressed how overwhelmed I am about starting the second set of chapter 3 revisions. She reassured me that this feeling is to be expected and that I should just start writing what reading and reviewing.

Wednesday, November 30, 2011-4:00 p.m.

-Arrived at Dr. A's office to discuss my chapter 3. She gave me advice on the format of the chapter. For example, methodological and theoretical section, research design, data collection, data analysis, credibility, etc. With this new format, she suggested I start over and break each section of my chapter into different sections so I can concentrate solely on that one section.

Monday, December 5, 2011-8:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

-On this day, I decided that I had taken enough days off and I needed to start getting making the necessary revisions for my chapter 3. At this point, I'm pretty distraught that my expected graduation date of May 2012 is not a reality. But instead of giving up, I will continue on the quest. Further, I want to take my time on these revisions and correct them as concise as I can. My goal is to be specific with my explanations on the rationale of using narrative inquiry, more specific on the data collection process, and have a clearer structure on the data analysis process. It's important that this chapter will be easy for an individual to read and follow.

Tuesday, December 6, 2011-9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

-Emailed Dr. A again asking her the status of her work schedule for the remainder of the academic semester. Since I'm working on my revisions, I wanted to know if she was going to be accessible if I had any questions.

Wednesday, December 7, 2011-11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

-This day was designated to working on my Chapter 3. I have reviewed multiple literature on the data analysis process. Miles and Huberman (1994) explicitly detail their method of data analysis, while other qualitative researchers such as Creswell, Maxwell, Marshall and Rossman, and Bogdan and Biklen offers the same concept but in a more simplified fashion. My goal is to review each methods and to assess which one aligns with my study.

Wednesday, December 7, 2011-6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

-Worked on chapter 3 revisions. I conducted book and article research on qualitative data analysis. I reviewed such authors as Miles and Huberman, Creswell, and Maxwell.

Thursday, December 8, 2011-9:00 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

-Worked on chapter 3 revisions.

Friday, December 9, 2011-9:30 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

-Emailed Dr. A my third Chapter 3 revisions. I feel more confident that I'm growing as a qualitative researcher.

Saturday, December 10, 2011-9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

-Worked on chapter 3 revisions.

Sunday, December 11, 2011-1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

-Worked on chapter 3 revisions.

Monday, December 12, 2011-9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

-Updated audit trail.

Monday, December 12, 2011-7:00 p.m.

-On this day, I completed my routine dissertation documents backup. I learned early on in the dissertation process that it is important to have multiple locations to not only save my work but to protect the identities of my participants. These locations include: (1) personal computer hard drive and (2) personal flash drive.

Wednesday, December 14, 2011 – 11:30 a.m.

-Met with Dr. Maria Witte (chair) and received my third revisions on Chapter 1. I'm getting closer to finalizing the final draft of the introduction. All I needed to do was correct some APA formatting issues with citing references and add more references.

Wednesday, December 14, 2011-3:15 p.m.

-Received an email from Dr. A on my second revisions. Although a lot of feedback, she mentioned the structure and framework is clearer. However, I still need to do some work on data collection and data analysis sections, and ethical concerns.

Thursday, December 15, 2011-9:00 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

-On this day, I started working on the third set of Chapter 3 revisions. Again, I wanted to take my time with these revisions to ensure that I'm (a) clear on my structure and format, (b) clear on the content of data analysis and ethical procedures, and (c) clear to follow.

Friday, December 16, 2011-9:00 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

-Went on campus to continue working on Chapter 3 revisions.

Saturday, December 17, 2011-9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

-I went to Auburn's RBD Library to work on my Chapter 3 revisions. I wanted this day to collect more literature on narrative inquiry. It was important to clarify why I'm using narrative inquiry as a method of qualitative research.

Sunday, December 18, 2011-1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

-I went to Auburn's RBD Library to work on my Chapter 3 revisions. On this day, I wanted to concentrate on Collins (2000) Black Feminist Thought. I needed to tease out what the theory is and what it represents, plus how it relates to my study and narrative inquiry.

Monday, December 19, 2011-9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

-I went to Auburn's RBD Library to work on my Chapter 3 revisions.

Tuesday, December 20, 2011-9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

-I went to Auburn's RBD Library to work on my Chapter 3 revisions.

-Dr. A emailed the hallmark of high quality reflexive journal handout. This helps me conceptualize the steps I'm taking in tracking my dissertation process from selecting a topic to finalizing the written report.

Wednesday, December 21, 2011-9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

-I continued to work on chapter 3 revisions. My main concern is data analysis. I need to have a clearer method of conceptualizing the information.

Thursday, December 22, 2011-9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

-I continued to work on chapter 3 revisions.

Part #4: Dissertation Data Analysis: This section illustrates the steps I used in my data analysis process through coding.

Spring 2012

Thursday, January 5, 2012-11:45 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

-I continued to work on chapter 3 revisions.

Friday, January 6, 2012-11:30 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

-I continued to work on chapter 3 revisions.

Friday, January 6, 2012-1:00 p.m.-1:20 p.m.

-Had a meeting with Dr. A about my data analysis process and open-coding and axial codes. I couldn't figure out if I needed to use Creswell (2007) or Miles and Huberman (1994) as my method of analysis. After further review, I decided that Creswell's method of data analysis would be the best method of analysis procedure. At that moment, I knew how to make the data analysis structure clearer.

Saturday, January 7, 2012-9:20 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

-On this day, I went to both RBD library and Panera Bread to write on chapter 3.

Sunday, January 8, 2012-1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

-I went to Auburn's RBD library to wrap up a few sections for my Chapter 3. I found a great qualitative research book from Marshall and Rossman (1998) that helped me understand narrative inquiry, data collection, and data analysis more in depth. I definitely added some more information to the chapter.

Monday, January 9, 2012-1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

-Completed the third revisions for Chapters 1 and 3. Emailed an electronic copy to Dr. A (Chapter 3) and printed and hand delivered a hard copy of Chapters 1 and 3 to Dr. M. Witte (chair).

Monday, January 9, 2012-4:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

-For the remainder of the night, I continued to work on my audit trail.

Tuesday, January 10, 2012-8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

-Focus for the day includes updating my audit trail.

Wednesday, January 11, 2012-10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

-On this day, I focused on writing in my audit trail. I reviewed what I have already done and made additional comments that to outline my process clearer.

Friday, January 13, 2012-9:20 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

-Re-read and reviewed transcriptions for interview four and five. Once I reviewed the transcriptions I began open-coding and axial coding process. Again, I began teasing out each construct.

Friday, January 13, 2012-3:00 p.m.

-Received an email from Dr. A with my third chapter 3 revisions. While she expressed that her feedback is both good and bad, she stated that conceptually my data analysis and credibility section is lacking substance. This information is frustrating as I felt my last revisions were closer to what Dr. A wanted me to do.

Monday, January 16, 2012 – 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

-Continued working on my revisions for chapter 3. Additionally, I ordered Lincoln and Guba's (1985) Naturalistic Inquiry book to read more in depth on credibility. What I find relevant to my study, I added to the chapter.

-Finished revisions for Chapter 3.

Tuesday, January 17, 2012 – 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 4 findings. I continued to review the transcriptions to identify quotes with the codes for challenges and persistence strategies.

-On this day, I concentrated on challenges.

Wednesday, January 18, 2012 – 9:15 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

-Worked on Chapter 4 findings focusing on persistence strategies quotes.

Part #4: Final Write Up: This report tracks my steps in writing the final write up in Chapters 4 and 5. In this process, I used the codes that I created in the data analysis process to create a story of the challenges and persistence strategies from my participants. In the findings section all quotes used are in their original form.

Spring 2012

Friday, January 20, 2012 – 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

-Came to Auburn's library to continue writing on Chapter 4. I re-read my quotes on challenges and persistence strategies from each participant.

-I completed chapter 4.

Saturday, January 21, 2012 – 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

-On this day, I focused on reviewing my Chapter 4 to make sure everything flows.

Sunday, February 5, 2012 – 6:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

-Started writing on Chapter 5. In this chapter, I focused on suggesting recommendations for PWIs to build an inclusive environment for African American administrators. Additionally, I provided a summary of the findings based on the data received.

Monday, February 6, 2012 – 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

-Continued to work on my Chapter 5. I was having difficulty with my implications and future recommendations so I called my chair and she clarified the difference for me. That clarification helped me forge on and complete my Chapter 5.

Tuesday, February 7, 2012 – Thursday, February 16, 2012

-During this time period I worked on revisions for Chapter 1, 2, and 3.

Friday, February 17, 2012 – 7:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

-Came to the library to format dissertation and update audit trail. Additionally, I sought help in inserting my PDF files into my word document for the final dissertation.

Appendix G

Codebook

Official Codebook

In Her Own Voice: A Narrative Study of the Persistence Strategies of Eight African American Women Vice Presidents for Student Affairs at Predominately White Institution

Codes	Definitions of Codes
A Priori Codes	
Professional Experience	Participation in activities that will increase administrator's ability to have comprehensive and varied work skills.
Persistence Strategies	Methods an individual takes in order to maintain or promote their current status within an atmosphere of good competition.
Challenges	Anything, as a demanding task, that calls for special effort or dedication
Intersectionality of Race and Gender	Intersectionality is a methodology of studying the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relationships and subject formations. In this case the intersection is between race and gender.
Institutional Climate	Embraces the culture, habits, decisions, practices, and policies comprise campus life.
Emergent Codes	Definitions of Codes
Academic Preparation	Gaining higher education degrees such as masters and doctoral degrees.
Love for Student Development	Interacting, mentoring, guiding students in assisting their personal and professional development.
Role model for diverse students	A person whose behavior, example, or success is or can be emulated by others, especially by younger people.
Personal/Professional confidence	Firm belief of professional/administrative/leadership abilities.
Politically Astute	Skills at navigating the political nature of higher education in an effort to gain an advantage.
Networking	Developing contacts or exchanging information with others as to further a career.
Professional Associations	Attendance and Participation in Professional Conferences and Institutes.
Spirituality	Religious devotion, spiritual character.
Friends	A supporter or sympathizer
Tokenism	The policy of making only a perfunctory effort or symbolic gesture toward the accomplishment of a goal, such as racial integration.
Personal and Professional conflicts	Focusing on professional and career progression over starting a family.
Perception of lack of credibility	Feeling underestimated lack of respect and second guessing one's ability.
Isolation	Feelings of being the only one, alone.

Jealousy (White women/Black women on Black women)	Representing envious behavior
Racism	Belief in or doctrine asserting racial differences in character, intelligence, and the superiority of one race over another.
Promotion of diverse staff	Hiring and promotion of members in an underrepresented group.
Sexism	Discrimination against people on the basis of sex.
Student Outreach	Mentoring, teaching, guiding, learning.

Research Question #1:

What are the challenges that African American women senior student affairs administrators face with persisting at a predominately White institution?

Challenges	Maria	Leanne	Audra	Lena	Renee	Helen	Michelle	Jasmine
Emergent Codes								
Racism	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sexism	X	X	X	X		X		X
Isolation	X	X			X			X
Jealousy from colleagues	X		X			X	X	
Perception of lack of credibility	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Tokenism	X				X	X		
Over committed of responsibilities	X			X				
Personal and Professional Conflicts	X	X		X	X		X	

X denotes participants whose responses correspond with the emergent code

Research Question #2:

What are the persistence strategies that African American women senior student affairs administrators use in order to succeed at a predominately White institution?

Persistence Strategies	Maria	Leanne	Audra	Lena	Renee	Helen	Michelle	Jasmine
Emergent Codes								
Spirituality	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Diverse Staff	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Friends	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Family	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Supportive colleagues	X		X	X				X
Academic Preparation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Politically Sound	X		X	X			X	X
Self Confidence	X			X		X	X	
Focus on Student Development	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

X denotes participants whose responses correspond with the emergent code

Challenge Findings

NOTE: There were numerous themes that emerged from the data and BFT theory that provided insight into the challenges my participants face and the persistence strategies they use as an AAW VPSAs at a PWI. These themes represented the experiences of most if not all the eight participants interviewed for this study.

Challenges Themes	Emergent Codes
<i>Overt Racism and Sexism</i>	Tokenism
	Jealousy (White women/Black women on Black women)
	Racism
	Sexism
<i>Sacrifices with Personal Life</i>	Personal and Professional Conflicts
	Focus on Education and Career Progression
<i>Isolation</i>	Lonely
<i>Perception of Lack of Credibility</i>	Lack of credibility
	Second guessing
	Underestimated

Persistence Strategies Findings

Persistence Themes	Emergent Codes
<i>Maintaining Political Alliances</i>	Politically Astute
	Networking
<i>Staying Relevant with Professional Associations</i>	National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)
	Networking
	Professional Associations
<i>Maintaining Professional Competency</i>	Academic Preparation
	Professional Development seminars
	Sense of Awareness
<i>Support Networks</i>	Mentors
	Family
	Friends
	Colleagues
<i>Perpetual Spirituality</i>	Prayer
	Meditation
	Regular Church Attendance
	Spirituality
<i>Promotion of Diverse Institution</i>	Diverse staff
<i>Maintaining a Sense of Self</i>	Confidence
	Thick skin
	Sense of Self
<i>Love for Student Development</i>	Student Outreach
	Guidance for Student Development
	Mentors and Role Models
	Love for Student Development

Summary of Codebook

Order of codes

1st table: A priori codes and emergent codes:

Note: This chart denotes the five terms that resonated in the literature on African American women and Black feminist thought which represented the a priori codes. From the a priori codes, new codes emerged from the a priori codes as it relates to each a priori code. In other words, the emergent codes are an extension of the 5 codes. For example:

- i. Professional Experience: Academic Preparation, Promotion of diverse staff, Student Outreach, Promotion of diverse staff, Professional Associations.
- ii. Persistence Strategies: Politically Astute, Networking, Spirituality, Friends, Academic Preparation, Personal/Professional confidence.
- iii. Challenges: Tokenism, Overcommitted career responsibilities, Personal and Professional conflicts, Perception of lack of credibility, Isolation, Jealousy.
- iv. Intersectionality of Race and Gender: Racism, Sexism.
- v. Institutional Climate: Advice for future African American women student affairs practitioners, Promotion of diverse staff.

2nd table: Research questions codes (persistence strategies and challenges)

- i. Challenges table – From the data presented, I identified which participant mentioned one of the emergent codes in their responses.
- ii. Persistence strategies table – I used the same strategy for the persistence strategies table that I used for the challenges table.

3rd table: Challenges and Persistence Strategies Findings – Presentation of Themes

- i. The order of the challenges and persistence strategies themes followed the order in chapter 4. I wanted the reader to be able to go back to chapter 4 while reviewing my codebook and the emergent codes to see how they relate to each other.
- ii. Each emergent theme came from the data collected from in-depth, open-ended interviews.