

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION
ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI:
PERSPECTIVES ON A HALF CENTURY OF PROGRESS

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Doctor of Education

By

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate Faculty, have examined a dissertation entitled:

AFRICAN American Women in Public Higher Education Administrative Leadership in the State of Missouri: Perspectives on a Half Century of Progress

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DEDICATION

To my family, mother Elizabeth, sisters, Mychell (Stanley), Ywonetta and Owita and my niece Leia, thank you for your prayers and support.

Special Dedication:

Reverend Oris L. Mays
1935-1996

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the lived experiences of six African American female administrators in Missouri public higher educational institutions. The Black Feminist Thought theory as espoused by Patricia Collins is the framework with which this research examines their leadership. The conceptual lens of race, gender, and class offers an opportunity to see strength and empowerment as these women face oppression with a conqueror's attitude. The ways in which these women are empowered to employ leadership and use their positional authority is reflected in the three themes, knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment.

Interviews were conducted with the participants using open-ended questions. They were questions about their positional authority, the cultural climate, political climate, and challenges as African American female administrators. They were also asked to make recommendations to Missouri institutions. The themes that emerged where: 1) racism, 2) sexism, 3) gender equity, 4) disrespect of knowledge, 5) lack of diversity, 6) isolation, and 7) lack of recruitment and retention efforts . Yet, with these emerging themes, the participants were empowered to continue to perform their duties, because students need what they have to offer, perseverance, advocacy, and role models.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Unless it is a meeting of the executive staff of a historically black college or university (HBCU), one might observe that there are very few, if any, African American women leaders in public higher education administration. There are substantive research reports to support the claim that African American women are underrepresented in administrative positions of authority in institutions of higher education. Positions of authority for this research include presidents and chancellors, deans, chairs, and directors or any position deemed executive/administrative by the college or university. Critical to this study is the selection of the sample population.

One primary issue that significantly impacts the scarcity of African American women in higher education administration is other African American women to serve as role models and confidants. This is so noted when there appears to be so few African American women at predominately white institutions (PWI's). For all the resolve shown by African Americans to give back to an institution that for years barred access, is phenomenal. The numbers of students seeking education continues to be on the increase and according to Lynn Hunt (2002) president of the American Historical Association at UCLA, institutions have been in a whirlwind to keep up with the demands of the growing numbers of students. What stands out in her research is the fact that, as the faculty numbers increased the number of administrators far outpaced the faculty.

The number of faculty has increased but the number of administrators has skyrocketed.

Just between 1976 and 1989, the number of students increased 25 percent, the number of faculty 30 percent, the number of administrators 43 percent, and the number of "non-faculty professionals" 123 percent. Educating the population has required big money and

combined with government-funded science, democratization has fostered an inexorable trend toward big administration. Even while more teaching positions are turned adjunct and part time to save money, associate deans, associate provosts, and vice presidents proliferate (Retrieved 2/5/12 from <http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2002/0204/0204pre1.cfm>).

If this assumption is true, it should follow that this trend also resonates in the state of Missouri. The Coordinating Board for Higher Education has the responsibility of collecting and examining data submitted by Missouri colleges and universities. According to the 1983 Missouri Census report the percent of executive, administrative, and managerial women employees increased by 27 percent between 1979 and 1983, of which five percent were minorities. This was considered below the national average yet close to the representation of each respective population. This report does not give the breakdown by race but did note that the progress for minorities continued to show a significant underrepresentation of minorities in all positions within public higher education. 2010 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) projects the numbers of women attaining advanced degrees and entering the workforce will continue to increase steadily well into the 21st century. The projected increases suggest a critical need to address the issue of why so few women - particularly African-American women - are not in top-level administrative positions within higher education.

The Black Feminist Thought Theory is the foundation upon which the questioning begins. The Black Feminist Thought theory is comprised of a collection of theoretical traditions such as Afrocentric philosophy, feminist theory, Marxist social thought, the sociology of knowledge, critical theory, and postmodernism (Collins, 1991). The emphasis on intersectionality (*sic*) and complexity of African American women as purported in Collins does not rely on one theory to

encapsulate the life of African American females. The Black Feminist Thought Theory is a combination of theories which addresses the complexity of the subjects and will be used as the lens to address the perceptions of African American women in Missouri public educational institutions.

It is important to clarify, that this study does not minimize the contributions of other women of color, but rather emphasizes the uniqueness of African American women administrators who have contributed to higher education in salient ways but not without struggle. The reference to “struggles” as explained by Butler and Walter (1991) refers to the changes on college campuses, brought on by the civil rights movement, in the early 1960s and ‘70s. Thus, the struggle for African Americans and women in particular, has a troubled history with identity, a sense of belonging, and oppression that is linked to cultural and political implications. Collins’ (1998) refers to this in her analysis of the Black Feminist Theory, as a body of knowledge that is “subjectively situated within a given oppressive situation”... that can easily “resonate in the voices of other oppressed groups” (Retrieved 8/1/2011 from <http://audreynilsen.com/Resources/DU%205105%BLACK%20THOUGHT%20Chapters%2010-12.pdf>).

For African American women in higher education administration it is presumed that the struggle continues beyond educational attainment and into the workforce. In higher education where decisions are made there is the potential to: a) enhance or impede campus culture, b) influence lifelong educational needs of diverse groups which are critical to the globalization of the economy and, c) inspire new knowledge and create new disciplines (Duderstadt, 2001 p. 7). Therefore, it is important for diversity representation to occur at decision making levels.

African American women in positions of authority in higher education and other sectors, as the literature illustrates, strive for positions in which they can make a difference.

These women are also confronted with what W.E.B. Dubois refers to as “double consciousness” (Jackson 1988, as cited in Allen, Jacobson, & Lomotey 1995). Jackson refers to this as, “adapting to two cultures simultaneously” (p.412). As this observation implies, African American women administrators, particularly those in predominately white institutions, must as Jackson suggests, view themselves through the eyes of both White society and the African American community. Thus, this observation relates to Collins’ (2004) outsider/within perspective in how African American women administrators, view their participation in the process and practices of higher education. Added to this observation, are the difficulties these women face in demonstrating that they have mastered white male epistemologies when confronted with being evaluated according to white male standards.

This study presents an opportunity to delve into the professional as well as the emotional phenomenon surrounding the progression of African American women administrators in public higher educational institutions. While the literature allows one to make many assumptions regarding this topic, the end result really depends on the sample population chosen to participate in this study.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of African American women leaders holding or having held administrative, non-faculty positions, in public higher education by examining their perceptions regarding overall authority, power, and responsibility. The effectiveness of their performance is not in question here but rather their perspectives and the meanings they give to those events that have shaped their careers. Utilizing a historical construct, this study will cross reference events that may have shaped the careers of African American women in public higher education.

The historical references extend to the fifty years since Affirmative Action. It is during this time, that a new era of social change was taking place and giving new meaning to equity issues. In with each subsequent decade beginning with the 1960s, equity and diversity issues were prevalent in every sector and higher education was at the forefront. In 1961, freedom rides were stirring the embers set off by sit-ins at lunch counters in 1960 and before that by bus boycotts in 1955. As a result, in 1961 President John F. Kennedy issued *Executive Order 10925*, which mandates that projects financed with federal funds take affirmative action to ensure that hiring and employment practices are free of racial bias. As with any federal document, the endless pages and fine print can be interpreted to fit almost any scenario. Adding fuel to the fire, the Supreme Court Justices held that "separate but equal" public schools were unconstitutional and ordered segregated school systems be phased out. As campus climates changed, policies and practices were needed to foster an inclusive environment that not only entailed improving the climate for minorities, but also for women. As the new millennium loomed, census data confirmed new groups and cultures were being added to the ranks of minority status.

The existing literature captures the essence of minority status on college campuses, but the focus is primarily on faculty. Although similarities exist, the assumption is that African American women in public higher education administration are met with a different set of challenges not experienced by faculty. Wilson (1989) asserts that "Women of color in academic administration are a recent phenomenon, due to their double oppression as women and people of color. It seems "their small numbers are intimately tied to American history, legal restrictions, and traditional customs" (1989, p. 85). According to Wilson's summation, not much has changed. African American women in public higher education administration continue to be a phenomenon tied to history, legalities, and customs. Although legislation has increased the

numbers of minorities in higher education, the numbers of African American women and minorities in general, are substantially underrepresented in higher education administration.

The efforts on the part of colleges and universities to recruit, mentor, and promote African American women for leadership positions has historic, ethnographic, and psychological implications. These implications when examined using the Black feminist theory inspired by *Black Feminist Thought* by Dr. Patricia Collins' (1991), reflects the distinctive themes of the African American experience" (p.251). Her assessment of this theory offers a foundation for beginning this research, focused on African American women higher education administrators. Collins' (1991) assessment addresses themes such as criterion of meaning, power, ethics, and structural domain of power. According to Collins', "Black feminist thought is suppressed by prevailing validation processes and that exclusion from basic literacy, quality educational experiences limits Black women's access to influential academic positions" (p.204). Prophetically, Collin's captures the theme of this research as illustrated in her statement regarding Black women in academic authority as being "pressured to use their authority to help legitimate a system that devalues and excludes Black women" (p.204). Thus, the Black feminist epistemology is borne out of the lived experiences of African-American women.

These experiences of Black women are laced with historic entitlements that resurface periodically, but in a different form, much like a chameleon. For example, affirmative action has helped many disenfranchised groups, occasionally testing the policy beyond recognition. As Tapia (2007) mentions in his article, affirmative action opened the door to a representation of many types of people, defined by religion, language, and other cultural attributes (p.B34). Therefore, it is plausible that consideration of this policy affects access based upon interpretation. Additionally, ethnographic implications address the commonalities, especially in

leadership that exist among African American women in public higher education administration and the lessons learned for those who may follow them. As Collins' (1991) noted, the epistemology of African American women is rooted in connectedness and dialogue rather than separation and isolation. Lastly, psychological implications or common characteristics such as knowledge, wisdom, and social consciousness may motivate, encourage, and inspire African American women and their peers in public higher education administration, but may be disconcerting and uncomfortable, to others.

The lack of consistent research and data in this area leaves the area open to assumptions about diversity, equity, and policy. As Collins' (1991) pointed out, the truth of any conquest is that of the conqueror. In other words, the sustainers of truth lie with those of the dominant culture. Harper, Patton & Wooden, in the *Journal of Higher Education* (2009) and Strum (2007) in the *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender* provide insight into the historical unfolding of laws and policies that documents the challenges employers faced, and continue to face, in neglecting diversity and equity issues. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits sex discrimination in employment practices in the United States. Additionally, the scarcity of psychological research provides yet another opportunity to expand on the implications of marginalization, exclusion, and invisibility. To focus on these issues is also an opportunity to extend the insufficient research that gives voice to the experiences of African American women in higher education administration.

This study will contribute to the literature a perception that African American women administrators in public higher education have regarding their experiences. It will also examine democracy or lack thereof regarding the legitimate or genuine authority of African American women in public higher education administration. Additionally, it is important to gain

information from African American women as to what it means to be in their position and a team member of a complex institution. Yukl (2006, p.365), addresses the potential advantages of executive teams as a way to understand the succession of leadership. As an executive team member, the assumption is that women are more likely to develop leadership skills that prepare them for the next level. This assumption is made on the basis of decision-making and the level of strategic planning that occurs among the executive team (Yukl, 2006). Yukl (2006) seems to advocate diversity in job assignments and in order for African American women in higher education administration to succeed at this level, they must provide leadership at various levels of administration.

The research intends to examine the perceptions of African American women in positions of authority at public higher educational institutions in Missouri. Within the parameters of this study it is important to discuss and have conversations that address the following questions:

- 1) How do African American women administrators perceive their positional authority within their institution in Missouri Public Higher Education?
- 2) How do African American women perceive the culture within their institution in Missouri Public Higher Education?
- 3) How do African American women perceive the political climate within their institution in Missouri Public Higher Education?
- 4) What challenges do African American women administrators face within their institution in Missouri public higher education?

Research Approach

A qualitative research design using a narrative inquiry with a phenomenological analysis approach is used to examine the conceptual framework of African American women in public higher education administration in the state of Missouri. The Black Feminist Thought Theory

(Collins, 1991) and Critical Race Theory (Delgado& Stefancic, 2001; Yosso, T.J., Smith, W.A., Ceja,M., & Solorzano, D.G. 2009), provide a theoretical framework for framing the perspectives African American women who currently work in or previously worked in public higher education institutions in Missouri. The phenomenological analysis approach capitalizes on the complex experiences of African American women, their career advancements, and policy perspectives in targeted positions within higher education administration (Creswell, 2007, p. 245). Perry's theories of democratic educational policy address the plurality of viewpoints that can cause conflict, as in Howe's (1992) study of tension between cultural diversity and equality of opportunity (p.428). The solution lies in balance through compromise and addressing core values (2009). Perry (2009, p. 433) narrows these values down to five key concepts, equity, diversity, choice, cohesion, and participation. These five concepts are fundamental to the phenomenological study of African American women in higher education administration primarily due to the underlying premise regarding marginalization. Perry's key concepts offer a foundation for exploring how African American women administrators understand their roles within institutions of higher education.

In this paper, democracy is defined as equal rights, responsibilities, and respect, as members of the overall society and as members of the higher educational community. The abstract language of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Affirmative Action Executive Order 11246 (E.O 11246) such as the regulations authorizing, either directly or indirectly the interpretation of the laws leads to assumptions made regarding implementation and can be interpreted many different ways. Consequently, diversity plans may seem rational in order to comply with affirmative action but may not be asserted in reality. Therefore, the effects of responding to the federal mandates are explored to see how administrators create or understand

the implications using the research questions. The research questions permeate the conceptual framework with the perceptions of African American women, as they navigate the presumed democratic work environment. Each case is different therefore; the manner in which administrators construct reality in response to democracy, offer opportunities for theoretical interpretations of social justice, diversity, gender equity issues, and leadership.

Examining multiple subjects develops the phenomenological analysis for this study. The descriptive analysis is included to avoid an incomplete study and to add depth and richness to the study by including certain facts (Creswell, 2007). For example, the background survey will include information such as, the type of position held, number of years in the position, and the age of the participant. Emerging themes following the interviews will be experienced individually and collectively. This process constitutes a cross case analysis. Each interview represents different interpretations and coping strategies for African American women in higher education administration (2007, p. 244). It is anticipated that the results of this study will provide an account of how African American women administrators perceive the campus culture. A culture of inclusion would suggest a democracy, where “active participation is seen as a key element” (Perry, 2009, p. 431). Democracy also entails a basic consensus about the rules of the game. Citizens must feel that together they are playing the same game (2009, p. 431). African American women in public higher education administration should feel they are equal partners in the institutional structure on their campuses. In analyzing each interview, the expected outcome is to provide perspectives of African American women administrators working in public higher educational institutions. The use of the psychological framework of marginalization to conceptualize the black feminist theory, as it relates to social justice and leadership, is important to this study. Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007) underscore the value of

history for discerning patterns, often invisible in daily life, that reflect systemic aspects of oppression, as it functions in different periods and contexts (see abstract). This belief contributes to the study as an underpinning that may be revealed and also reflected in the literature review.

In a special report, entitled *Diversity in Academe*, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2007) the author asserts, the term diversity has replaced affirmative action and representation in discussions of minority issues in academe, following the language of the courts (Tapia, 2007). Richard Tapia (2007) claims the shift is more than semantics but “a shift in direction that opens the door to representation of many types of people, defined by religion, language, and other cultural attributes” (p.B34). Aguirre and Martinez (2007) in *Practicing Diversity Leadership in Higher Education* offer the definition of diversity among institutions as meaning whatever the institution wants it to mean. This statement resonates with this research in ways that are to be considered over a fifty year period. An examination of the literature, archival materials, and oral histories, create a foundation for inquiry.

The collegial model, as described by Bush (2003), provides an opportunity for historical patterns of behavior to be examined by noting who shares the power and who is involved in the decision-making (p. 64). As such, it is assumed that professionals are equipped with the knowledge, expertise, and authority to make decisions and that these decisions are the result of a democratic process. Therefore, the assumption is made that, as an administrator, African American women in higher education, have a seat at the table and contribute to institutional decision making via a democratic process. Literature and historical reviews, when paired with interviews, should produce substantive research regarding women who can share their perceptions and successes on the journey to gaining access to and attainment of administrative positions in public higher education.

Institutions of higher education are the conduits for learning, with the knowledge base and skills to build capacity, as evident of its enduring history. Therefore, the ability to build capacity is linked to sustaining a culture of familiarity, comfortableness and expectations. African American women, who are engaged in, or aspire to administrative positions, may navigate the culture of the organization by utilizing what Collins (1991, 1998) describes as an outsider within perspective. The affect this perspective has on leadership is enhanced in ways to be explored during this study.

Given the complexities of history, power, and gender in the academy and the limited studies exploring African American women in higher education administration literature, the methodological approach is a phenomenological study which supports the chronicling of lived experiences. Additionally, a qualitative research design seems most appropriate for this study because it is designed to build rather than to test concepts, hypotheses, and theories (Merriam, 2009). Becker (1993) encourages researchers to make the theoretical framework, explicit. In other words, approach the theoretical framework as derived from the researchers' orientation or stance. Therefore, the exploration of challenges that African American women experience as professionals in higher education administration, is well suited for exploration by this researcher. The perceptions, as well as the respective realities, of African American women in public higher education administration in Missouri are the foci of this study. Both Creswell's (2007) and Merten's (2005) account of qualitative research offer the diverse strategies that this research requires. Qualitative inquiry allows for the collection of data using different methods: case study, personal experiences, life stories, interview, observations, history, document analysis, and visual texts, such as photos and journals. The use of one or more of these methods is expected to

produce information that is rich in description and explanation. The contributing data will be historical accounts as they emerge from each participant's interviews and the review of literature.

As a theoretical framework, the Black Feminist Theory is considered in order to look at the elements of African American and gender perspectives, as an analysis that may assist in explaining access to positions of authority within the academy. Dr. Patricia Hill Collins (1991) offers unique and common sense perspectives to the marginalization of African American women in various roles using this framework. She notes that the Black feminist epistemology, though considered as subjugated, is that borne out of their experience. It is this experience this research seeks to capture. Her research also views race, gender, and class of African American women from a historical perspective and relates it to the present, which again is an objective for this research.

The trustworthiness of this research is achieved by sharing with the participants that their information will be transcribed in a private domain and that transcripts will be filed on a flash drive and kept in a locked file cabinet. Within a month of the interview, participants will receive a copy of their responses to validate that it reflects their perspectives regarding the phenomenon studied.

The data analysis process will begin by reviewing demographic information on each participant and their career paths using a pre-survey. In addition, the history of African American leadership in these positions at the participant's institution will contribute to the dialogue and the data collection. The transcripts of interviews will be examined to become familiar with the data and to identify more patterns, themes, and categories (Mertens, 2005). The data will then be reviewed and coded based on the conceptual framework and research questions. This process will allow the data to be analyzed, deconstructed, reassembled, and categorized in

meaningful ways (Creswell, 2007). The data will be examined through the process of open coding, and the connections made to the various categories, through the process of axial coding (Mertens, 2005). The data will be used to develop both individual case studies of each program as well as a cross-case analysis of these programs and practices (Merriam, 2009). A cross-case analysis will identify similarities and differences in the perceptions of internal and external influences.

Significance of the Research

The available literature reports that African American women administrators in higher education remain underrepresented in part due to the phenomenon of double oppression (Wilson, 1989, Moses, 1989, Barksdale, 2007). Double oppression is defined as linked to race and gender. Historically, females of any race were denied privileges thus, the women's suffrage movement and the feminist movement; but, to be female and Black, meant African American women were stigmatized with a double set of standards. Bell Hooks (1989) continues this dialogue with her definition of feminism, because as she sees it, feminism is for all people to be liberated from sexist roles, domination, and oppression (195), whether you are the oppressed or the oppressor. Thus, the significance of this study lies in the attitudes, behaviors, and barriers experienced by African American women administrators in public higher educational institutions. Therefore, double oppression is magnified for African American women and multiple layers of marginalization, such as attitudes toward affirmative action, double discrimination of race and sexism, and tokenism (Moses, 1989, Kanter, 1977 Molina, 2008, & Wilson, 1989) potentially contribute to the experiences African American women in public higher education administration. Wilson (1989, p. 85) elaborates further by explaining that the limitations set for women of color is rooted in the history of American and cannot be understood

separately from this history. Therefore, the references to equal opportunity programs and affirmative action will complement to the experiences of African American women administrators participating in this study.

Additionally, leaders can use the findings to advance an institutional agenda addressing diversity as it relates to the institutional culture. The campus climate is not generally set by women and rarely, African American women. Therefore, understanding this phenomenon from the perspective of these women may reveal variables that go beyond academic preparation.

Another significance of this study is in the contributions it will purportedly make to the limited available literature specific to African American women in higher education administration. Subsequently, the research will offer a view of the influence of African American women and their leadership and coping strategies within the hierarchy of the institution.

Lastly, the significance of this study is best described as a phenomenon among African American women in higher education administration because they are constantly constructing their place in the academy, both through interactions with others and through their reflections on life in their world (Finnon & Swanson, 2000, p. 65 as interpreted through the cited work in Southerland, 2004, p. 280). Giroux (2010) emphasizes further the importance of contributions of these African American women administrators with the question, "What pressures will intellectuals in the academy bring to bear on the issues of our time and whose interests will they reflect" (p.6)? In other words, what gets attention and who formulates the key concepts, the methodologies, and the staging of solutions? The answer lies in the dialogue to come from the population studied for this research. Therefore, it is important to take a qualitative approach to dispel the false sense of pervasive social homogeneity (Giroux, pp. 6, 7) and let the voices of African American women in higher education administration be heard. Likewise, in studying

African American women administrators in public higher educational institutions in Missouri, the presumption is that they have different experiences depending upon their positions yet, similar experiences as a cohort of African Americans.

The perceptions of African American women in top-level administrative positions will be examined to see if theories emerge regarding the phenomenon of positional obscurity in higher education.

Definition of key terms

Authentic leadership: Genuine and real authority to make decisions within the scope of the position, independent of cultural and political expediency or expectancy.

Black Feminist Thought Theory: A social theory that argues shared group experiences and challenges can foster similar ways of seeing a standpoint that, in turn, can lead to group knowledge or standpoints that are essential for informed political action (Collins, 1991).

Colorblinding-: Rhetoric viewed as, race no longer matters (Giroux, 2010).

Critical Feminism Theory: Understanding social conditions (lived experiences) in order to uncover hidden structures affecting women.

Marginalization: any issue situation or circumstance that has been placed on women outside of the flow of power and influence within their institutions (Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

Outsider-Within Perspective: A perspective from which minorities or oppressed peoples can observe and become familiar with the mindset and behavior of dominant groups as a participant and as a non-participant (Collins, 2004).

Structural Inclusion: Workplace equality achieved by connecting inclusiveness to core Institutional values and practices (Strum, 2007).

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The literature that highlights the quandary of African American women in higher education emphasizes marginalization and the silencing of women (Molina, 2008, Wilson, 1989). Mabokela (2007) defines this dilemma as “double oppression” which is befitting because of the history of African Americans in general. This study will highlight the dilemmas and the challenges faced by African American women administrators as experienced in Missouri Public higher educational institutions. Wilson (1989) describes their dilemmas as tied to history, traditions, and legalities, which may account for the slow gains over the decades. What this means for African American women in the academy may be found in the research questions that ask for their perceptions regarding: 1) their level of authority in Missouri Public Higher Education; 2) the institutional culture and politics in Missouri Public Higher Educational Institutions; and 3) challenges to their leadership. There are many African American women leaders in higher education who observe the scarcity of African American women in higher education administration. Dr. Barnett-Johnson (2010) questions the scarcity of African American women in top administrative positions in higher education in 2010. She echoes what Johnnetta Cole, Yolanda Moses, former congresswoman Braun and others have alleged, when they recount that there are African American women who are now more qualified than ever and are making themselves available for these critical searches and selection processes. Yet, these women are not securing the key administrative positions at the same rate as their counterparts.

Barnett-Johnson argues that the academy has to do its part but that African American women must not feel defeated when they do not secure the positions sought. However, from a historical perspective, Strum (2007) argues in the article, *Advancing workplace equity in Higher*

Education that workplace equality is difficult to navigate and that trusting in the policies of the 1960s and 1970s is futile. Therefore, with inadequate resources to carry out their traditional enforcement policies seems to suggest that equity in the workplace had a sluggish beginning. Thus, the controversial attack on affirmative action persists since its inception in 1964.

Historical Context

Historically, education has been an important catalyst for success in the African American community. African American women have been instrumental in the promotion of education for over a century. As an example, Spelman College was the first college for black women in the U.S., founded by Sophia B. Packard and Harriet E. Giles. In 1891, Harriet Giles succeeded Sophia Packard and served as president of Spelman for eighteen years. During her tenure the school enrolled 800 students. In 1887, Spelman employed 30 teachers, and owned property valued at \$90,000 (Retrieved February 5, 2012 from <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-1460>). These young women leaders were followed by Mary McLeod Bethune. She founded the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls (now Bethune-Cookman College) in Florida in 1904, where she also served as President for twenty years (Black women in America, 1993). These women were trailblazers for their time, and their resolve to make a difference in generations of African Americans paved the way for other women to lead.

There have been other African American women administrators in higher education to rise to the heights of Presidency. Johnnetta B. Cole, president emerita of Spelman College and Bennett College for Women in North Carolina. Shirley Jackson, 18th President of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, N.Y. and Hartford, Connecticut, the oldest technological university in the United States and lastly; Ruth Simmons, President of Brown University, the third oldest

institution of higher education in New England and seventh oldest in the United States (Retrieved 3/2/12 from <http://rpi.edu/president/profile.html>) are scholarly icons who have contributed to the historical archives of higher education. With this rich history, what are the motivations or barriers to educators who wish to move into higher education administration? Why are African American women, not better represented in college and university administration? Duderstadt (2001) implied that, African American males are often promoted over African American females in executive positions. He noted that Dr. Johnnetta Cole didn't become the first black female president until 1987 yet, she became the first black female president of a Historically Black private college.

When diversity is mentioned in the literature regarding institutions of higher education the articles rarely address increasing the number of underrepresented minority administrators but rather focuses on students, staff and faculty. According to projections by Dr. Duderstadt (2001, p. 5), the increasing diversity of our population and the growing needs of under-served communities are very demanding and require significant changes in how colleges and universities and we, as stakeholders, patrons, and government bodies relate to them. His sensitivity to this issue addresses the need for social and political consciousness of public institutions:

Our social pluralism is among our most important opportunities, because it gives us an extraordinary vitality and energy as a people. As both a leader of society at large and a reflection of that society, the university has a unique responsibility to develop effective models of multicultural, pluralistic communities for our nation. We must strive to achieve new levels of understanding, tolerance, and mutual fulfillment for people of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds both on our campuses and beyond. But it has also

become increasingly clear that we must do so within a new political context that will require new policies and practices (p. 8).

Notwithstanding the controversy surrounding working women in general, Molina (2008) adds to the perspective of marginalization, by stating that the feelings of being silenced or tokenized in institutions of higher education is a frequent theme. Her paper points to the various ways women are excluded within higher education. Bryan McKinnley Jones-Brayboy (2003) isolates his research to predominately white colleges and universities as he argues that the language of diversity and efforts to implement diversity are bound to fail in the absence of commitment (p.72). His argument supports Tapia's (2007) claim of how the term diversity has evolved to make it more palatable.

Brayboy (2003) conveys how predominately white institutions (PWIs) in higher education view diversity as a free standing policy, unrelated to the underlying structure and daily operations. Thus the term 'diversity' is modified depending upon the need, which ultimately equates to a new or friendlier version, without the philosophical changes needed for real change to occur. The underlying structure is what Strum (2007) defines as full participation in the academy; a process that requires the full attention of the institution across the spectrum for women and men of all races to have the opportunity to thrive, succeed, and advance. This sentiment is echoed by Collins (2000), Bell Hooks (1990), Giroux (2010), and Moses (1997) and others regarding the need for systemic changes to occur and eliminate barriers that limit access and facilitate distrust. Perry (2009) explains this as promoting equality through various key concepts associated with educational practices and structures. For example, the plurality of equality can promote cohesion and conversely a lack of cohesion depending upon the context (p.429). One example Perry uses refers to the argument surrounding affirmative action and the

preferential treatment of underrepresented minorities in the United States who do not receive equal opportunity and therefore, should receive preferential access to universities whereas; critics would argue that this goes against equal opportunity. From this standpoint, there are weightier inferences, that when viewed through the lens of African American women, may reveal some insensitivity not prone to discovery unless their voices are heard.

The descriptors such as invisibility, marginalization, and silencing appear frequently in the literature, addressing African American women in higher education and providing conceptual lens for analyzing this phenomenon. Tokenism is another term to conceptualize these themes (Kanter 1977, Turner 2003, Barksdale 2007, Tapia 2007, Molina 2008). Kanter (1977) suggests that men and women at a certain level of authority are positioned in such a way as to illicit different interactions, depending on whether they are in the majority or the minority. Those in the majority are seen as one of the group and those in the minority are characterized in a number of ways that cause them to feel invisible, placed on display or having limited sources of power through alliances. Kanter (1977), also describes tokenism as accidental and that one is not necessarily considered a token if their presence is taken for granted in the group or organization, and incorporated in the dominant culture” (p.3 ¶ 3). Consequently, this statement supports Dixon (2005), Strum (2007), and Jayakamur, Howard, Allen, and Han (2009) claims that diversity in higher education is difficult to achieve because of the dominant culture. This is especially true, when the dominant culture absorbs those differences. The Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2002) challenges the dominant theory with its claims of color blindness, equal opportunity and more, to conceal self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009, p.663). In other words CRT brings into question promotions and assignments that are self-serving. Is meeting a quota, self-serving? Is

having minority representation on committees, tokenism? Or, is no representation of minorities in certain positions, the privilege of dominant groups? The dominant culture holds a perception about race as does the minority cultures and it is the perceptions that are the impetus for this study of African American women in public higher educational institutions. As a people and as a culture, we acquiesce in our responses to what we believe as true or false in words and in silence. African American women higher education administrators are asked to break their silence.

Sexism, equity in pay, isolation, and other marginalities, also lend themselves to the sluggishness of African American women in higher education having full citizenship within academe (Kanter, 1977, Turner, 2003; Barksdale, 2007, Strum, 2007, Rai & Critzer, 2000). Barnett–Johnson (2010) stated that African American women need to take responsibility for their role in attaining positions by being prepared. However, one can argue the fact that no amount of preparation can cast down barriers masked as equal opportunity. Yet, with these challenges, it is perceived that there are achievements for which this proposed research will attempt to reveal among African American women serving in administrative roles in Missouri higher educational institutions.

Few articles report the progress that African American women have made in higher education administration. Those that address this concern are generally an anomaly or focus the African American woman's success within predominately black institutions. It has been fifty years since the implementation of the Civil Rights Act and Affirmative Action. During that time, the subject of equity and diversity appears to have initiated some transformation, but not the controversy surrounding it.

Former senator Carol Mosley Braun of Illinois addressed Affirmative Action and the Glass Ceiling on the floor of the U.S. Congress, on March 30, 1995. Her objective was to bring

attention to the need for continued support of Affirmative Action. *The Black Scholar* included her speech in its 1995 edition. Congresswoman Braun's speech included statistical accounts, as well as, trends prevalent since the inception of this executive order. But rather than create a speech tainted with divisiveness Braun makes a poignant case for viewing Affirmative Action as a challenge to face together in this time of change (p.9). She also pointed out that even with the progress women have made; it seems that women have benefitted the least especially, African American women.

Interestingly, the 'glass ceiling' is not just a term that denotes inaccessibility, but it was also given credibility when Congress created the Glass Ceiling Commission as a part of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 (p.11). The term 'glass ceiling' implies that one can only progress to a certain level with no opportunity beyond that level to the top ranks. As former congresswoman Braun reported on the Senate floor, the 1992 college attendance data documented that approximately 590,000 women and 163,000 minority students graduated from college. She challenged her colleagues as she ended her speech, "Are we really prepared to say to them, "Sorry; you're not allowed to compete" (p.14). The literature or remnants thereof, lack sufficient evidence that African American women compete at the level where policies are made. Do those in authority seriously consider these matters? Is there a glass ceiling in higher educational institutions for African American women seeking administrative positions? To answer these questions further research on the topic is needed.

Dr. Johnnetta Cole, president of Bennett College in North Carolina and former president of Spelman College remarked in an article (Hamilton, 2004) entitled, *The best is yet to come: women of color have risen to the top ranks in higher education*, that more leadership opportunities are on the horizon and that "We can't think that because we have these two

presidents, we have won the race” (¶ 1). Yolanda Moses, president of City College of New York and the American Association for Higher Education, followed Dr. Cole’s remarks with, "Clearly there are more provosts and presidents and more women ready to take on these jobs. More importantly, you have senior administrators and boards who are more willing to pick women of color to lead (¶ 2)." Given equitable opportunities, this researcher believes African American women are prepared for leadership in higher education administration. However, the question remains for institutions as suggested by Dr. Cole (2004), “will they support the changes needed to make these women successful? Are they willing to give women the authority they need to lead, or will they put up roadblocks and stumbling blocks to transformation?"

Much of the literature addresses barriers rather than opportunities, like those mentioned by Wilson (1997) Strum (2007), Morlina (2008) and others, that given the anticipated situation would be problematic for all women. Although there are certainly common obstacles for all women, their histories tell a different story. Women in higher education do not share the same history and therefore, their perspectives are very different.

Strum (2007) developed a stronger case for structural inclusiveness as a means of providing a framework for sustaining culture. As Strum articulates in her article, the norm of institutional citizenship is viewed as a justification for diversity initiatives; creating conditions for all races and genders to fully participate in the culture of the institution. In particular, colleges and universities work synergistically and create norms for how societies conduct themselves in the work place so, what better place for reform to occur than within higher education. Strum (2007) clearly illustrated how institutions mediate norms and policies and how these are translated into practice. Furthermore, the metaphorical use of architecture alludes to building or construction to describe diversity, which seems appropriate to understanding

diversity within higher education, and the move toward inclusivity. The literature supports the premise that institutional diversity is always under construction, which accounts for the “disparities in status opportunities” (2006 p. 256), as well as the limited research of African American women in positions of authority in higher education administration. This article uses data that suggests there are fragmented authority structures within departments and that it contributes to the perception of powerlessness (2007, pp. 420, 421). Although, the suggested solution of motivating diverse constituencies to assume responsibility for addressing the barriers to women’s participation within their own domain (Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, and Han 2009), places the sole responsibility of a remedy on those most affected. This remedy is a matter that is debatable, but adds to the research in ways that African American women can best address, through their personal experiences. The literature also provides support data for other variables influencing the leadership and advancement of African American women administrators, such as culture and policy.

Institutions of higher education are, by nature, administratively complex. Schein (1997 as cited in Shafritz, Ott, and Jang, 2005), caution against inferring too much into the structure of organizations, because underlying assumptions may tell a different story. In a special report entitled *Campus Life*, Boyer (1990) refers to the division between academic and non- academic as entirely separate worlds (p.17). This inference suggests conflict based on how each division views their level of control or power which also contributes to the complexity. There is no mainstream approach to a universal definition of organizations and that translates into individuals constructing their own realities. The same holds true for the realities of African American women within these institutions of higher education.

Strum (2007), Morpew (2009), and Kanter (1977) provide data regarding policy, as it relates to diversity and its influence on the advancement of African American women in higher education. Process and power are most likely the most frustrating causal factors in organizational complexity. Our efforts at understanding both are at the center of many articles and have the potential to influence this research theoretically and contextually. Theoretically, the Black Feminist Thought Theory provides a foundation for understanding African American women and the stereotypical roles that affect professional roles. Contextually, the influence of process and power depends on the position and the institutional culture.

Within higher education literature Kanter (1977), Turner (2003), Barksdale (2007), Tapia (2007), Molina (2008) referenced the “glass ceiling” as a phenomenon affecting all women. However, gains made by white women resulting from affirmative action are not reflected for women of color. A report by the Women’s Environment and Development Organization, entitled Women’s Equality: An Unfinished Agenda (2000) supports this perception. In retrospect, this researcher looked for knowledge and understanding of ageless dilemmas faced by African American women through stories presented by the sample population in Missouri public higher educational institutions.

Black Feminist Thought Theory

The basic insight of the Black Feminist theory is that knowledge is mediated by numerous factors related to an individual or group’s particular position in society and in history. Black women, like members of any oppressed group have special kinds of knowledge by virtue of their perceived marginalized status in society. Knowledge gained via their perspective can lead to a raised group consciousness. Raising group consciousness is important; however raising the consciousness of others about the marginalized group is more in line with the intent of this

study. Collins (1991) underscored Black feminist epistemology as grounded in their personal experiences of racism and sexism and in their cognitive styles. She used this epistemology to empower Black women to resist the demeaning images of Black women. Black women are "outsiders within" because they having enough personal experiences as insiders to understand their social place but also enough critical distance to allow critique.

Although this research has a cultural undertone, the most relevant theoretical framework for getting started is the Black Feminist Thought Theory (Collins, 1991). This theory encompasses the intersection of influences on African American women administrators. The common denominator is their employment with public higher educational institutions. Other influences that provide substantive support to this study is education policy of plurality, conflict, and balance as illustrated in a study by Perry (2009). This study "establishes a conceptual model for analyzing education policy in democratic societies, based on the key concepts of equality, diversity, participation, choice, and cohesion" (2009, see abstract). This multi-dimensional process is reinforced by Butler and Walter (1991) who contends that the experiences of White middle class women provide a norm by which all other women's experience are added to and measured (p.74). If African American women are measured using the experiences of other women there is cause to pause and reflect on what this really means for African American women in general, and African American women in higher education administration, specifically. African American women bring different and unique and perspectives to the educational communities. The perspectives of these women when paired with a substantive literature review should add richness and depth to this research.

The Black Feminist Thought theory (Collins, 1990) offers a very insightful look at a cross section of topics such as education, politics, history, and social issues that have come to

symbolize progressiveness. What is questionable is whether or not that progressiveness is extended to African American females. The roles of African American women in higher education administration are caught up in the sophisticated discourse of politics and race (Giroux, 2010, Collins, 2004). Giroux addresses this particular aspect as influencing the United States and global society. However, politics and race with the added influence of gender and class, is camouflaged by the colorblind logic of the post-civil rights university (Giroux, 2010, p. 40). Following the civil rights movement, it is conceivable that universities may have felt a sense of urgency to accommodate African American and other underrepresented students. Yet, it is unclear at what rate that same urgency was extended to African American administrators. However, the urgency to comply with affirmative action and dispel accusations of inequality may validate Giroux's colorblind logic. Embedded in this logic is perhaps a neutralization of race and gender under the guise of professionalism. Thus, diluting the historical relevance of race and politics, gender and class, to that of irrelevancy and keeping with "colorblinding (*sic*) protocols," results in a false sense of pervasive social homogeneity that renders one blind to social differences (pp. 6, 7).

Works citing marginalization of women in higher education contribute greatly to this research however; it is the Black Feminist Thought Theory that provides the most substance. The Black feminist thought theory (Collins, 1990) is suitable for considering the past fifty years of history and public policy influencing the academy and African American women in higher educational institutions. This theory addresses the many social protocols Giroux (2010) reports on in her book. It is important to take the lessons learned from the literature and the research and not shelve them, but used them to enhance learning regarding equity issues. There is no absolute truth in conducting this research, only opinions and perspectives that deserve the respect of the

educational community. The reviewed literature supports this and the myriad collection of thoughts and theories addressing African American women in higher education. The research approach for this study is yet another layer, another perspective.

Summary

The capacity to effect change is dependent upon all things working together-the learning environment or culture, the individual, the team, and the leadership. If African American women administrators are marginalized and their leadership not taken seriously, then the capacity for change is compromised. Participative leadership provides an opportunity for African American women administrators to engage in the decision-making process and thus it becomes shared, distributed, dispersed, collaborative and collegial. (Bush, 2003, p.187). In examining the lived experiences of African American women administrators in these public institutions, the aid of artifacts, histories, myths, stories, legends, and symbols will provide insight not only into the lives and cultures of the participants but also the institutions.

Much of the literature addresses barriers rather than opportunities, like those mentioned by Wilson (1997) Strum (2007), Morlina (2008) and others. However, this proposed research is an attempt to understand the uniqueness, trials, successes, and challenges of African American women in higher education administration and the strength of character, perseverance, and leadership that is presumed to exist in each of them. The strength of character for African American women in positions of authority in public higher education is implied to mean the ability or the drive, to work through, within, and across campus cultures or systems, in essence, to lead.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

This research will examine the perceptions of African American women in Missouri higher education administration using a phenomenological study approach. During the fifty year period of 1961-2011 affirmative action and subsequent policies that influence college attendance and equity in employment have evolved as a constant platform for discourse in education. The Black Feminist thought theory provides the theoretical framework for capturing the perceptions of African American women in public higher education administration. Using this theory allowed the researcher to look at the influences of institutional practice, public policy, and social justice on leadership and career advancement of African American women in Missouri public institutions of higher education. The research questions provided the basic framework for the interviews and the interview questions were developed to directly correlate to the research questions.

Qualitative methods were used to explore the perceptions of African American women in public higher education administration in the state of Missouri. This allowed for the exploration of in-depth lived experiences of the sample population. The phenomenological approach to this research was devoted to understanding the lived experiences of these participants and allows for data collection from individuals and institutions without the confines of a laboratory.

The narrative approach allowed the researcher to address specific theories that may be significant to understanding the phenomenon of African American women in positions of authority in public higher educational institutions. Using this approach, allows for perception and theory to align and tell the story of how African American women administrators in higher education experience certain phenomenon in their leadership roles. Individual interviews were

conducted and resumes, vitas, were shared by the participants for analysis in conjunction with survey background data. Participants shared information regarding their career paths via a googledoc survey instrument. Institutional information was gathered via internet websites.

Merriam (2002, p.4) writes that the key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed. With this in mind, Merriam introduces several philosophical or theoretical orientations that are corroborated by the following four major characteristics: 1) understanding the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants, 2) the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection, 3) strategy builds toward theory, and 4) results of the inquiry is richly descriptive.

The first characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher strives to understand the meaning African American women administrators in public higher education have constructed about their experiences (p .4). Subsequently, the researcher is interested in the participant's perspective of the phenomenon, and the emphasis is on what it means to function in and maneuver within the participant's world. The meaning for this study lies in how African American women administrators in public higher education, perceive their overall experience within the institution.

Establishment into the study entails not only understanding the participant but also the setting within which they live and work. Merriam (2002), Creswell's (2007), and Mertens' (2005) encourage observing the participants in their domains, in the setting where they experience the phenomenon. In doing so, the researcher aims to get an insider perspective of what African American women in public higher education administration are experiencing. For example, participants will be asked to detail the culture of the institution during the interview.

The second characteristic of qualitative research as described by Merriam (2002) and supported by Creswell (2007) is that the researcher is the key instrument in data collection. Creswell notes that the researcher is responsible for examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants (p.39). Researchers seldom rely on surveys and questionnaires alone; there are multiple sources of data collected (2007). Human behavior is complex and the researcher must be attuned to personal biases that may intrude on the credibility of the research. Creswell (2007) suggests that the researcher decide how and where to insert personal understandings of the study (p.62).

The third qualitative research characteristic is inductive analysis. There is an emergence of themes, categories, and theories (Merriam, 2002). Researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up; working back and forth between themes until comprehensive sets of themes are established (Creswell, 2007, p.39). For example, Strum (2007) asserts that disparities are the result of cumulative disadvantage in everyday interactions operating across the spectrum of institutional life and that women face cognitive biases in evaluation and exclusion from informal networks. She also goes on to say that decision makers are often unaware of these dynamics (p.251). So, there is an underlying pattern of structural inclusion or exclusion that will emerge through a qualitative approach to this research. This characteristic is guided by analytical principles rather than rules, and ultimately ends with an innovative synthesis. In other words, the initial plan for research cannot be rigidly prescribed. There will be shifts in data collection, forms, questions, and other modifications (Creswell, 2007).

The fourth and final characteristic of qualitative research (Merriam 2002, and Creswell, 2007) is that the data should result in a rich description. Creswell (2007) notes that researchers have the responsibility of developing a complex picture of the problem and reporting its many

perspectives. According to Creswell (2007) this characteristic is not bound by cause and effect relationships. Representing each participant and being sensitive to the information as presented, is a role of the researcher that can ultimately produce the rich, complex, and thorough descriptions of this study. This type of research leaves the door open for multiple interpretations even after the report has been issued.

Population and sample

The phenomenological approach recommends a sample size of approximately six participants (Mertens, 2005). Considering the topic of this research the sample size suggested by Mertens was realistic. Eleven contacts were made and the contacts yielded seven women who were willing to participate yet six returned consent forms and five of the six were actually interviewed. Retirees were also considered if they were retired for less than a year. The sample was stratified to improve the homogeneity of the sample by using specific criteria such as: position level, size of institution, prior experience and longevity. This study focused on the experiences of these women, through firsthand accounts depicted through formal interviews.

In using the phenomenological study approach a historical and narrative research methodology was developed. This process provided a perspective of how the participants viewed the authenticity of their positions, their preparation for leadership, support for performing job duties and advancement opportunities. Finding African American women in leadership administrative positions was challenging; a copy of all Public Higher Education Institutions in the state of Missouri was retrieved from the Missouri Department of Higher Education website. A review of the websites for pictures and biographies was the initial step and if there were no pictures the researcher searched the internet using the names of females listed as having administrative positions, and also made inquiries of several colleagues. Emails were sent with a

message of why they were receiving the attached invitation letter and informed consent. Three participants responded within 24 hours of the routed invitation. Two other responses arrived within two to three days. It was the last response that took the longest. Furthermore, considering the women and the institutions represented, there was only one type of institution not represented and that was the one I was most concerned with pursuing.

Sampling Procedure

As a qualitative research approach, a purposeful sampling strategy was employed. Data from the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) coupled with the assistance of colleagues should provide the foundation needed for identifying the sample population. The researcher began with a stratified purposeful sample. Stratified purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to look at different levels of administrators and group them accordingly. The six African American female administrators had experiences at predominately white institutions, a historically black college and university and, a community college. This sample size is within the parameters suggested by Merten (2005). The advantage to this sample size is the ability to gain multiple and diverse perspectives. However, the limitation to conducting a stratified purposeful sampling is that it could get complex if the sample size is much larger than that suggested by Merten. However, this was not a problem because the internet search and the recommendations from colleagues yielded a pool of eleven possible candidates and seven responded. Yet, only six were able to follow through with the interview. The seventh person had been out of the office for approximately two months and could not proceed due to her workload.

Once approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board, the online background questionnaire was sent to administrators in other states in order to identify issues with wording,

content, or technology. Once feedback was received and the issues addressed, the survey was sent to administrators in Missouri who met the inclusion criteria using the survey creator, Google Docs. This instrument was chosen for the ease in preparing the survey, the no cost aspect, and the data options available for reports.

Data collection techniques and sources

In considering a phenomenological study, the data gathering is unique in that a particular time in history is considered for which there are videos, books, magazines, journals, and oral histories available to set the background for this research. Therefore, having resumes or vita's as a means of getting to know the participants is essential. Coupled with the biographical information attained from the resumes/vita, the survey monkey adds another layer of introduction to the participants.

I audio recorded each participant with their permission. The consent forms were on hand at each interview. Each participant was coded prior to the interview with their initials. The beginning and end times were documented to be transferred to the typed transcription. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym in the transcriptions and within the color binder assigned to them. Any reference to their names and institutions were blacked out or deleted. Two digital and one cassette recorder were used to record sessions. Audacity, computerized digital recording software, was used as backup. During the sessions, key words or phrases were jotted down as well as journal notes scribed within 24 hours of the sessions. Due to the lengths of the sessions, the transcriptions averaged about ten hours each. Following the interviews, each participant was reminded of the online survey which did not identify persons by name and asked to provide a curriculum vita or resume. Each participants binder included the IRB approved informed consent form, field notes, journal notes of the session and arrangements for interviews, sketches,

any additional information participants may have supplied such as a performance evaluation, curriculum vita or resume, online information found with pictures, transcriptions, and confirmation from each participant that their transcriptions were correct and that the analysis portrayed is satisfactory.

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Once the participants were selected, they participated in a one-time face-to- face interview. Two of the six interviews necessitated a conference call. The face-to-face interviews lasted forty-five minutes to an hour and a half. The first 10-15 minutes will be a review of the purpose and scope of the study. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Tuchman (1994, as cited in Mertens, 2005) “makes the case that adequate social science includes a theoretical use of historical information; social phenomenon must be understood in its historical context” (p.267). A special note is made of the feminist movement, because it brought “women out of obscurity and repairs the historical records, in which women are largely absent” (p. 267). With this in mind, the historical and narrative approach supports the phenomenological study.

Data was collected from individuals who had experienced being African American female administrator in public higher educational institutions in Missouri. The participants

provided support documentation such resumes or curriculum vitas to contribute to this study. One participant also connected the researcher to an organization whose aim is to work with rising African American PhDs. The researcher used a portable scanner to scan documents, as needed. As previously stated, all identifying information was excluded from the written results.

Data management

The recorders used to interview participants have been placed in a safe deposit box for the amount of time required by IRB. The recordings on the computer were deleted because the digital recordings were not damaged, lost, or stolen. The transcriptions and all other documents that were available via email were placed on a flash drive and stored with the digital recorders. The hard copy transcriptions were destroyed and documents that were given to me and that were necessary for analysis were scanned and placed on the flash drive and stored.

Strategies to address issues of quality

Following approval from the Institutional Research Board (IRB), participants were solicited by identifying African American women administrators based on the data supplied by the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) educational statistics reports, internet website searches, and statewide colleague's identification of potential participants. Because the African American female administrator pool is about eleven percent (MDHE, 2010), there was a sizable population for this study.

As African American women administrators were identified an invitation to participate in this research was emailed. The email included a letter of invitation with information about the online survey (Appendix B) and the interview as well as an attachment of the informed consent form. The survey allowed participants to comment on questions regarding leadership and demographic information such as: race or ethnicity, length of employment, type of institution,

and position title. The survey was anonymous yielded information that was used to stratify responses and address commonalities.

Scheduling of interviews occurred once the signed consent forms were received. Those providing information about potential participants do not have access to information regarding who accepted or did not accept the invitation.

All correspondence and dissertation information was handled through a personal laptop and email account. The information from the survey was manipulated using the reporting options supplied by Google Docs.

Qualitative research as Creswell (2007) notes “requires an alternate voice or multiple voices” (p.212) as this research proposes with African American women administrators. Qualitative research is also appropriate for uncovering meanings people assign to their experiences (2007). It is the lived experiences of African American women administrators in public higher education that provide the impetus for this study. It is the researchers’ responsibility to unveil the meanings of these experiences through the anticipated emergence of themes drawn from the review of literature.

Data were analyzed using a cross reference of survey responses and emerging themes from the interviews. Each participant had a file and that file will have their transcriptions. A universal colored file will house all things common to all participants. It is important for the researcher to understand personal subjectivity by scrutinizing assumptions and ensuring that personal biases are not influencing the analysis. These strategies were imposed to establish credibility.

Ethical Consideration

The policies of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Missouri were followed in conducting interviews. In keeping with these policies, an informed consent letter (Appendix A) was distributed to all participants. This form letter advised participants of the expectations for their participation in the study (e.g. 1 hour face- to- face interview), explain the risks involved with their participation, and confirm that participation in the study is completely voluntary and can be terminated at any time. Participants were assured that their identities would be kept confidential. Contact information regarding the study included the researcher information, dissertation advisor and that of the Compliance Office for the University of Missouri should participants have questions at any point during the study.

The participant pool for this study was six, which is small and can be viewed as sensitive. Participant's names or institution affiliates were not revealed. The descriptions of the institutions were held in strict confidence. Participants were reassured of the protection of their identities for the study to encourage them to answer interview questions openly and honestly, without concern that a particular comment would be attributed to an identifiable individual. To accomplish this, pseudonyms were used for participants and institutions, when applicable, to protect identities.

All data is kept in secure locations. Other than instances where data was shared with the dissertation advisor regarding the analysis, the researcher is the only person viewing the data. To further ensure the data was protected, transcription of all interviews was completed by the interviewer. In addition, any files that might contain personally identifiable information about participants was password-protected, and transferred to a flash drive for storage. Any reference to participants, their interviews, and transcriptions were transferred to a safe deposit box once the dissertation defense occurred.

Anticipated study limitations

There are several concerns or possible limitations to this study: 1) the lack of a cross section of African American women in positions of authority to stratify the study, 2) the reluctance of women to having their lives and careers opened to scrutiny and, 3) the sample size will prevent generalizability. While the number of African American in administrative positions in Missouri institutions of higher education is unknown at this time, the opportunity for searching for candidates is promising based upon the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE, 2010) aggregated data of administrators in the state of Missouri. According to this data, there were 350 African American Executive/Administrators/Managers in the fall of 2010. This is only a fraction of the 11% all higher educational professionals in the state of Missouri.

Summary

There are currently limited studies with a focus on African American women in higher education administration. Research focused on African American women in Higher Education generally produces information targeted to faculty members. The lack of consistent research and data in higher education for African American women in leadership roles leaves a gap that widens, if left unattended. Changes and practices that constitute barriers to promoting women into positions of authority appear to be diminishing.

The study of African American women in higher education administration intimates that the complexity of their gender, race, and leadership, is only a fraction of what may come forth through their voices. Embedded in each complex characteristic mentioned, are the stereotypes that hover over African American women. It is assumed that the barriers do not disappear just because African American women acquire positions of authority.

Yukl (2009) like many others reporting on women devotes a section of space to examining women in leadership roles without going into specifics regarding race or ethnicity. The underrepresentation of African American women in leadership however, can be attributed to various stereotypes. Some reasons given in the literature are: inadequate career opportunities, racial differences in speech, socialization, and tokenism (Oakley, 2000 as cited in Sanchez & Davis, 2010). Understanding the experiences and perceptions of African American Women administrators in public higher education provides insight into the types of activities and experiences that are beneficial for the development of knowledge, skills, and competencies required for effective leadership. The Black Feminist Thought theory (Collins, 1991) provides a perspective that is uniquely African American and is not to be confused with group think, but rather a movement toward understanding a consciousness or perception that is distinctively female and distinctively African American.

There is no lack of interpretation in conducting a qualitative study, as depicted in Creswell's (2007) and Mertens' (2005), five basic philosophical assumptions essential for this type of research: 1) ontology; 2) epistemology; 3) axiology; 4) rhetoric; and 5) methodology (p. 30). For this particular study, one or more of these assumptions will contribute to the understanding of this research topic. The ontological assumption that reality is subjective and multiple, will be reflected in this study through the researchers' use of quotes and themes from participants. The epistemological assumption requires knowledge of what the relationship is between the researcher and what is being researched. The obvious answer to this is that the researcher shares race, gender, and ethnicity with the sample population as well as, having served in administrative positions in higher education. The axiological assumption of how values are shaped and interpreted in this research, require honest and open discourse between both the

researcher and the participants. The rhetorical assumption addresses the language to be used in interpreting and reporting what was said or not said during the interviews. The personal voices of the participants must come through this research. However, the researcher will incorporate an informal literary form as the language of qualitative research.

This study is intended to illuminate the themes that emerge from the perspectives of African American women administrators in public higher educational institutions in the state of Missouri. Based on the review of literature, there are several themes that have been touched on that may resonate with the participants. Exploring the strategies used by the participants to cope and to effect change should provide for a rich description of the findings.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The preliminary data analysis began with listening to audio taped interviews and transcribing the interview into a written script. The transcription process provided me with written data to begin “open coding” of the collective studies, for the purpose of identifying “categories and subcategories” about leadership of African American women administrators and what was most influential to them as educational leaders (Creswell, 2007, p. 160). I employed the “horizontalization” of the data to analyze specific statements and quotes about phenomenological factors that contribute to the experiences of African American female administrators (Moustakas, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 61). The identified factors from the audio and post-audio conversations were recorded in a data collection matrix (Appendix D) which served as an “analytic aid” for the purpose of identifying emerging themes related to the leadership phenomenon of African American females in public higher educational institutions in Missouri (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Frequent comments, phrases, and statements were identified as pertinent to the study and that addressed the research questions.

Each audio taped interview was accompanied by a copy of a written transcript for each. Their conversations proceeded with “axial coding” to identify emerging themes and “saturated categories” about how the leadership phenomenon had influenced the careers of African American females in administrative positions in Missouri public higher educational institutions and the equity issues experienced due to Affirmative Action and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Creswell, 2007, p. 161). Contributing to the central theme of African American female administrative leadership is the phenomenon that influences educational leaders and therefore, I proceeded with “selective coding” to generate theory from the data collected. The results of this coding process will be presented in the findings section of this paper.

The use of field notes and journal entries and axial coding (Appendix B) served to triangulate the data for accuracy. Additionally, researcher bias may be assumed; for as the researcher, I live within the parameters of what is being researched. As such, the journal entries served as a time of reflection and at times venting, when areas of concern and contention surfaced. I was able to relate and also reflect on the meaning of my own experiences as well as what was shared by each participant adding to the generalizability and reliability of the data collected for this study (Creswell, 2007).

Participant Data

The overall assumption that African American female administrators experienced challenges as leaders begins with the Black Feminist Thought Theory. Purposeful sampling was used to identify the participants. Each administrator was invited to participate based upon their ethnicity and positions in their institution. The sample population was identified through institutional websites and colleague recommendations. Based upon the success of the internet searches, invitations were sent to 11 administrators in Missouri Public Higher Educational institutions.

Semi-structured open-ended questions were used to elicit answers directly related to the participant's experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions regarding their leadership and positional authority. In using open ended axial coding, the focus was on coding to determine themes. The use of thematic coding involved, searching a particular issue or perspective that was compatible for this research. The thematic structure serves to support the theoretical assumptions, and the narratives from the interviews, were used to connect findings to theoretical propositions. Each participant was given a pseudonym using the names of precious gems, Ruby, Amber, Opal Pearl, Amethyst and Emerald. The decision to use gems as a pseudonym was an

easy one, because the special processes gems endure during their formation is a stressful one but the end product is a precious jewel. Additionally, Webster's dictionary also defines a gem as a person held in high esteem. Therefore, the pseudonyms contribute to their personalities as well, and seem appropriate for concealing their identities.

Participant Profile

Participant 1: Amber is the youngest administrator in the role of Assistant Director within the division of Enrollment Management at her institution. Amber is a native Missourian. She has not worked at any other public higher educational institution. She attended school at the institution where she is employed. She is one of eight children born and raised in a two parent household.

Participant 2: Pearl is Assistant Dean of Multicultural Affairs at her institution and has been at her institution for nineteen years and in her current position for thirteen. She is married and has two sons. She moved to the area with her husband and found her passion for working with students, particularly students from non-traditional backgrounds.

Participant 3: Emerald is Vice President of Academic Affairs in an urban community college. She is a native Missourian and has worked in both in-state and out-of state institutions. She has been in her current position for two years.

Participant 4: Amethyst is Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs at an HBCU. She is a native Missourian and has worked in several (four) institutions in other states prior to relocating back to Missouri.

Participant 5: Opal is Assistant Vice Provost of Enrollment Management, as well as the Director of the University's Access Initiatives, which entails financial aid, registrar, student information system, veteran affairs and pre-collegiate opportunities. Her role along with the Vice President,

is to provide leadership oversight across the division, with oversight for what the division is doing and how that fits into the university as a whole. She is a native Missourian and has worked in positions at the state and federal levels.

Participant 6: Ruby is a retired Dean of a college with administrative experience in academic affairs. Ruby is not a native of Missouri but has nine years of experience in the position held in Missouri. She is married and the mother of two sons.

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile for this study revealed that two of the participants were within the 56 and older age group (65 and 60 respectively). Three of the other participants were within the 36-45 age groups and the youngest within the 26-35 age groups. Three of the participants were married, two divorced, and one single. There were two participants holding a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); two others, a Doctor of Education (EdD); and one Master of Arts (MA) and the final participant, a Bachelors degree. All participants in this study were first generation college students except one, whose father earned a Master's degree. The women in this study represent public higher educational institutions in the state of Missouri; community colleges, highly selective, moderately selective, and research institutions in urban and rural communities make up the participant pool.

Positional Authority

In White Reign, Deploying Whiteness in America (Kincheloe, Steinberg, Rodriguez, & Chennault, 1998,) positional authority is defined as the socially constructed understanding of our world and ourselves. Yet, in this book, whiteness is explored for how it has contributed to race, gender, class disparity and power distribution. The editor's approach is new and refreshing and causes a paradigm shift in education that can join the ranks of African American or multicultural

studies. The discussion on feminism is thought provoking as it reminds us of white privilege. According to Kincheloe, et al., 1998), "...the feminism of all these white students, based on assumptions of whiteness did not include any consciousness of being white" The result is that, "race was seen as an exclusive (and obstructive) property of black women only" (p.146). In other words, if race is only seen as specific to blacks the consequence is pure dominance, which as previously stated, contributes to race, class disparity, and how power is distributed. Such thought processes, if viewed as typical, can influence how women, especially African American women in administrative leadership, are portrayed. The multiple and expanded roles and expectations that these women can take on more responsibilities and be the token person of color on committees, seems to resonate throughout the interviews. So, how do African American women administrators perceive their positional authority within their institution? The African American female administrators in this study attest to the diverse ways in which the above roles for Black administrators are manifested in their positions and their leadership within their institutions.

For example, Amber's version of how she views her leadership position offers a glimpse of race and power distribution. Minority status may guarantee Amber membership on committees. However, she is resistant to being boxed in to the stereotypical minority role.

I found myself kind of being pushed into roles that you know were designated as this is what we need a minority...for this, or we need a minority... advisor for this, we can't have someone else do this? And I would hope that it has gotten better but that's not the case either. Because as I move further and further up the rank that actually gets worse and worse ...the pull towards the ideal that because you are the minority, you have participate in certain things, you know. It's kind of standard here on this campus, if you

are a minority, you participate on certain committees or you can guarantee you will find yourself on somebody's standard committee to fill that role where they need a minority.

It's a great deal...I'm a great big deal because I'm a twofer, a two for one, because you get a woman and minority, which I've also had to learn I can use that to my advantage as well.

Amber also notes that she makes some decisions, but does not make one hundred percent of the decisions for her area; this does not bother her because as indicated if something goes wrong, it becomes one hundred percent her fault. However, she was quick to say that her supervisor does value her opinion. So while she is not a direct decision maker, she feels that she has an impact and is heard in most instances. Her comment while acknowledging her role and responsibility lacks confidence in her decision making. The assumption here is that, there are consequences for which she was not willing to risk her position. It is the unspoken assumptions and expectations that create this uncertainty of positional authority.

Unlike Amber, Pearl embraces a sense of responsibility toward the role influenced by her minority status. In other words, instead of feeling boxed in, she works within the confines of the box. She has been a one woman promoter of diversity. As the head of multicultural affairs, she provides support, social and academic, to underrepresented ethnic minority students. As she concluded, "part of my role, is to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of diversity campus wide". In this scenario, the power is more problem-solving and managing programs and student issues. She has been at the institution for approximately 20 years, and sees her progression as a fortunate event in her career:

Fortunately, I had been asked tons or more occasions to assume more leadership, other positions, serve on different committees. I was asked by the president of the university to

serve as interim when another dynamic African American man left the position of assistant, associate dean for multicultural affairs. I was asked to serve as the interim, and a few years later through a search process, I was selected to fill his position.

Although, this administrator is content in the position she holds, the question remains whether or not she is valued for her merit instead of her convenience?

There is no question of Emerald's merit. Like Amber she expresses concern regarding stereotypes that degrade rather than respect a person. Emerald has come up through the ranks and is now Vice President of Academic Affairs. Although her insight encompasses past and present leadership reflections her battle has been changing the stereotypical image of who she should be as an African American woman in a leadership role.

I tend to have a softer voice, which may also impact on how I am perceived sometimes, and so my soft voice means that I am soft and that's not the case at all. I can't help how my voice sounds. And so, I had one particular experience in which there were a lot of attempts to marginalize. It was a male dominated environment. First of all if you were a male that was the number one. If you were a female, and you wanted respect, you were white. But black women just kind of fell down at the very bottom of that list. Everyone came before us with this particular administration. That was challenging for me as a person that values being able to speak my mind, ... have a role in what's going on, especially if I'm at the leadership table... in this situation, it was male dominated with a African American male as the lead, in terms of the campus President. This person had held a lot of stereotypes about women and seemed to not hold African American women in high regard. So that was really troubling for me...he would outwardly disrespect African American women and ...was more nurturing for white females. So that was

very. . . I didn't realize until I left how damaging that was to me because I've always viewed myself as a person . . . with high self-esteem . . . but over time, . . . I'm not trying to equate it to an abusive relationship, but in some ways when you are marginalized regularly it eats away at you without you even knowing that.

She describes a top down, male dominated, leadership which represents the traditional organizational hierarchy. What was critical to her testimony is how she internalized and interpreted the relationship within that hierarchy. Emerald compared that experience to an abusive relationship that's a role that she refused to accept. When we think of abusive relationships, we think of victims. She was not a victim; she knew that by completing her doctorate she would free herself of the oppression. This is fuel for another study however, the "Black feminist thought speaks to the importance African American women thinkers, place on consciousness" (Collins 1999) or new knowledge designed to generate change, as a compass to freedom. Emerald received her freedom papers in the form of a PhD. Thus, getting her credentials was generating this new knowledge and motivating her to move forward; it was liberating.

The experience Amethyst shares, is quite the opposite of Emerald's. She felt secure in her position. As Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Amethyst has a supportive boss, recognizes the opportunities she has, and uses them to her advantage.

I also had some administrative responsibility at a previous institution prior to coming here. And so um, in that experience I kind of had, for lack of a better (phrase) . . . free reign, to do whatever, and I felt that was a blessing. Because for one, I was probably the only, yes I was the only woman of color, and person of color, in my department heading up a graduate program. And they were like, you know what Amethyst this is your baby

do what you want to do with it and pretty much they gave me; they gave me access and avenues and just allowed me to do whatever I wanted to do. I thought that was very trusting of them. I really appreciated that, and so I was able to take that program and grow it even further than what it was. ..But I knew that um, my sphere of influence only lasted within that realm of the building, that particular part of building I was in, particularly the department I was in. But I was good with that. And so even looking at my position here at this institution, it's been the same way ...And I feel that um, I feel that I am blessed and ...I have not been restricted, I guess in the things I want to do.

Amethyst recognized the limits of her positional authority. Although she could point to some accomplishment as a result of her position, she had not influenced policy. The power she has can be summed up with her own account, "my supervisor had my back".

Ruby is a retired Dean. She is not a native Missourian but continues to reside in Missouri following retirement. Her summation takes into account her arrival and her departure from her position as Dean. She experienced supervisory support as well as, the lack of supervisory support, much like Amethyst and Emerald.

So when I first got here I just got a lot of support. Ah, one of the things I was told and a little flag kind of went up and, cause I was like, exactly what does this mean. I was told very quickly that you are the first female that we have had as a dean. Now they have had an African American, an African American male and I had talked with him and he had told me some of his challenges ... I put all that aside. I'm just going in with a clean slate and we'll see how it goes.... I definitely feel like that, with the Missouri experience it was a dichotomy and it was wide ranged... it started out very positive and over here almost 10 years later, totally opposite in terms of my feelings about being, about being a black

female (in my position) and how I was treated, in comparison (to) had I not been a black female.

Ruby spoke more extensively regarding a welcoming environment which she described as changing overnight when the person who hired her left and the new person assumed the role. She enjoyed positional authority during her tenure, but her authority was challenged by the new leadership which was a source of frustration for her and her college. Whereas, the person who hired Ruby was a white female, the person who took the white female's place was a white male. Whereas, Ruby once had an amicable relationship with a female supervisor, she faced a different set of challenges with a male supervisor. Ruby's perception was that her power was being usurped and undermined. Bell Hooks (1989, p.175) refers to what Ruby was experiencing as, the politics of dominance, the notion of superior and inferior, which is the traditional organizational hierarchy.

Opal, Special Assistant to the Vice President for Enrollment Management, takes a different approach to describing her administrative position. Her depiction is cast in generalities regarding leadership. She seems to think that understanding your role and how it fits into the institutional structure helps one to navigate the system which; if we review Ambers take on navigating the system, makes sense. Amber needed to understand her role as a minority and Opal constructs her take on navigating the system to understanding your role as an administrator.

I think the kind of leadership you, uh (pause) there are multiple pockets to what I call leadership. I think one part is actual management. Unfortunately, I think in higher education we don't put much value on effective management as we should. Um, if you are in this industry or even in government, there is extensive weight put on management, training management opportunities and management development. In higher education,

sometimes you will see people move into management, slash leadership positions, because of years of service, because of years of institutional commitment in a field of expertise, in a subject matter, but not in institutional management, and I think it is a disservice in higher education. With that said, a lot of my background was in management, as I was a management officer in a state department. So I pride myself in understanding leadership roles, that I understand management. That's how I continue to grow as a manager by challenging myself with new professional opportunities locally, regionally, nationally in order to strengthen my management skills and to bring a real keen eye to professional development, staff development, to understanding, and utilizing the resources and skills of the staff that you have. I think the second part of leadership is about vision. Truly, it's about you coming into an organization and do you continue to the day to day or do you choose to step back and understand the work pools and see a new vision opportunity, a grander scale of scope, not to be more, but to understand the depth and the breath of what you are doing and how that fits into an institutional structure.

Opal has a unique perspective. She understands leadership roles, but takes pride in being a manager. This seems contradictory, given her position. However, when describing managerial characteristics, she takes ownership and when talking about leadership characteristics, she speaks in third person. She does not elaborate as to how position is unique to African American females. The Black feminist thought theory addresses this issue as internalizing Eurocentric gender ideology or the infusion of the dominant group thinking into the culture of African Americans. This is manifested as resistance; resistance to being labeled or tied to a group.

The push toward certain positions, the multiple roles, role identification, support systems, domination, and even resistance, are recognized themes among African American females in public higher educational institutions. Is this typical or atypical? The participants in this study do not see themselves as unique, but these practices are characteristic of the public higher educational institutions represented by African American female administrators. As Opal interprets it, we must understand the depth and the breath of what you are doing and how that fits into the institutional structure, the institutional goals. Ultimately, it also entails deciding what our career goals are rather than letting circumstances dictate our mobility within the institution. But, how do you aspire to be what you do not see? It could be said that leadership precipitates leadership. It is not enough to know that there are role models who epitomize career options desired; it matters most that one is able to see and hold that vision as motivation for aspired positions. This study reveals how important it is to have educational credentials, competence, and confidence in your abilities, although merit is not enough to circumvent challenges to one's position.

Some challenges can be a source of frustration, not because they are unexpected, but because we hope things change. As administrators, the expectation is that we contribute to the change we want to see. How African American women perceive the culture within Missouri Public Higher Education opens the way for evaluating decision making authority, although there does not seem to be a usable definition for understanding the culture of a campus. Tierney's (1987) research revealed a lack of research in this area particularly, as it pertains to higher education. The culture of an institution seems to have taken on the trends of the decades; the 1960s concentrated on the student body; the 1970s on being or becoming "distinctive colleges" (Tierney, 1988). So, those persons positioned as administrators have perceptions that are

uniquely individual while, uniquely germane. In other words, the experiences are relatable within the intersectionality of gender, race, and class.

The lack of African American women administrators in Missouri Public Higher Education is sometimes lost in the fact that there are few, if any, African American administrators in general, unless the institution is an HBCU. For instance, for African American female administrators at rural public higher educational institutions, like Amber, the culture is pretty affluent and she equates it to, the haves and the have not's". She alleges:

There are some very, very wealthy people here. There is not a large middle class, it's either, the have's or have not's. And the campus culture sometimes is very reflective of that... and I think our faculty, staff is still reflective of that...The issue that we have is, we are kind of inflated at the top, top heavy, we have a lot of executives, a lot (*emphasis on lot*) of executives and there are several administrators. There are still a lot of people in the beginning levels, yeah entry levels or, they are administrative assistants or, they work in facilities management, but really don't have a lot of power at all... You have other minorities that work on campus but they are typically in entry level positions. We have a very difficult time enticing minorities, primarily African Americans to this community, because it is a small community. There are not a lot of services. The first question is where can you get your hair done? And that's a big deal. And I'm from this area and I still don't know the answer to that question. I don't know always how to best promote ourselves. As an African American female, there are certain things if you commit yourself to staying in this area you ...you are going to give up a part of your life, especially if you don't come here with a spouse or significant other. The odds of finding a significant other in this area are slim to none, unless somebody moves in to work at the

university, or hospital, or something like that. The circles for the most part, for me, my social circles are kind of evolved around the people I work with. And when you come from that small community as well, you are limited to, as to who your social circles can be. The variety of issues is because of our location and because of I think of the lack of understanding of the executive level.

Amber expresses how limiting social connections are in institutions located in rural communities. Minority recruitment is difficult due to the locale and lack of social outlets, especially for singles. When considering employment opportunities, African American women in this study seem to have sacrificed something. In rural communities, Amber, Pearl and even, Ruby discussed the lack of community services, and social connections or outlets. From a singles perspective, opportunities for romantic relationships are narrowed. So, you have to wonder if these sacrifices take a back seat to the coveted opportunities sought within the institution, whether real or imagined. The realization that there are so few African American administrators on a campus could be an indication that there are opportunities for advancement or the converse, have one question why there are so few. There is another plausible scenario, and that is, accepting employment because there were enough African American administrators represented in the initial introduction to the institution, to warrant accepting employment. This was true for Ruby, who describes a similar situation. However, things can change and what was once an amicable, collegial environment can be disrupted when administrative and executive demographics shift.

Amber pondered how best to promote African American women administrators in public higher educational institutions. The situation she describes can be found in a comment made by Ruby. Ruby expressed that many recruits are looking for a quality of life and or something

unique that the university and the community can offer. She went on to say, “I think they (institutions) need to start selling other things about the Midwest, about their community, rather than, just say, money; because you cannot pay them the money that they can get somewhere else”. Then again, Ruby has a family, Amber is single. Yet, Ruby’s advice is sound enough for a single person or someone looking to raise a family; quality of life is universal and may entail consequences whether you’re married or single.

She also indicated that there was a certain status that prevailed within the community and in the institution where she is employed. The metaphorical ‘haves and the have not’s’ was also reflected in the institutional hierarchy, which she says is inflated at the top. Therefore, the presumption is that ‘they’, the dominate culture; defines diversity. Therefore, what Amber expresses below, is that diversity is not equitable. It is the executives, or the dominant culture, who control what is considered a diverse faculty and staff. Amber further remarks:

Do they truly, truly know what it means to have a diverse faculty and staff unit? I think sometimes mistakenly, we have executives that feel like if we have a few on campus, then, they have done their job. And that’s not the case. Our student population, our minority population is 10%, if you add international students; it’s close to 17%. And, as far as I am concerned, our faculty should be a reflection of that. But heaven forbid there is an issue with a minority student, or an issue with the minority faculty or staff member, because then it becomes an issue for all of us. You know it’s like, it’s the idea, we are all the same, and that’s not true. We are individuals, with individual personalities; individuals with hopes, dreams, goals. And, I do think a lot of times there is a huge misconception with that. They don’t always see us as individuals. They do see us as collective; as a group. That’s unfair, extremely unfair, and it’s extremely unethical, when

you really want to get down to it. We have an ethical issue because if 'Joe Snow' comes in, he started the same time as I did and does the exact work I have done, but he moves up the food chain faster than I have; how is that okay? Just because he meets a certain criteria, being white male, doesn't make any difference to me. It's ability. Ability should always be the deciding factor. I think that's one thing that hinders a lot of movement with minority faculty and staff on this campus. That misconception of ability is that they almost think you can't lead, and it's almost like you have to go in and prove yourself. It's like the idea of 'black attack', which I don't believe in, but there is a little bit of truth in it. Sometimes, you do feel like you have to work twice as hard to get the powers that be to pay attention to you. And for me, if you do that, that's fine; I'll do whatever it takes, it doesn't change the fact that it makes me mad.

Amber touched on several issues that address the sub themes: knowledge validation, consciousness, and politics of empowerment. Amber commented about collective treatment, promotional equity, and leadership capability. Her insight is mature and attentive, as she recognizes, and is conscious of, the crafty use of marginalization such as making assumptions based on generalizations and groupings, or promoting white males with fewer credentials. However, her final comment suggests defeat and anger, and perhaps even powerlessness to change the culture. Although individual contributions are relevant, there is strength in numbers, and collective action brings about change.

Ruby's comment below supports Amber and is inserted for its relevance:

I feel, because people just assume that you're in these positions because you're black, you know, and some of them look at you and they think, oh she has taken a job from some more qualified white male. This is kind of a curse, in a way that, you have always,

you've got to, you have to keep proving and reproving yourself because of that... I mean I have even had people say to me- which they thought it was like a compliment, but I took it as kind of an insult to say, "You know you really write well".

Emeralds contribution to this topic:

There are some things unfortunately, some negative stereotypes... we are in a certain population but there are a lot of African Americans who are very capable of speaking properly and educated and all of that.

Thus, Amber's take is that we are constantly proving ourselves and this has some merit based on Ruby and Emerald's comments.

We are able to see individual contributions in the lived experiences of all of the participants. However, Pearl's experience is one that predicts how isolating it can be to fight alone. Pearl works in a rural institution and her comments do not resonate as anger, but rather as resigned and patient.

On a personal level, I feel just fine; happy with my job (laughter)... Some of the things that I had hoped for, is that there would be more faculty and staff of color, hired...It's very hard, as far as (not) having other faculty and staff minorities, particularly African Americans, not many...so that can be isolating. Also, it's just really hard to get a group of African Americans women together on staff or faculty, who could really get together and talk about these issues and try to strategize and try to make things happen collectively... very, very few, so that's been isolating.

Pearl has a long standing history with her institution and has gained acclamations for her contributions. She fosters community among the student groups she serves and has carved out a niche for herself. Yet, the expressed feeling of isolation comes across as powerlessness; not in

her ability to get things done, but in transforming a culture. The same culture that relies on one person for all matters related to diversity and multicultural affairs. Whereas another participant, Opal, does not accept this as her mission; she does not think that a place at the table means we are experts on all things, relative to diversity.

Opal, is more philosophical in her approach to institutional culture, and sees the need for understanding processes and practices. She embodies the outsider/within perspective. She constructs her own knowledge of what she sees through self-reflection, while distancing herself from the situation. In the same manner, her casual comments toward culture and diversity may set her apart from other women and particularly black women. She does this by qualifying her statement:

I think, if you would talk to other women in leadership, who are at this institution, I would say that most of them have spent most of their career at this institution or around this institution. And so, their perspectives may be different than mine. Again, I got into this institution with a clear understanding of what it was, and how it functions, what its priorities were. Because my emphasis was not to move into this institution; it was to move up to this region... I'm from here, and for personal and family reasons, needed to relocate and to identify a position that would allow me to continue at the level at which I was... continue some of the work I do on a national scale, while having an impact on a local level. So you know a large, predominantly white, research one, public institution is going to have all the projects that you can imagine. There's going to be priority shifts. Things like no diversity, inclusivity, and equity minded leadership, are going to be at the table, but they may just not be as prominent, as we want to see them. But that's the reality

of any organization of this size and of this nature. It's a very decentralized institution, which is not unique for its type and for its size.

Opal's relocation was purposeful due to family circumstances; she is making the best of the situation. However, she is navigating within her position, to continue work with external organizations and committees she was committed to prior to moving back to Missouri. Her comments suggest that she stays connected to these projects and committees awaiting an opportunity to move on. Third person references also suggest a need for anonymity:

There are a lot of competing priorities, both financial as well as its mission, in that you see a lot of different things; that you see a lot of leaders, various entities, parts of the institution, as we prioritize things in different ways. So for me, I had a very good understanding what this culture was like. I have only been here for two years. It was like, they have always etched out a space if you want one, or if you wanted to carve one out. And, you must come into an institution and not try to identify with what the institution is not doing, but understand what the institution is doing. Why it is doing it? How is it doing? Who the key players are, doing it? And if your goal is to actually be transformative, without that knowledge of being able to work within a system, you will never be successful.

Although Opal is accepting of the culture, her acceptance further distances her from what is taking place at her institution. Comments like, 'they have etched out a space if you want one' or 'you come into an institution and not try to identify with what the institution is doing', suggests that she has subliminal motives and no interest in being transformative.

Emerald works in a predominately African American setting in terms of students

however, the faculty population does not mirror the student population. And, because the campus executive leadership is headed by a female, the assumption is that gender issues are not problematic. Emerald mentions stereotypes again and in one particular illustration how African Americans are viewed regarding their intellect which was also expressed in Ruby's and Amber's interviews. It is as if African American speaking and writing capabilities comes as a surprise to some, in the academy. Emerald addresses such stereotypes:

This is a predominately African American campus and there are some things, unfortunately some negative stereotypes, that we see, that people who are unfamiliar with the culture think that that's all of us... we are very capable of speaking properly and we are educated and all of that, but race is still a factor, gender not as much. I think that in some cases it may be, but ...we have a woman at the top of leadership so, that is not as much an issue. But I don't know that race will ever, not be an issue.

Emerald echoes Amber in her comment regarding collective treatment, "that people who are unfamiliar with the culture think that that's all of us". Stereotypes prevail because of a lack of understanding. In other words, our world view influences our perceptions and racial stereotypes can perpetuate the stigma of collective treatment. Consequently, just because a female heads an organization does not reduce the challenges of gender issues. There is a tendency to dilute race by colorblinding, and gender by generalizing, as not to offend the marginalized group.

Amethyst works in an urban institution, and her focus on culture is centered on student demographics. Whereas, other participants discussed campus culture in terms of their leadership, she placed value in what the institution does for students. You can hear the passion in her description:

I value this type of institution and I value the things that we do. And, we are producing a culture that supports the types of students who come here. And it allows for students to be successful and allows for students to navigate. And, if students do what they are supposed to do, they are able to graduate. So I can appreciate that, the culture with the good and bad, all wrapped in it... I've had people being very collegial and at the end of the day it's about the students. And I can respect that. And I can appreciate that because my background is student affairs and that's what I was grounded in. That's what I studied. That's what I know. And so when you are part of an institution that understands that and gets that, it's really easy to come to the table and sit down and do some great things.

Like Amber, Pearl, and Opal, Amethyst accepts the culture for what it is due to her convictions being grounded in student affairs. Her role at the leadership table is to promote student success and aside from anything else that goes on, she wants to know how, what is said or done, helps students. In order to help students, Opal says we must first attend to our own needs. Therefore, how we come to know ourselves and others, translates into respect for ourselves and others.

Ruby exemplifies someone who is self-aware and carved out new territory for herself as the first African American female administrator in her college. She was very confident in her abilities and maneuvered the campus culture, despite assuming a position that no other African American female had assumed. Her comments reflect those of Ambers, as it relates to position and power. The positions did not pose a problem; attitudes preempted responsibilities and usurped her authority. Marginalization can occur when restricted to certain positions or roles as many of the participants discussed. More importantly, not having the autonomy to perform the

job for which one is hired; is marginalizing. Her comments cover the historical perspective and what the trend was and is currently:

But looking at the history of the campus (pause) you know, historically they weren't even used to African Americans period, you know. And, I see that a lot and I feel it a lot when I would go to the alumni events and represent the college...where you have alumni from 50 years ago plus there and you know I would interact with them and everything of that nature and that would be positive, so I've never had any negative feedback but it was just so clear there were no African Americans (laughter)...so I think we are in our infancy on this campus in terms of African Americans and being in higher administrative positions. One of the things that I've seen, that I don't like is, it's like they have identified certain positions like; this will be an African American position or a position of color. I think we have African Americans that can do any of those jobs on campus, including being president. Ah, I know the equity issues position, everything I've seen since I've been on the campus and from what I've heard, even before I came, it seems like that has been an African American position. And, then I would say, when I came to interview, one of the things that really impressed me was the fact that at the administrative level, we had a number of African Americans and they were all, except the equity issues person, African American females. And so, without even somebody even saying anything to me that was sending a message that, African American females are welcome in administrative positions on this campus. And, unfortunately, now we're all gone.

The paradox of Ruby's comment lies in the fact that there were quite a few African American female administrators employed when she accepted her position, that it gave the impression, that African American females were welcomed as leaders. However, over the years,

the numbers diminished significantly. It would be presumptuous to suggest that African American women administrators are not welcomed however, when she says, 'they are all gone now' leaves it open for interpretation. She also commented on position identification and in accordance with Amber and Opal, Ruby expressed concern over certain positions that seemed earmarked for African Americans or persons of color. TRiO programs within Student Affairs and Diversity Programs were mentioned as positions most often mentioned as earmarked for African Americans or people of color.

In regards to perceptions of the political climates at their institutions, African American women administrators operate as a function of their positions. Their perceptions are as varied as the institutions they represent. Therefore, the political climate is defined in this research as the governmental policies and practices, such as state and federal policies, that influence the campus regarding affirmative action and equal opportunity. The participant's views in addressing the political climate include the decisions making practices of institutions, ranging from budget allocations to hiring processes and, the day to day operations of the campuses.

Amber talked about being a feminist, but did not actually define it. She illustrated how frustrating it was to be held to a different standard than her white colleagues. She expressed frustration with privileged attitudes of some of her Caucasian colleagues. Like Amber, Amethyst also expressed how the standards were different for African Americans:

I am extremely feminist; I think it's very interesting that I look at my Caucasian counterparts and see what they do, and I see the work they are able to turn in. And I look at my work and I think, 'man I could never get away with that'. I would have to do something totally different. So I try to bring them up to my standard. Because I feel like if I have to work really, really hard, then you should have to work really, really hard too.

There's nothing worse to me than anybody feeling like, because they are who they are, they get what they get. And, that's ridiculous. Everybody should have to work for what they get. So as an administrator, I had to learn to set my standards extremely high, and to make sure that the people that work for me set their standards and meet those standards. I want them to exceed those standards. I want them to surprise me, truly. Because I just feel like that's the fair thing to do.

Fairness is also Pearl's concern regarding policies affecting students. Pearl has responsibilities that cover the gamut of Student Affairs. As a result, she found herself caught in the middle when institutional policies and practices needed to be explained to students. Her concern was that although it may be good policy for the institution, it may have had devastating consequences for students. She experienced internal conflict (within herself); caused by the intimate details she sometimes had of student lives. Due to the nature of student affairs, participants, such as Amber and Amethyst, who have with direct or indirect contact with students, experienced conflicts. Pearl shares her frustration:

So, I think the hardest thing to watch is how certain policies are passed down, and I think what is devastating is, that these policies could have a different outcome for different populations. I understand that better than anybody and for nothing to be done about it other than to express that it could be detrimental, and still watch it is unfair. And so ...to, explain to the students... you know, figure out how you going to make the best out of this situation and you know, that's a bad situation and you know how hard the impact is on the students. Then you have to work quadruple hard to kind of figure out how to mitigate it as best as you can and you are still responsible for the outcome ... because it's

your job. But to me you're responsible for the outcome, because of these students' lives, families' lives.

This is a wicked problem for Pearl. She shares similar concerns with Amethyst, and Opal regarding policy on students. Pearl's approach is to run interference and put out fires. While, Opal sits on a number of boards, non-profits, pre-college organizations using these formats to teach people in higher education what it means to be inclusive. Her focus is to bring attention to students who are from low income, non-traditional, or first generation backgrounds. These students share a background similar to hers. As for Amethyst, the focus is on who is sitting at the table making decisions for the students. She wants to ensure that she is at the table to represent the voices of those, especially students, who others may not consider. Thus, the contributions to concerns regarding policy, revolves around an ethic of caring. Collins (1991, p.215) says this caring quality is "rooted in a tradition of African humanism, each individual is thought to be a unique expression of a common spirit..." This sentiment was expressed by Opal who said, she wanted to find students who shared a background similar to hers. Policy or practices can prevent access. So each participant seems to be on a mission to ensure equity for students. However, ensuring equity at the administrative level is yet to be discussed.

Emerald is more of a decision maker than Amber or Pearl. Her perspective is generated at the executive level. As the Vice President for Academic Affairs, she felt a sense of obligation to her division (mostly faculty), to advocate on their behalf. She also understood the fiscal responsibilities that came with her position, and how it adhered to the overall strategic plan. She discussed her approach in working as a team to accomplish institutional goals. Her perspective is constructed as one who is challenged, regarding decisions. Hence, she is a planner, someone

who sees the big picture and is able to articulate it. She engages her staff, which is different from what the other participants shared. In short, she talks the talk of an executive administrator:

In my role, people have challenged some decisions, of course... But in general, I am thinking of a couple of situations where there have been decisions that I have made or had to make and I'll have people to come question me about. Then when I give them the rationale for those decisions or where the decision is coming from, higher than me. But I just have to communicate the message....ah, it seems to get resolved. My background is communication. I think communication can solve everything and it really can't, but it can help. So, I try to paint the picture because again, I go back to how I want to be treated. If there is something that needs to be done, if I'm kind of clear on what I need to do, and the rationale for doing it, even though I may not like it, I may be able to feel okay. This is what we need. This is where we need to move the competition forward. I will support that. So, I try to do that for people that report to me or any decision that I make. Okay, here is the bigger picture, because sometimes people are just really in their silo, and they're focused on their day to day. They don't even look at or think about the larger picture, so I try to kind of move that forward by communicating; I get challenged regularly. You can't work with a faculty and not get challenged, you just can't. You have to make sure you know what you are talking about and again determine is it coming from an African American standpoint. It could be in some cases. I think they've had African American VPs in this role before, however; I may be the first female. Again, there may be reasons why people challenge me more that they challenge others. I have my suspicions about why I may be questioned about something over someone else. But the fact is, regardless of why you are questioning me, or you do not like what we have to do,

I am still saying it and we all are going to move forward.... So, it could be they are upset just because they are upset or they are upset because how dare this black woman say this or how dare this black woman be in this position. But this is still your problem. And the fact of the matter is this black woman is in this position and so you just have to deal with it. Deal with it.

Emerald's administrative leadership gets results. She is conscious of her race and gender but it does not interfere with her role. Emerald has an awareness of her role; she is focused on what needs to be done, and on the decisions, the issues and the results.

Amethyst expresses empowerment as an African American woman. She conversed about how supportive her supervisor was and how she gained strength from that support. More importantly, just as Emerald, she was confident in her decisions.

Sometimes I made decisions and my immediate supervisor may have supported it, but the powers that be elsewhere just (did not support it) ...and I'm like ...,okay I thought I was in this position and I have this degree, but you know what, you go right ahead, do you. We kind of always joke; my boss and I have a very good relationship. We are like, if the head blesses it, then I can keep it moving because I don't, I don't have time. And one thing that I have learned is to cover my behind. So, when I have my ducks in a row, this is what I started, and this is what my decision is, and the rationale I have come to, and, I have it documented. If you want to go over my head and if you want to change it, that's fine. But this is what the paperwork is going to say and that's what I'm sticking to. So you go right ahead and do it. Sometimes it ended up backfiring and people... But I am not going to get entangled up. And I'm not going to engage that anymore... People want to push the blame button and try to bring it down to me. And I'm like nope. You know who

did it (laughter) you go talk to that person. And that's what I do. Call it being um, what's the word, call it being a coward or what have you... my decision is documented... I can say that people have appreciated seeing a young black female in the position that I am in, and it can work both ways. It can work as a means of motivation; it can work as a means of inspiring; it can work as a means of mentoring. And, it could serve as a means of making this institution look contemporary, in the sense that we are forward thinking; we appreciate diversity; and we appreciate granting opportunities. That can be the positive side of it.

Amethyst has learned many lessons during her administrative career and she is using them. She is empowered by making decisions, and defining her space within the institution. Amethyst understands where the power lies and how to navigate the system.

The other side of it unfortunately, has been perhaps, I mean I don't know how to say this; I know that I have had opportunities to do things just because I am a young black woman. Because some older men, not that they were trying to hit on me or whatever, but because of who I am, 'let her do that or we need', you know... I think that sometimes my womanly ways have worked and granted me the opportunities (laughter). It's sad you know... But I have been able to work it to my advantage.

Gender issues in terms of sexuality and femininity have been used to Amethyst's advantage; not to suggest inappropriateness but rather how sexuality has been used and how it influences advantages and opportunities. Amethyst's awareness of sexuality is a source of power, and as she admits, it has been to her benefit. Like Amethyst, Amber and Ruby also spoke about taking the tools at their disposal and using them to their advantage. In other words, African American women administrators in public higher educational institutions navigate the system in

many ways and, are very conscious of what is occurring in their world because of race, gender, and class.

Opal is more philosophical in her approach to policy and decision making. As an administrator, she takes the position that you deal with the situation at hand; that as African Americans we are often put in positions to respond to specific issues regarding diversity and we must know when it is or is not appropriate to respond. In Emeralds case, it was to not react to biases regarding her position, “So it could be they are upset just because they are upset or they are upset because how dare this black woman say this or how dare this black woman be in this position but this is still your problem”. Whether racism or sexism, she admonishes it as that persons issue, not hers. Opal, like Emerald and even Amethyst, seeks balance or risk being labeled as an ‘angry’ black woman. As Opal notes:

You know as an African woman who is in a professional environment, who upholds leadership roles, and has a strong personality, you always walk into an environment where there is going to be a challenge. There’s going to be thoughts of intimidation or aggressiveness. There are going to be times when people don’t know why you are in the room, or consider you’re in the room, because there needs to be someone of color. But you may not be there to add strong content. There are going to be times or opportunities where people are going to deflect all content related to diversity, or issues related to people of color to you, because you are the person of color in the room; and that’s a balance you have to strike.

Opal’s comments suggest she is fighting to dispel stereotypes, much like Emerald. She does not see tokenism as a key reason for inclusion in meetings or at the decision making table.

She concludes that administrators not allow others to divert their attention to race related issues, only.

Ruby illustrates how personalities influence decision making. Ruby and Amethyst shared an admiration for supervisors. Both had male supervisors, for Amethyst the relationship was supportive; “My boss and I have a very good relationship”. However, Ruby’s experience caused her to be in constant conflict with her male supervisor. For example, Ruby stated:

It’s kind of unique in Missouri you know, well on this campus. Because, when I first came in I had some different administrators, as far as the person I report to. I found out over the years, that maybe this is not a racial thing period; your immediate supervisor has a lot to do with your program success and your feelings about your position...And, so it’s interesting, ... on this campus, I felt like I worked as hard as or harder than anyone else. But by the people who came in after the person that hired me, I didn’t feel like I was getting the recognition or the appreciation or whatever, or even the opportunities. Because there were some things that I had done that I was in better shape to continue than anyone else...But then when the new (person) came in he didn’t even ask me (about specific projects) would you like to be over it... all he did was make an announcement that (a white male) was going to be over the (project). And so, I contacted (the person)... he said ... I don’t know why he gave it to me...I have no interest in this or know anything about it. That’s just an example, more and more of those things were happening. I wasn’t looking necessarily for more work. I wasn’t trying to build an empire or anything like that, but it was like I was ignored.

When asked what she did to resolve the issues she and her immediate supervisor had, she announced, “I retired”. The resolution Ruby opted for, will not work for everyone. The fight of

flee behavior is a sign of marginalization not explored often but has validity when paired with the notion of “masculine privilege” discussed in Hooks (1981, p. 114). Masculine privilege is an act of exploitation (of women) in order to maintain privilege. Ruby saw her supervisor as the oppressor and chose to retire rather than deal further with the oppression and the inequity.

When paired with institutional core values, perceptions of fairness or unfairness surface. These challenges are assumed as part of the multiple responsibilities faced by African American women administrators in public higher education. The participants have been able to use the fact that they are as one administrator described, a two for one package. This status works two ways, it heightens the authority status of African American women administrators and it helps to legitimate the institutions commitment to diversity.

The institutions core values was challenging to Amber. She understood that she was asked to do certain things because she was a female and a minority. She seemed keenly aware that there were agendas taking place far beyond her comprehension. However, she mentions her need to blend-in, which seems the perfect camouflage, and symbolizes a desire to be invisible. This assertion could be a response to a lack of, power. Thus, blending in can also mask insecurity. Amber is a young administrator with three to five years’ of experience and is learning to navigate the system. As she explains it:

Okay, in administration it is kind of, putting yourself out there; that’s been kind of a hard one to me. Because, as I mention earlier, I always wanted to be the one that blended in; I didn’t want to be set apart, because of the fact I am a minority. So, now as an administrator I have to recognize, I would be a fool not to recognize that. That is what people are going to recognize when they see me. I have to learn, and I am learning to use that to my advantage and take, really take the opportunities, whether they are

opportunities I love or not, you know... It's like, ok that's fine if you want to put me in charge of, minorities, faculty, and staff. That's fine, I am going to do what I need to do with it, and make it a really good group. And really, kind of change it up and make it fresh, and new, and exciting ... So, it's that administrative part that has, by far, been the most challenging thing for me. Internally, learning and recognizing that I need to use the fact that I am a minority female to my advantage. I need to recognize it now, way more than I used to. I've always fought it. I can remember having conversations with a coworker of mine; he would always say you need to understand this is it; this is it as a minority. This is what you do, it doesn't matter what you think, and they still see you as this. And I would always say, 'that's not fair'. I would say, 'I would never let that happen to me', but it is happening. And I understand now why he stayed as long as he did, and why he put up with as much as he did. It's like, quite honestly, it felt like it clicked in place and I was like oh, I get it now, you know. But, yeah that's been the biggest challenge, internally, me.

Amber's biggest challenge is herself. She recognizes that she is African American but struggles with being seen as a minority. Amber grew up in rural Missouri, in a conservative, predominately white community. Her experiences as an African American youth, shielded her from the challenges she faces as an African American adult. As an African American female administrator in public higher education, her expectations of progressiveness are thwarted when confronted with race.

Isolation is Pearl's challenge. Unlike Amber, she has no problem with being a minority. She is more interested in having other African American female administrators as colleagues. As the only African American female administrator at her institution, Pearl has responsibilities

that are as diverse as the student population. Her frustration comes through loud and clear as she laments over the challenge of being ‘the only’:

I think the hardest challenge has been, not having other...African American females, other administrators to collaborate with and to talk to and kind of, you know, talk about the challenges and successes, trying to make things happen, to have people that brainstorm about how to change and make things happen. Personally, that has been hard. The other thing I just think, since I am the only one in particular on the student affairs side, I am kind of responsible for students’ lives. It’s just hard, you know, and yet I advise, five, six, and seven, I don’t even remember, at this point, student organizations that have to do with minority students. So, it’s just kind of hard that when, when there are issues particularly for female minorities students; they don’t have a lot of people to go to or, they don’t feel that they do. They (the institution) have to figure out how to place them with others who ah, they feel are committed to their success. I think the hard thing is I’m here every day. I’m here probably four or five evenings in the week and I’m here every weekend during the academic year. So it’s a little tiring. But, it’s you know, I mean, it’s been a great ride. I wouldn’t trade much of it. So I’m not complaining, but it would be a lot better if there were a few more people.

Pearl’s expectations, whether self-imposed or job related, places a strain on her over time. She has accepted the culture, the challenges and all that comes with her position and has many accomplishments but at what personal costs. Having a collegial experience for Pearl was isolating but for Emerald it was the exhibiting of masculine privilege as interpreted by Hooks (1981).

Emerald has past and present experiences to draw upon. However, there was one particular situation she found hurtful as African American and as a female. A topic that was only mentioned by one other participant and that is the challenge of working with African American males. Often there is the assumption in a collegial environment, that African Americans look to each other for support, because of a shared history and an often unspoken acknowledgement of the struggles to attain certain positions. The insult comes when marginality is experienced within one's own race. As Emerald shared:

Well, I will go back to that situation, with having an African American male discriminate against me. That was something I was not prepared for, you know. I lived all life in a multicultural environment, so I have gone to school with all different races and I have experienced racism from outside of my race, and not that you ever get used to that, I know how to navigate that, because I have experienced that and understood when I was being spoken down to ... But I think what I was unprepared for was, having that racism and gender discrimination from an African American male. Ah, because you have, you know, for many women and African American women we have this, in some cases allegiance and solidarity with our brothers. We have their back and we want to have them be successful, and that's why I went into this position... I really wanted to make sure that he was successful.

Emerald shared that it was hurtful to be in a position to help another colleague and have that person ignore you and disrespect you. It hurt more when it was another African American, considering there were so few, in positions of authority. However, masculine privilege cannot be overlooked in as challenging, as this theme emerged with several of the participants. Within the

epistemology of Black Feminist thought, this is considered marginalization and can influence African American female leadership.

Amethyst continues this discussion regarding the challenges of what enhances, or what impedes, the climb toward success. She talks about who has social capital and what she has to do to build it. Masculine privilege (Hooks, 1981) is considered in a broader context. One in which she expresses how privileged they are:

... Probably my greatest challenge is being taken seriously by the overall Higher Ed. community. I think that sometimes if you are a white man you have it made in the shade, regardless of the occasion, background, or experience. I think that white men have to jump through fewer hoops. I think that black men have hoops. I mean ...they have fewer hoops to go through than I would. Because, ultimately, I would like to be a college president one day; I know that my hoops ...are going to be different...A black man would probably have to go through four or five hoops. Me, I'd probably have to go through eight or ten hoops... because it comes with the territory. You know, sometimes I can be at state meetings and I can say something and move on, but somebody can say the exact same thing that I said, and they look at me as if I'm, like I'm in a twilight zone, and ... didn't I just say that? You know if you say that, you look like you ...whining, complaining. And ... what was different from what he said. ... But then I'm the angry black woman, with an attitude. So you kind of have, ... as black women, you have a certain swagger (confidence) in order to successfully navigate through, and not be viewed in a negative sense, or viewed as threatening, or viewed as a woman with an attitude. ...I'm just going to let my work speak for itself. I'm just going to let my

research speak for itself...I know that's one thing I need to do. And standing on that, that's what I'm going to have speak for me.

Amethyst and Emerald know how to build capital. Amethyst builds capital by mapping out her plan of action. Emerald is networking with executives and administrators she met at a conference for women of color where African American presidents were in attendance. She commented that she was 'really looking at the females because this is who I am and hearing their stories; and, their stories were not too different from mine, in term of their educational preparation...'. Amethyst and Emerald shared very personal challenges in their quest for advancement.

In discussing challenges, Opal talked about struggles women administrators face as they pursue advancement and promotion. Her comments are general and the challenges she describes can be said to affect all women. Not surprisingly, the first and most striking thing she says is, being a female, not African American, is the most challenging thing faced when assuming administrative leadership. For example, Opal stated:

You know the interesting thing is, I don't see being African American females in Higher Ed as being kind of challenging... The greatest challenge that you face as you move up the ladder of leadership is being a female period. And layering that with being a person of color; it's a fact that, at some point in time, you know, we start buying into the mantra that we can have it all. And you really can't, without some serious sacrifices... The reality that strong women, particularly strong women of color, can be intimidating. I have been in a situation which not at this institution, but at a prior institution where my direct supervisor was very threatened, he would tell me on a regular basis that I was intimidating. He knew I could do this job and I could probably do his job better than

him. And, he just didn't know what to do about it. So, on occasions he would try and undermine my authority. He would do things to my staff or towards my staff and try to undermine what I had put in place or, what I had put forward, what I had done to insure their protection, their coverage in terms of the work load, or other issues. In that, in any situation, those are some realities...if you are handling your business correctly, it's a reflection on you, as much as a reflection on the person who is challenging you.

Opal points out key leadership qualities, like open communication and transparency, also reflected in statements by other participants. Emerald has a background in communications, and made the comment, 'I think communication can solve everything and it really can't, but it can help'. The other thing is that these women do not accept the burden of someone else's problem, whether it is racism, sexism, or a problem with their authority; it's the other person's problem.

Public higher educational administrators like Ruby see their role as service to others, but it is also discouraging when their intellect, their authority, is challenged. Marginalization in this context is influenced by history. History influences, values and perceptions. As Ruby explains:

I just think dealing with people who have a lot of these old ideas; you got to hire one and you got to be looking over her shoulder to make sure she's doing stuff right oh, did she write that sentence correctly, and acting, you know, shocked if I can put together a paragraph and things of that nature. And then also, people who are your superiors who identify you, I mean, they know that you are smarter than they are, and so that means that they're going to give you some problems. I know I'm smarter, they know I know I'm smarter (laughter) and that's going to be problematic. So, as much as they can, they are going to try to keep you from having opportunities and things of that nature, and you know it's the kind of stuff you can't prove, you know, but I do feel a sense of that and I

have definitely seen that. Because you know I have to try to scratch for my own opportunities in some situations, and other people they'll give them a call and say there's a meeting going on in Washington I want you to go to, you know, that kind of thing. So, I've had to ask if I can go.

Interestingly, Collins (1991) predicted that black women in leadership positions, particularly, black women who are agents of knowledge, the outsider-within status can be a source of frustration for African American women. As participants and non-participants with an insider view of the dominant culture it is frustrating when their status as African American Women and leaders restricts their mobility and usurps their authority within institutions. This observation is evident in the comments made by these women, as each one cited challenges, opportunities, frustration, and obstacles to overcome.

Ruby's knowledge and consciousness of being stripped of her authority was frustrating. Amber's knowledge and consciousness of inequities regarding roles, standards, and responsibilities, was her source of frustration. Pearl's source of frustration was her feelings of aloneness and isolation; no other African American women administrators to connect with at her institution. Amethyst's source of frustration was, having to continually prove herself within the Higher Education community. For Emerald, dealing with the fact that race continues to be an issue, was a source of frustration. And, for Opal, women who give up their own dreams of pursuing advanced degrees in order to help students, sees advancing their own education as being more beneficial.

Each participant has learned how to cope with as Ruby put it, 'the hand they're dealt'. 'It doesn't make it right, it just is'. If we were discussing transformative leadership, we would be examining change and how African American women have influenced their institutions. Instead

these African American administrators were asked to make recommendations to institutions as shared in Chapter 5.

The Black Feminist Thought theory offers African American females choices. African American female administrators in public higher education administration can choose to act on the situations presented from a perspective of position, gender, ethnicity and values. What is presented in the narratives is awareness that the participants have power, and often that power is acknowledged, because of the position. Situations often call into question whether race, gender, or class influenced the events. The varied perspectives of leadership and challenges have not eradicated the voice of African American women leaders. In some instances and in some circumstances, they are stifled.

Explication of Data

Explication is a form of explaining the data and transforming it through interpretation (Groenewald, 2004). The use of formulated meanings is a means of clustering and forming themes, and used to summarize the themes. In using the phenomenological study, multiple meanings emerged to validate Collins (1999) Feminist Thought theories as sub-categorized in her book. Therefore, the core themes explicates the data and illustrates the researchers formulated meaning.

Summary

Three core themes, knowledge validation, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment, help to frame the summations. Knowledge is interpreted as validation “within a Eurocentric masculinist (sic) process this means that a scholar must convince a scholarly community of white men that a given claim is justified” (Collin, 1991, p. 201). The research identified three basic beliefs of the participants: 1) More education and experience than white

counterparts are perceived to be the norm for African American administrators in public higher educational institutions, 2) Credibility is defined by dominate group, and 3) Reticulation of African American women views is seen as validation and marginalization from the dominate group.

Consciousness is expressed as “people experience and resist oppression on three levels: personal biography; the group or community level of the cultural context created by race, class, and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions” (1991, p. 227). Black feminist thought emphasizes all three levels as domination and resistance. The complexity of understanding oppression from within African American leadership competes with understanding oppression from the dominate culture. The participants each own their stories of oppression and their illustrations are based upon their individual experiences. Although there may be similarities, they may be interpreted differently because of what they value and where the experience occurred. Thus, personal values contribute to leadership style, persistence, and expectations.

The politics of empowerment is to “suggest that there is always choice, and the power to act, no matter how bleak the situation may appear to be (1991, p. 237). One’s world view also “raises the issue of individual responsibility for bringing about change. It also shows that while individual empowerment is key, only collective action can effectively generate lasting social transformation of political and economic institutions” (p. 237). Participants identified changing stereotypes, ensuring student success, and fair hiring practiced as transformative issues but not as a collective action, because the numbers are not present. They strive, as individual agents to make a difference, and that makes all the difference.

Based upon the literature and the conversations with African American women administrators in Missouri public higher educational institutions, those who control entry into

leadership positions set the expectations based upon the norms and values that they hold. Gross & Etzioni (1985) suggest that those who accept positions, learn to accept and adopt appropriate values, rules, and policies through their socialization into the profession and participation in professional organizations to authenticate their roles as administrators. Collins (1999) emphasizes intersectionality (*sic*) as social hierarchies with interlocking systems that reinforce one another. Through the lived experiences of the participant's, this study proved that marginality exists as illustrated in the number of "firsts and examples of stereotyping, as discourse challenges. And although issues of marginality are not restricted to African American women administrators in public higher educational institutions only, the assumption is still, they are susceptible.

Chapter 5

Discussions and Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of African American women leaders holding or having held administrative, non-faculty positions, in public higher education, by examining their perceptions regarding overall authority, power, and responsibility. Their perspectives and the meanings they give to events that have shaped their leadership and careers provide insight to African American Female educators seeking positions in higher education administration. Black Feminist Thought theory is the theoretical framework used to analyze the lived experiences of African American female administrators in Missouri public higher education. In this context, positional authority, culture, political climate, and challenges were questioned and examined for this research. Emerging themes of race, gender, and class provided the mirror for analyzing the perceptions of how African American female administrators in public higher educational institutions, lead. How women lead is as pertinent as the values they hold for inclusion and collaboration. Many times these values set the tempo for their existence within institutions. According to Grint (2005), leadership involves the social construction of the context that both legitimates a particular form of action and constitutes the world in the process. In other words, our world view influences how we lead and authenticates our decisions. Additionally, in support of Grint's leadership theory, African American women administrators in public higher education may have positional authority and influence policy marginally, but this is all it takes to make incremental changes.

Results

The results of this study illuminate three core values and insights as perceived by African American Women administrators in Missouri public higher educational institutions and aligned

with Collins (1999) Black Feminist Thought Theory: Knowledge Validations, Consciousness: Outsider/Within Perspective and Politics of Empowerment. In addressing knowledge validation, the women in this study: 1) are confident in their capability to lead; 2) aware of the small hardly noticeable challenges to their authority, they face every day; 3) perceive that they must be prepared with more education and experience than their white counterparts

The results from a consciousness: outsider/within perspective, reveal the frustration and the complexity surrounding the marginalization of African American female administrators in Missouri public higher educational institutions. For instance, race or sexism is discussed abstractly because participants seldom used the terms, although they may have been implied. As referenced in Collins (1999), 'The controlling images of Black women that originated during the slave era attest to the ideological dimensions of Black women's oppression. Ideology represents the process by which certain assumed qualities are attached to Black women and how these qualities are used to justify oppression'. As an example, one participant so noted, "I do feel that as a female we are encouraged more to mentor younger students, because the assumption is we are nurturing (laughter) you know, and whether truly that's the case or not, you are encouraged to do it. And that could be because there are more female staff members on campus than males. But I think sometimes when you are a black female other cultures see you and that's, I think that's, the assumption they see you somehow down that line and they go all the way down the line. They think she's got to be a good cook, she got to be this nurturing, she got to be all these things because of that". Generally, these assumed qualities may be considered negative stereotypes yet, the participants talked about using the negative images or thoughts as the utility for advantage. Whether the controlling stereotypical images are from white women, white men or black men there seemed to be a consciousness of the oppression and generally non- verbal

retaliation, which is a form of silencing and marginalization. Yet, in this context silence can be considered, power.

Intersectionality (*sic*) examines what it means to be marginalized within a marginalized group (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Collins 1999). The term also denotes a concept of multiple personalities and complex identities to which, Collins (1999), Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, (2010) attributes to the multiple roles women of color and African American women administrators in particular, hold that constitutes everyday life and the power central to it. The women in this study affirm that they feel a sense of responsibility to students and, yet, often miss the mark when it comes to doing what is right for them. As Opal asserts:

... many of my friends and dear colleagues who are African American, women of color, who are in higher administration ... as they inspire, and push, and challenge, and motivate their students, they give up all their own dreams, paths and journey, because, well I got to make sure these students get through. You are not doing those students any kind of service if you are not following the same advice. There are too many women I know that should be sitting side by side with me with a doctorate that should be side by side with me in the classroom. But they have beaten that piece up or prolonged their options, placed them on the back burner because they have got to get this program up and running. I have got to be there for those students. The students will come, the students will go. The students will be there for 4 or 6 years. And they're still there for 10 or 12, or 13 or 17 years in the same position, with the same title; and maybe an increase in pay, not an increase responsibility, respect, or an influence on policy.

In a history of black feminism in the U.S. in the 1960s, to the present, Black women participating in the feminist movement have often been met with racism under the guise of

exclusion. But what was happening during the decades since the 1960s was a revolution which gave way to an explosion of Afrocentric voices like Johnetta B. Cole, Angela Davis, Bell Hooks, Yvonne Moses, and Patricia Collins. The aura of this movement reveals the many facets of black women; their lives, their survival, and their growth. The way African American women have been portrayed is research for another time yet, it is critical to say, that portrayal has played a part in access to certain careers. Therefore, positioning of African American women administrators in public higher education is perceived as strategic and perhaps even stereotypical. The term 'pigeonhole' was used in several instances to reference the types of positions African American women in public higher education find themselves.

In a stratified system of higher education, diversity is employed differently and the perspective of employees may vary. Such is the case with the women interviewed for this study. Perry (2000) argues that diversity is a key democratic concept in education policy. Therefore, the third phenomenon of politics is interwoven into how diversity is described and perceived. African American female leaders represented in this study concur that the key element is to be present and accounted for at the decision making table or in positions of authority; if not, much of the populace will be misrepresented or not represented at all or seen as inconsequential and therefore, neglected. The participants in this study represent African American women who have positions of authority and their decision making as leaders or even managers, is representative of who they are and the perspective that is called for at the time decisions are required; the situation seem to dictate the responses. And, as Opal explained,

Every situation defines who you are as a professional manager, leader, hopefully as a visionary, in what you do. So it's not about a particular situation. It's about the lens in which, how much of that influences your responses to a situation or defines the depth of

which you bring to the table, solutions, suggestions and new strategies that then, reflect your experiences, your perspective, your context.

The voices of the women participants in this study could arguably be considered advocacy roles for the underserved and underrepresented populations. However, Opals comments reflect a different perspective in that effective practices for leaders would be to stop living vicariously through their students and putting student needs before their own. In other words, we are better leaders if we are better prepared to be the missing voice, the missing link at the leadership tables. The comments by participants echo, Nikki Giovanni as cited in Collins (1991, p. 157), “The purpose of any leadership is to build more leadership. The purpose of being a spokesperson is to speak until the people gain a voice”. This sentiment entails a combination of understanding politics and being on the policy development team. In doing so, administrators help others to understand and accept, not tolerate cultural differences.

Cultural influences were recognized, but did not seem to affect decision making and positional authority. Participants readily identified cultural phenomenon and practices on their campuses, without hesitation. This is not to say, that the participants approved of the campus culture, but that they have a keen sense of where they are, their purpose for being at the institution, and how they make a difference. The concept of a ‘glass ceiling’ never entered the conversation however; only two women in the study spoke of wanting to be a President or Chancellor of an institution. African American women administrators in this study identified campus culture as isolating, and getting things done required support from their supervisor and staff.

The outsider-within perspective generated by Black women in higher education administration are uniquely individual. The comments by participants mirrored Collins (1999, p.

233) when she explained; the dichotomy of being two different people is an attempt to “minimize the differences between the cultural context of African American communities and the expectations of social institutions”. For example, Amber expressed it as appropriate or inappropriate ways to navigate the system:

In administration, I see too terribly often, we’ve had minority faculty and staff on campus that have wasted opportunities. Not because they meant to do it, they wanted to take those opportunities, I think, it’s because they didn’t know how to navigate the system, and take the opportunities. That’s a catch twenty-two, not only do you have to take whatever they are giving you. You have to figure out some way to be happy with how you are approaching it. You know, I think you know what I am saying here. It’s like, if you’re given that task, but you just feel like, why do I have to do this? It’s taking that task that you are not 100% okay with, not 100% comfortable with doing, and say, I have to figure out a way to be happy with this, for the time being; so that, I get to that next step.

Opal contemplates balance as it relates to expanded roles:

To think that part of the challenges, is kind of navigating yourself, to build your own parameters around how much do you take on, how much do you define as part of who you are, and how much do you separate that from your roles and responsibilities. At different stages of your career, depending on and what level you’re at, you can have much success. However, you do have to be very careful because then you get people who are identified as the person that always talk about diversity issues, but not necessarily have any additional content. Um, you’re going to have the kinds of experience and expertise to be able to compete at universities without always being labeled as the diversity person.

And, then there is Ruby:

I don't feel the need to just try to make myself be seen you know, just talking because here's the other thing too, as an African American female I'm going to be seen, we are the visible minority, we cannot hide... That's one of the things I tell students too, I don't care if there are 300 people in the class, you need to be in there, because they're going to know when you're not there.

The paradox of race consciousness and fitting in is a contradiction to diversity. The historical concept of diversity has lost its original intent of desegregation and the embrace of integration. It is now a term that is loosely coupled with equity. The use of diversity and equity among institutions suggests a multicultural institution with fair policies and practices. The women in this study contradict this assumption and at times even defended the practices by dismissing them as the culture of the institution, or the area. Courageousness and cautiousness among these leaders suggests that the outsider-within perspective has helped these women navigate, and use to their advantage their positional authority.

According to Collins (1999) African American females move on when organizational limits restrain their self-development. Fitting into the existing system or culture does not seem to give them freedomAcquiring a focused education by moving through jobs enable women to see the bigger picture that may have been obscured by working within only one setting (Collins, 1999, p. 159). This claim holds true for each participant, with the exception of one. The youngest participant has experienced employment at only one institution. Family ties are a concern and one that can be challenging for women with families. Family is the one theme that was consistent; it is the foundation, the motivation, and the strength they need to sustain them while they pursue their careers. With so few African American women administrators in public

higher educational institutions, the stability of family and community makes the challenges bearable.

Recommendations

This study provides an insider view of African American women's dedicated leadership in Missouri public higher education. In concluding this study, participants offer suggestions for institutions and for women aspiring to be administrative leaders in Missouri public higher educational institutions. These suggestions deal primarily with equity issues (i.e. fairness in hiring). Feminist theory, as applied to this research, stays safely guarded with the women with whom I spoke. One rationale for this is the fact that there are so few African American women in administrative positions as allies', colleagues, and supporters. Therefore, to stand alone makes one vulnerable.

The discussion of cultural environment and its influence on leadership suggests that superficially the environment is seen as collegial and equitable. However, rumblings of discontent may not be heard above the silencing. The illustrations of what took place on college campuses and in meetings, were not followed with a confrontation or resolution, but were stated as a matter of fact.

Interview data for one participant per representative campuses, provided only a glimpse at leadership among African American women administrators in Missouri public higher education institutions. Each participant's story contributed to the black feminist thought theory that challenges exist for African American female administrators in public higher education. The consensus is that it is not their problem, but the problem of those who see them as a threat. Yet, their roles seem to converge on that of service provider, mentor, and liaison for students and staff.

These African American women administrators in Missouri public higher educational institution provided key advice and strategies for advancing an agenda for a supportive environment for faculty, staff, and students. They address the assumptions that public higher educational institutions are inclusive and lead the way in equity and diversity issues. While only African American female administrator perceptions are presented, it is clear that inclusivity is not a selfish desire on the part of the participants. In summary, I draw upon the advice these women offer to institutions:

Amber:

Ah, taking a realistic approach, if you can, when working with African American females primarily don't, make the assumption that we are all one in the same. We are very, very, very different. You don't look at- you don't look at Caucasian females the same way... We are many, many, many different shades-many different shades, and many different backgrounds. Don't assume that we all went to college on student loans, grants, some of us did, some of didn't. Some of us went on scholarships. Some of us went on whatever. Some of our parents could afford to pay for us to go to school. So don't make that assumption ah, we do that a lot with our students; we make the assumption that they can't afford to be here. We got a lot of minority students, who can easily afford to be here. And have every right to be here. Ah, just like everybody else does. So that would be my advice. Look at the individual instead of the group. That's the worst mistake I think we make in this state.

Amethyst:

I think if we are going to walk the line of diversity, we need to call it what it is. Don't come to me with, well we're diverse, diverse in terms of ages, we're diverse in terms of

geographic location, we're diverse in terms of economic, we're diverse in terms of um religion. People don't see that. You know, people see color. And we have to be mindful of that. And if you are going to value diversity people need to see diversity within the administration, within Board of Regents, on your Board of Curators, or you know just your board in general. And I think you need to make sure we have diverse voices represented, because policies just don't impact one group of people or one group of students. Its impact is pervasive throughout the campus. And if you have one set of people talking, who are very similar in their thoughts, similar in philosophies, similar just in their upbringings, you only get one side of the story. And you need to make sure you have multiple presentations; that you can do things that are in the best interest of the people you serve.

Emerald:

I think addressing the issues of discrimination or racism in higher ed; I think looking at...I think we don't talk enough about the lack of diversity in our faculty. We think hiring one or two is good and we do it looking at rate of recruitment but not retention. What's the climate like when you can put people of color into an environment and you not have a support system? They are just like with students. You're not going to keep them. So, more diversity; and regardless of how we want to not talk about it, people want to see people that look like them. Hopefully, those people that look like them would connect and not be people that want to not address the whole racial

Opal:

I would say to an institution, there's a reality of utilizing the expertise that is in and round your campus. And that expertise comes in many different forms. And I think that too

many times we label or pocket or pushed people into one parameter. Unfortunately, people cannot see themselves in any other way, once we put them into that cubby hole or fill that role. So, I would challenge institution to truly understand and investigate and know the expertise and the great resources they have around their institutions and use them to their advantage.

Pearl:

One, I think it's really, critically important that they have different people from all different backgrounds, at the leadership table. I think it gives the institution a better chance of making better decisions. Because different people bring different experience and knowledge to the floor; I think that's critically important that all higher education institutions do their jobs to educate people, who sit at those leadership tables and to encourage, particularly young women and men of color, to go on and get all the credentials they can so they will be able to bring their vision, expertise, and experiences to higher education in the future (laughter)... You need to always make sure the campus climate serves, as well as possible, all the people who make up your community. I believe affirmative action still is something, a policy that universities should embrace and fight for because the struggle is not over. And equality is not something that's a distant, you know, not a distant memory, those kinds of things.

Ruby:

I would say look for the best people and stop all this nonsense with its got to be somebody I went to college with, it's got to be my next door neighbors child and all this inbreeding that they're doing; it has to be somebody who graduated from this institution- they need to look for the best people and cast a wide net. I mean there are people all over

the country you know. And the other thing I would say is, everybody knows that Missouri is not a rich state but, what I found is that and especially now and especially if you are, well, anyone who is rare, then you have a lot of choices. So, if they say well I can pay you \$50,000. There are a whole lot of people who can pay you \$50, 000. If they say, I can pay you 60 they can find somebody who will match that. It's got to be quality of life issues, something unique that you can offer them that nobody else can offer them. I think they need to start selling other things about the Midwest, about their community ah, rather than you know just say, money because you cannot pay them the money that they can get somewhere else. So, it's got to be more than that.

African American women are plagued with the duality of race and gender. African American women administrators in public higher education can add class to this dichotomy. This is where the resemblance ends. However, the participants identified race most often as a contention, because we are seen as a collective group. On the contrary, we have different values, opinions, and perceptions. Therefore institutions cannot make the assumption that we or any other people of color are alike based solely on race. Therefore, for institutions to make assumptions based upon this philosophy is misrepresentative. If misconceptions are nurtured, the recruitment and retention of African American female administrators and people of color in public higher education will be negatively influenced. Unfortunately, there are other negative influences mentioned, such as lack of diversity when institutions implement quotas, positions that seemed earmarked for minority staffing, and inadequate recruitment tools. The inclusion of a diverse group of people, ideas, knowledge, and experiences ensure that leaders make the best possible decision for the institution. These measures also ensure the formation of concrete

strategies for overcoming barriers of race, sex, and class within Missouri public higher educational institutions.

Implications for Further Research

This study has provided insight into the leadership of six African American women administrators' in public higher education in the state of Missouri. They have offered their own recommendations to institutions regarding recruitment of African American women, hiring practices, stereotypes, and diversity. Putting the recommendations from these women in perspective, using Collins (1999) Black Feminist Thought Theory, I submit that research using this theoretical concept, continue. In doing so, using a qualitative research approach would capture the complexity of African American women in higher educational administration.

The use of the three themes: Knowledge: Validation, Consciousness: Insider/Within, and Political: Empowerment can be used to examine additional topics such as: 1) stereotypes, 2) administrative 'firsts', 3) discourse and, 4) behavioral challenges.

Knowledge is approached from the framework of validation to address education, intellect, and expertise. Consciousness uses the insider/within framework to addresses social awareness of women in public higher educational institutions as females, as African American, and as administrators. The Political theme uses the empowerment frame to examine how African American women in public higher educational institutions, maneuver the systems. Therefore, implications for further research, has a foundation for conducting research using the Black Feminist Thought theory.

First, stereotypes of African American women exist as specific roles for females. Studies are needed to examine stereotypes that obstruct leadership. Study participants pointed out that there were positions on campuses that slated for African American women. I think that it is

important to understand how African American women in public higher educational institutions alleviate stereotypes and gender specific roles.

Secondly, there were African American women administrators in public higher educational institutions confessing to being ‘the first’ African American women to hold their positions. Additional studies could be quite revealing as to the recruitment and retention of African American women administrators in public higher education. The participants universally addressed the hiring practices and offered suggestions related to this topic.

Third, discourse challenges were detectable in what participants said to the researcher. Their innermost thoughts were shared, but their contemplations were not shared with the offenders. Issues that are silenced do not get attention and, therefore, do not get resolved. Therefore, there are links to oppression in the form of silencing, that specifically need to be addressed, as well as potential barriers that prevent discourse.

Fourth, research opportunities exist for examining social behaviors, such as, sexism and racism. The participants in this study either, mentioned by name, or illustrated situations that addressed these behaviors. The participants diluted the influence of racism and sexism as being the problem of the persons exhibiting the behaviors. However, they are existent, and there are multiple links to these behaviors that effect advancement, professional development, and retention.

The potential for additional research to supplement this study and other studies is inexhaustible. Fifty years of progress within Missouri public higher educational institutions mirrors fifty years of progress on the national level. However slow it may be, incremental changes are present as viewed through the lived experiences of the six gems: Amber, Pearl, Amethyst, Emerald, Opal, and Ruby.

Summary

The participants in this study represent a diverse group of African American women administrators. It is important to note that these women emphasize that race and gender are always a present dynamic, but not always a focal point in decision making. These participants are keenly aware of the campus cultures and they navigate it accordingly. They use whatever approach they feel will advance their goals

This study also identified perceived challenges for African American female administrators. It is a reality in Missouri public higher educational institutions that in many instances, they are the 'only' African American administrators at meetings and in charge of a division or a department. This fact alone influences positional authority of African American female administrators in Missouri. Most research, to date, has focused singularly on gender or race and not in combination (Holvino & Black-Beard, 2004 as cited in Sanchez-Hucles, J.V., Davis, D.D. 2010). However, the singular dimension cannot capture the full complexity of African American women administrators. That is why the Black Feminist Thought Theory heightens the essence of this research. The influence of these women on students, staff, and even policy, in some instances, have been felt, perhaps not on a grand scale, but definitely over a period of time and within the positions they have held.

In "Ain't I a Woman" Bell Hooks (1989, p. 193) proclaims that 'neither passive acceptance nor stoic endurance leads to change'. Although this comment was centered on the revolution of change brought about by the Women's Suffrage Movement, it is still applicable here. For change to occur there needs to be action. Yet, there was no evidence of collective action for change among the sample of African American women administrators in Missouri public higher education; only apparent flawed systems and fragmented opportunities for change

as is applicable toward students. The lack of sufficient engagement with other African American administrators is a consistent proclamation. Progress has inevitably been made over the past century yet, there are still occasions where African American females can claim to be the ‘first’ in a position of authority at their institutions.

There is no doubt that there has been some progress and that there is diversity even if it means one African American female administrator represented at the leadership table of Missouri public institutions. As we have learned during the 2012 election year, the demographics of the United States looks a whole lot different than it did a half century ago. Yet, the discussions continue to center on race, gender, and class. Although, incremental changes have purportedly taken place at Missouri public institutions, African American women in positions of authority are still an anomaly. As revealed in this study, there is an awareness and acceptance, at least among African American female administrators, that on their side of the table comes responsibilities to those that fought so hard for there to be such an opportunity. Thus, the lack of supportive circles takes a back seat to the duties associated with the position. They understand that their support often comes from many sources within and outside of the institution. In Missouri public higher educational institutions these women have accepted the fact that they may be the only female as well as the only African American at the decision making tables. The influence of African American women administrators in public higher education on lifelong educational needs of diverse groups enhances a campus culture of diversity (Duderstadt, 2001). Each participant shared a strong conviction regarding their values as they relate to education. Education is seen as the stimulus for growing communities including educational communities. The influence of African American women administrators in Missouri public higher educational institutions on decision making as well as contributors to

policy cannot be over looked. It is important for marginalized groups to have a voice and these participants represent the voice of their students, faculty, and staff. Although African American women are many times limited within the scope of their positions, these participants make a difference in ways we may never know. In order to gain knowledge of their contributions we must continue to study their journeys within the academy.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT

This letter is to request your consent to participate in a research study for my dissertation that will explore the perception of African American women in leadership positions within higher education administration (non-faculty positions). I wish to explore how African American women view their leadership roles in public higher education institutions.

The study is for the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program at the University of Missouri-Columbia in preparation for performing qualitative research. Data collection and analyses will be completed under the direction of Dr. Paul Watkins, Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis.

Project description: This research project involves interviews with African American women in higher education administration in senior level positions (e.g. Directors, Deans, Chairs, Vice Presidents, Presidents and any position that higher educational institutions recognize as administrative). The research, including survey will also be inclusive of retirees from Missouri institutions. The background survey will be issued in an effort to get representation of African American women in different institutions and varied divisions. Additionally, participants will be asked to share tangible information such as resumes or curriculum vitas (CVs), as well as, historical information that may contribute to tracking the progress made by African American women administrators in Missouri higher education. The researcher will not ask to take original copies of anything you may share. However, copies of resumes or CVs will be requested for use in addressing career paths. Information provided in resume or CV will not be used to identify participants.

Potential Benefits: Findings of this project will be used for presentations and/or publications regarding leadership and the advancement of African American women within the academy.

Confidentiality: Participant identities will be kept confidential; pseudonyms will be used in the dissertation to protect identities and encourage open dialogue during the interviews. All data collected for this study will only be viewed by the researcher and dissertation advisor. The researcher will personally transcribe all interviews; electronic copies will be stored on password-protected machines or secure servers, and any files containing personally identifiable information about participants will be password-protected.

Risks associated with this research are minimal; your involvement would involve the interview described above, the ability to review a transcript of the interview for correctness and

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completeness, and possible follow up correspondence or interviews for clarification of the content. Benefits from the study may include the ability of administrators in higher education to better understand the perceptions of African American women leaders as well as provide a guide for young African American women aspiring to lead in higher education.

Audio recording: All interviews will be audio recorded, unless you prefer to have the interview conducted without recording. If you agree to have the interview recorded, you have the right to request the recorder be stopped at any time—either to stop the interview completely or to continue the interview unrecorded.

Time Commitment: Approximately 2-3 hours which includes a 30 minute to an hour interview and the remainder of the time spent reviewing the transcript of the interview and follow up correspondence via email.

Questions: If you have any questions about the study (e.g., research methodology) or about your rights as a research participant, please contact me or my dissertation advisor, Dr. Paul Watkins or the Campus Institutional Research Board (IRB) using the contact information provided below:

Vida A. Mays
Enrollment Management and Student Success
Southeast Missouri State University
One University Plaza, MS2200
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701
Phone: 573-651-5173
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Educational Leadership & Policy
Analysis
One University Plaza-MS 5600
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701
Phone: 573-6512136
E-Mail: pwatkins@semo.edu

Campus Institutional Review Board
University of Missouri
483 McReynolds, Columbia, MO, 65211
573-882-9585
umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. Should you consent to participate in the research, you may withdraw at any time with no penalty. If you agree to participate in this research, please sign and return the consent form and retain a copy for your records. Thank you for your consideration.

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Sincerely,

Vida A. Mays

I have read the above informed consent letter and agree to participate in the study as described. I realize that my participation is voluntary, and can be terminated at any time without penalty.

Print Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date _____

Preferred email address: _____

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APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

Time of Interview: Start: _____ End: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

(Briefly describe the project):

Briefing of the study

Interview Questions

1. What has your experience been as an African American female in higher education administration?
2. What situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences as an African American female in your position?
3. Affirmative Action and the Civil Rights Act have been associated with essentially opening doors for minorities to have equal access to education and jobs, how do you feel these laws have influenced your career or your career options?
4. Describe your leadership position and how you view your decision making authority?
5. Describe the culture at your institution and what it is like for you, as an African American female administrator?
6. Describe how you feel your colleagues view your capacity to get things done?
7. What have been the greatest challenges you have faced as an African American female higher education administrator.

8. As an African American administrator, please share a time when you felt your authority was challenged and how you dealt with or resolved the issue?
9. What is the most significant influence your gender and your race has had on you as an African American female administrator?
10. Based on your personal experience, what advice do you have that would be beneficial to higher education institutions?
11. Based upon your experiences, what advice would you give to African American women leaders considering a career in higher education?
12. Do you have any additional comments to add?

(Thank the interviewee for participating in the interview and re-assure him or her of confidentiality of responses.)

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND MATRIX

- 1) How do African American women administrators perceive their authority in Missouri Public Higher Education?
- 2) How do African American women perceive the culture within Missouri Public Higher Educational Institutions?
- 3) How do African American women perceive the political climate within Missouri Public Higher Educational Institutions?
- 4) What challenges do African American women administrators in Missouri public higher education institutions face?

Interview Questions	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	x	x	x	x
2	x	x	x	
3		x	x	
4	x		x	
5			x	
6	x		x	x
7	x			x
8	x	x	x	x
9	x			x
10	x	x	x	
11	x			x
12	x	x	x	x

VITA

Vida A. Mays received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 1976. She earned her Master of Science degree from the University of Memphis in 1978. In 2009, she entered the doctoral program in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri at Columbia, Missouri. Ms. Mays' career spans five states, four higher educational institutions and six years as Executive Director, State of North Carolina Youth Agency. She completed the doctoral program and was awarded the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia, in May 2013.