

DISSERTATION

KNOCKING ON THE DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES
HAVE EXPERIENCED THEIR JOURNEY TO THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PRESIDENCY

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

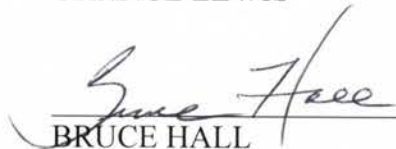
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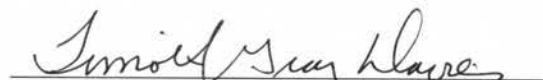
WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY ELMER A. BUGG ENTITLED KNOCKING ON THE DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES HAVE EXPERIENCED THEIR JOURNEY TO THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENCY BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

KNOCKING ON THE DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES HAVE EXPERIENCED THEIR JOURNEY TO THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENCY

This qualitative study elicited key themes in an attempt to understand the nature and essence of the career advancement experiences of a select group of African American male community college presidents. Research was conducted through a “culturally sensitive” research design (Tillman, 2002) that contained four elements: *culturally congruent research approach; culturally specific knowledge; culturally sensitive data interpretation; and culturally informed theory and practice.*

A criterion-based sampling was employed to select the five African American male participants to this study (Patton, 1990). These participants were either sitting or recently retired executives with titles consistent with the definition of “president” utilized for this study. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data and a holistic-content approach to data analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber, 1998) was conducted. Research revealed culturally informed career advancement strategies used to by these participants to achieve the position of community college president and suggests strategies for overcoming career advancement obstacles facing future African American male administrators seeking a presidency in American community colleges.

The researcher is hopeful that the findings presented here will encourage future researchers to take up scholarly dialogue and/or a discussion of best practices that might serve to address the career advancement challenges facing African American male administrators aspiring for a community college presidency. In particular, comparative research needs to be conducted to provide a more in-depth understanding of how the reported barriers faced by African American males in this study differ from those experienced by their majority counterparts and other underrepresented groups. This research will need to be undertaken soon before a substantial history of lived experiences of African American community college presidents is lost due to pending retirements.

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To the participants, your stories invigorated me. You took the time to help the next generation...something you've done all of your careers. I felt and will always remember your compassion and dedication to the cause. You are heroes in my opinion...I am honored to know you...to be touched by you...and to be guided by your wisdom. I am committed to carrying on in your light.

To my instructors and to the members of my dissertation committee...I will always remember the faith you showed in my ability...you've opened so many doors for me. Tim and Jim...you have a special place in my heart and the tears I shed in this program have made me stronger along the way each and every day.

To the Fall 2003 cohort, thank you. In your midst, I grew. Your contributions to my study and personal exploration were and are heartfelt. To the California cohort, aka "*The Dirty Dozen minus Six*," it was intense...the projects and field trips were the best. To the Northern California crew, you made this experience rock.

To mom and dad...mom graduated from the 12th grade...dad got to the 8th grade...thanks for the drive...your stories are reflected here. Art...such a bright future...Eagle...with me everyday...you both inspired me, I heard you in my mind's ear when times got hard.

To my heart, Cherry...this does not happen without your love and support...I can't think of a moment when you weren't demanding my best...and when I thought it

was too hard you gave me the hand I needed most. I love you and I dedicated this study to your beauty and caring soul.

TABLE of CONTENTS

ABSTRACT of DISSERTATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	3
<i>A VINGETTE.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>BACKGROUND.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>PURPOSE STATEMENT.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Strong Values and Commitment: A Cultural Lens.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Strong Values and Commitment: A Professional Lens.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Strong Values and Commitment: A Research Caution.....</i>	<i>20</i>
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	21
<i>INTRODUCTION.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>THEME 1: SOCIAL VALUES AS EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>THEME 2: THE INFLUENCE SOCIAL NORMS ON PROMOTIONS WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>THEME 3: THE PATHWAY TO THE PRESIDENCY.....</i>	<i>36</i>
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	44
<i>RESEARCH DESIGN ELEMENTS.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Culturally Congruent Research Approach.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Culturally Specific Knowledge.....</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Culturally Sensitive Data Interpretation.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Culturally Informed Theory and Practice.....</i>	<i>49</i>
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS.....	50
<i>INTRODUCTION.....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Question 1.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Question 2.....</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>External Mobility.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Internal Mobility.....</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>Positional Variety.....</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Emotional Journey.....</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>Question 3.....</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Familial Influence.....</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Professional Influence.....</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>Legislative Influence.....</i>	<i>67</i>

Question 4.....	68
<i>Be Goal-Oriented</i>	68
<i>Be Technically Sound</i>	70
<i>Be a Builder of Interpersonal Relationships</i> ..	72
<i>Be Balanced in Life</i>	74
Question 5.....	76
<i>Race as a Barrier</i>	76
<i>Perception as Barrier</i>	78
<i>The Assignment as a Barrier</i>	80
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	85
RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	86
Question 1.....	87
Question 2.....	90
Question 3.....	92
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS OF KEY THEMES ARISING FROM RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	96
INTRODUCTION.....	96
KEY THEMES ARISING FROM RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	96
Theme 1: <i>Make Race not an Issue</i>	97
Theme 2: <i>Prepare for a Non-Linear Pathway</i>	100
Theme 3: <i>Find a Champion</i>	103
SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES ARISING FROM RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	106
FUTURE RESEARCH.....	106
IN CONCLUSION.....	108
REFERENCES.....	110
APPENDICES.....	116
Appendix A: <i>Institutional Review Board Determination Notice</i>	117
Appendix B: <i>Recruitment/Follow-up Letters</i>	119
Appendix C: <i>Consent to Participate in a Research Study</i>	121

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Career paths, opportunities for upward mobility, tenure and promotion as reported as avenues of access are still pervasively paved with institutional, personal and cultural racism (Taliaferro & Montoya, 1995, p. 10).

A Vignette

It had been a very long day. The breeze was blowing crisply as it did every afternoon about that time. After a steady climb from the beach, we sat in his office. He had been a member of my screening committee back in the 1980s. Now, seven years later, he was one of five executive-level administrators at the college, and the look on his face was that of a tired warrior. We were talking about what life was like for a Black male administrator in a predominantly White community college, and he was wrestling to put form to his response to my question. I remember how he paused, reflected, and searched the ceiling. A smile came to his face, then a frown, followed closely by another smile, still another frown, and finally a scowl. His hands clenched then relaxed as seconds passed and the memories showed deeply as his shoulders slumped. Finally, he looked at me softly and said “that’s a long story...let me give you the short version.” I spent the next 3 hours listening to his lived experience. I had known this man for almost ten years but listening to the shorten version of his professional story I realized how little I knew about him. He always appeared so jovial...nothing seemed to bother him...but now I knew the truth...knew how he had suffered...the humiliation he had felt...how personal stress and institutional racism had become contributors to his high blood

pressure and weight gain...how he had gone back to school for his doctorate, a key to the future, only to have the locks changed again and again.

His narration, while brief, was expressed culturally and temporally. He wove the fabric of his intertwined experiences in terms of what for him had been an ongoing clash between personal and institutional values. Placing the story in the context of time allowed him to affix weight to these experiences. He took three hours to cover what was to be thirty-three years of service to one institution before he ended with a statement of his earnest desire to be a community college president.

Today, I still remember the feelings I had as I listened to him, and over the years I have drawn on his words for strength as I pursued my career aspirations in higher education. Now after more than twenty years in community colleges, I, like him, have my own personal stories and battle scars. And as I prepare for the next phase of professional life, I reflect on that time with him, and I remember how his story inspired me and provided me strength in troubled times. I recall wondering if his stories were similar to those of other African American male community college presidents? I wondered if there was a pattern in the stories, trials, and tribulations of African American male community college presidents, and whether they might benefit African American male administrators seeking to overcome institutional, personal, and cultural racism that so often bar the doors to a community college president?

Background

Morgan, Gliner, and Harmon (2006) assert “research has two fundamental purposes: (a) increasing knowledge within the discipline and (b) increasing knowledge within oneself as a professional consumer of research in order to evaluate and understand

new developments within the discipline” (p.9). A preliminary review of the literature reveals some research on African American female administrators and scant research has been conducted on the phenomenon of how African American male administrators have experienced their ascension to the rank of community college president. For example, Lewis and Middleton (2003) found that of the approximately 466 articles published by the *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* (CCJRP) between 1990 and 2000, only 2 of those articles directly focused on the experiences of African American administrators, that only 1 of those 2 articles was qualitative in nature, and neither study focused exclusively on the challenges faced by African American male administrators achieving a community college presidency. The question this raised for me was whether a broader review of literature would reveal a similar paucity of research published on the phenomenon of how African American male administrators have experienced their ascension to community college president.

In reviewing the broader literature, I found that some researchers (Bridges, 1996; Holmes, 2004; Jackson, 2004; Jackson & Phelps, 2004; Ribeau, 2001; Rolle, Davies & Banning, 2000; Vaughan, 1989) have provided insight into the career advancement challenges facing African American administrators in American community colleges. However, research of this type is limited and these researchers chose not to or were unable to disaggregate their findings to focus specifically on the challenges facing African American male administrators aspiring to a community college presidency. Bridges (1996), in studying the characteristics of career achievement perceived by African American college administrators, spoke to the urgent need of this type of information for aspiring African American administrators. He wrote

talented young African Americans who are starting the climb toward successful, rewarding careers in America often discover that the ascent up the success ladder is plagued with pitfalls. Even when these individuals are prepared with excellent credentials, they find that the climb is not necessarily easy (Bridges, 1996, p. 748).

Bridges (1996) goes on to suggest that

Information on African American professionals employed in all levels of higher education is needed and can expand the body of knowledge in this area. Therefore, a similar study of African Americans employed at various levels of institutions should be conducted (p. 766).

This study contributes toward understanding the experience of African American male presidents in American community colleges and provides insights and knowledge to African American male administrators aspiring to become community college presidents.

Purpose Statement

When I think about other African American male administrators aspiring to a community college presidency, I wonder how they are preparing for and experiencing their career advancement opportunities. This question arises partly from forewarnings found in the literature (Boggs, 2003; Bragg, 2000; DeMitchell, 2004; Filan & Seagren, 2003; McCarthy, 2003; Pope & Miller, 2000) that the leader/follower concept exemplified in the waning years of the Industrial Revolution will ill-prepare individuals for the leadership demands of the 21st Century community college; and partly from how silent the literature is on the task of preparing African American male administrators for a presidency in a contemporary, comprehensive community college. Consequently, this research focused on understanding the structure and essence of the career advancement experience of African American male community college presidents and provides words of wisdom for other African American male administrators aspiring a community college presidency.

Research Questions

Three research questions were investigated:

1. How have a select group of African American males experienced their journey to community college presidency?
2. What were the essential qualities and characteristics that enabled them to take advantage of the career advancement opportunities they sought?
3. What professional and social barriers did they encounter in their career management efforts, and how did they overcome those barriers on their journey to the presidency?

Significance of the Study

Phelps, Taber, and Smith (1997) posit that “the president of a community college can influence institutional and community policy, encourage innovations, and develop new educational opportunities” (p. 3). In studying the number of African American presidents in community colleges, Phelps et al (1997) found that only 5% of all community college presidents in the United States were African Americans (61 out of 1220). Further they found that African American males accounted for 3.44% of all community college presidents in the United States (42 out of 1220). In addition they noted African American presidents were most likely to head predominantly African American colleges and universities or minority community colleges rather than institutions with White populations at or over their national proportion of 80%. Still further, Phelps et al (1997) found that 27 states did not have an African American heading one of their community colleges. In fact, they found that 74% of all African American presidents were found in nine states: Alabama, California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. Phelps et al (1997) conclude “research should be conducted to identify specific barriers to African

Americans attaining the community college presidency” (p. 12). The American Council on Education (ACE, 2007) reports nothing much has changed in the decade since Phelps et al’s (1997) study. ACE reports

Minority presidents continued to be underrepresented relative to the higher education workforce, in which minorities accounted for 16 percent of faculty and senior staff in 2003. Until colleges and universities improve presidential hiring practices, as well as the pipeline of minority faculty and senior staff through ongoing, customized leadership programs, progress in recruiting minority presidents will continue to be slow (2007, p. 23).

This study is professionally significant because it contributes to the critical dialogue on strategies for overcoming specific barriers faced by African American males aspiring to a community college presidency. Beyond professional significance, this study also holds a social significance.

Blake and Darling (1994) report that for African American males “the cumulative gaps in educational achievement levels begins with kindergarten and increases through the postsecondary years” (Blake & Darling, 1994, p. 405). They assert

Black men have less incentive than White men to acquire education as data show the same amount of educational investment yields considerably less return for Black males in the form of superior occupational status. Until African American males are rewarded for their merits, they will continue to have less incentive toward education and thus this problem will persist (p. 405).

In this sense, I see a social significance for this of sitting and/or recently retired African American male community college presidents contributing to a new generation of

African American male community college presidents that can

provide inspiring role models for students, employees, and community residents; add important voices to dialogues concerning personnel issues, including staff development, curriculum changes, teaching excellence, and student success; and promote community relationships and commitments, enriching all associated with the college and its community (Phelps et al, 1997, p. 3).

Researcher's Perspective

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) assert that there is a connectedness between the researcher and the researched phenomenon and posits “analysis...and the ways in which we choose to represent our data cannot be separated” (p. 121). This notion of a linkage between the researcher and the research is echoed by Miles and Huberman (1994), who contend that “qualitative ‘data’ masks a good deal of complexity, requiring plenty of care and self-awareness on the part of the researcher” (p. 10). Richards (2005) further cautions qualitative researchers to take into account the “strong values and commitment to their topic” they bring to the research project. Richards (2005) suggests the qualitative researcher should

think of the first stage of this process as declaring what is in your baggage, as you do on arrival at an international airport. If you don't declare it, you will take it in, surreptitiously, assumptions or expectations that will colour what you see and how you see it (p. 26).

Following Richards (2005) suggestion, I identify and present next my connection with the research topic investigated here through two streams of lived experiences: cultural and professional.

Strong Values and Commitment to Their Topic: A Cultural Lens

As a young Black man growing up in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, my mother taught me that self-leadership was an issue of defining for oneself what determines self-worth and to act on that belief in spite of the trials and tribulations I would encounter. During those years American society was not intent on enriching the lived experience of a strong, determined Black male. In my teenage eyes everything seemed bent on the denigration and humiliation of my Blackness, and I was expected to accept this social condition unquestioningly and submissively. Daily I faced the choice

of accepting the predominant view for Black Americans (then at best called Negroes) and being *acceptable* or choosing self-definition and being found *unacceptable*. My mother's encouragement (an oral tradition practiced by many head-of-the-household Black women) to me was to accept nothing less than defining for myself a life of dignity and self-worth; so I spent my formative years learning the lessons of this oral tradition and experiencing the pain of its implementation. As I went from being a teenager to a young man, the oral traditions of my mother were furthered by the rhetoric of Black leaders such as H. Rap Brown, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, Huey P. Newton, and Bobby Seale. The lyrics of James Brown became a statement of pride where once shame resided and even today the words "Say it loud, **I'm Black** and **I'm proud**" move me.

Having left Youngstown, Ohio, to live with my father in Cleveland, I was shaped by the Hough Riots of 1965. I remember the fires...and the National Guard troops patrolling the neighborhoods. I remember the stories of beatings by police, emboldened by the National Guard troops, and I remember the sound over my shoulder as the 50-caliber machine gun's bolt slammed into place and the experience of 10 of us young Black males lined up against the wall and frisked before being hauled off to jail on a curfew violation. What imprinted me most during this period was the image of Tommie Smith's and John Carlos' statements of protest at the 1968 Olympics and even today I feel a similar flush of pride I felt then.

Tommie Smith won the gold medal and John Carlos the bronze medal in the 200 meters track and field event of the 1968 Olympics. They accepted their medals in bare feet (symbolic of poverty in the African-American community), wearing beads (in honor

of the countless blacks murdered as victims of slavery or racism), and holding black-gloved fists in the air (a symbol of unity and determination). They were set upon immediately like a carcass to a pack of starving wolves. A protest to the reality of life as felt by African Americans in the United States was not good television, and those ungrateful niggers had to be made to pay for embarrassing the White establishment. According to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) they had disrespected the "Star Spangled Banner" and the Olympic games. Avery Brundage, IOC president at the time, threatened to expel the entire U.S. team if Smith and Carlos were not banished from the Olympic Village and expelled from the U.S. Olympic team. The U.S. Olympic Committee capitulated and withdrew Smith and Carlos from the relays and sent them home. Upon their return, Tommie and John were subjected to death threats, economic sanctions, and a contempt that has lasted for over forty years. Nevertheless, their legend has grown over the years, and their action has become a symbol of the struggle for equality for Blacks in America. For me, however, their action has always been a vivid portrait of personal integrity and courage. What they encountered gave reality to the stories I had heard as a child.

I never lived in or visited the Deep South, even though I'm the son of parents born in Georgia and North Carolina and the great-grandson of a slave born in 1860, five years before the end of the Civil War. Even so, I experienced the icy touch of post-segregation de facto racism in every school I attended. For example, my lived experiences with education from 1962-1967, exclusively within a predominantly White educational system, included being a resister to my teachers' daily espousing the virtues of subservience and the natural order. In 1970 Germany, as a member of the U.S. Army,

scared that Viet Nam was my next step, I read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Haley & X, 1965) and found words that articulated what I felt in those experiences with my teachers. Describing an experience Malcolm X had with his English teacher, Haley and X (1965) wrote

Malcolm, one of life's first needs is for us to be realistic. Don't misunderstand me, now. We all like you, you know that. But you've got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer – that's no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you *can* be. You're good with your hands – making things. Everybody admires your carpentry shop work. Why don't you plan on carpentry? People like you as a person – you'd get all kinds of work (p. 37).

While the words spoken to me were never as crass or as insensitive as those spoken to Malcolm X, the view that there was a rightful place for African American males in American society was always just under the surface as my early instructors spoke of my future. It wasn't hands and carpentry as it was for Malcolm X...it was manual labor in the steel mills of Youngstown, Ohio, or in the auto plants of Detroit, Michigan. I would have none of that, and I excelled academically in school. But even academic success had its affronts for a Black man during the 1950s and 1960s as Vernon E. Jordon, Jr. (2001) writes in his autobiography.

Recounting memories from 1955 Atlanta, Jordon (2001) wrote of an episode he had one summer with his retired banker employer. Jordon had the summer job of chauffeuring the man around town and every day, during the afternoon while the man slept, he would steal away to the library to pass the time reading. One afternoon the man arose from his nap early and discovered Jordon in the library reading. This so astonished the man that he wasted no time telling his relatives and friends in wonder that *Vernon can read*.

I regularly lived that type of experience when I was growing up. It was not unusual during my teenage and young man years to hear a White person describing me say: *“Elmer is very smart and he speaks so well.”* For me, it was commonplace for Whites to hold this view about Blacks. This was a time when Native Americans couldn’t portray themselves in the movies...when an Asian American (Bruce Lee) couldn’t be a leading man in a television series (Kung Fu)...when Blacks were almost non-existent on television and in movies, save for their stereotypical roles of cooks, maids, or buffoons. I grew up in a time when White America didn’t expect Blacks to be successful at anything and made every effort to ensure that Blacks weren’t successful in the same economic terms as they were. I remember the looks of uneasiness in their eyes, especially in light of the Civil Rights Movement, when I looked at them with defiance and self-confidence...I also remember the whispers as they called me arrogant and uppidity.

The African American male presidents I interviewed had similar lived experiences of personal lore and that many had comparable role models who guided them in their formative years. They are “babyboomers” like me and what Valverde calls a “second-generation” leader in higher education. Valverde (2003) identifies first-generation higher education African American leaders as those prior to 1960, who because of segregation were prohibited from serving in leadership roles in White postsecondary institutions prior to that time, and second generation as those after 1960. I did not find any African American male who had more than thirty years of tenure as a president of a community college.

Strong Values and Commitment to Their Topic: A Professional Lens

I was employed for approximately two decades in private sector sales and sales management positions, selling consumer products like Pepsi-Cola, Gallo Wines, health and beauty aids, televisions, audio equipment, and household appliances before I joined the public sector. Toward the end of my private sector career, I even owned a small management consultancy firm. I think of this time as the first phase of my professional career. In sum, I found all of my private sector assignments exciting and progressively challenging, but I also experienced them as inherently unfair and unfulfilling. When I speak reflectively of those times, I tell a story of how those assignments required me to work harder and produce more than my White counterparts with the harsh realization that for me, and others like me, working harder and producing more did not equate to being seen as worthy of recognition or even career advancement opportunities.

I brought this viewpoint with me when I joined the community college ranks as a full-time faculty member in the 1980s but deep within I also brought a longing to be proven wrong. There was such elation in my heart that first day, a brand new faculty member being introduced to the college family. The program was on a roll when suddenly the President stopped and music started...like everyone I waited expectantly and to stage came Tommie Smith, a member of the college's PE Department and my childhood hero. I remember rising as in slow motion and clapping loudly and vigorously. Grudgingly, it seemed, people around me began to rise until Tommie was bashfully receiving a standing ovation. We applauded him for what seemed an eternity, and I remember being the last to take my seat. When I finally got to meet him, he told me how he had thought "who is this crazy man?" I explained how he had been an inspiration to a

young man and still was...he smiled and we shared a bear hug. Over the next 13 years, he would scratch several parts in his thin hair when it came to me, often times finding me incredulous, like when I ran for Academic Senate President. "Why?" he would ask me..."why put yourself through this?" He looked in my eyes, shook his head and smiled...he knew why.

It had been two years since I joined the college as the only full-time faculty member assigned exclusively to the college's evening Business Administration program, and I was ready for a promotion. In my mind having assisted the sitting department chair for nearly four years, first as an adjunct faculty member then as tenure-track faculty member, I thought myself ready to be the new department chair. So I ran for the position motivated in part by the fact that if I ever wanted to be a college administrator this was the next logical step in that progression. I ran, lost soundly, and promptly became disgruntled. Shortly thereafter a White colleague, consoling me in the staff lounge, said "Elmer, there's another way to get what you want...run for Academic Senate President." He went on to say, "if you agree to run, I'll nominate you as a candidate." Being a community college rookie, I hesitated accepting his offer and set off to confer with several of my "well-connected" colleagues. They told me, with the new community college reforms being mandated by the State, there was indeed another path to administration other than through the traditional "operational" route of the department chair, and it was up the "policy/governance" road. The next day I found my champion and agreed to become a candidate.

I ran a political campaign grounded on several pledges. First, I would work to find and implement new ways of doing things at the college. Second, I would work to

strengthen faculty's voice in collegial governance. And, third, I would work to improve the teaching and governance experience of adjunct faculty. I battled the Old Guard, both in the faculty and administration ranks, to win the first two-year presidency of the college's Academic Senate and to become the first African American elected as Academic Senate President in the college's then sixty year history. Over the next two years, in addition to serving as the faculty's voice to the Board of Trustees and the College President on all academic and professional matters, I spent countless hours learning everything I could about how community colleges operate and sharpening a skill set I could never have learned as a department chair. My life during this period was filled with a heavy work load requiring high energy, personal strength, and being a "man of action." I oftentimes found myself, as Valverde (2003) notes, caught between opposing social values and experiencing significant interpersonal conflict, psychological stress, and facing a host of no-win situations. Nevertheless, when my term was up, I took on a bigger task and ran for and was elected to a two-year term to the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC).

The ASCCC serves as the official faculty voice to the System Chancellor and Board of Governors of California Community Colleges on all academic and professional matters. As the South's Representative to the Executive Committee of ASCCC, I took on several controversial assignments and served on 8 ASCCC committees (3 of which I chaired), 4 Intersegmental committees (Co-Chairing one on Business Administration articulation issues), and 6 committees of the Chancellor's Office. By the time I boarded the plane two-years later, after losing a bid for ASCCC Vice President, I had a long list of accomplishments and a heartfelt commitment to the "kufi" I now wore daily.

Etymologically, the word “kufi” is of Arabic origin and is defined as a close-fitting brimless cylindrical or round hat which, in my case, is made of multi-colored African fabrics. But for me the “kufi” was and is more than a physical and visual artifact of Arabic origin. For me it represents a piece of culture lost and my identification with a lost culture that included my great- great-grandmother’s life in slavery. I came to wear the “kufi” during a mid-life crisis where, through pain and reflection, I resolved questions of who I was and what I wanted to do with my life. So until recently, I wore the “kufi” as a statement of personal identity and cultural pride.

So when I headed home from my work with ASCCC, I was prepared in mind and spirit to take on an administrative assignment at the earliest opportunity. My expectations were grounded in the fact that two other colleagues had come home from their statewide service with ASCCC and went on to become presidents at the New Hampshire Technical Community College and Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham, Oregon. I wanted and expected the same for myself. A year later, I was still waiting. Finally, following a presidential search and hiring at the college, the ideal administrative assignment was posted: *Dean, Business and Industry Programs*. Everyone I talked to said I was perfect for the position; convinced, I applied. I knew everyone on the interview committee. I had worked with most of them. The answers to the interview questions were easy...I had practiced them for 4 years. Even so, I didn’t make it to the final interview. I found out later that I had been a casualty of a political compromise. If being disgruntled described my feelings when I lost the race for department chair, this time I felt disheartened and betrayed. I spent time over the next few months fuming at my loss until again someone said “there’s another way to the top.”

I've spent the last ten years trying to get to the top via the alternative route of a workforce and economic development practitioner. It took me two years to make it to the administrative ranks: *Assistant Dean, Workforce and Economic Development*. Since that time I have built two operational units from scratch and successfully managed well over 350 contract education projects with regional employers and have generated over \$15 million in "alternative revenue" (a term commonly used for fees derived from contracted training services and grant procurement efforts). In my last administrative assignment, over a 4-year period, I managed a non-profit, public-benefit corporation that provided training services to more than 150 employers and provided approximately 18,000 contact hours of training for nearly 6000 employees, in areas of management, human resources, strategic planning, and computer applications. As this assignment neared completion, I contemplated the next step and concluded now was the time to pursue a hushed goal of becoming a community college president and joining a labor pool that currently represents less than six percent of all community college presidents on the job in America. So I put together my materials, called on my references, and set out on the presidential job search journey.

I applied for a community college presidency and enrolled in a national workshop entitled *Thoughts and Clues for Aspiring Presidents*. Just as I was about to walk into the workshop my cell rang. I was being invited to interview for a presidential assignment. Elated, I sat in the workshop with 10 other African American males and at least 50 others of diverse ethnicity (mostly White females) and listened to the words of wisdom on what it takes to be a community college president. The workshop activities included practicing interviewing techniques, which were recorded. When it came my time to have my

techniques reviewed, I was floored. A few comments on my strengths proceeded the slap at my personhood as the workshop leader said, "*Elmer, you can appear scary.*" Through forced laughter, she made mention of my deep baritone voice, how intimidating my size could be and finally she tiptoed up to implied criticisms of my kufi. She asked "*do you always wear that...that hat?...you do know it's going to be a problem for you, don't you?...you're going to have to decide if wearing it is more important than getting the job... because someplaces aren't going to be accepting of it.*" There it was again...to be or not to be found acceptable. I took her words to mean if I wanted a community college presidency, I had to compromise my values. In other words, lose the kufi to get the job. I recall the questioning in the eyes of several of my African American colleagues...they knew what the kufi meant...on some faces was the question of *would I comply...*on others the defiant statement of *don't you dare*. I left the workshop determined, disgusted, and unsure.

A week later I was sitting in my car preparing to walk into my interview with a committee of 11 individuals from every constituency on campus. I remember taking a moment to affix my kufi in the rearview mirror before I got out of the car...feeling its personal power. I left that interview to become later that day a finalist for the position of president. Still fresh are the feelings I felt while sitting outside the Chancellor's door, waiting for my second interview, talking to a Board of Trustees member, and the look on her face as she asked about my kufi and why I wore it...I was diplomatic and direct, sensitive and compassionate. She softened as I told her my story. I didn't get the job but my sense of self was affirmed in the process.

Since that time, I've been a part of six national searches for a community college

president. In three of these, I have been a finalist...but I have not been successful in my efforts to become a community college president, and I am left with the question of why.

Strong Values and Commitment to Their Topic: A Research Caution

Thinking of those African American males that have attained a community college presidency, I wonder how they achieved their executive-level position. I came to this study of African American male community college presidents particularly interested in understanding how they experienced their career journey to the presidency. What professional and social barriers they encountered in their pursuit of a community college presidency and how they overcame those barriers? I believe researching and documenting their career management experiences will benefit me and other African American male administrators aspiring for a community college presidency (Bridges, 1996, p. 751).

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

As the first decade of the 21st Century unfolds, a review of the literature shows that community colleges now find themselves not only at the hub of the workforce development wheel (Bragg, 2001; Bramucci, 1999; Forde, 2002; Gennett, Johnston, & Wilson, 2001; Pauley, 2001; Warford & Flynn, 2000) but also facing a crisis of leadership. Research reported by Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005) highlights a contemporary view of this leadership challenge for community colleges. They state:

approximately 50% of the current community college presidents will retire over the next 3 to 7 years and in the next few years, 700 new community college presidents and campus heads, 1800 new upper level administrators, and 30,000 new faculty members will be needed. (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005, p. 235)

While Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005) do not specifically identify the source of this new generation of required leadership, Boggs (2003) does contend while community college have made progress in diversifying their leadership ranks by gender, “community colleges have not been as effective as they need to be in diversifying their leadership by ethnicity” (p. 16). A review of the literature suggests three themes that can be seen as negatively affecting the career advancement opportunities for African American administrators aspiring for presidencies in American community colleges: (a) employment practices in community colleges; (b) the relationship of institutional culture to promotion opportunities in community colleges; and (c) the road to the community college presidency.

In discussing employment practices in community colleges I report on the role social values play in the employment practices of community colleges. This literature is important because it shows the influence these social values have on inhibiting access to career opportunities in American community colleges for African American administrators. In discussing the second theme, the relationship of institutional culture to promotion opportunities in community colleges, I present cultural dynamics reported as essential factors in career advancement. The literature reviewed in this section is critically important because it shows how racial discrimination within an organization's culture can operate to impede the career advancement aspirations of African Americans. And in discussing the third theme, the road to the community college presidency, I highlight the dominant pathway toward the presidency in American community colleges that is found in the literature. I believe review of this literature is critical to my study because it places executive-level African American administrators in a career-laddering context within American community colleges. An understanding of the hiring practices phenomenon will provide an understanding of a major barrier facing African American administrators aspiring for a community college presidency.

The literature reviewed in this chapter provides a lens for understanding that African American male administrators face two significant barriers in their career advancement to a community college presidency: access discrimination and treatment discrimination. For the purposes of this document, I adopt Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley's (1990) differentiation of "access discrimination" from "treatment discrimination." According to Greenhaus et al. (1990)

Unlike "access discrimination," which prevents members of a subgroup of the population from entering a job or organization, treatment discrimination occurs

when subgroup members receive fewer rewards, resources, or opportunities on the job than they legitimately deserve on the basis of job-related criteria. Thus, such discrimination represents a situation in which the treatment of employees is based more on their subgroup membership than on their merit or achievement. Treatment discrimination can affect not only such tangible phenomena as position assignments, training opportunities, salary increases, promotions, terminations, and layoffs, but also such subtle issues as acceptance into a work group or the availability of career-enhancing and psychological support from supervisors and others. In effect, subgroup members who are exposed to treatment discrimination encounter organizational experiences that are less favorable to their careers than are the experiences members of a dominant group encounter within an organization (pp. 64-65).

The literature reviewed in this section is primarily related literature drawn from outside education because of a lack of literature on this topic in the education field and suggests that additional research is needed to understand how some African American male administrators have, in spite of these obstacles, successfully managed their careers in American community colleges and achieved the rank of community college president. Among other benefits, the literature identifies such research as crucial to collecting career management strategies that can be used by executive-level African American male administrators aspiring for a presidency in American community colleges.

Theme 1: Social Values as Employment Practices in Higher Education Institutions

Higher education as an institution of social values is a recurring theme in the literature (Anderson & Collins, 2001; Astin, 1993; LuzReyes & Halcon, 1991; McIntosh, 2001). Patton (2004) asserts

the university is not merely an instructional site where learning takes places, but rather it is a social institution that both has the power to shape current political and cultural thought, and is also shaped by current public response to cultural, political, or social issues. (p. 62)

In this section I articulate this theme found in the literature through an examination of how race influences the employment practices within today's institutions of higher

education. Drawing on the literature, I begin these discussions by sketching a historical portrait of factors influencing African Americans' access to career opportunities in higher education and move on to discuss how race conditions hiring practices and promotion opportunities for African Americans to executive-level positions in community colleges. It is important to note here that the literature reviewed in this section focuses primarily on university-level institutions. In spite of that, I found nothing in the literature that would preclude an extension of the cited authors' remarks and findings to a fuller definition of higher education which would include community colleges. Thus, I begin my review of the literature from the assumption that the writings reviewed here present and represent issues and challenges common to all segments of postsecondary education, including community colleges, and are not limited to life on university campuses.

During the time of major expansion in American community colleges, between 1960 and 1980, America was undergoing a major cultural revolution (see Holmes, Winter 2004, pp. 23-25). Social artifacts of the early 1960s include the consequences of the Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, Civil Rights protests and marches, assassinations of Black leaders and civil right workers, forced sterilizations, bombings of Black churches, lynchings, and federalized National Guard troops at the front door of the University of Alabama to name just a few of the events of that time. Holmes' (Winter 2004) discourse on the roots of African Americans in higher education suggests that community colleges created in the mid-1960s were witness to passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and, as a result of Titles VI and VII provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, saw an upheaval to the employment landscape and hiring practices that had been commonplace for sixty years of the American community colleges' history.

The implementation of Executive Order 11246 signed by President Johnson in 1965 extended the prohibitions of the Civil Rights Act and included a mandate for the application of every good faith effort in the development of a written affirmative action program and pursuit of a set of specific and result-oriented procedures. I believe Allen et al (2000) neatly summarizes this tumultuous period of American history. Placing the African American experience in American society in a historical context of 250 years of constitutionally-sanctioned slavery, followed by a hundred years of legal segregation, Allen et al (2000) asserts

by 1965, the legal barriers to Black progress were torn down, leaving in their place a heritage of opposition, denial, and restraint no less potent in denying Blacks equality of opportunity. What remained were the not-so-blind hands of structured inequality, market forces, stereotyping, and racial discrimination that continued to ensure the subordinate status of Blacks in U. S. society (p. 5).

Valverde (2003) drawing on historical and leadership literature as well as interviews discusses the experiences of minorities in higher education during this period of societal transformation. Of particular interest for the purposes here is his portrayal of African American leaders' entry into White postsecondary institutions. Valverde (2003) holds that segregation served to keep African Americans from assuming leadership roles in White postsecondary institutions prior to 1960 and within this context he asserts,

For the first wave of African American males to gain entry into academic administration, a common entry emerged, a practice that typified higher education promotion. Individuals were identified and then recruited. It was not an open process in which any candidate could apply. Although the process was the same as used for all, the motives for selection were different. Universities did not willing go after Blacks; they did so because they felt they had to (p. 78).

He goes on to say,

So from the start, African American leaders at universities were compromised. Quickly, the faculty saw them as tokens or window dressing for the external community. By having one or two highly visible minority persons, some strong messages were sent. First, to the university community and its alumni, since there

were only one of two minorities appointed, the institution was not giving up or losing its essence. The campus was to remain as in the past. It would not change. Second, by appointing one or two minorities, the university could show that it does not practice discrimination” (Valverde, 2003, p. 79).

Earlier Kawewe (1997) offered “colleges and universities devised sophisticated internal mechanisms to subvert affirmative action in recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion to the advantage of the privileged gender and race that dominate the academy” (p. 264).

According to Rolle et al (2000) race relations is still a significant issue for contemporary African American educators. Rolle et al’s (2000) qualitative study of the experiences of African American administrators in predominantly White colleges and universities found four major themes emerged from their data: (1) the administrative experience is structured by race; (2) that a strong sense of self-assurance was necessary to weather the environment; (3) the importance of communication skills; and (4) the need to understand and make use of the politics of higher education. In addition, Rolle et al found that

Theme I (*the administrative experience is structured by race*) contained four sub-themes: (1) race as an issue of first position; (2) race as part of the administrative experience; (3) race in relation to perception of role; and (4) struggles with the predominantly White environment. According to Rolle et al, the first Sub-Theme (*race as an issue of first position*) included comments of African American administrators’ experiences having their appointment seen as acts of tokenism and being negatively impacted by a perceived association with affirmative action/minority programs. For me, these comments speak to how the hiring process, and life after the hiring process, was experienced by these participants. Turning to the management literature, I find a bridge for understanding how race and employment practices are intertwined in postsecondary education. Moreover, a glimpsing at the typical presidential hiring practices common in today’s community

colleges, I see a direct correlation between Nason's (1972) assertion regarding *The Dilemma of Black Mobility in Management* in the private corporate sector and Rolle et al findings in the public higher education sector.

Nearly four decades ago, Nason (1972) found that the more subtle deterrent of "institutional racism" adversely affected Black mobility in corporate America by erecting five barriers. I believe four of these career advancement barriers can readily be found in the typical presidential hiring practices common in today's community colleges and throughout these discussions I shall explain and make connection to community college employment practices. Commenting on a first barrier to upward mobility for African Americans, Nason (1972) asserts "common to almost every job description is the specification of minimum level of formal education" (p. 59). This is the case as relates to the hiring of community college presidents. In California, for example, every job announcement associated with a presidential search contains some form of the following phrase: *A master's degree from an accredited college or university is required. An earned doctorate is highly preferred.* Flannigan, Jones, and Moore (2004) report "a review of the hiring practices at eight community colleges selected at random reveals a standard and predictable screening process where candidates are rated based on credentials, experience, skills, and response to interview questions" (p. 832). It is Nason's (1972) contention that this educational "credential often has little meaning for job performance and ... the result is that those with less formal education and certification are needlessly excluded from consideration" (p. 59).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that there were 25, 323 doctoral degrees conferred on males by degree-granting institutions in the 2003-2004

academic year. These data include Ph.D., Ed.D., and comparable degrees at the doctoral level and excludes first-professional degrees, such as M.D., D.D.S., and law degrees. The report for this period shows that African American males received 1,015 of these degrees (4%), while their White male counterparts received 13,567 of these degrees (53.6%). Synthesizing Nason's (1972) assertion and Flannigan et al. (2004) account of the sequential hiring process common in public community college sector, it seems reasonable to infer if a community college's hiring norm is a preference for individuals who hold a doctorate degree and if as the literature reports African-Americans male applicants tend to have fewer doctorate degrees than their White male counterparts, then African American male applicants will more likely be removed from the recruited pool of applicants via this "paper screening" phase.

Nason (1972) further presented two other career advancement barriers for African Americans found in the private sector. One barrier comes from "[African Americans] predominant use in nonline jobs when they do get into management" (p. 60), and the other comes from the relationship between seniority to promotion. I will address both of these barriers below in a third theme arising in the literature but suffice it to say, as Amey et al's (2002) findings have shown, the vast majority of African American executive-level administrators are located within the student service department of colleges and universities placing them outside the academic affairs area, which is the traditional pathway to the community college presidency (p. 581).

Nason (1972) asserts that a further barrier to upward mobility of African Americans in the private sector comes in the form of lacking membership to informal networks. Nason wrote "while evaluations become more subjective as more managerial

content enters the job, the Black has fewer advocates and is often outside the social system which leads others upward” (p. 59). While many African American administrators aspiring for a community college presidency similarly lack informal network membership, a point I shall explore later in this document, they share a strong affiliation that some find as an obstacle to career advancement in the private sector: affirmative action.

According to Heilman et al (1997), there is a stigma of incompetence associated with affirmative action and that the expression of this stigma begins with the discounting of the beneficiary’s qualifications and the assumption that the person was only hired or was being interviewed because of membership in a racial group. Heilman et al (1997) studied 192 managers from a Northeastern insurance company, with the study’s participants almost equally divided by gender, with nearly 70% of the individuals between 25-44 years of age. A three-by-four factorial research design was used for this quantitative study employing two independent variables: employee and performance information. Data were collected through voluntary participation in a series of company-sponsored training sessions with two types of experimental manipulations. First, the independent variable *employee* was manipulated by name and affirmative action status, which was manipulated by the bottom section of the employment application reading “Hired Through Women/Minority Recruiting Program.” The independent variable *performance information* was manipulated by the six-month job activity summary where a success condition was rated in five categories from top 5% to bottom 50%; an ambiguous success condition was categorized in the top 50% or the bottom 50%; and a success failure condition was placed in the bottom 50% performance category. Two

dependent variables were connected with this study: competence evaluations and salary recommendations. In addition, two additional questions were asked to gain insight into what were the respondents' views that may have influenced their responses to employees hired through the affirmative action program.

The results of Heilman et al's (1997) study revealed that there exists a stigma of perceived incompetence ascribed to those expected to have benefited from affirmative action. Moreover, lacking disconfirming data, the participants in Heilman et al's (1997) study inferred individual competence inferior to those not connected to an affirmative action program. Furthermore, the researchers found that disconfirming information about successful performance was only influential if the information was unequivocally clear. Put differently, ambiguous information was found as having no effect on dissipating the negative effect or stigma associated with being connected to an affirmative action program unless that disconfirming information left little margin for misinterpretation. In fact, unequivocal information lacking clear disconfirming data about performance success was perceived no different than that associated with performance failure. The researchers also found that while clear disconfirming data mediated perceptions about competence, it did not necessarily have the same effect in mediating decisions associated with salary recommendations. To explore this latter finding, Heilman et al (1997) conducted a second study of these managers and added a fourth hypothesis to their previous study of this population. They found that "when information about success was ambiguous, the employee associated with affirmative action was treated more harshly in terms of salary recommendations than either the non-affirmative action women or men" (Heilman et al, 1997, p. 619).

Ziegert and Hanges (2005) exploration of “modern racism” relationship to employment discrimination appears to support Heilmann et al’s (1997) findings that there is a stigma of incompetence associated with affirmative action and that individuals perceived as being associated with affirmative action are evaluated more harshly than those not associated with affirmative action. Ziegert and Hanges (2005) defining “modern racism” state

Modern racism is more indirect and rationalized where negative attitudes toward Blacks are masked with nonracial reasons to preserve a nonprejudicial self-image. The central tenets and beliefs of modern racists include the thinking that discrimination is a thing of the past, Blacks are using unfair tactics to push themselves into places where they are not wanted, and gains by Blacks are not deserved. Modern racists see their beliefs as constituting empirical facts. They do not believe that they are racist because they conceptualize a racist as someone who espouses the old-fashioned or hostile racism beliefs. Modern racists will act on their beliefs when there is some social norm (e.g., climate for racial bias) justifying their discriminatory behaviors (p. 554).

Ziegert and Hanges (2005) found in their study of implicit racist attitudes and employment decisions that discrimination in employment practices is associated with a sanctioning organizational climate. Or as put by Ziegert and Hanges (2005) “implicit racism interacted with a climate for racial bias to predict discrimination” (p. 561). They go on to say “when individuals were given a business justification for racial discrimination their implicit racist attitudes were positively related to their discriminatory behavior” (Ziegert & Hanges, 2005, p. 561).

Recall that in Rolle et al’s study (2000), the first Sub-Theme (*race as an issue of first position*) included comments of African American administrators experiencing their appointment being seen as acts of tokenism and being negatively impacted by a perceived association with affirmative action/minority programs. Heilmann et al’s (1997) and Ziegert and Hanges’ (2005) studies highlight that these perceptions revealing how contemporary

employment practices in community colleges may constitute obstacles for African Americans aspiring for a community college presidency. In addition their studies suggest African American administrators aspiring for a community college presidency may face a stigma of a perceived association with an affirmative action hiring program and that selection decisions “may be based on subjective preferences of decision makers that are not race- or gender-related but have some other origin, or on individual differences between applicants referred by review panels that are not easily captured by empirical research” (Powell & Butterfield, 1997, p. 125). I found absent in the literature reviewed here recommendations or strategies tailored to the African American male administrator for overcoming the obstacles associated with community college employment practice. Ziegert and Hanges (2005) do, however, point to a second theme arising in the literature as relates to career advancement opportunities for African American administrators: the influence of organizational culture/norms on employment and promotions in higher education.

Theme 2: The Influence of Social Norms On Promotions Within Higher Education

Scheff (1995) conceptualizes the patterns of behavior within the academy to those of youth street gangs. He begins from the premise that “a school of thought” or academic specialty can be viewed as binding membership’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors similar to the way that members of a street gang are bound together by what he calls “the code of the streets.” He goes on to comment that

in addition to membership in a specialty, all academics are also members of a super-gang or clan, the discipline [and] being a member in good standing of a gang and a supergang is crucially important for advancement on one’s career (Scheff, 1995, p. 157).

Scheff (1995) argues that gangland membership of good standing brings with it endorsements, and he argues “the endorser sincerely believes that the candidate has the stellar qualities endowed in the letter of recommendation; his or her judgment is more or less obliterated by a fierce sense of loyalty to the code of the gang” (p. 158). While Scheff’s (1995) discussions are limited to advancing a belief on the nature of university life, the literature reveals that this notion of group affiliation plays a role in career advancement activities within the academy and that African Americans are likely to encounter affiliation obstacles as they pursue executive-level leadership assignments in higher education (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998; Powell & Butterfield, 1997; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993).

Ibarra’s (1995) study of network utility for managers in the private sector appears to most parallel how community college administrators’ networks provide utility for career advancement in higher education. A central tenet in Ibarra’s (1995) study is that effectiveness in social networking is crucial for managerial success, and he defines informal managerial networks as “the set of job-related contacts that a manager relies on for access to task-related, career, and social support” (p. 674). For Ibarra (1995) a network’s instrumental utility can be viewed collectively in terms of (1) how diverse is the group affiliation and the resources this group affiliation offers one manager and not to another, and (2) the status of the contacts within that network or group affiliation. Ibarra’s (1995) review of the literature generated nine hypotheses for his mixed study of managerial networks and I cite all nine:

1. Minority managers will have a smaller proportion of homophilous (same-race) ties in their personal networks than will their White counterparts.
2. Minority managers will have a smaller proportion of intimate ties in their personal networks than will their White counterparts.

3. Minority managers will have fewer multiplex network ties than their White counterparts.
4. Minority group members with high potential for organizational advancement will have a higher proportion of minority contacts in their informal networks than both their White counterparts and less mobile minority counterparts.
5. Minority group members with high potential for organizational advancement will have networks with wider range than both their White counterparts and less mobile minority counterparts.
6. Minority group members with high potential for organizational advancement will have lower-status network contacts than both their White counterparts and less mobile minority counterparts.
7. Having a broad range of network contacts will be more predictive of perceived network utility for White than for minority managers.
8. Having high-status contacts will be more predictive of perceived network utility for White than for minority managers.
9. Having a high proportion of intimate and multiplex ties will be more predictive of perceived network utility for minority than for White managers. (Ibarra, 1995, pp. 676-682)

Ibarra's (1995) study produced three sets of findings:

1. When human capital variables, such as tenure and graduate education, and positional resources, such as rank and potential for advancement, were held constant, minority and White managers in comparable jobs differed in the homophily and intimacy of their organizational network ties.
2. Evidence for the role of individual strategies, as well as support for the pluralist, rather than assimilationist, perspective was obtained from the findings that high potential minorities differed from high potential Whites and non-high potential minorities in the range, status, and multiplexity of their network ties.
3. The race-based variation in the effects of range and status on perceptions of career utility provide additional support for a pluralist rather than assimilationist perspective on career strategies (pp. 693-694).

What does this mean for African American male administrators in American community colleges? Applying Ibarra's (1995) study to this question appears to suggest that African American male administrators in American community colleges (1) are more likely to have a heterophilous informal network than their White counterparts and consequently are less likely to benefit from the fierce loyalty associated with homophilous networks, and (2) that African American male administrators are inclined to

view certain networking strategies as non-productive and opt for alternative career advancement strategies. Mehra, Kilduff, and Brass (1998) examined this idea of opting for alternative career advancement strategies in their study of the marginalization of ethnic minorities in social networks and concluded the phenomenon stems both from exclusionary pressures and individual choice. Mehra et al's (1998) contention, however, lacks a response to the question of whether this individual choice is based on the individual's choice or is structured by the environment within which the individual finds himself or both.

Discussion in this section builds on Scheff's (1995) concept of academic gangs and academic supergangs to gain an understanding of potential career advancement challenges facing African American male administrators. This conceptual extension appeared reasonable since no commonality of academic specialty or discipline affiliation can account for the disproportionate number of Whites to ethnic minorities in what the literature identifies as a traditional pipeline to the community college presidency. Ibarra's (1995) study of race and social networks contends that Black managers experience lower levels of organizational acceptance because Blacks are less likely than their White counterparts to see assimilationist career management strategies as acceptable placing them at the margins of their organizations. Mehra et al (1998) suggests that African Americans are less likely to benefit from career advancement opportunities, regardless of their career potential, than their White counterparts. Absence to all of these contributors is a specific attention to the challenges that African American males face in contending with these organizational pressures as they pursue their careers in either the private or the public sector. The research conducted in this study sought to address this absence in the

literature by investigating how African American male administrators have navigated their academic environment in light of the above contentions regarding the relationship between social networks and career advancement.

As previously discussed, the literature reveals that “access discrimination” has an impact on the career opportunities of African Americans in community colleges. Further, the literature suggests that African Americans face “treatment discrimination” in their pursuit of career advancement opportunities in community colleges. What follows is a review of the literature that speaks to a particular form of treatment discrimination.

Theme 3: The Pathway to the Presidency

Many studies have reported on what has been called the traditional pathway to a community college presidency (Amey, VanDerLinden & Brown, 2002; Cejda, McKenney & Burley, 2001; Kubala & Bailey, 2001; Moore, Martorana & Twombly, 1985; Wessel & Keim, 1994; Vaughan, Mellander, & Blois, 1994). Cohen and March (1974) put forward the notion that there are five positions that individuals typically travel to the presidency: (a) faculty member, (b) unit chair, (c) dean, (d) provost or vice president for academic affairs, and (e) president. Kubala’s (1999) research of a group of recently appointed community college presidents reported similar findings. Participants in Kubala’s (1999) national study were identified using the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Community College Times*, and *Community College Week* and represented 30 states. Paralleling and supporting Vaughan’s (1986) work on community college presidency, Kubala (1999) surveyed 52 newly appointed presidents and found that 72.2% of the participants to his study had come to their presidency through the academic route with only 11.1% coming through the student services department. In a

later replicative study of 101 newly appointed presidents, Kubala and Bailey (2001) found again that the dominant route to a community college presidency was through the Chief Academic Officer position with 56.4% of the participants coming to the presidency through the academic route and 11% coming through the student services route. In neither of these studies does Kubala (1999, 2001) provide demography regarding the participants' ethnicity or gender. Nor does he take up a discussion of career obstacles that these newly appointed presidents faced on their road to the presidency. Instead, his research efforts focused on investigating how this group of newly appointed presidents experienced certain quantifiable issues (e.g., their pathway to the presidency, their motivation to serve as president, the best and worst aspect of the presidential search process, disappointments they had upon appointment, etc.). He aimed from this perspective to generate data that "might help to generalize the information acquired to future groups of newly appointed presidents" (Kubala & Bailey, 2001, p. 802). Thus, while Kubala's (1999, 2001) findings support a contention that a dominant pathway to a community college presidency exists, his work does not inform us regarding any specific barriers that African Americans administrators in general, or African American male administrators in particular, face on their road to becoming a community college president. Amey et al's (2002) research provides a glimpse into career advancement barriers African Americans administrators face in today's community colleges.

Casting community colleges in light of their comprehensive mission, increased organizational diversification, and significant social and economic demands, Amey et al (2002) asked two questions: who are the future leaders willing to guide community colleges and is the leadership experience changing, and thus coinciding with the changing

environment on the community college campus? The data presented in their report were designed to replicate earlier work in this area (Moore, Martorana, & Twombly, 1985). The study used 34 open-ended, closed-ended and Likert scale questions with additional questions employed to address contemporary issues. Survey respondents came from a stratified random sampling of 1700 community college administrators across 14 position codes drawn from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) databank. There was a 54% return of usable survey and quantitative variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and open-ended responses were content analyzed.

Of particular interest here were Amey et al's (2002) findings on two major routes to the community college presidency: the chief academic officer and the senior student affairs officer. The label "chief academic officer" was defined by Amey et al (2002) to reflect what is commonly called the academic route to the community college presidency and the "senior student affairs officer" label was understood as embracing the student services route to the community college presidency. Amey et al (2002) found that over half of the individuals participating in their study were promoted to their Chief Academic Officer (CAO) position from within their current institution. Approximately 58% of the study's participants on the academic route to the presidency were male, 89% of them were White, the average age was 54 years old, and 74% held a doctorate – with 40% of these individuals holding a Ph.D. Amey et al reports that these individuals came to their academic assignments from diversified career paths but

the largest percentage (51%) of CAOs immediate past positions were those that would be thought of as traditionally leading to the senior academic officer's position – similarly titled senior positions (8%); Associate, Assistant, or interim CAO (8%); Assistant, Associate, or Academic Dean or Dean of Instruction (31%); or Department Chair (4%) (p. 579).

The participants in Amey et al's (2002) study that held the position of Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAO) was demographically dissimilar to their CAO counterparts. Amey et al (2002) found these individuals on average 2 years younger than those holding CAO positions (52 years compared to 54 years), only 11% of these individuals came to their senior level position from the academic positions compared to 51% in the CAO pool, and cumulatively there were fewer doctorate degree in this population (47% compared to 74%). According to Amey et al (2002) there were more females in this pool than in the CAO category (54.8% compared to 42%), there are also more administrators of color in this pool (19.4% compared to 11%) "representing the greatest demographic diversity among the senior positions studied" (p. 581).

Amey et al (2002) argue "it is clear that while diversity has significantly increased for SSAOs in the last 20 years, movement into the presidency is still not common" (p. 581). They go on to say "such clustering into one position gives rise to the argument that at community colleges, leadership diversity has become an organizational *silo*" (Amey et al, 2002, p. 581). This concept of an *organizational silo*, according to Ribeau (2001), is the number one barrier to success in increasing the number of African American presidents, chief administrator officers, and deans in predominantly White colleges and universities (see Table 5, p. 76). That is, given the propensity of community colleges to lock African American administrators into what Ribeau calls "minority-focused positions" means African Americans are typically poorly positioned to travel the traditional route to presidency of one of America's community colleges. With the internal labor market as the dominant source of leader succession in community colleges, this organizational strategy, implied or overt, can be seen as an obstacle to Amey et al's

(2002) call for “[more] work to be done in generating diverse candidate pools for senior positions, in preparing younger generations of administrators with the skills and experiences that assist in promotion, and in promoting equity for the most senior positions” (p. 587).

What is absent in Amey et al’s (2002) and Ribeau’s (2001) discourses is a specific address of the career barriers facing African American male administrators aspiring to a community college presidency. While Amey et al identifies “administrators of color” and Ribeau speaks to conditions affecting “African Americans,” they both fall short in providing purposeful benefit derived from disaggregating their research data. This tendency to step aside of issues specifically facing African American male administrators aspiring to the community college presidency is common in the literature reviewed here. For example, while Vaughan’s (1989, 1994) “attempt to understand the community college presidency more fully, especially in relationship to the issues and opportunities faced by Black presidents” (p.18) is helpful in identifying procedural, institutional, and cultural barriers that “Blacks” face in attaining a presidency, he does not disaggregate his quantitative findings by gender. As a result, his research is not useful in preparing a gender-specific strategy for overcoming the identified career advancement obstacles faced by African American male administrators. Likewise, while Holmes (2004) does identify that 50% of the participants to her national study of African American presidents were males, and does conclude that “issues of race and class are salient factors perpetuating the underrepresentation of African American presidents in higher education” (p. 34), she does not report her findings as they exclusively relate to African American male administrators aspiring for a presidency.

Still further, Jackson's (2004) quantitative research explores the gains made by African Americans in executive-level administrative positions in higher education. Jackson (2004) quantitatively examined the representation of African Americans in executive-level positions at public and private college and universities in America using national data derived from a purposeful sample and considered through trend analysis. Jackson's (2004) analysis concluded, among other things, that affirmative action programs had not disadvantaged Whites in executive-level positions in the six years under investigation and that there had been a decline in African American representation in the executive-level positions of dean and vice president during that same period (p. 17). As mentioned of the other contributors to this section, Jackson's (2004) research also lacks a disaggregating perspective that would illuminate career advancement obstacles of African American male administrators in American community colleges. In a recent study, Jackson (2006), employing trend analyses and disparate impact theory, examined *Hiring Practices of African American Males in Academic Leadership Positions at American Colleges and Universities*. His quantitative study sought to "fill [a] void in the research literature regarding the employment status of African American male administrators and their comparison with other males in the higher and postsecondary education workforce" (Jackson, 2006, p. 317).

Relying on the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, Jackson (2006) investigated four questions:

1. Did the representation of African American males in academic leadership positions compared with other males change between 1993 and 1999 in higher and postsecondary education?
2. Have these changes affected the representation of African American males compared with other males in lower level (e.g., director) and upper level (e.g., academic dean) leadership positions in higher and postsecondary education?

3. Has this representation changed at the various types of higher and postsecondary education institutions?
4. To what extent do these employment trends support or refute that the hiring practices of African American and other males of color in academic leadership positions have an adverse impact on their selection? (pp. 317-318)

Jackson (2006) concluded that “the impact ratios for comparing African American males and other males of color with White males at all levels suggest that severe adverse impact exists in the hiring practices for Academic leadership positions in higher education” (p. 332). Put differently, during the period reviewed there was a decline in the absolute numbers of African American males participating in higher and postsecondary education institutions. Absent in Jackson’s (2006) research, primarily because of his use of trend analysis to frame his investigation, is an answer to why an adverse impact of African American males in higher and postsecondary education institutions is occurring or a strategy for African American males to overcome this adverse impact in light of prevailing hiring practices. The research conducted in this study leaves aside this question of why as well and seeks, in part, to respond to Jackson’s (2006) call “additional analysis of the workforce...to understand the significant adverse impact that does exist” (p. 334) by documenting how African American males have been successful in attaining a community college presidency. It is my opinion that such research will be of significance for “individual institutions of higher education that value diversity in leadership and decision-making positions [and are intent on conducting] an examination of human resources policies and practices, formal and informal, that impact protected groups” (Jackson, 2006, p.334).

In sum, the literature reviewed here identifies that the coming decade will provide an opportunity for a new generation of community college presidents and that a

traditional pathway to a community college presidency exists. The literature also identifies that administrators of color are, for the most part, poorly situated on the traditional pathway to a community college presidency to take advantage of these opportunities. This is especially significant for African Americans because the literature reports a decline in African American representation in executive-level positions that would traditionally lead to the presidency. The literature also shows an absence of research findings that could specifically facilitate African American male administrators seeking to advance to a community college presidency. The research conducted in this dissertation seeks to respond to this scarcity in the literature. I am guided in this purpose by Phelps et al (1997) and Bridges (1996) recommendations. Phelps et al (1997) assert

Research should be conducted to identify specific barriers to African Americans attaining the community college presidency. These barriers may be in the minds and values systems of board members, community leaders, and selection committee members. There may also be barriers in the minds and values systems of African American community college administrators and other who would consider a presidential role were it perceived as more attainable (p. 12).

Bridges (1996), drawing on the works of Haskins (1973) and Hirschorn (1988), argues

because little documentation exists that provides ‘how-to’ information for achieving success for African Americans, there is a burning need to document such how-to information that can be used by African Americans in their pursuit of success (p. 750).

Following these recommendations, this research focused on identifying barriers that African American male administrators encountered on their career path to a community college presidency. I believe, as Bridges (1996) has stated, “knowing the personal traits of these individuals, what decisions they have made, and what rewards they derive from their career choices can be helpful to other African American [males] who are seeking [presidential appointments] in [community colleges]” (p.751).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design Elements

Conceptually, I was guided in the design of this research project by the work of Tillman (2002). Tillman (2002) argues for the use of what she calls “culturally sensitive approaches” in the design of research and in the gathering and analyzing data focusing on African Americans. Tillman (2002) contends

when research about African Americans is approached from a culturally sensitive perspective, the varied aspects of their culture and their varied historical and contemporary experiences are acknowledged. From a culturally sensitive perspective, shared knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study are implied, and the individual and collective knowledge of African Americans is placed at the center of the inquiry (p. 3).

To that end, she offers a conceptual framework within which my research design aligned. More specifically, my research design contained four elements: *culturally congruent research approach; culturally specific knowledge; culturally sensitive data interpretation; and culturally informed theory and practice*. Brief definitions of each of these elements follow interwoven with comments on the research approach I used to embrace Tillman’s (2002) research framework.

Culturally Congruent Research Approach

Tillman (2002) writes,

culturally sensitive research approaches use qualitative methods such as interviews (individual, group, life history), observation, and participant observation. These and other qualitative methods are used to investigate and capture holistic contextualized pictures of the social, political, economic, and

educational factors that affect the everyday existence of African Americans, particularly in educational settings (p. 6).

My investigation of how African American males have experienced their journey to a community college presidency was best suited in the phenomenological tradition (Creswell, 1998, p.37). Particularly because the research efforts were (a) to gain an appreciation for a perspective that is rarely revealed in the research literature and (b) to understand African American male presidents' perceptions and interpretation of opportunities for and obstacles to achieving their community college presidency. Grounding my research efforts in the phenomenological tradition allowed me to set aside my preconceptions of the structure and nature that career advancement barriers to a community college presidency might take for African American male administrators and to seek a shared investigation of this phenomenon by myself as researcher and the study participants (Simpson, Dickinson & Greenblatt, 2005) through a semi-structured interview process.

Culturally Specific Knowledge

On this element, Tillman (2002) states

culturally sensitive research approaches use the particular and unique self-defined (Black self-representation) experiences of African Americans. Researchers carefully consider the extent of their own cultural knowledge, cross-race and same-race perspectives, and insider and outsider issues related to the research process. (p. 6).

A criterion-based sampling was employed to select the African American male participants to this study (Patton, 1990). The study's five participants were either sitting or recently retired executives with titles consistent with the definition of "president" utilized in my research efforts (e.g., System President, Chancellor/Superintendent, Campus President, or President). My investigative interactions with these participants

followed Larkin, Watts, and Clifton's (2006) assertion of the two aims of an interpretative phenomenological study. Larkin et al (2006) state "the first aim [of an interpretative phenomenological study] is to try to understand their participants' world, and to describe *what it is like*" (p. 104). They go on to assert the second aim of interpretative phenomenological approach to a qualitative study is

To develop a more overtly *interpretative* analysis, which positions the initial 'description' in relation to a wider social, cultural, and perhaps even theoretical, context. This second-order account aims to provide a critical and conceptual commentary upon the participants' personal 'sense-making' activities. This interpretative analysis affords the researcher an opportunity to deal with the data in a more speculative fashion: to think about 'what it means' for the participants to have made these claims, and to have expressed these feeling and concerns *in this particular situation* (Larkin et al, 2006, p. 104).

Thus, to achieve the aims identified by Larkin et al (2006) each research participant was asked the following interview questions:

1. How did you come to a career in community colleges?
2. Can you describe for me your professional journey to the community college presidency?
3. When you think back on your career, what and/or who did you think was most influential in your success? Please explain.
4. In your opinion, what were the essential qualities and characteristics that enabled you to take advantage of the career advancement opportunities you sought?
5. What professional and social barriers did you encounter in your career advancement efforts and how did you overcome those barriers?

Follow-up interview questions arose from my interactions with each research subject. Individual interviews were captured on a digital recorder and transcribed from .wav files. A bonded transcription company was used to transcribe the digital files and efforts were taken to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants including the

“scrubbing” of any data that might lead to revealing their identity, geographic location, or community college affiliation. After an interview was transcribed, I again met with the contributor to ensure accuracy of the transcribed data and conducted a follow-up interview to add richness to the data collected (see Appendices A-C).

Culturally Sensitive Data Interpretation

According to Tillman (2002)

culturally sensitive research approaches for African Americans position experiential knowledge as legitimate, appropriate, and necessary for analyzing, understanding, and reporting data. Analysis and presentation that is appropriate to the research topic and the individual or group under study is co-constructed. Storytelling, family histories, biographies, narratives, and other forms of data presentation may be used. The cultural standpoints of African Americans provide endarkened analyses of their particular experiences in American society (p. 6).

I believe adopting a view of “career experiences as narratively constructed and narratively lived” allowed for (a) gaining a deeper understanding of these African American male community college presidents’ feelings/hopes, and moral dispositions as they interacted in an American community college setting and (b) placing those career experiences in a thematic format that will benefit other African American male administrators aspiring for a community college presidency. I sought as an outcome for this study, as Larkin et al (2006) have stated, “a renewed insight into the ‘phenomenon at hand’ – informed by the participant’s own relatedness to, and engagement with, that phenomenon” (p. 117). The interpretative approach to phenomenological analysis I used focused on determining what career advancement opportunities and challenges mean for a select group of five African American male community college presidents. From their individual descriptions, I derived the essences of structures of lived experiences (Creswell, 1998, p. 53). Philosophically, I believe as Coffey and Atkinson (1996) have

stated, “narrative analysis ... complements and counteracts the ‘culture of fragmentation’ that is so characteristic of data analyses based on coding and categorizing” (p. 80).

Consistent with this belief, I used a holistic-content approach to data analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998). That is, as Lieblich et al (1998, p. 12) put it, in my analysis I “concentrated on the explicit content of an account, namely, what happened, or why, who participated in the event, and so on, all from the standpoint of the teller” and look “for patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual’s experience and in a social setting” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132).

To ensure that the themes developed from analysis of this study’s field data are credible and trustworthy I employ a variety of strategies as outlined by Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, and Richardson (2005). Namely,

1. *Researcher Reflexivity* – I sought, throughout my data collection efforts, to understand and self-disclose my assumptions, beliefs, values, and biases regarding the topic of this research (see *A Research Caution* p. 20 above);
2. *Member Checks* – I conducted two levels of member checks. First, I took transcriptions to the participants prior to analyses and interpretation of results. Second, I took analyses and interpretations of data to the participants (prior to publication) for validation of (and support for) my conclusions;
3. *Collaborative Work* – I worked with my Committee Chair and Methodologist in designing this study and in concurring about the conclusions to ensure that my analyses and interpretations are not idiosyncratic and/or biased;
4. *Audit Trail* – I kept track of the interviews conducted, including specific dates and times of the interviews, to document and substantiate that sufficient time was spent in the field to claim dependable and confirmable results;
5. *Thick, Detailed Description* – I report, in Chapter 4 below, sufficient quotes and field note descriptions to provide evidence for my interpretations and conclusions; and
6. *Particularizability* – I document my interviews with thick description so that readers, especially African American male administrators aspiring for a community college presidency, can determine the degree of transferability to their own situations. (p. 201).

Culturally Informed Theory and Practice

Tillman (2002) contends

culturally sensitive research approaches can lead to the development of theories and practices that are intended to address the culturally specific circumstances of the lives of African Americans. Researchers rely on participants' perspectives and cultural understanding of the phenomena under study to establish connections between espoused theory and reality and then to generate theory based on these endarkened perspectives. Researchers use culturally informed knowledge to propose educational change and work to build meaningful, productive relationships with the nonacademic community (p. 6).

I am hopeful that the publication of my research findings in such scholarly journals like *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* (CCJRP) might lead to the development of theoretical framework. Lewis and Middleton's (2003) study of published articles in the CCJRP between 1990 and 2000 found that of the approximately one thousand articles published by this journal during this period, only 2 of those articles focused directly on experiences of African American administrators, and then only 1 of those 2 articles was qualitative in nature, and neither of these 2 studies focused exclusively on the challenges faced by African American male administrators aspiring for a community college presidency. Perhaps my findings will provide CCJRP, and organizations like *The Center for African American Research and Policy*, the opportunity to take up scholarly dialogue and/or a discussion of best practices that might serve to address the career advancement challenges facing African American male administrators aspiring for a community college presidency. I believe as Tillman (2002) asserts "the usefulness of culturally sensitive research approaches for African Americans will, to a great degree, be determined by scholars who conduct research and write about this group" (p. 9).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

Moore (1998) argues that “regardless of work experiences, educational preparation, community involvement, fund-raising, or other qualifications included in position announcements for community college presidents, only two doors lead to employment...they are inside and outside” (p. 1). By definition, Moore says

a person enters the presidency through the inside door when he or she is an employee of the college upon selection or enters through the outside door when he or she is not employed by the college at time of selection. (p. 1)

Per Moore’s description, the respondents to this study were both *insiders* and *outsiders*. On average, the five participants in this study possessed more than 30 years of experience in postsecondary educational institutions, all but one of the respondents had a terminal advance degree (e.g., EdD or PhD) and all possessed impressive resumes of service to the academy and the community. Taken together, I found their stories signaling, for all who would follow in their footsteps, a trek of “overcoming unique and relatively burdensome obstacles” (Wilson, Sakura-Lemesse, & West, 1999, p.166). All of the participants agreed to be involved in this study because of a consensus agreement “to give back. Someone helped me. We have to help each other...for the next generation.”

To better understand the participants’ journeys to an American community college presidency, I have used an interpretative approach to phenomenological analysis focused on “the explicit content of an account, namely, what happened, or why, who participated in the event, and so on, all from the standpoint of the teller”... and...looked

“for patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual’s experience and in a social setting” (Lieblich et al, 1998, p. 12). Of special note, the five Participants to this study will not be introduced so as to maintain a promised confidentiality for their participation here.

Responses to Interview Questions

This section presents the five participants’ responses to the five research questions and provides “an interpretative analysis [of field] data [focused on]... ‘what it means’ for the participants to have made these claims, and to have expressed these feeling and concerns *in this particular situation*” (Larkin et al, 2006, p. 104). Through the collection of field data, categorized into these research questions, my aim was twofold: (a) to produce an objective record of the phenomenological event and (b) to have the data serve as a basis for generating key themes. Reporting the participants’ responses to this study’s research questions, I will be providing quotes and field note descriptions as (a) evidence for my interpretations and conclusions and (b) a basis for readers, especially African American male administrators aspiring to a community college presidency, to determine the degree of transferability to their own situations.

Interview Question One: How did you come to a career in community colleges?

The entry into the community college system for these five participants was not the traditional full-time, tenure-track teaching positions; rather, they entered the community college system as adjunct faculty members, as long-term subs, and as classified employees. Participant One recounted coming from the private sector into the community college system as a long-term sub for a faculty member who was on sabbatical. Participant Five was a returning Vietnam era veteran who “wound up teaching

part-time at [a college] I had attended.” Several participants were working at universities before they joined the community college system, including one who came from a Historically Black College and Universities (HBCU) institution and entered the system as a classified employee within student services.

While the pathway to the community college system was diverse, all participants shared a common goal in making the transition to the community college system: that of helping disadvantaged populations. For Participant One, for instance, the gravitation of young Black students to him is reason enough to try to help these same students:

Well, I’ve always worked in these types of institutions, first of all. I’ve always worked in an urban setting. And I’ve seen, when I was teaching because I was young, Black I would, you know, the Black students would gravitate to me. And they’d tell me about what was happening in their Anthro class, and soc class, what this teacher said, what this English teacher said. They’d bring me their paper that they got all these red marks on. I’m looking at it, is it really that bad? They were being subjected to things that they felt they knew were not right. And so I saw it. I began to see it, and began to counsel these students, how can you combat some of that?

Participant Two was much more explicit and directed in his goal of helping disadvantaged populations:

I think it was the fact that my aspirations were to be a college president, and I move from thinking about the HBCUs to the community college system because of the population. You’re still serving under-prepared students, you’re still serving people who really need a boost in life like myself been the first to attend college in their family. I felt that it was a good niche for me.

He went on to say,

...for me to work in the community college system is a good match for my skill set and my interests and working with students who need a boost and need some hope. And I feel good about working.

For Participant Three, being able to expand his ability to help students from the classroom to the broad canvas of a college was the goal:

I think also at that point in time you start to look at what impact can one have on vision and mission but also helping to better serve a very broad perspective of students and trying to translate what I had learned in a very small microcosmic in a classroom and how I can expand that to meet needs of students.

Even though Participant Four made the transition from the university system to the community college system “strictly for the money,” the job he took allowed him to help students in need:

I did whatever I felt like for kids and helped. As a matter of fact, I have a plaque from those days in the office right here and now, bought by the kids, out of their own little money that said, “thank you for helping me.” It was a chance where I had thought I was really making a difference in kids’ lives. And I look back and we can still talk with some of those kids 30 years later. Those lives were impacted by the time we spent together.

The responses revealed that the participants chose diverse approaches to pursuing this common goal of helping disadvantaged populations. I understood the participants’ responses to emphasize how they went about achieving this common goal of helping disadvantaged populations. Thus, for example, this study’s classroom faculty participants focused on helping Black students perform in the classroom; while student services faculty participants focused on campus support services that aimed to provide increased self-esteem for students. All the participants saw the choice to enter the community colleges as a good match between their personal skills and the common goal of helping disadvantaged populations. As Participant Two put it, “I felt that it was a good niche for me.”

Interview Question Two: Can you describe for me your professional journey to the community college presidency?

The journey to an American community college presidency for the five participants was both from the *inside* and from the *outside* (Moore, 1998). That is, one of the participants advanced to the presidency from his incumbent institution and the other

four participants ascended to the presidency at another institution. All participants acknowledged an inherent difficulty in becoming community college president at an incumbent institution for a variety of reasons and emphasized the need for aspirants to be open to “moving” for that first community college presidency. Still further, in response to this research question, the five participants recounted experiencing their journey in four ways: external mobility; internal mobility; positional; and emotional.

External Mobility

External mobility is defined as having to move away from one’s incumbent institution in order to advance in career. All five participants described their journey in terms of facing a career decision that required them to move away from their incumbent position to take on a more responsible position at another institution. These moves were reported as geographic; involving different types of environment; and entailing opportunities in enrichment of experience and perspectives.

Participant One chose to move only locally when opportunities to advance his career were presented, while Participant Five chose regional mobility as a career advancement strategy. The journey for another participant took him from [State] to [State] to [State] to [State] and back to [the originating State]. Still another participant went from the south of a State to northern part of the State only to return to the southern part of the State, going from an urban to a rural setting back to urban environment.

Participant Four recalled his first move,

I had to leave...to get a significant promotion because I was so young, and I was willing to go anywhere to take the assignment. I did it again for the money, not really knowing much about the assignment. They offered me from \$16,000 to \$26,000 in a year and maybe two months. And I thought, “Let’s see 16 to 26? That’s a \$10,000 raise over \$16,000. That’s another close to 40% increase in salary.” Being as someone who can count, 40% raises don’t

come regularly. So I took the assignment. It was in a small town in the middle of nowhere where there were very few ethnic minorities. As a matter of fact, there were three ethnic minorities on the campus. The custodian, me, and a guy I hired.

Participant One suggested a rationale for these then-presidential aspirants to feel the necessity to be mobile in the pursuit of their career goals. He speculated,

...one of the major characteristics that you probably have to be willing to leave—move to one—go to more than one institution, because you're not just going to stay 30 years in one place and end up ascending to presidency. That's not how it happens.

He concluded,

People are not really appreciated in their own backyard as much as they sometimes will be if they leave and go someplace else. There's a premium, particularly in presidencies bringing folks from the outside to bring in new perspective, have a different take on things... So I think that that's probably why it's easier for a person to develop that resume by moving around, having different experiences. And it's probably good also to have a little eclecticism in your background where you've been in different institutions.

The participants' responses suggest for me that staying with a single community college can limit career advancement opportunities of African American male presidential aspirants. Furthermore, they felt that being open to external career advancement opportunities, aspirants will gain a deeper perception of and understanding for contemporary community colleges. The participants perceived a benefit in having external mobility as a career option; namely it gave them the option of going where they would be appreciated, have the opportunity to demonstrate existing skills; and to acquire new skills that would serve them well in pursuing further career advancement opportunities.

Internal Mobility

All participants experienced a variety of assignments inside their incumbent institutions on their journey to the presidency (internal mobility). For example, Participant One, after a short period in the full-time faculty ranks, got a lay-off notice and his journey was diverted to a position in the District's Institutional Research Office.

Then I got a layoff notice and so he knew he had hired me and he knew I had background in statistics, and had done research in graduate school. So he said, maybe you can come as a faculty at another time, today be a coordinator of research. They never had research in the district. So he's trying to save my job. So he brought me to the district office, and I started working as a researcher. One thing lead to another; they made that into a permanent research and planning job.

For Participant Three the journey to a community college presidency began in a specifically-funded program (SFP) and later took him outside the community college system to a K-12 institution before returning to a community college assignment. He recalled the SFP grant position (Director of the Business Training Center) as the first "full-time perspective" he had of community colleges and went on to say "when the funds ended, the job ended." He left the community college system after that assignment and "took a little different avenue and went to work for a private proprietary school." Participant Four recounted his "first assignment in community colleges... was [as] the Assistant Financial Aid Officer..." He went on to comment how he had to take on two jobs at once to make it into the instructional ranks.

And the president said, "I want you to have both of those assignments and I'm not giving you any more money. You're going to be the Director of Financial Aid and the Director of Admissions and Records. And by the way, you're going to do it for the same amount of money because I want to broaden your base." I thought he wanted to take advantage of me. I thought the man was out of his mind. It turns out it was the greatest assignment he could ever give to me.

I interpret these responses to point to the benefit varied assignments can offer an African American male presidential aspirant. All participants recognized the limits of incumbent positions, sought and accepted skill development opportunities in other positions, and used those opportunities to acquire requisite skills that they would have otherwise been unable to learn. This sentiment related to the third way in which participants experienced their journey to a community college presidency: positional.

Positional Variety

None of the participants held the same number of positions before they ascended to the presidency of an American community college. I noted that the number of positions held within the community college system varied depending on the number of positions held in higher education outside the American community college system. For example, Participant One had no higher education experience outside the community college system and went through eight positions before he became a community college president. In contrast, Participant Three had ten years of higher education outside the community college system before he accepted a full-time tenure track faculty position and two years later he was Vice President of Academic Affairs and not long after made the move to the presidency.

The responses revealed that *positional variety* was defined by the participants as “how one is positioned to ascend to the presidency.” For the participants it was beyond what positions they had held, even beyond what they learned in those positions or what skills they acquired on their journey to the presidency. Participant Four’s responses captured this sentiment expressed by the participants regarding their journey to the

presidency. Speaking of this positional experience in terms of the interview process

Participant Four recalled,

I interviewed a dozen times before I got to the second level. And I interviewed six times the second level before I got the first assignment as president. And every time I go back and get that thin letter in the mail that says, We thank you for your interview and I know I didn't do it, I'd get depressed. But then, somehow or another, the spirit of, You know? I come from a long line of poor people who never quit. The idea of quitting was like, I'm hurt and I'm upset. But I ain't givin' up. This ain't the first time I've been knocked down. I'm going to see if I can get up again. And getting up a dozen times, every time you get up, you drag a little harder. Because the first few times, you think, Well okay. I've got this. It won't be on the next one. Then after a dozen times, you think, What am I doing wrong? Why don't they like me? You start personalizing it. And then you have to get somebody to help you understand that it ain't personal. And to understand what the assignment is. I didn't understand what I was interviewing for the first 10 times or so. I read the job description and thought that's what they were looking for.

On these remarks, I questioned Participant Four why he thought that was the case.

According to Participant Four "the job description tells you very little about the presidency." He went on to explain

I was given the book. The book. The blue book. A sitting white president, female, said, *I understand you've been interviewing. It's time for you to have the book.* I didn't even know there was a book. It's a compilation of every question ever asked in a presidential interview. And she said, *I'm going to pass the book on to you.* I'm going to show you the book right now. Let's see if I have it handy. I have it on my shelf at my house. It's a compilation in a one-inch binder, of all the questions at that time, ever asked by a committee. You can get those questions now online. AACC publishes them for you. But I had to practice with the book. I didn't know people had a whole set of questions all ahead of time. It was like being in a fraternity where you can go to the library and get all the old tests. The old tests were being published. I didn't know. Once I got all the old tests, I knew how to study for the next test. And I started getting a second interview. It took a half dozen times because it wasn't just about the test or answering the questions. It was about, *Do we like this person? Can we work with this person? Does this person represent the values visually before they even speak? Do their ideas go with our ideas? Not that they're right or wrong. Are they our ideas? Is the fit right with this person?*" I interviewed with people who got jobs who I knew I was better than. Not because I knew I was better, but because they didn't want what I had. And that's fair. You can't make people want you. It's like making somebody love you. You can't do it. And if you've got to force them to love you, it's going

to be a short marriage or a short relationship. Because one of you is going to be mad.

Participant Three also spoke of this “hidden” knowledge essential to the pursuit of community college presidency. He asserted,

The information is out there. It’s the ability to access that information. We talk about helping individuals get to a level where they can become Presidents. The President’s Round table has had mentoring programs since 1994. You’ve got some good programs around that have good people in them that assist in that. We’ve got to get more word out regarding the programs that we have in our universities, but, at the same time, make those concerted efforts to get folks within this pipeline. We need to be looking at those folks who are ready – their next level is the presidency. We’ve seen a decrease in the number of folks coming into [community colleges]... Who’s helping them?... Who’s pushing their agenda in these institutions? Because if someone is not pushing [that agenda] then [recent entrants] not going to go [for the presidency]. You’ve got a lot of folks who are committed, but they’ve got to be pushed to the agenda. That’s a role that I think we all play in pushing that agenda.

From these interviews, I understood “positional variety” to be both knowledge-based and relationally-based. I interpreted their stories to stress a benefit to being relationally positioned so that a presidential aspirant can acquire essential hidden knowledge and so that such mentoring associations can help one advance a specific career agenda. Moreover, it was in their descriptive responses of their journeys, that participants revealed for me a fourth way they experienced their journey to the presidency: the emotional journey.

Emotional Journey

While the participants in this study experienced a variety of emotions (i.e., frustration, elation, anger, depression, self-doubt, etc.) on their journey to a community college presidency, all participants experienced race emotionally. For these African American males, race is a daily fact of life; it is a statement of fact. As Participant Five put it, “we live in a society where race is a factor.” Participant Two recalled,

I was born in Mississippi. Seeing some of the misfortune of segregation and knowing that you had to be confident and focused if you're going into education. Especially in [deleted] which I consider a very segregated city. The guy who was my mentor should've been the first African American chancellor but wasn't chosen. And it was unfortunate for us that it didn't happen. And so I think it becomes blatant racism.

Participant Four recalled a unique experience with race as a daily part of his journey to a community college presidency. He noted experiencing race emotionally not only as an "insider" bearing the brunt of racial experience but also as an "outsider" witnessing the application of race as a negative experience to another group of individuals. Participant Four recalled,

Well, it was small town, very rural. And let me tell you the truth. Because I was Black and they weren't used to discriminating against Black people, that was okay. They were used to discriminating against Indians. So the Negro in town was the Indian. The no count Indians, the drinking Indians, and the thieving, lying Indians? That's who they held all the viral, visceral resentment against. The Native American people.

He explained, "being Black and having been born and raised in the south it was the first time I had seen [another group of people] being the subject of derision. Participant Three experienced race emotionally throughout his career advancement. He recalled how race was intimately interwoven with his journey to a community college presidency,

I am a product of the affirmative action era and I recognize what affirmative action does. But, I've always put myself in the position that I'm not an African-American President. I'm a President on behalf of the populations served. There's a historical prospective with affirmative action. I don't care if you even talk about the hiring of faculty. It wasn't until late 80s early 90s that this whole diversity thing started to hit and trying to get more folks to look like people like your audiences and your community and your classrooms. And still, you struggle with that because you're still in a 70%-75% White faculty. As you go up the scale, it's not just a White faculty per say. It's a White male faculty.

He went on to say,

I've seen many of my colleagues who I'm close to who have been shunned because of who they are. The other biggest issue is that I do have concerns with –

oftentimes I see many Anglo Presidents who have committed hari kari and everything else under the sun and get a second Presidency in less time than it takes for some Black folk to get a first President. I have a friend right now who was removed from his presidency and he's excellent; and it's been 2½ years. Another friend who just got a presidency; but he'd been out for close to 2 years. [With] an Anglo President there's a lot of helping hands. When you take an African-American or Hispanic President for that fact there are very limited helping hands even from within. [For us], it's we can't touch them because we can't do this because . . . on the other side of the equation it's can we bring him in.

Participant One spoke of how race is experienced differently for African American males than for African American females in an emotional sense. According to him,

I think being an African American man in education there's a little bit of racism that you encounter. Be it subtle, there's a little bit of racism even in enlightened environments. There is some racism that the African American man experiences more so than an African American woman in the same position.

He went on to say,

I think all Black men take a little bit of culture paranoia around with them all the time. I think all Black men, no matter where they are, they've had certain kinds of experiences, when you pass a cop on the street, you're driving in your car, you have a tendency to look in the rear-view mirror even though you're doctor this, or you're President that. You have a tendency to look in the mirror to see if he going to stop you. That's something that we do. That's that culture paranoia--... So you take it along with you into these positions so I'm sitting with my Academic Senate President and I'm telling him that we needed to change the allocation of our staff development funds, it just didn't seem right to me, that the allocation was very inequitable. And we're not giving equal amount across the various categories, and I thought we should. [the conversation went something like this] You trust my judgment? It's not that I don't trust your judgment. You distrust my judgment? It's not that I don't trust your judgment, it's just that I think that this is the right thing to do. This was the allocation before. I'm being sensitive to the fact that we shouldn't put it all into conferences so everybody can go to conferences. Well, it just seems like you're trying to mandate something. It's that kind of thing. It's almost like it's challenging my authority. Had that come from someone else, possibly a woman, it would not have been like me challenging this Academic Senate President who was a male as opposed to someone else coming in. I don't think they would've seen it in that way. I had observed nothing like this battle the last time around when she had done it. I'm in the district. I hear about this stuff. I'm thinking we need to put it more in one area, so I'm just doing the same thing she did but it became personal kind of thing. I can understand from a

female administrator, but from a... And she's Black. It's like a challenge thing. You always keep in the back of your mind, are you being, is your decision being disagreed with because it's a bad decision, or is it just a challenge of you as the head person because of who you are. When in fact, you have history you've seen similar kinds of decisions made, it wasn't a problem then, why is there a problem now?

Collectively, the participants provided numerous examples of race as a daily experience and evidenced their journey in an emotional sense. These "*race as an emotional experience*" examples ranged from experiencing blatant racism to being the subject of derision to not being the subject of derision to being treated differently simply because of birth station as an African American male. Informed by the participants' retelling of emotionally-laden experiences along their journey to the presidency, I noted it was the participants' ability to navigate these emotional landscapes that was one essential factor in their successful career advancement efforts. As relates to the study here, race as an emotional experience was discovered to be a daily occurrence both professionally and personally.

Interview Question Three: When you think back on your career, what and/or who did you think was most influential in your success? Please explain that.

All five participants in this study acknowledged being influenced on their journey to the presidency of an American community college. More specifically, they identified three major categories of influences that had an impact on their journey to the presidency: familial, professional, and legislative.

Familial Influence

For Participant Five the influences on his pursuit of an American community college presidency occurred long before he began his professional career. According to him,

I'd start with my parents. There's no substitute for that. A good work ethic—neatness, politeness that kind of thing opens doors for you. I talk to a lot of young folks all the time. I tell them the same thing, that first image that comes across is one I hope is still that way, of one of a person that's neat, that's clean, that's polite. And that came from my parents, help raising us in a way to be, to put forth that right image.

Participant Two was “the first in [his] family to attend college...and ...my brothers and sisters have not gotten college degrees even today.” He offered,

But I had a cousin who also was a year ahead of me who preceded me in getting a PHD. And he's now president of [deleted]. But he was out here in California for a number of years as vice chancellors. We kind of had this healthy competition. So that helped me, so we kind of like then, like brothers more so than cousins. And higher education was he got his PHD, he said, you got to work on your PHD so I said sure, why not.

I noted in their responses that not only did family influence the participants toward the goal of a community college presidency, family also influenced Participant One in terms of the type of career decisions he made on his journey to the presidency. He recounted,

I never finished my PHD for one thing. My parents got sick; and I came home. I did all my comprehensives. I even wrote a draft of my dissertation, but I never finished it. My parents got sick. I had to really deal with them. I'm the oldest boy in the family. In our family that was a real hook. I had to take the responsibility for it. So I came back. My mother moved in with me. I just never got back to it.

Several of the participants evoked a contemporary saying that it takes a village to raise a child. Participant Four spoke of how this notion influenced his career journey. According to him,

Neither [of my parents] were educated, but I had two of them who understood right and wrong. Good and bad. They didn't always do right and wrong, but understood it...I had a community that helped me...when I was stepping out of line, they called home and said, “Your boy is out of line.” That I had my uncles around me. That I had family. And I mean “family” in the broadest context. That I had people who were not self motivated, but who saw the future in me and helped propel that future, made a difference. I can tell you about [deleted], my high school math teacher...my high school principal who pushed me in a direction and said, “Boy, you can do this. Even though nobody in your family ever did it, you can do this.” They made me think I could. Even though there was no evidence

that I could, they made me think I could. And then when I got to college, there was this guy who later became the University of [deleted] Assistant President who said, “Boy, I think you can. You can do this.

I discovered that family influences were experienced by the participants on their journey to a community college presidency in a variety of ways, including the type of strategies they chose or didn’t choose and even how they employed those strategies. Most noteworthy here was the way the participants spoke of these familial influences as “balancing” influences on their journey. On a pathway wrought with instability, these familial influences provided the Participants with intrapersonal stability.

Professional Influence

Participant Five mentioned counselors both at the secondary and postsecondary levels who influenced him. As he put it, “there are people that saw in me more than I saw in myself.” This appreciation of what is called here professional influence was reflected in other participant’s responses to this question. For example, Participant One recounted,

Well, I had the president that hired me became the vice Chancellor then became the Chancellor of the district. And he was always a mentor. He hired me as a teacher, I kind of looked up to him, he always kind of mentored me. In [deleted] there were several African Americans in positions of leadership for long periods of time during the 70s and the 80s. [deleted] at one time out of the five colleges, they had three Black presidents. And four Black Deans. Deans of Instruction. Lot of Deans. Lot of African Americans and minorities in positions of leadership. So I was able to be exposed to that in the [deleted] district. And sort of as with any large institution you got your good and your bad. But I was able to see good leadership, bad leadership, effective leadership, ineffective leadership. Thank God I had that wisdom to be able to discern between these. And I gravitated to the people that were really strong leaders. And they basically took me under their wings and helped me.

He went on to say,

And they were not all people of color, either. One Jewish guy...used to be the Dean at one of the colleges and then became vice Chancellor. I learned more from him than I learned from anybody. I learned how to get into a budget, he showed me where all the dead bodies were literally. All the dead bodies were; how the

colleges maintain their little slush funds by taking salary savings, where the money was hid in the district budget. I got to go in and look at the opening budget at the end of the expenditure, if you do that for a couple years, three years you'll see that there's a tendency where always got this extra money in benefits, you always got all this extra money in utilities, always got this extra money in salaries, and at the end of the year you don't spend it all. I learned a lot of that from him. He really kind of showed me a lot—quite a bit. That was really the person that sharpened my skills. Gave me a real dose in management. He supervised me when I became a manager. He was my first supervisor. That was a tremendous help.

Participant One concluded,

I think that having people that have walked the path you're walking on, or would like to walk on is always good. To have a sounding board, if you can develop those relationships, if they're available. In some settings they're not available. I know of a couple of cats in environments that they just couldn't find. Those folks are mentors. Maybe you got to be somebody outside of the district, or outside of the state. But yeah, I think having some folks that you can just kind of call up, man, such and such is happening, have you ever had this experience? That helps. Having presidents elsewhere that you can just call upon to get there... There's a lot of experience collectively when you look at just the folks that are in presidencies now, be those White or Black it doesn't matter—White, Black Brown or Yellow. If you can call up the president at [deleted] College and be able to talk to him about a situation that they may've experienced before that you see rising on your campus, how did you handle it? That's always a help. Even if you don't have the formal mentor relationship, as long s like some colleagues that you can call upon who've maybe experienced some similar things. That's invaluable. In my district I got my Chancellor. I've got the President at [deleted]. We all came up through this... We came in approximately the same time. And so whenever I got a question or something like that, that I'm dealing with, I can always call one of them, and get... If that doesn't work, call somebody in [deleted]... I know a couple people in your district. You can just check with and just see what the heck is going on and how can you handle it. So those relationships is very important. I think it's also really key... It helps to go to one of those leadership training, they got several of them. They got the ACE, the ACCA, I think even Harvard has some kind of thing. Those, that's always good to do. I was an ACE fellow back in 80. That year was like a real eye-opening year for me. There's 36 in our ACE fellowship class, and we're all around the country. Some are in four-year institutions, some are two-year institutions. And I just learned a ton. "So as I said, even if you don't have the relationships within your district, or within the state, it's good just to have folks you can call and get their feedback on things. It's always good to have that network. That's always good. And for Black presidents—African American presidents. They have the President's Roundtable. Which is a group of black presidents that periodically

come together to talk about issues that are affecting African Americans who are in positions of leadership.

Participant Four echoed the role mentoring influenced these African American males' journey to the presidency of an American community college. He recalled,

And then I met [deleted] or for that matter, I met [deleted] who said, I think you can. Go to Washington DC and find me some money. He sent me from [deleted] to Washington DC. First time in my life. They say, Go get on an airplane and see if you can find us some money in Washington. I had no idea where I was going. He said, I think you can. Why don't you fly from here, go to DC. Don't know which office you're going to. But go see if you can find us some money. Because I think you can. Whether I could or not was irrelevant. They believed I could. And to have somebody believe in you. To have somebody support you and have somebody guide you. And just minimal guidance. Not force feeding. But minimal, structural guiding helped channel my energies in certain directions. And I think that's what I learned. That's the advice that I would pass on. Find somebody who is not trying to build themselves on your head, but trying to build you.

For Participant Three "having a strong cadre of mentors and colleagues you can call on" influenced his journey. According to him,

I have been – I hate the word "lucky," but it's been good to have the number of mentors that I've had. I can go right down the line with them and what each one of them has brought to the table for me and knowing that I can pick up that phone and call them right now. A great deal of them are retired, but I can still call them. There are some that we started around the same period of time. You start saying "What are you doing down there? What are you doing up here? Can I call you about this?" You start to get that type of network together. That is tremendously important.

He went on to say,

There's a group of Presidents and what we do – we know what we have to do when we are in our zone if you will. If we're going to a conference – who's going so we can at least at that point in time relax among all of us because we all share the same types of issues.

In response to this question, the participants revealed the need for a stable base on the journey to the presidency of an American community college. Family, friends, professional colleagues, mentors all played in influential role in their journey. The

participants didn't limit this pool of influential individuals by gender or ethnicity. In fact, they revealed this network of influential individuals was more likely to be heterophilous rather than homophilous in nature.

Legislative Influence

As I mentioned earlier, these participants averaged more than 30 years of experience in postsecondary educational institutions. Participant Five spoke of how the legislative climate at that time was influential in his journey to the presidency. He recalled,

there was a lot of pressure for hiring African American faculty at that time which helped. And I acknowledged that foremost. There was pressure; affirmative action guidelines and things like that, that had those not existed there wouldn't have been the pressure to go out and bring somebody in like me. Folks of my generation that don't acknowledge that are probably asleep. I'm very much aware that those circumstances existed at that time and they don't now.

Participant Four likewise spoke of directly experiencing this legislative influence.

According to him,

I was a classified employee in Student Services; and I was hired because I was an ethnic minority. Not because I had any particular skills. I was just hired in the initial assignment as a result of a court order that forced a college to integrate its faculty and staff if it wanted to continue receiving federal funds. And they thought I was a fairly harmless new college graduate. That I would satisfy the criteria of being an ethnic minority; and I wouldn't offend too many people; and I wouldn't screw up the system too badly.

Thus, all participants' responses revealed that their career advancement opportunities were made available by or limited by the cultural norms reflected in social legal conditions. In sum, I discovered from the interviews how the participants saw these influences interacting with each other. For example, their responses spoke to how familial influences prepared them with a foundation to function successfully in the social

environment just exiting legalized segregation and how professional influences provided them with skills and comfort as they operated within that environment.

Interview Question Four: In your opinion, what were the essential qualities and characteristics that enabled you to take advantage of the career advancement opportunities you sought?

The participants identified four qualities they felt were essential in their successful journey to an American community college presidency that they would recommend to other African American males aspiring for a community college presidency: be goal-oriented; be technically sound; be a builder of interpersonal relationships; and be balanced in life. Each essential quality is illustrated further in the following pages.

Be Goal-Oriented

These five participants recounted stories that illustrated their understanding of being goal-oriented in the pursuit of a community college presidency: have a plan; prepare yourself; prepare to take advantage of the career opportunity; don't jump just to be president. According to Participant One,

I think the key thing is that I think you got to be clear about this is what you want to do. You got to be very committed to getting the experiences that are going to put you in a position where you're competitive when it comes time to apply for one of those jobs. And that means you got to sit in the chairs, you got to have your paperwork together, you got to have the experiences together in order to ascend to one of these positions.

He went on to say,

It's always good to develop a plan, to have a 10-year plan, how you are going to get to where you want to be? It's not by chance that you get those experiences. You should want to be a department chair because that department chair is going to give you the experiences to move into a division, and that division will give you the experience to move into a Dean's job, and then into a Vice President's job. And in community colleges, you got to set in the chairs. Nine times out of 10 community college administrators have taught. They've taught. They haven't just

came from the outside working in some private college and became a Dean. They've sat in the chairs., they've walked up through the ranks. They know what it's like. Because faculty want to know, have you ever taught? Do you understand what it is that I'm experiencing? Even though you can be the empathetic person, you may have good grasp what is, your credibility is not there unless you've been able to sit in those chairs. It's not just the experience, some of it is just the fact that you need to have these badges on your chest so that people can say that you've done... You've graduated from that, you've had that experience, you're legitimate now so to speak.

Participant Two also identified being goal-oriented as an essential quality in achieving a community college presidency. He remarked,

Prepare yourself. Think about things, plan for things, and understand that you take what comes. We have to be proactive. So I think for me it's been proactive and I've been blessed that you know, you're at the right place at the right time.

For Participant Five "the first [presidency] in particular can be one that I think folks need to spend a lot of time thinking about." He cautioned,

Prepare to take advantage of it. Things came up, but again, the opportunities that came up [then] are not out there now. I think to be prepared, to kind of make those moves which is indicated from my first presidency. I was reluctant because you just get beat down. You keep going out and you keep getting rejected and you just kind of say, I don't... You just don't need that. But you have to have a resiliency to say, you being comfortable that you have, or to do follow-up when you do interviews to what you did, like I... The example I gave you, what did I do well? What did I not do well?

He admonished,

Don't jump at something just because you want to be a president. You can get into a situation that's a bad situation so you really need to be very slow and very deliberate and very analytical. We do workshops through the Round Table that I've worked on. Look at these documents; talk to people. When you see a lot of turn-over in a place, there's often times a reason for that, and you're not despite what you feel, you need to be realistic about what your strengths are and whether it's a good marriage. If not, then you just create a problem and we won't bounce back like they bounce back. If we get in and you have a bad experience then it's much more difficult to just go somewhere and pick up the pieces and get hired again.

I understood all participants' accounts of the need to be goal-oriented on the journey to the community college presidency to be a dynamic process of preparation of means toward an end. These participants focused on improving the quality of their skills as a way of improving self. They saw a goal-oriented life far more likely to lead to professional success than a life that leaves success to chance and circumstance. The participants all called for long-range, structured goals that they committed to writing and pursued in their everyday experience. These partially ordered activities were aimed at reaching career goals and imbued their career management strategies with flexibility and clarity. The participants were not confused by their professional environments and reported how they found appropriate ways to navigate barriers to their career advancement efforts. One quality the participants saw essential in being goal-oriented was to be technically sound.

Be Technically Sound

The participants revealed a list of basic technical skills that African American male aspirants needed to develop if they're going to seek a community college presidency: be technically knowledgeable; be a good judge of character and competence; attain the doctorate; demonstrate integrity and evidence-based judgment; and sharpen financial acumen. According to Participant One,

You've got to be technically knowledgeable. You got to know management, you have to know how to manage people. You need to know your board procedures and your hiring procedures and the rest of that kind of stuff. You got to know all that. You got to be able to supervise folks. Got to be able to reprimand folks. You got to be able evaluate folks.

To this, Participant One added,

you need to be a pretty good judge of character, a judge of competence. Because you have to surround yourself with people that are willing to buy into your

program and are willing to work for your mutual goals. So you know, if you do have a chance to hire people, and invariably if you get a presidency, you will be given an opportunity hire. You need to hire the people that are going to enhance you.

Participant Two saw completion of the doctorate as an essential technical quality, with which Participant Five agreed. According to Participant Five,

Get yourself ready... You've got to do the doctoral work. That's a union card. We're in an educational field and you've got to have that. I've seen a few people that have gotten to the top tier without that, but that's very unusual.

Participant Four added integrity and judgment to the list of essential technical skills. For him,

You have to have a certain basic intellect. You also have to be civil. The bullies don't do well over the long haul. You have to be civil. You have to understand that people make mistakes, but they still have value. You have to be caring, I would think. You also have to have a certain tenacity. A spirit of completion. You're not giving this up. Ain't nobody going to turn me around. I'm gonna do this thing.

Participant Five added financial acumen to this list of essential technical skills. He remarked,

I think for aspiring CEOs what one of my former bosses told me, a President or CEO never lost his job because students didn't learn, but if you let the institution's finances go south you'll be out of there in 15 seconds. So I think a lot of folks that come from either student services or instructional backgrounds don't have a good handle on budget on finance and now also facilities. So that's something, either in the doctorate program or somewhere in other people need to get a handle on them, because if not you're vulnerable. Because you've got folks that you're dependent on that sometimes can do you a dirty deed. You don't need to understand all the tedious detail of it, but you need to have a sense... Most of us will have a feel for the instructional side because that's where we come from and minorities more so come from student services even than instruction. If you need to understand all of the pieces of the puzzle, finance again, that's through the Round Table. There's some brothers out of Alabama that are solid on finance at a national level and ways to pick that up. And California is kind of unique the way things work here. That would be something else is to get a handle on how that works because if not, you get in and the job and you find out that that can be the third leg of the stool. That may be kind of weak.

The participants' responses affirmed that their credibility to pursue a community college presidency was enhanced by being technically sound. They spoke of the benefit of successful performance in the varied positions they held toward their ability to bridge organizational and social barriers. I understood the participants' responses to point to tools and methodologies that enable them to become a strategic asset to their organizations. The participants' ability to tackle complex problems, to challenge the status quo, to initiate effective solutions, and to channel the expertise of others to produce desired results was key in their ability to pursue their goal of becoming a community college president.

Be a Builder of Interpersonal Relationships

The participants stressed developing and exhibiting essential *people skills* as qualities for aspiring community college presidents. These essential people skills include: building internal relationships; getting along with people; respecting others; and developing trust. As Participant One put it,

I think it's building those internal relationships, and building the composite for you to have champions of positions that are outside of yourself. And I think in some ways you also need to have a confidant in a kitchen cabinet in a sense. Some folks that you can always depend on. Going to give you the lay of the land. I think this is going to go... I don't think it's going to go down too good. How you think I should do it? You need those kind of people that you can trust with any institution that's going give you the right 411. If you don't have that, you just depending upon chance. I don't depend on chance all the time. I think that you need to stack the deck a few times. And stacking the deck is having some people that can kind of give you the sense of how things are going to be received. If you've got something maybe potentially controversial, you run it by. I'm thinking about doing this. Well, what do you think about it? It's going to be tough. Well maybe if you did it like this... Figure out ways in which to kind of approach sensitive issues. And I think, that for me that's my strategy. Another Black man may not, could not work in you in that way. But as I said before, one of the key characteristics of being successful in these presidencies is you have to build relationships.

For him,

You got to be able to get along with people. I think your relationships are the most important things. It's not necessarily your technical knowledge. You may have technical knowledge, people can be very smart when it comes to technical piece, know the code, know the various regulations and stuff. That's one thing. But you know, in these positions, Dean's job, once you start working Dean's job, any kind of leadership role, you don't necessarily do a lot of the work. The work is done through other people. And you got to be able to motivate other people. You got to be able to encourage other people, give them a sense of belonging, a sense of appreciation in their roles so they'll be willing to work for you. I think that person that's difficult to communicate with, doesn't have the acumen to really kind of deal with the different types of people—different personalities—little bit rigid, they're not going to be good for these jobs. You got to be flexible, you have to have an open mind, you've got to be able to relate to people. Those to me are the more important characteristics.

He concluded,

I've seen so many good technicians that are not successful as presidents because they can't get along with people, or they can't forge those relationships.

According to Participant Two "you've got to have a good view of how you deal with people, the interpersonal side. Be respecting of people whoever they are." He recalled,

I was in Miami for a couple days last week at a meeting. The IT person was gone, they're gone for two, three days, all hell would break loose. I'm gone for two days, they don't even miss me. I think that the key is knowing that the indispensable people in the environment are usually those support people in and around you. So you treat everybody with the utmost respect. Because they are very important, and we know the faculty drives the bus. So it's how do you work with faculty, staff and administrators?

For Participant Two respecting people is also about modeling behavior. According to him,

You can't tell people what to do if you don't do it yourself. So it's modeling good behavior of yourself demonstrating a good ethical sense. You look at Bill Clinton—his legacy will always be tied to Monica Lewinsky. I don't care whatever else he did. So what do you want people to remember you for?

Participant Five spoke of the importance of honing human skills on the journey toward the presidency of an American community college. As he sees it,

You have to earn people's trust. And you have to be able to work and demonstrate what your capabilities are and not be so egocentric that you feel like people ought to just look at what's there without you having to be willing to demonstrate what your capabilities are.

Building interpersonal relationships for these participants was seen as directly influencing their ability to plan, problem-solve, and lead. The participants' responses stressed the importance of establishing effective interpersonal relationships and minimizing the amount of energy spent on managing dysfunctional interactions. Through these responses I came to understand the benefit of knowing how the participants utilized interpersonal skills to build team spirit and culture aligned with the organizational strategic intent.

Be Balanced in Life

For the participants, keeping oneself grounded as one is ascending ladders of leadership positions to the presidency is to know that one has a life outside of the job.

According to Participant One,

Sometimes it can get to be a conflict. Right now, in this job, I got more meetings than I've ever had outside of the job. Chamber of commerce. They got mixers, I'm on various boards, one week in the spring semester I was out every night of the week. I left home at 7:00 am. I didn't get back until 7:30 or 8:00 at night. Going to different meetings and if you're not there, they want to see the President. They want you. They want you to be in attendance, because they sent the invitation to you. So you got to keep a balance there. That can be a real obstacle. If you got a wife, thank God my kids were grown when I took the position. So I didn't have that to worry about, I still got a home life that I... My wife wants to go on a trip or something. She wants to go out to dinner tonight. I got to go to a chamber mixer. I got to go to some board meeting. That becomes a... You got to be able to parcel out that time and create some space for yourself so that you can take care of those important personal things.

Participant Three concurred with this view that a balance in life is an essential quality for success in pursuit of a community college presidency. He remarked,

You better also find balance in what you do because if you work 18-19 hours a day, at the end of the week what do you have? There seems to be a little bit more to life than just the institution in which you're in. Some people it takes a long time for them to recognize that and some people never recognize that. But, that's a quick killer because in some point in time you're going to get burnt. When you get burnt, things start to dissipate.

The participants' responses cautioned that the workload is always large, deadlines are always tight, and responsibilities are seemingly endless on the journey to a community college presidency. I understood from their remarks that it's easy to fall into the trap of working long hours in order to stay caught up or get ahead. Moreover, this trap of working longer hours was seen as an illusion because there's always more work waiting when any one task is "finished." All participants stressed how getting the balance wrong can be damaging to the individual, their family and their organization. In contrast, the participants' responses revealed that getting the balance right can reduce stress, increase productivity, motivation and commitment, and improve quality of life.

In sum, the participants saw four essential qualities and characteristics that enabled them to take advantage of career advancement opportunities toward a community college presidency. Their advice to presidential aspirants was first be goal-oriented...have a written career plan and pursue that plan deliberately. Secondly, be technically sound...acquire requisite skills because those skills will provide individual credibility in the interview and selection process. Thirdly, be a builder of interpersonal relationships...people are, in these participants' opinion, the key to the success of presidential aspirants and incumbent presidents who must model ethical behavior and develop trust among colleagues. Lastly, be balanced in life...I understood their responses

to say that work-life balance is not just about juggling a home and family; it also means finding time for life outside work, whether to care for elderly parents, to improve professional skills, or even to play some golf...find time to recharge self's batteries.

Interview Question Five: What professional and social barriers did you encounter in your career advancement efforts and how did you overcome those barriers?

The five participants to this study identified three professional and social barriers they experienced on their journey to the presidency of an American community college: race as a barrier; perception as a barrier; the assignment as a barrier.

Race as a Barrier

The participants distinguished how they experienced race as a barrier from how they experienced race as an emotional phenomenon. The former was experienced as an interpersonal phenomenon while the latter was experienced as an intrapersonal phenomenon. As African American males, all participants acknowledged that race permeated their journey to the presidency. According to Participant One, "I think that being an African American man in education there's a little bit of racism that you encounter. Be it subtle, there's a little bit of racism even in enlightened environments." Likewise, Participant Five said, "We live in a society where race is a factor. There's no way of getting around of that." He went on to say,

...being a southerner I learned that at a very, very early age. So what happened with me once I got to the point where I had been a President for 10 years and I started applying for President/Superintendent or Chancellor jobs, I probably applied for six, eight, 10, I forget. And that's a humbling experience because again, you get into situations, I won't mention places where I applied, where people that didn't even have Doctorates had nothing like comparable experience, but see all of the sudden, now I'm out there and I don't have folks that are, that know me, and that are... or if they know folks, they know the other folks.

Participant Five concluded,

I'd say anybody that doesn't appreciate the fact that race is a factor in those decisions is probably not awake or they're laboring under a different reality. So that's a piece of it.

The participants' responses revealed that race was not a unique experience for them and that they had experienced race as a barrier in both subtle and overt ways.

Participant Four, for example, provided a detailed account of how race manifest as a career obstacle for African American males. He recounted,

I mentioned to you that my first assignment in an educational institution was because I was African American. I was a Black man. But I was told very directly, "Don't do anything. Just be there and make sure the kids get some money. Don't try to learn the assignments. Don't try to participate in the professional life of the assignment. Just be the spook that sat by the door and pass out the money. Don't be botherin' White people." I'm 21 years old. I'm from a small, southern town. That was the way life was. Who was I to challenge it? I knew there was a civil rights movement going on. "But don't get too excited because you can get hurt. Besides that, if your mom and daddy still want to work, if your brothers and sisters want to go to school, we can change their lives, too." So there was the veiled threat always in existence that "we could impact not only you, but your family." And that veiled threat was very thinly veiled. It wasn't so veiled that I couldn't understand it. And I saw that veiled threat in other times in my life.

Participant Four further related a story of deep hurt to illustrate how race as a barrier was experienced by him, specifically in what he termed as White privilege. He recounted,

One day, the president was going to change my title like he was changing everybody else's title in the institution. No money involved. Just a change of titles in the institution. And there were five of us who were up for institutional title changes. The directors were going to be associate deans. The deans were going to be Assistant Superintendents. The Vice President was going to be something like a Senior Vice President. Nothing important. Just title changes. And one of the White staff members came to me and said, We're going to fight your title change. Not anybody else's in the institution. Just yours. Why? Because we don't think you deserve it. You haven't been here very long and we think that somebody else should have that title. I hadn't asked for the title. The other people hadn't been there any longer than I had to get their title changed. But they weren't being fought. And they went to the board and said, We opposed this title change. Everybody else got theirs put through. I was the only African American. Mine was defeated.

To this Participant Four added,

I was one of three [African Americans] in the whole campus. So I was the only one possibly being affected. And the thought was, “Well, you just haven’t been here very long. We don’t think you deserve it.” But I had been there longer than the dean who was going to the Assistant Superintendent. I had been there as long as the Vice President because I served on his committee. It was going to an Executive vice Superintendent. Whatever the title was. I was on their committees and I’d been there longer than them. But they were getting the title change and I wasn’t. And the faculty made a presentation to the board to assure that I didn’t get that title change. And I said, “Okay.” It was painful. Very painful. But I understood, at least viscerally, things happen to Black people that don’t happen to other people. Okay. I got that.

For Participant Four the experience

was a profound hurt. It was deep seeded. I remember it was 25-30 years ago and I can remember it today as if it happened today. And it impacts how I see things in broad strokes.

I understood the participants’ responses to reveal how race as a barrier can manifest as a sanctioned stigmatizing, marginalizing culture at the organizational level. The participants’ interviews also revealed, for me, how race as a barrier can carry penalty for African American males as well as a need to prove that they are not the stereotypical Black. I understood the participants’ responses to collectively reflect a divide between the White experience and the Black experience in postsecondary education. Also, that for these participants, race as a barrier differed from perception as a barrier. For these participants race as a barrier was experienced more organizationally- or socially-oriented, while perception as a barrier was experienced more individually- or emotionally oriented.

Perception as a Barrier

For Participant Four, perception was an obvious barrier to the ascendancy of African American males to a community college presidency. He said,

As a large, Black man. They want to know where I played football first. The idea that you’re an athlete before you’re a scholar. My background is as an academic. I

was a National Science foundation Scholar in Mathematics, a Fulbright Fellow, a distinguished alumnus, a former valedictorian. But those questions never come up. They want to know what I know about sports. So I've got to get through that idea of the academy before I can go on. I also have to be comfortable with the notion that that's their first perception. And if that's where I find you, I can engage you there and move you to another position. But I can't just dismiss you because that's your first thought. I've got to find a way to engage you there.

Participant Three spoke of perception as barrier in terms of misperception. His remarks not only highlighted how misperceptions can erect barriers but also shed light on how technology facilitates the effectiveness of misperceptions as a barrier. He speculated,

I think it's playing it safe for Boards because Boards are what's controlling institutions and they are not going to take a chance because it may end up on the front page or the back page or whatever and they think maybe it will have some detrimental effect on what they do. But, oftentimes, Boards, search firms don't understand and don't get the whole story. Oftentimes, they may see something and let's say it's written but it's really not what it is. But, they don't take the time to look at it or to question because what they do oftentimes especially with the advent of our Google system now – folks don't even get to be interviewed no matter what paper they put in. It's constantly just put to the side. That's something that you have to deal with.

Participant One's experience of perception as a barrier was expressed in terms of a gate keeping quality and experienced as a device to exclude African American males from ascending to presidencies of predominantly White institutions:

I think also, in a lot of ways, and maybe it's not so much today as it was in the past. We can only be Presidents in certain settings back in the day. We can only be President at a [deleted]. We couldn't be president at a [deleted].

Participant One also reported how he experienced perception as a barrier as a form of treatment discrimination. He remarked, "there is some racism that the African American man experiences more so than an African American woman in the same position."

Participant Five provided an account of how perception as a barrier interacts with the hiring process for African American males aspiring for a community college presidency. According to Participant Five,

I don't know how else to put it, but just to realize, first of all you really don't want to be in an environment where you got to get the force of law behind you to get in there to start off with. And if people can't accept you for who you are, and see the benefit that you bring, then it's not the right place for you. At one place that I applied, the institution hired someone and the people broke the confidentiality the folks on the screening committee came out and said, this wasn't our first choice. Well, it's the board's decision. First of all, it's their discretion. They have a person that they want. And secondly, even if you could get into a legal situation and show that there was some kind of discrimination which is very difficult to do, do you want a job that you've had to sue to get? That's how you've gotten it? Doesn't make sense. And I've applied for any number of places where if you've looked at the types of things that have kept Blacks out for years—experience, education all of a sudden you look at those things and the rules have changed.

For these participants perception as a barrier was experienced in a variety of subtle ways on their journey to the presidency. Their responses told stories of how even if perceptions were not rational or well-informed, perception was still a major factor in the career decision-making process. As a result, the participants experienced on their journeys obstacles associated with being stigmatized and being devalued. They reported experiences where perceptual and personal discomfort, lack of co-operation, close mindedness and mistrust acted as barriers to their being able to take advantage of career advancement opportunities. The participants' responses revealed experiences where skin color, height, and, even just being an African American male engendered misperceptions and barriers.

The Assignment as a Barrier

In addition to organizational, social factors, and individual perceptions, the participants acknowledge how the nature of the assignment can itself be a barrier for presidential aspirants to an American community college. The participants identified in their responses two areas in the presidential assignment that can present a barrier to

career success: the Board as a barrier, and the community as a barrier. Each of these barriers is presented next.

The board as a barrier. Boards make the ultimate decision as to whom they will hire to sit as President of their college. These participants viewed the Boards' conception of the correct fit constitutes a barrier to the presidency. For Participant Four,

The boards place strong barriers in the presidency. Board's expectations of the presidency, board's philosophies make a difference. I worked for a board of trustees who had a member who didn't believe the holocaust occurred. I worked for a board of trustees who believed in divide and conquer among the administration. Who would give one administrator one set of assignments, another administrator another assignment, and wouldn't want them to talk to each other about the same assignment. I worked for a very good board and I've worked with small-minded boards whose ideas were just their own political aspirations rather than the wellbeing of the institution. So the barriers are who you choose to work for, where you choose to work, how you choose to live.

According to Participant Five,

...when you get into a CEO level, it's a matter of comfort on a part of the board and it's their call. And many of them aren't comfortable with folks that are very different than they are. And that's tough because I've sat down and I've talked with boards. Where I'd get to be a finalist and you walk in and they have a picture of their Superintendent on the wall, and I said, hey I realize I don't fit the mold, but you've got to be willing to take a chance. And some of them just aren't willing to do that. And that's their call. But I think the other piece when you talk about characteristic, you got to be able to accept that, and be empowered by it and just say, when the right thing comes along, then I'll get it.

The community as a barrier. The participants acknowledged in their responses to this question that there is a necessity to be in the community; however, sometimes their experiences in the community form a barrier to a successful community college presidency. Participant Four recalled,

Are there old line organizations that make decisions or don't make decisions in a community? I worked in a small town where if you didn't go to a certain high school, people didn't recognize that you had any skills or any talent. If you went to different high schools, they had different thoughts about what their skills and talents were.

Participant Two provided insight into how this barrier operates,

Well social barriers are going to be there whether you're male, female. I think for me it was more in terms of knowing a limitation, finding what things you need to do differently to get beyond the cliffs that were there. To break barriers in. We had a tax levy in [deleted]. I needed to raise close to a million dollars. I had to go to the top business leaders. For me though, knowing that you prepare for how to make sure you get past to get to people and those things you think through is people who know people, or you get to know people, or you take them out to lunch and you don't be afraid to do so. A company like [deleted]. Maybe you can't get the CEO but you get the person next to the CEO. In this case I got the CEO eventually, but it took time. So those are social barriers...I didn't grow up with the family so I didn't know [the CEO]. But I knew people who knew him. In one case, I joined a fraternity group. My fraternity was a good network...They have very influential people in the Black community on them who also work in these big companies so I joined a group called the [deleted] and this group enabled me to get to some folks in some major companies. Because folks who are members of that were [deleted], were very established people in those companies. So some of that is just figuring out what's the best way to segue, to raise money, to get influence and also influence people. Unless you already have that. You already have that, by birth or whatever you don't have to worry about that. But I know I didn't have it by birth, I had to work on it. And around here in [deleted] county, I'm learning who the major players are. So part of my strategy is getting to know them, having lunch with them, going out tomorrow with one of the senators from this area who was important over here.

In summary, the participants discussed the assignment as a barrier in terms of how an aspirant should prepare himself for the position of community college president. The Participants identified four areas of particular concern. First, the participants revealed that in their opinion if an aspirant had what they called a fear of rejection then the aspirant was headed in the wrong direction. According to the participants, being an effective leader as a president in a community college means the individual must be willing to take a risk, develop new programs, hire needed employees, or ask someone to take on a certain task. As Participant One put it, "as a leader you have to realize that there are risks involved, and those risks come with rejection...look at your options, decide on what to do, and then take action." Secondly, the participants admonished that if an individual is to

effectively deal with Boards as a barrier to success they must not be afraid to delegate responsibilities. According to the participants, what successful aspirants to a community college presidency must realize is that you are in control of very little. According to the participants life is basically out of your control. As Participants Four emphasized “managing people with a strong, controlling hand will not allow them to take on new problems nor will it challenge them to make progress in areas where they have never been before.”

This advice on being too controlling in leadership style prompted the participants to speak about a third need aspirants to a community college presidency must prepare to address: employee dependence. According to the participants, a community college president can’t do it all; he or she must rely on staff to get the job done. For the participants, the successful community president understands that people come and go; and that having a successful team (and not being overtly dependant on any one employee) means presidents must cultivate the human capital of the organization. As the participants experienced it, success in dealing with employee dependence follows finding a balance between being a micromanager and blindly depending on people to do their job. As Participant Two put it, “hold on to your people, if you hold on too tight, they’ll slip through your fingers and you’ll lose in the end.” And finally, to address the Board as a barrier to personal success, aspirants to a community college presidency must be prepared to attend to the financial challenges they will face. According to the participants, more presidents have been dismissed for not meeting financial challenges than for have poor relations with staff or even for having poor student success rates. New programs or ventures take capital. Employees needed to expand and grow increases fixed

costs in the budget. According to the participants these conditions are a part of everyday life for a president of a community college. The participants stressed an effective leader cannot be satisfied with the status quo; they give up on their dreams. For these participants organizational excellence, in community college leadership, means a president must keep the college moving accomplishing the organization's mission and vision. As they experienced it, a great college is one that overcomes the financial obstacles and turns in its path. The participants recap their responses regarding dealing with the Board as a barrier by saying prepare yourself for these four challenges and you'll keep the Board happy and that'll reduce the many barriers Boards can place in front of newly-appointed presidents.

The participants' responses reveal a certain irony in their report on the community as a barrier. While the participants acknowledged that the nature of the assignment can act as a barrier, it was in the specifics of their discussion of the community as a barrier that irony was found. For example, the participant responses revealed how race as a barrier was experienced as an obstacle to and through the doorway to a community college presidency but once through the doorway, one expects obstacles to fall away. However, the Participants reported that was not the case. They remarked how discomfort and negative attitudes towards people who are different was still one of the most experienced barriers to their success as presidents. They reported that, consciously and unconsciously, Boards in predominantly White institutions tended to feel uncomfortable around them and how added burden was put upon them to prove that the Board had made the correct choice of someone equally or better qualified than the Majority individuals who had applied for the position. The participants' responses implied that even though

the Board had made a decision to hire these individuals, they were still seen as a deficiency that needed to be minimized or overcome.

The participants' responses disclosed how the community can itself be a barrier to success in a presidential assignment. In particular, the participants spoke to how their ethnic diversity was sometimes viewed as a weakness by people outside the institution. They recounted experiences where their difference was seen as a liability and how at times they were stereotyped as being less intelligent, less hardworking, and less committed to the needs of the community. I discovered in the participants' responses numerous experiences in which their successful performance contradicted prevailing Board and community stereotypes and even more experiences in which Board and community stereotypes lead to discrimination, blatant acts of racism, and biased behavior.

Summary of Responses to Interview Questions

The study's research yielded descriptions by five participants on the subject of how they experienced their journey to a community college presidency. Through the use of a list of non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements, interview field data were analyzed to produce a portrait of the lived experience for these participants.

In summary, the participants entered the community college system through varied pathways including adjunct teaching, long-term substitute teaching, and classified assignment and came with the intent of helping disadvantaged students. The participants in this study experienced on average a 30-year career in the American community college system and experienced their journey to the community college presidency from both *inside* and the *outside* of their institutions. The participants recounted experiencing their

journey in four ways: external mobility; internal mobility; positional variety; and emotional journey. These five participants acknowledged being influenced on their journey to the presidency of an American community college and, more specifically, identified three major categories of influences that had an impact on their journey to the presidency: familial, professional, and legislative. The participants identified four qualities they felt essential to their successful journey to an American community college presidency—qualities that they would recommend to other African American males aspiring for a community college presidency: be goal-oriented; be a builder of interpersonal relationships; be technically sound; and be balanced in life. The five participants, also, perceived three broad areas of barriers on their journey to the presidency of an American community college: race as a barrier; perception as a barrier; the assignment as a barrier. The assignment as a barrier was experienced by the participants in two forms: the Board as a barrier and the community as a barrier. In the following chapter, I discuss how the participants' responses compare to the career barriers identified in the literature reviewed for this study in Chapter 2 before moving on to discuss key themes that arose from the Participants' responses to the structured interviews.

Responses to Research Questions

This section presents responses to this study's research questions derived from an analysis of the participants' answers to semi-structured interviews. These responses are presented in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and conclude with brief comment on how the Participants' interview responses affirm the literature reviewed.

Research Question 1: How have a select group of African American males experienced their journey to community college presidency?

The participants' responses to Interview Question #1 addressed this research question, and while extensive findings are presented above several key experiences are seen as encapsulating how these participants experienced their journey to the presidency and are reported here.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 provided a historical context for this study; set in the expansive years of the American community college system, between 1960 and 1980. In addition, the literature review revealed a societal upheaval present during this time frame and provided for labeling African American male leaders entering higher education at that time as a "second generation" of African American leadership of postsecondary institutions (Valverde, 2003). Valverde (2003) spoke of how this second generation of African American presidents in White post-secondary institutions came to their positions, in part, as a direct result of the legal climate of the time. With an average 30 years of community college experience, the participants came to the American community college system as a career at the end of the system's major expansion and their responses reflected the societal upheaval of the time. For example, Participant Four's recounting his journey spoke of prevailing employment practices at the time,

I was hired because I was an ethnic minority. Not because I had any particular skills. I was just hired in the initial assignment as a result of a court order that forced a college to integrate its faculty and staff if it wanted to continue receiving federal funds. And they thought I was a fairly harmless new college graduate. That I would satisfy the criteria of being an ethnic minority and I wouldn't offend too many people and I wouldn't screw up the system too badly.

Participant Five put those times in a contemporary perspective,

The ethnic piece of it's not quite the benefit that it was. I'd say anybody that doesn't appreciate the fact that race is a factor in those decisions is probably not awake or they're laboring under a different reality.

Recall the literature review revealed that a traditional pathway to a community college presidency exists; this pathway begins with tenured faculty position, on to department chair, to an academic dean, to chief academic officer and ends at the presidency. For the purposes of this study, "nonline jobs" in American community colleges was defined as community college employment outside that traditional pathway (Amey et al, 2002). Interview responses disclosed that all participants entered the community college system through nonline jobs, and experienced their journey to president by making a transition back to the traditional pathway in preparation for the presidency. In responding to Research Question #1, the participants' recollection of their experiences on their journey to the presidency also affirmed Kawewe's (1997) contention that "colleges and universities devised sophisticated internal mechanisms to subvert affirmative action in recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion" (p.264). the participants' responses revealed consensual agreement that the "union card" (Ph.D. or ED.D.) is one internal mechanism that was and is still being used as a way of erecting a barrier to a community college presidency for African Americans, particularly African American males. They concluded while possible it was highly unlikely that an African American male aspirant to a community college presidency will be successful without a terminal degree.

The participants' responses to Interview Question 1 also highlighted the need they experienced on their journey to the presidency. The participants reported efforts they went through to find "helping hands" and the challenges they experienced attempting to

put together an informal network. According to Participant Three “when you take an Anglo President there’s a lot of helping hands. When you take an African-American or Hispanic President for that fact there are very limited helping hands even from within.” The participants’ responses, accordingly affirmed Nason (1972) assertion that “while evaluations become more subjective as more managerial content enters the job, the Black has fewer advocates and is often outside the social system which leads others upward” (p. 59). All participants experienced institutional racism on their journey to a community college presidency. Ziegert and Hanges’ (2005) found in their study of implicit racist attitudes and employment decisions that discrimination in employment practices is associated with a sanctioning organizational climate. Participant Four provided a detailed example of Ziegert and Hanges’ (2005) argument regarding his interaction with implicit racism, and a climate of racial bias, experienced on his journey to the presidency. He recounted,

I was one of three [African Americans] on the whole campus. So I was the only one possibly being affected. And the thought was, “Well, you just haven’t been here very long. We don’t think you deserve it.” but I had been there longer than the [White] dean who was going to the Assistant Superintendent. I had been there as long as the [White] Vice President because I served on his committee. It was going to an Executive Vice Superintendent. Whatever the title was. I was on their committees and I’d been there longer than them. But they were getting the title change and I wasn’t. And the faculty made a presentation to the board to assure that I didn’t get that title change.

In another example, Participant Four responded,

Frankly, they told me they were scared of me. I walked into a room and an English teacher told me I blocked out the sun and that she was afraid to talk to me because she didn’t know whether or not I could speak the language and whether or not I came here to ruin the academic reputation of the institution. The institution had a significant set of administrative issues including loss of enrollment and unbalanced budget. And our job was to increase the enrollment and to balance the budget while to inspire the faculty and the students. But the faculty were afraid first that I was coming without background in the faculty. Including the ethnic

faculty. The African American faculty were as afraid as the White faculty...And so they were all afraid of me because I'm not a small man. I'm dark complexion. That in and of itself is frightening to some people.

The participants in this study experienced their journey to a community college presidency as second generation community college leaders. All participants' experienced their journey to the presidency as a non-traditional voyage and all but one of these Participants entered the presidency from an academic affairs position consistent with findings in the literature. The participants noted experiencing many gatekeeping mechanisms on their journey to the presidency and strongly emphasized the need for a terminal degree which all but one of the participants held. All participants experienced institutional racism on their journey to a community college presidency, and because of their experience of few helping hands on their journey to the presidency strongly encouraged the building of heterophilous informal networks as a means of overcoming professional barriers and discrimination.

Research Question 2: What were the essential qualities and characteristics that enabled them to take advantage of the career advancement opportunities they sought?

The participants' answers to Interview Question 4 provided at length a response to this research question; several essential qualities and characteristics were reported: be goal-oriented; be technically sound; be a builder of interpersonal relationships; and be balanced in life. The participants' responses acknowledged numerous experiences with affiliation obstacles experienced in their community college careers and spoke to essential strategies they employed to overcome those affiliation obstacles: namely, participation in, and success with, the *faculty* clan; and developing informal networks

(super-clans). Participant Four spoke of his experience working with faculty as one of the best of his career. He concluded

Faculty, by the way, don't come in colors. They're all striped the same way. After a while, they get inculcated. When you're in the faculty, you are a member of that same mindset that maybe is different before you get there.

Participant Two likewise spoke of how his involvement in the faculty ranks was essential to his career advancement,

one of the things that helped me I think with the screening committees and all that, my major in undergrad was teacher education. So I had been a classroom teacher first—elementary school. I worked in the public school system in [deleted] for two years. And then I was a tenured faculty member at [deleted]. I taught Psychology and Communications. And then also when I was knowing that the path to a presidency is often tied to the classroom, during the time that I worked as a chief student person, I was an professor at two other colleges. I taught in the African American studies program at [deleted] University, I taught at [deleted] University. And then one year I taught at [deleted]. And other times I was a chair, director of counseling also. I also had the full-time faculty appointment. So I was kind of like in the classroom even though I was an administrator. So I had a lot of classroom experience prior to coming to the community college system.

The participants' responses also revealed that essential to their success in navigating their journey to the presidency was the ability to develop informal managerial networks along the way. In the literature, Ibarra (1995) identified effectiveness in social networking is crucial for managerial success. The participants' responses in this study supported this contention of Ibarra's (1995). For example, Participant One stated,

I...think that you need to develop supporters that are beyond you. Supporters that are not in your management team [as well as] supporters that are in the institution who sometimes can take on those battles for you.

He went on to say,

So I think it's building those internal relationships, and building the composite for you to have champions of positions that are outside of yourself. And I think in some ways you also need to have confidant in a kitchen cabinet in a sense. Some folks that you can always depend on. Going to give you the lay of the land. I think

this is going to go... I don't think it's going to go down too good. How you think I should do it? You need those kind of people that you can trust with any institution that's going give you the right 411. If you don't have that, you just depending upon chance. I don't depend on chance all the time.

Participant Three echoed this sentiment,

Having a strong cadre of mentors and colleagues you can call on. I have been – I hate the word “lucky,” but it's been good to have the number of mentors that I've had. I can go right down the line with them and what each one of them has brought to the table for me and knowing that I can pick up that phone and call them right now. A great deal of them are retired, but I can still call them. There are some that we started around the same period of time. You start saying “What are you doing down there? What are you doing up here? Can I call you about this?” You start to get that type of network together. That is tremendously important.

He added,

There's a group of Presidents and what we do – we know what we have to do when we are in our zone if you will. If we're going to a conference – who's going so we can at least at that point in time relax among all of us because we all share the same types of issues.

The participants were quick to comment and prioritize, in response to this research question, that their ability to take advantage career advancement opportunities they sought was more a result of finding supporters that had the ability to address the career challenges they were facing than finding a specific color or gender of supporter. The participants recounted a variety of experiences where they specifically sought heterophilous relationships to advance their journey to the presidency and saw this quality/characteristic as the most essential of all necessary talents.

Research Question 3: What professional and social barriers did they encounter in their career management efforts; and how did they overcome those barriers on their journey to the presidency?

This research question was addressed in the participants' responses to Interview Question #5 and the participants' stories and recollection provided numerous examples of

interpersonal career advancement barriers they experienced on their journey to the presidency. As mentioned earlier, the participants identified three key professional and social barriers they experienced on their journey to the presidency of an American community college: race as a barrier; perception as a barrier; the assignment as a barrier. These professional and social barriers are notably interpersonally-oriented. The participants also identified two intrapersonal career advancement barriers they experienced on their journey to the presidency in their responses to Interview Question #5 and a report on those intrapersonal barriers was reserved for here.

Collectively, the participants identified “being true to yourself” as a primary intrapersonal barrier they experienced on their journey to the presidency. As Participant One put it,

Well, I think you got to be true to yourself. If it’s difficult for you to be placed in a situation where you’re going to be questioned, and you think you’re being questioned because of who you are, if the first reaction, you’re going to blow up and pound on the table, you know, fight back, I think that becomes a liability in and of itself. You got to be smart enough to know that the situation is such that this is an opportunity to navigate some waters that hopefully, is going to be an experience for you. You going to learn from it without having to compromise yourself.

Participant Four went beyond just saying that “being true to yourself” was a professional and social barrier he experienced on his journey to the presidency, he identified a value system he used, and that aspirants must possess, to successfully meet this intrapersonal barrier to career advancement opportunities. He remarked,

Integrity, judgment. You have to have a certain basic intellect. You also have to be civil. Bullies don’t do well over the long haul. You have to be civil. You have to understand that people make mistakes, but they still have value. You have to be caring.

A second intrapersonal professional and social career advancement barrier identified by the participants' responses to this research question centered on self-imposed barriers that the Participants erected on their journey to the Presidency.

Returning to the interview with Participant Four, he remarked,

There is also the notion of what I want as a barrier. How I see myself and what I desire for me is also a barrier. Where I want to live, how I want to live, who I want to live with, what my joys are, what my limits are. My own self-imposed barriers. I don't want to be in certain communities any more. I don't want to live with certain kind of people. I don't want to live in certain kind of neighborhoods. I want to go be able to go get a haircut and an order of barbeque ribs in a reasonable amount of time. Those are the barriers that are just real. Not the external barriers, but the internal barriers that I place upon myself. I also want to be as like-minded people.

He went on to say,

My expectations of the assignment are internal barriers. How I see myself, the role I have, the role I want to have in the community is an internal barrier. For instance, I was a president of a college in a place that didn't have a gospel choir. I like gospel music so I created a gospel choir 115 strong. Mostly white people who couldn't sway to the same way Baptists choirs couldn't sway. But that's alright. I had a gospel choir.

In summary, the participants stressed the interpersonal professional and social barriers they encountered on their journey to the presidency can be overcome if aspirants attend to these two intrapersonal barriers. More specifically, the participants' responses warned African American male aspirants to keep in mind that the job they preparing is only a part of what they must learn. Furthermore, that you can't really understand the whole aspect of the presidency or the weight of the presidency until you are a president. Participant Four summarized it well,

Learn the business well. Be comfortable in your knowledge of the business. Being president is the last thing you think about. Doing president is the key. Having the ability to do the job is the most important. If you're comfortable in your skills and you're comfortable in who you are, being the president is a natural outgrowth of

that. It's a very personal job. It's not a job that you can understand fully until you do it.

Through these participants' responses to this research question an appreciation was gained of a perspective that is rarely revealed in the research literature, as well as an understanding of how this group of select African American male presidents experienced their journey to the presidency. Upcoming in Chapter 5 are key themes derived from the participants' responses to the interview and research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS OF KEY THEMES ARISING FROM RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Four, the literature identified three themes seen as representing barriers to African American male ascendancy to executive-level positions in American community colleges: *employment practices in community colleges; the relationship of institutional culture to promotion opportunities in community colleges; and the road to community college presidency*. However, the literature also revealed an absence of research specifically designed to facilitate African American male administrators seeking to advance to a community college presidency. In light of this absence, I will present my discussion of three key themes derived from the five participants' responses to semi-structured interviews in an attempt to respond to Hirschorn's (1988) call for "how-to" research,

because little documentation exists that provides 'how-to' information for achieving success for African Americans, there is a burning need to document such how-to information that can be used by Africa Americans in their pursuit of success (p. 750).

This Chapter concludes with a brief discussion of areas for future research.

Key Themes Arising from Responses to Research Questions

The accountings and remarks made by the five participants during their interviews have three broad content areas: discussion of career pathways used to achieve the position of president of an American community college; a delineation of qualities they

perceived as essential to the successful pursuit of that career goal; and strategies they employed to overcome career barriers along their journey. Three themes were generated from the participants' interview responses: make race not an issue, prepare for a non-linear pathway, and find a champion.

Theme One: Make Race Not an Issue

All participants commented on how African Americans in general, and African American males in particular, will be subject to access and treatment discrimination on their journey to a community college presidency. Participant Five remarked, "We live in a society where race is a factor. There's no way of getting around that." Speaking of employment opportunities for African Americans, he went on to say,

The environment's very different out there now than it was in the 60s and the 70s with the war, and changes in the demographics and the state. The opportunities particularly for African Americans is not going to be what it was.

In light of these changing social conditions, Participant Five suggested a strategy for competing in a world where race is a factor. He asserted,

Most minorities come from the student services background and there's nothing wrong with that. It's just that the external pressure and the support for them is just not going to be there. You won't need that, I think you can get in there as I felt as I could. I could go toe to toe...once I got an opportunity in the early stages [of my career] to get the background experience. Again, I felt as comfortable, maybe I was wrong but I'm here. Because I work with these people, just like I told you when I looked at the grants, I said, shit, I can do that. These people are not any brighter than I am. I think we have that opportunity to do the preparation to get in there to do it. We can compete but the political pressure from the environment as a whole will not be as supportive as it was during the late 60s and 70s. So it's a different struggle but still not one that can't be won.

Participant Five's comments imply that one way to compete in a world where race is an issue is through the development of a strong sense of self. He suggests further that this belief in self is one element in determining whether we accomplish our career goals.

When the participants were asked in follow-up, how should we, as African American males, react to the world around us when race is a negative external force daily influencing our ability to pursue and achieve our career goals of being a community college presidency? Participant One responded profoundly to this question when he said “vengeance ain’t yours. You are going to be seen as arbitrary and capricious. You got to be strong enough to withstand those personal attacks.” He went on to stress,

you can’t pull a race card all the time, but you got to know that it’s there. You got to know that it’s probably there more so than you anticipate it being there. And develop your own way of dealing with it. And I think that, for me I’ve always been able to you know, to appeal to people’s logic.

Through Participant Four’s responses I discovered another reason why a strong sense of self is essential on the journey to a community college presidency. He remarked,

Oh yes. I’d been in environments where I was hired initially because I was Black, I was despised because I was Black, I was not promoted because I was Black, I was promoted because I was Black. I was assigned because I was Black, I wasn’t given raises because I was Black. I had been through the whole drama of being an African American male in different institutions. And documentedly either because I was Black supported or because I was Black despised. So I’d had a whole set of experiences I brought with me to all of the assignments.

He went on to describe a strategy he employed to make race not an issue,

People form their opinions of the president by their occasional interactions with that person. And those interactions can either be positive or negative. They form a range of opinions around minimal interactions and around minimal circumstances. What you need to do as president (I found out) was control those circumstances. Give people their opinion of you. Structure their opinion. Give them something to talk about. Give them what you want to talk about. I’d rather talk about how I like to cook from South Louisiana. That is so minimal a part of who I am, but it gives them something to think about. Because they’re going to fill the void. They’re going to talk about you. You give them what you think they want to talk about. I told people here what I want them to think about me before they even hired me. I wanted them to understand why I was coming to this assignment. I’m getting married. It was like, “Is he running away from [deleted]?” “No. My kids are here. I want you to understand why I’m coming here. It’s got nothing to do with this job. This is a Chancellor’s job.” One Chancellor’s job, despite what they think, is not a hell of a lot different than another one. One presidency (this is my third one)

is not a hell of a lot different than another one. What it is, is how you intend to do the assignment. The mechanics of the assignment are the same. It's what you bring to it and how you intend to engage it.

Collectively, the participants employed a strategy for responding to racial injustice in the workplace. I noticed a certain imperative in their appeal to African American male community college presidential aspirants. This imperative came in the form of warnings. In the participants' responses there were warnings against wearing race on one's sleeve...warnings against losing control over oneself in situations of blatant racism...warnings against deluding oneself that the world should be or is color-blind...warnings against being unprepared to respond appropriately to happenstances of race. I took these warnings to be directly connected to one's sense of self and how one reacts to the world around them.

I discovered in the participants' comments, leading to the theme *make race not an issue*, three essential career management strategies. First, prepare yourself to identify the barriers race presents. In their responses, the participants were clear that to overcome *race as a barrier*, the scope of the barrier must be accurately identified. To *make race not an issue* one must be prepared to think like the offending individual and to define the racial barrier as broadly as they do. Inferred in this interpretation is the demand to prepare oneself to deal with the fear and issues the "other" believes that support the barrier, even if you don't think the fear and issues will be a problem. Second, gather some perspective on the barrier. I discerned from the participants' remarks that understanding the other's perspective about the issue helps ensure that the solutions developed will satisfy them. Moreover, understanding the other's perspective will allow for strengthening partnership and developing solutions that are responsive and provide long-term benefits. Third,

develop effective solutions to the barrier – even if, the most effective solution is to leave an institution or not apply for entry. I gathered from the participants’ responses that the key here is to develop solutions that are true and sustainable, and that, most importantly, reduce their concern and allow you to prove you can meet the other’s needs.

Theme Two: Prepare For a Non-Linear Pathway

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the literature reviewed for this study reveals that a traditional pathway to a community college presidency exists, i.e., full-time faculty, department chair, divisional/ instructional dean, Chief Academic Officer, and President. None of the participants in this study followed a traditional pathway to the presidency. Instead, the participants entered the community college system through varied pathways including adjunct teaching, long-term substitute teaching, classified assignments and specially-funded projects. Participant Five recalled events where the entry process was experienced as a barrier on his journey to the presidency. He stated,

in districts where I worked the department chair controls this process even though they’re faculty members, districts I worked in are involved in that process. And it’s one where it’s a matter of subjectivity and personal relations and not much process. Then once they get in, the district that I left most recently probably 70% of their full-time hires come from the part-time pool. So getting into that is an excellent point. There’s not a lot of process. There’s not a lot of equity that’s there. A lot of time it’s just based on personal relation, [and to a lesser part the actual interview process]. The evaluation processes there are pretty skimpy most places unless the crediting folks have to crack down on them. A lot of times folks are minimally evaluated. Some districts do better jobs than others. [Some districts are] open to a lot of nepotism and things of that nature just because it’s not well-regulated, in my opinion.

Once inside, and to take advantage of career advancement opportunities as they became available, all the participants accepted non-traditional assignments preparing them with essential qualities/skills for a career climb. Participant One related how he

benefited from a career path that spanned multiple assignments within the community college and different job classifications,

He hired me at [deleted], and then he became Chancellor. Actually he was Vice chancellor at the time. Then I got a lay-off notice and so he knew he had hired me and he knew I had background in statistics, and had done research in graduate school. So he said, maybe you can come as a faculty at another time, but now we need a coordinator of research. They never had research in the district. So he's trying to save my job. So he brought me to the district office, and I started working as a researcher. One thing lead to another, they made that into a permanent research and planning job. Pretty soon I had research and planning and outcomes... I did all the districts planning. All the grants and stuff came under me. Before I left the district office we were bringing in 6-7 million dollars for the district in special funds. And it was all because of the efforts that my office supported.

He went on to say,

I think it's very few of the presidents, particularly African American presidents, that have spent the majority of their time at one or two institutions. They've been in several institutions. And that's what you have to do. You have to sit in all the chairs... So I think that that's probably why it's easier for a person to develop that resume by moving around, having different experiences. And it's probably good also to have a little eclecticism in your background where you've been in different institutions. You've seen how it's done at different places. That's not a bad thing, either. To be able to speak to that. This is how they did it at one institution, this how they did it at another institution, you can tell the differences and the practices, the pit-falls and certain things by having a broader perspective of experience as opposed to just being in one institution for a long period of time.

Participant Two experienced this as opportunity for him to successfully demonstrate his people skills. I understood his responses to suggest if you want to get ahead, don't just think vertically, think horizontally as well; sometimes a lateral move is actually a prerequisite for a big step forward. According to him,

I also understood how faculty saw student services. And one of the challenges that I think I faced early on was getting the chief academic officer with me. I was fortunate. I was on the screening committee when he was hired as the co chair. So I knew him coming in, and we had a pretty good relationship where it was not like he looked down on student services. We did a lot of things together to bring new programs online. Things that faculty who had students in the classroom needed and wanted student services to address. We did that proactively. We had a lot of

sharing of programs, and also I made a point of being visible with the faculty and trying to figure out what I can do to help them be successful. So that was helpful without trying to usurp the chief academic officer.

Participant Four's responses revealed how the ability to change direction quickly and respond to the fast-paced demands in comprehensive community college can benefit an aspirants' journey the presidency. For him,

After a lot of trials and turmoil, I was asked to assume not only the financial Aid Office, but the Admission and Records Office. And the president said, "I want you to have both of those assignments and I'm not giving you any more money. You're going to be the Director of Financial Aid and the Director of Admissions and Records. And by the way, you're going to do it for the same amount of money because I want to broaden your base." I thought he wanted to take advantage of me. I thought the man was out of his mind. It turns out it was the greatest assignment he could ever give to me.

He went on to say,

it allowed me to look at multiple areas and to manage more than one set of balls at one time. To look at issues and problems. It also put me, for the first time, in direct contact with faculty. Direct contact with faculty in terms of how they process their rosters, their grades, the attendance accounting. All the issues that have to do with administration and instruction without actually having to be in Instructional Administration. That was a great gift to me. I knew how to manage the money aspect; I knew about the students. But I didn't have much day-to-day contact with the faculty. And most of admissions and records has to do with students. But at critical times of the year, you're working with the faculty. And that was important in terms of my transition into Instructional Administration.

In sum, this theme arose from the participants' accounts of personal understandings that the traditional routes to the presidency was either not going to be available to them or not available to them at all. I understood the participants' collective comments to reflect a career management process that they needed to refine and redefine continually. They were going to have to be open to any assignment that offered them personal growth and development, that enabled them to develop skills, knowledge and experience applicable to current and future assignments. When I probed those comments,

the participants revealed that their journey was focused on career choices that provided maximum opportunities and the right environment to achieve their professional and personal goals. The participants all sought people-oriented cultures in their career choices, where leaders are coaches and team developers, and people are recognized as valuable resources regardless of color. It was within that context that the following theme arose from findings.

Theme Three: Find a Champion

The five participants in this study all spoke of the necessity for establishing mentoring relationships as one ascends to a community college presidency. They spoke of these relationships as serving an advisory capacity by listening, guiding, providing non-evaluative feedback; providing encouragement and guidance on professional development issues, as well as providing support in personal matters. Participant Three stated,

You need to get as much mentoring as you can in the areas in which you are weakest in but also to maintain areas in which you have strength. If you're in a community college, I would tell you to be bold and look at other experiences and you need to get out there to see what the other experiences are.

Participant Three cautioned, however, that for African Americans males “there are very limited *helping hands* even from within.” The participants acknowledged the experiential limitations and called for the need to go beyond just establishing mentoring relationships to establishing relationships with a champion. This notion of champion, for the purposes of this study, is defined as someone that not only provides the qualities of a mentor but also has the demonstrated capacity to open doors for their protégé to take advantage of current and emerging opportunities. A good champion is passionate about their cause or charge and sponsors and protects the charge from the organizational bureaucracy when

needed. For Participant Four, his champion provided him with an opportunity to make mistakes as he learned the nuances of the academy. He recalled,

Yes. I was a part of a change in administration for a college when a mentor of mine and dear friend, a guy named [deleted] who later was the inspiration for what is called the [deleted], asked me to join him as a Dean at another college. That college changed its administration and [deleted] took a chance on me to be Dean of Instruction without any instructional background. I confided in him that I knew relatively little or nothing about being an instructional dean. He said to me that he knew little or nothing about being president, but he was going to be one. If I wanted to be a dean, let's go take a ride. And that changed my life. It changed my life because it allowed me to make a lot of mistakes in instruction, but with somebody who was willing to fly a cover for me. Having somebody fly a cover for you is the greatest support system you could ever imagine. Having someone who will allow you to make mistakes as you learn and not crucify you for every error you can make is a great support system.

Participant Five experienced the benefits of a champion playing a pivotal role in his career advancement on several occasions. He recalled one experience as a classified employee,

I was working in the grants office and my wife was expecting our child. I wasn't making enough money. I was in the personnel office one morning going through the brochures getting ready to look for a job. The Vice President came in who was the guy that had hired me for the teaching job. He asked me, are you looking for another job? I said, "I will be." And then he said, we're going to be reorganizing here. There may be some things here that may work for you. And I said, well, you know I've never taught full-time. And knowing the institution I said, it'd be highly unusual. And he said, well you still ought think about it. And so I did, really kind of based on his encouragement. I applied for those positions. But it was a process where they had a committee, people interviewed you, and of course after you got through the committee then you had to go and meet with the Vice President and the President. And the President like me, kind of said the same thing. He said, this is very unusual to have someone without any full-time teaching experience ranked as highly as you were by these committees. But since I had applied in two divisions and I was the first choice in both of them, they were almost obligated to give me something. So again, Social Sciences and Humanities was where I applied and I was appointed in the Humanities area.

Participant Five spoke of his champion's actions in another assignment that was instrumental in his career. He recalled,

What happened is that the district opened a satellite campus in a neighboring community—[deleted]. And they needed someone to go over and establish that campus. What had happened on that was the Dean that I reported to—the Dean of Humanities had retired and I had been a candidate for the Dean's position, an unsuccessful candidate. And I wound up working with a new Dean, and the rapport as was often the case, you know, when you have someone that comes in new and you have somebody that was the candidate for the position that's been there, it was not ideal. And the Vice President again, the same person that had hired me when another position came up, he and the President talked with me about the possibility of making a transfer which I did. And when I made the transfer it was at a higher level. So I went over there, and I think it was called the Dean of the [deleted] campus. And I had responsibility for doing all the oversight of the physical plant—making the conversions from a junior high to a college campus; working with neighbors; working with the city; setting up the instructional programs; hire the staff that needed to come in. So it was really like setting up a small college. It was really a good experience. Much broader than the experience being the Humanities Dean. So it worked out to my advantage. And I wound up working at the same level with the person that I had reported too and with other Deans. It was a good experience for me.

According to all participants, their journey to a community college presidency was not based solely on how well they performed in their assignment (meritocracy); it was also based on having a champion that could help them rise in the ranks, teach them what they needed to know, tell others their worth and protect them from bad projects or others' wrath (especially when they made a mistake). All of the participants spoke of how their champions helped them get good projects, training, promotions and perks. Moreover, all of the participants' champions had power in the office hierarchy and were respected within organizations. From the participants' responses I understood the ideal champion, for those on a journey to a community college presidency, to be someone capable of opening doors and providing multidimensional support in eight areas: governance/strategic management, instructional/student services quality, institutional effectiveness, managerial financial planning, evidence-based marketing, improved information systems, human resources, and maximizing facilities utilization.

Summary of Key Themes Arising from Responses to Research Questions

Three key themes were presented above in this chapter: make race not an issue, prepare for a non-linear pathway, and find a champion. The first of these key themes centered on managing self while on the journey, the second on managing the actual journey, and the third on acquiring essential relationships for success on that journey. These themes were offered to provide a career advancement strategy advice for African American male aspirants seeking a community college presidency. These key themes, and the findings presented in Chapter 4 echo the limited research in this field, and respond to a research call for specific how-to information (Phelps et al, 1997, p.12).

Future Research

This qualitative study focused on understanding the structure and essence of the career advancement experiences of African American male community college presidents and on providing words of wisdom for other African American male administrators aspiring to a community college presidency. Following this study's findings, two areas of future qualitative research are proposed. First, comparative qualitative research needs to be conducted to provide a more in-depth understanding of how the career advancement barriers elicited in this study for African American males differ from their majority counterparts and other underrepresented groups aspiring to a community college presidency. In addition, to contributing to an expansion of available literature on how a select group of African American male presidents have experienced their journey to a community college presidency, such research would provide a resource for community college Boards seeking to improve the hiring practices at their institutions. I believe this second point concerning the preparation of a "hiring practices" resource may have

national implications. I believe if we, the American community college system, were to expand diversification of the available pool of community college presidential candidates, especially as it relates to African American males, we may more African American male presidents in American community colleges in the near future.

A second area for future qualitative research needs to be focused on providing African American males aspiring to a community college with more how-to literature; particularly in eight multidimensional areas: governance/strategic management, instructional/student services quality, institutional effectiveness, managerial financial planning, evidence-based marketing, improved information systems, human resources, and maximizing facilities utilization. I believe such research would contribute to critical dialogue on redesigning contemporary leadership programs that respond more profoundly to current and future professional development needs of African American males aspiring to a community college presidency.

There is urgency in conducting the research I proposed as soon as possible. Many of the sitting African American male community college presidents are preparing for retirement, having given 30+ years of service, and the literature reports that the number of African American male community college presidents is decreasing in American community colleges. The areas of future qualitative research proposed here will expand the paucity of literature available on African American male community college presidents and benefit the next generation of African American male community college presidents at the same time (Bridges, 1996, p.751).

In Conclusion

I came to this study as an aspirant to a community college presidency. Intuitively and experientially I understood, as the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 above revealed, that social values play a pivotal role in the employment practices of American community colleges. Further, I understood that prevailing social norms within the institution often present career barriers for African American males aspiring for a community college presidency. And, after nearly two decades in the California community college system, I was aware that there is a traditional pathway to a community college presidency that is seldom traveled by African American males seeking to be a community college president; a point confirmed by the literature. I was unaware of how to overcome the career advancement barriers revealed in the literature, and reported as findings in this study, to become community college president. The participants to this study enlightened me and provided strategies not reflected in the literature. I exit this study equipped with knowledge absent in the literature that could be used to inform our critical discourse on strategies for expanding and educating the pool of African American aspirants to a community college presidency .

In my research I expected to find individuals that were angry and bitter from the trials and tribulations of their journey to the presidency. Instead I found individuals full of compassion and committed to sharing lessons learned and talents achieved on their journey. They did not see their journey to the presidency as a burden but as an opportunity to exhibit skills honed by rich experiences borne in a continual need for self-development. Their stories revealed that while prevailing social values can erect barriers to career advancement to a community college presidency it is most important for

African American male aspirants to have, and act on, a personal set of values that will sustain them when life is hard (e.g., integrity, family, dedication, vision, etc.). Moreover, the participants emphasized the need for African American males aspiring to a community college presidency to accept life as hard and unfair and to be unswerving in their personal commitment to shape social norms rather than to be shaped by prevailing institutional norms. All of the participants had unique journeys to a community college presidency, and while all of the participants acknowledged that a traditional pathway to a community college presidency exists they were emphatic about making the journey a personal one. For them the journey was never about the presidency...the journey was about taking every opportunity to step toward the presidency being sure that the final step was from the academic side of the house.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION NOTICE

Protocol Title Knocking on the Doors of Opportunity: A Phenomenological Study of How African American Males' Have Experienced the Journey to the Community College Presidency

PI Jim Banning, Education via e-mail

Co-PI Elmer Bugg, Education via e-mail

Review date January 13, 2008

Notification date January 14, 2008

Type of review INITIAL (expedite review)

Review of the information you provided resulted in the following determination:

1. How will the initial names of potential participants be obtained?
2. Add to the consent form that total participation for all interviews and meetings will last up to at least 6 months.
3. The section, Can my Taking Part in the Study End Early?, is for the researchers to remove the participant involuntarily. For example, if the participant does not check the transcriptions or meet with you for the final interview; will they be removed from the study? If yes, this type of information goes in this section. If there are no reasons why the researcher would remove the participants, this section can be removed.

Please submit your response in memo format via e-mail or hard copy and submit any revised documents. Your response to this memo will be routed to a reviewer, typically within a day after it is received unless the Committee must re-review it. Your prompt response is important. Please do not resubmit the H-100. Research participants may **not** be recruited until the protocol has been approved.

If you have questions, please address them to the IRB, care of Janell Barker, IRB Administrator, at 1-1655 or janell.barker@research.colostate.edu.

Access our web page at <http://ricro.research.colostate.edu> for current information and application forms for human research.

Animal Care and Use · Drug Review · Human Research · Institutional Biosafety
321 General Services Center

**THE HRC IS NOW KNOWN AS THE IRB
(INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD)**

Janell Barker
IRB Administrator
Research Integrity & Compliance Review Office
321 General Services Building
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523-2011
Janell.Barker@Research.Colostate.edu
970-491-1655
FAX: 970-491-2293
<http://ricro.research.colostate.edu>

From: Banning,Jim
Sent: Monday, January 14, 2008 7:33 PM
To: Barker,Janell
Cc: elmerbugg@sbcglobal.net
Subject: RE: human research, Banning, Knocking on the Doors of Opportunity...

Janell, in response to the IRB Determination notice of January 14, 2008):

Protocol title Knocking on the Doors of Opportunity: A Phenomenological Study of How African American Males' Have Experienced the Journey to the Community College Presidency

PI Jim Banning, Education

Co-PI Elmer Bugg, Education

Review date January 13, 2008

Notification date January 14, 2008

1. The initial pool will be comprised of all African American male community college presidents. This list will be obtain from the institutional records posted on institutional websites. Those serving in interim or acting roles will remove from this initial list.
2. The requested addition has been made to the consent form (See attached revision).
3. The section regarding "Taking part..." has been removed (See attached revision).

Please let us know if any further information or changes are needed. Thank you.

Jim Banning

Thank you for your responses. The margins of the consent form may be different on my computer, but before printing the final version off to use, make sure the page/initial/date lines are all on the bottom of each page; including page 4.

Your project, Knocking on the Doors of Opportunity: A Phenomenological Study of the African American Males' Journey to the Community College Presidency, has been approved as of January 17, 2008 with the condition that the approved consent form is used. Approval is for a maximum of 12 participants. The IRB ID # is 08-001H.

The approval is being processed and will be sent in the next several days. The letter will contain more details of the approval and the responsibilities of the researchers; please read and keep a copy for your files.

**THE HRC IS NOW KNOWN AS THE IRB
(INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD)**

Janell Barker, IRB Administrator
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APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT/FOLLOW-UP LETTERS

CSU LETTERHEAD

<Date>

<Name>

<Address>

<City/State/Zip>

Dear >>>>

My name is Elmer Bugg. I am currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program in Education and Human Resources, with a specialization in *Community College Leadership*, at Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, CO. I am writing you to request your assistance in my dissertation research efforts.

I am interested in understanding the lived experience of African American male community college presidents and in providing their insights and knowledge to African American male administrators aspiring to become a community college presidency.

To accomplish this goal, I plan to investigate three primary research questions:

1. How have a select group of African American males experienced their journey to the rank of community college president?
2. In their opinion, what were the essential qualities and characteristics that enabled them to take advantage of the career advancement opportunities they sought?
3. What barriers did they encounter in their career management efforts and how did they overcome those barriers?

I shall be calling upon you next week to discuss your possible participation in this project and to answer any question you might have at that time. If you have any questions before then, please don't hesitate to call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Elmer Bugg

CSU LETTERHEAD

<Date>

<Name>

<Address>

<City/State/Zip>

Dear >>>>

Thank you for meeting with me and agreeing to participate in my dissertation research efforts.

Along with this note, I've included the Colorado State University "Informed Consent" form, and the questionnaire we discussed. Please review and sign the "Informed Consent" form, complete the questionnaire and return them to me via the enclosed envelope.

Upon receipt of these forms, I shall call you to schedule a time for to conduct your interview.

If you have any questions before then, please don't hesitate to call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Elmer Bugg

Attachments

APPENDIX C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE OF STUDY: *Knocking on the Doors of Opportunity: A Phenomenological Study of the African American Males' Journey to the Community College Presidency*

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **Dr. Jim Banning**
School of Education
105I Education, Colorado State University,
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1588
970.491.7153
James.Banning@ColoState.EDU

Co- PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **Mr. Elmer Bugg**
School of Education
208 Education, Colorado State University,
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1588
925-382-3288
elmerbugg@sbcglobal.net

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being asked to participate because you are an African American male that has successfully managed your career to the rank of community college president.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The study is being conducted by Mr. Elmer Bugg as part of his dissertation research efforts under the direction of James H. Banning, Ph.D., Colorado State University.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose this study is to contribute toward understanding the career advancement experiences of African American male community college presidents in predominantly white community colleges and to provide these insights and knowledge to African American male administrators aspiring to become a community college president.

Page _____ of _____ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

**WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?
WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**

The study will involve interviewing you in your office. The interview will take from 60-90 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions, including:

1. How did you come to a career in community colleges?
2. Can you describe for me your professional journey to the community college presidency.
3. When you think back on your career, what and/or who did you think was most influential in your success? Please explain that.
4. In your opinion, what were the essential qualities and characteristics that enabled you to take advantage of the career advancement opportunities you sought?
5. What professional and social barriers did you encounter in your career advancement efforts and how did you overcome those barriers?

Follow-up interview questions are likely to arise from my interactions with you.

Once the interview has been transcribed, another 60-90 minute meeting will be scheduled for you to check the accuracy of my transcription and to make any additions you may have. The total participation for all interviews and meetings will last up to at least six months.

A final 60-90 minute meeting will be scheduled after the interview data has been analyzed for validation of (and support for) my conclusions.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You may feel, after the interview has been transcribed, that the information contained in it is too personal and that you want to withdraw from participation.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

The only records linking you and the research would be this consent document, and the taped and transcribed interviews you will be party to. Possible risks would be any potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality.

Page _____ of _____ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in the proposed research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no known direct benefits to you, but by knowing the personal traits you exhibited, what decisions you made, and what barriers you overcame will assist other African American males in managing their career choices and in taking advantage of career advancement opportunities. By sharing your lived experiences other African American males seeking presidential appointments in American community colleges may benefit.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE?

This will be no cost for you to participate in this study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep you name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your consent form will be kept separate from the digital recordings and transcriptions of your interview and these three things will be stored in different places under lock and key. In addition, your transcribed interview will be “scrubbed” of any data that might lead to revealing your identity, geographic location, or community college affiliation.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will NOT be compensated for your participation in this study.

Page _____ of _____ Participant’s initials _____ Date _____

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, James H. Banning, Ph.D. at 970.491.7153. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator, at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form for your records.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 4 pages.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Elmer Bugg
Name of person providing information to participant

Date

Signature of Research Staff