Roses that Grew from the Concrete: A Critical Investigation of the Intersection of Race and Gender on the Lived Experiences of African American Male Senior Student Affairs Officers at Predominately White Institutions

Rahmon S. Hart

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THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND GENDER ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCES
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS AT
PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Education

By
Rahmon S. Hart Sr.

February 2009
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2009
ROSES THAT GREW FROM THE CONCRETE: A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND GENDER ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS AT PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

ROSES THAT GREW FROM THE CONCRETE: A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND GENDER ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS AT PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

By

Rahmon S. Hart Sr.

February 2009

Dissertation Supervised by Rodney K. Hopson, Ph.D.

Despite past efforts to address the racial disparities that exist in the higher education workforce, African American male Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) are dramatically underrepresented at predominately White institutions of higher education (PWIs). The lived experiences of this unique group of African Americans have been ignored in the empirical literature. The main research question that guided this study was the following: How does the intersection of race and gender influence the experiences of African American male SSAOs at PWIs? A particular focus of this research was to gain a better understanding of how African American male SSAOs experience and respond to racism at PWIs.

The two theoretical lenses utilized in this dissertation were Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Van Manen’s lifeworld existentials. CRT offers a strong conceptual
framework upon which to assign meaning and practical application to the research findings pertaining to the experiences of African American male SSAOs at PWIs. Van Manen (1990) holds that the existential themes of lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived human relation pervade the life experiences of all human beings. This dissertation was a qualitative, collective case study that utilized personal documents, archival records, and in-depth interviews. A criterion-based sample of 10 SSAOs participated in this research study.

The participants provided thick descriptions of their experiences at PWIs throughout their career. The data was constantly analyzed to inform data collection decisions and recurring themes. ATLAS.ti was utilized as the primary analytical tool. ATLAS.ti is a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software program that utilizes a grounded theory approach to code, display, and systematically analyze for thematic patterns across cases. The themes that emerged as a result of the analysis are as follows: (1) Mobile Professionals, (2) Black Man’s Burden, (3) Love for the work, (4) Racial Microaggressions, (5) Blocking of Black Male Bodies, (6) Cognitive-Time Responses and (7) Increasing Personal and Academic Capital. This study is unique in that it gives voice to the lived experiences of African American male SSAOs and provides several practical implications for African American males who are aspiring SSAOs.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents Charles Hart and Michelle Jones. Your unconditional love, patience, guidance, and support have provided me with the courage to pursue my dreams without limitations. I am forever grateful for all the sacrifices you have made for me.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my stepparents: James Jones and Mary Hart. You have been very important in my life and have contributed to my overall development. The lessons you have taught me are invaluable.

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife Nneka. There are no words that adequately describe how much I value our marriage and friendship. Your encouragement and love gives me the strength to move mountains.

I dedicate this dissertation to my four children: Brooke, Rahmon Jr., Nia, and Charles (unborn). Always remember that education is the key to success. I also dedicate this dissertation to my sisters LaShawna and Chelsie. I pray that I can serve as an inspiration to you.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my in-laws and extended family members. You serve as a reliable network of support and I appreciate you.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation could not have been written without the guidance, encouragement, and support that I have received from a host of people. During this doctoral journey, I have been blessed with the opportunity to meet some inspiring people and to develop some meaningful relationships. This list is long, but I humbly acknowledge the sacrifices made for me and investments made in me.

To my wife Nneka Hart, who has been a shining light throughout this entire process, that supported me unconditionally, and helped me to remain focused when I needed it most. Without your support this would have not been possible.

I also want to acknowledge all of my parents: My mother and father (Michelle Jones and Charles Hart): my step Mother and Father (Mary Hart and James Jones); my Mother and Father In-laws (Barbara and Jerome Williams). To my sisters (LaShawna and Chelsie). All of you have helped me in some meaningful way and I appreciate everything that you have done for me.

I also want to acknowledge others who have had a hand in my ability to navigate this doctoral program and dissertation process: To Dr. Jean Higgins and Dr. James Henderson for being outstanding teachers and motivators over the last four years. To my IDPEL 2009 cohort and small group members (Deno DiCiantis, Wes Shipley, Renee Taladay, and Hollis Batista), we had each other’s backs throughout this entire process and made sure that when one was weak the others took up the slack--and I certainly had my moments. To Monica Lamar for being a true friend and for being my partner in the Theme Based Dissertation Group led by Dr. Rodney Hopson. To my program mentor
Dr. Michael Murphy for setting aside the time to discuss ways in which I could apply theoretical concepts in practical situations. To my secretary Terina Hicks was increasingly supportive throughout my last year of intense dissertation research and writing.

Finally to my dissertation chair, Dr. Rodney Hopson who always kept the bar extremely high but also sacrificed numerous hours to provide me with critical feedback and uplift. To my committee member Dr. Levers-Lopez who also helped me to work through stumbling blocks and provided me with some very timely encouragement. To my other committee members Dr. George Yancy and Dr. Rex Crawley for the time they set aside to discuss my work and provide me with feedback. My committee members are a group of extremely busy people and I am honored to have had them serve on my committee.

I could go on and on listing people that I feel have helped me during this doctoral journey but I just want to humbly acknowledge that I am only a product of the investments that were made in me and the sacrifices made for me. I thank you all for any role you played.
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Chapter 1

Line of Inquiry

Introduction

Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete? Proving nature’s law is wrong it learned to walk without having feet. Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air. Long live the rose that grew from the concrete when nobody else ever cared (Shakur, 2006).

Tupac Shakur’s poem, *Roses That Grew From the Concrete* (2006), is a metaphor utilized in this study to describe the challenges that African American males employed as senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) have overcome in their journey to secure and excel in their positions at predominately White institutions of higher education in the United States (PWIs). Many African Americans have characterized their experiences at PWIs as tumultuous, inhospitable, and hostile. Metaphorically speaking, the roses in this study are a group of 10 African American men who have persevered and persisted through the administrative ranks to secure chief student affairs positions at PWIs.

The concrete is a symbol of the embedded obstacles and challenges that African American males face as they strive to gain access to spaces that have been historically reserved for White administrators. When African American males successfully navigate the embedded obstacles, defeat the odds, and ascend to chief student affairs positions at
PWIs, they can be likened to roses that have emerged from cracks in the concrete. The experiential knowledge of African American males, who have secured chief student affairs positions, has not been given proper attention in the scholarly literature. Consequently, this study will address the existing gaps and give voice to this unique group of college administrators.

I gained interest in this topic after reflecting back over a decade of my personal experiences as a college student and student affairs administrator at five PWIs in the United States. Although I find my work in student affairs administration to be extremely rewarding, my lived experiences have not been in alignment with McIntosh’s (1998) long list of unearned skin privileges that many White Americans are granted on a daily basis. On the contrary, my experiences are in harmony with the many experiential dimensions described in Yancy’s *Black Bodies, White Gazes* (2008). Within this context, “my darkness is a signifier of negative values grounded within a racist social and historical matrix that predates my existential emergence” (Yancy, 2008, p.3). The purpose of sharing the following reflection is to give readers a glimpse of my lived experiences and my motivation behind pursuing this line of inquiry.

I am a Black male who grew up in a predominately African American urban community on the east coast during the birth of the hip-hop generation. My adolescent years included rapping, break dancing, wearing Kangol hats, Gazelle glasses, and bomber jackets. My neighborhood adhered to an unspoken *street-code* that was rarely violated without serious consequences. The cultural transition from the *street space* in my community to the *academic space* at the PWI that I attended as a college student was a tumultuous one. There were very few African Americans at the state university that I
attended and the African American males were dropping out or getting kicked out at an alarming rate. It was clear to me that I was in an academic space filled with negative perceptions about my academic skills, my potential, and my ability to earn a degree. The accumulated affects of being viewed in that manner extinguished the spirit of many of my peers.

Throughout my undergraduate and graduate years, I was able to rely heavily on the support network I established through the Black student organization on campus and my historically Black fraternity--Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated. Upon earning my Master’s degree in higher education administration, that support system remained in place, but I quickly realized that I pursued a career occupied by very few African American males. For the majority of my career, I have functioned as one of a handful of African Americans at my university, and I have almost always been the only African American male in the student affairs division. I have held various administrative positions in work environments that have ranged from hostile to somewhat supportive. On many occasions, I have experienced overt and covert racism in the workplace and in the community surrounding the university.

As a Black male and former collegiate football player, I have been perceived as very intimidating because of my race and physical stature of 6 feet 2 inches and 230 pounds. On more than one occasion, I have fit the description of a criminal at large and have been temporarily detained by campus and local police officers. Due to my experiences with racial profiling and being mistaken for a Black male that should be feared, I go above and beyond to make sure that I wear a shirt and tie when I know I am going to be working at night or on the weekends. When I don’t wear a shirt and tie on
campus, my White colleagues often walk past me because they don’t recognize me. While participating in meetings at work, my ideas have been frequently ignored or over analyzed, only to be embraced when White colleagues present them weeks or months later as their original ideas. I have been insulted time and time again by assumptions made about my culture and values due to my Black maleness.

Unlike the list of unearned skin privileges that are cited by Peggy McIntosh (1998), the characteristics I provide are a brief description of my experiences navigating traditionally White academic spaces in my Black body. They provide a glimpse of some of the issues that I have had to overcome while attempting to pursue my academic and professional goals at PWIs. These experiences have led me to inquire into the experiences of other African American males who have remained in the field and excelled at PWIs despite the concrete obstacles put before them. I am extremely curious about the stories they have to tell, and the advice they would give me as I attempt to navigate my career in student affairs. What types of challenges did they have to overcome? What strategies did they employ that helped them become successful? How did they resist growing bitter? What advice would they give to a young Black male trying to be successful in this field? My experiences and unaddressed questions have fueled my passion to investigate the experiences of African American males who are employed as chief student affairs officers at PWIs.

African American SSAOs have an untold story that should be probed, analyzed, and made public for those who are interested in this line of inquiry. This dissertation study attempts to address a gap in the extant literature and shed light on the journey of a unique group of Black males who have found a way to prevail at PWIs. This study will
investigate African American male SSAOs at PWIs and give voice to their journey and perspectives. As Shakur (2006) eloquently proclaims:

“…You wouldn’t ask why the rose grew from the concrete had damaged petals. On the contrary, we would all celebrate its tenacity. We would all love its will to reach the sun… Don’t ask me why, thank God and ask me how!”

Statement of the Problem

Despite past efforts to address the racial disparities that exist in the higher education workforce, African American male chief student affairs officers are dramatically underrepresented at PWIs. In 2000, African American males made up 3.8% of all student affairs positions and .54% of all chief student affairs positions (Flowers, 2003). The lived experiences of African American male SSAOs at PWIs have been ignored in the empirical literature. This unique group has ascended to the highest level in the field, yet their voices have remained muted and their stories remain untold.

Melendez (2004) acknowledges that it is gratifying to see that this country now recognizes the merits of diversity, but the danger lies in sending the implicit message that we have won the battle for equity and equal opportunity. It is undeniable that this country has made progress, but African Americans have not reached parity in the American workforce in general and the higher education administrative workforce in specific. When examining the racial profile of American college and university presidents in the United States over the last two decades, the serious need for continued racial progress within the top administrative ranks at PWIs is evident. A report published by the American Council on Higher Education (2007) found that African Americans made up 5.0 percent of all college presidents in 1986 and 5.9 percent of all college
presidents in 2006. This alarming statistic points out that African Americans have made virtually no progress over the last 20 years as it pertains to securing the position of college president. This stagnation suggests that there is indeed additional work that needs to be done to address the racial disparities that currently exist.

Analyzing the issue of African American representation from a broader perspective, African Americans represented 9.4 percent of all the administrative positions at postsecondary institutions of higher education in 2003, 3.8 percent for African American males and 5.6 percent for African American females (NCES, 2005). During that same time White administrators employed in the same positions made up 81.8 percent, 41.3 percent for White males and 40.5 percent for White females. It should be duly noted that these statistics include historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). It can be reasonably argued that the number of African American administrators that hold administrative positions at PWIs is at least slightly less than the 9.4 percent found at all institutions of higher education.

Racial disparities can also be found among the faculty ranks at postsecondary institutions of higher education. African American faculty made up 5.2 percent of all full-time instructional faculty positions in 2005, 2.5 percent for African American males and 2.7 percent for African American females. During that same time, White faculty members held 78.1 percent of those positions, 46.4 percent for White males and 31.7 percent for White females.

The poor representation of African Americans at colleges and universities across the country has raised the level of interest in the line of inquiry that focuses on their plight. Consequently, a growing body of empirical literature has addressed the status of
African Americans in the higher education workforce (Jackson, 2001, 2003a, 2004b; Flowers, 2003; Gaston, 2003; Reason, 2003; Turrentine & Conley; 2001). Responding to the gap in the literature, scholars have investigated the experiences of executive-level academic administrators in general and female administrators in specific (Holmes, 2003, 2004; Rolle, Davies, Banning, 2000). This research illuminates that African Americans are underrepresented and marginalized at many PWIs in the United States. Despite the increased knowledge that scholars have acquired in the last decade pertaining to African American administrators in higher education, there is a paucity of literature that investigates the experiences of African American administrators employed in non-academic positions.

The challenges related to racism that African American men and women face at PWIs continues to have a debilitating effect on their ability to navigate these historically White spaces. Studies have shown that racism contributes to anxiety, depression, substance abuse, low self-esteem, decreased life satisfaction, and poor academic success in African Americans (Broman, 1997; Burke, 1997; Gougis, 1986; Outlaw, 1993; Simpson & Yinger, 1985). Specific to African American males, White and Cones (1999) argue that prejudice, discrimination and racism can lead Black men to harbor feelings of resentment, grief, frustration, despair, anger and rage. In light of the racism’s negative influence on the self-esteem and psychological health of Black males in the United States, it is critical to examine the influence of race and gender on African American male administrators who are employed at PWIs. Addressing this gap in the literature would give voice to their experiences and provide a better understanding of the Black male journey in those spaces.
Purpose of the Research

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of how the intersection of race and gender influences the lived experiences of African American male SSAOs at predominately White institutions PWIs. This researcher was interested in securing personal descriptions of African American males’ experiences navigating their careers at PWIs. A particular focus of the research was to understand how these African American men have experienced and responded to racism and other forms of discrimination in these settings. This line of inquiry also examined factors that these African American SSAOs perceived as most salient to their success and the success of other African Americans. The narratives provided by this historically silenced group of administrators will challenge the dominant discourses on how issues related to race are experienced by African American men at PWIs.

Student Affairs administrators are of particular interest because they are highly engaged in the lives of students and are often the resource students utilize most during their academic tenure. Given their close relationships with students, it is of great importance for them to be representative of the diversity of student population they serve. The poor representation of African American student affairs administrators can promote a cultural environment that is not responsive to the needs of African American students.

The Chief Student Affairs officer is often referred to as the Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO). Most SSAOs hold the title of Dean or Vice-President and are a member of the President’s Cabinet. At some colleges and universities, SSAOs are responsible for providing leadership to a large collection of departments, sometimes comprising hundreds of employees of various skill levels and racial backgrounds. Some of the
functional areas that SSAOs oversee are the following: Athletic Departments, Greek life, academic advising, student activities, career services, college unions, counseling services, judicial affairs, minority affairs, orientation programs, leadership programs, religious programs, women centers, housing and residential services, facilities services, disability services, and international affairs.

The leadership roles of student affairs administrators are constantly redefined and they vary tremendously from position to position and from institution to institution. They are rarely tenure-track positions, and they often lack the prestige of their counterparts who are academic administrators in the academy. Still, these key administrators have the ability to directly influence the formation of a multicultural environment (Manning & Boatright, 1991). Daily functions and responsibilities of student affairs administrators include, but are not limited to the following: resource allocation, addressing student crises/conflicts, program development, serving on institutional committees, and a variety of other functions aimed at improving the quality of curricular and co-curricular learning. In addition, they develop and implement policy that often influences the campus climate and transforms institutional structure.

Research Questions

The main research question that was proposed in this study was: How does the intersection of race and gender influence the lived experiences of African American male senior student affairs officers at predominately White institutions? In addition to the main research question, the following questions provided additional guidance for this line of inquiry:
1. How do African male SSAOs describe their social and academic experiences at PWIs?

2. How do African American male SSAOs describe their experiences with racism and/or discrimination at PWIs?

3. How do African American male SSAOs describe their responses to racism and/or discrimination at PWIs?

4. What factors do African American male SSAOs perceive as most salient to their success at PWIs?

Theoretical Framework

The philosophical approach of critical race theory (CRT) offered a strong conceptual framework upon which to assign meaning and practical application to the research findings pertaining to the experiences of African American male SSAOs at PWIs. CRT was utilized as the primary theoretical tool because it provides a useful rubric for understanding the taken-for-granted privileges and inequities that are built into our society (Ladson-Billings, 2003). This lens was useful in amplifying the narratives and counternarratives in a fashion that illuminated the experiences of the African American male administrators in this study as they navigated racism, racial subordination, and discrimination at PWIs.

Emergence of Critical Race Theory

CRT is a theoretical framework that draws upon and extends a broad literature base in law, philosophy, sociology, history, ethnic studies and women’s studies. CRT
was primarily built upon the work of legal scholars of color who believe that racism is intertwined in the fabric of American life (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). It is an outgrowth of the early work of critical legal scholars Derrick Bell (an African-American) and Alan Freeman (a White-American), both of whom were deeply distressed over the slow pace of racial reform in the United States in the mid-1970s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Soon scholars like Richard Delgado, Kimberle Crenshaw, William Tate, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda and Angela Harris joined them in their discontent and argued that racial progress since the civil rights movement of the 1960s had slowed drastically and, in some cases, rolled back. They believed that traditional approaches like filing legal briefs, engaging in protests, developing new legal strategies, or writing articles in an effort to appeal to the moral fiber of fellow citizens were no longer productive in pursuing racial justice. Many scholars were in agreement that a new approach was needed, and as a result, the CRT movement gained tremendous momentum. Collectively, legal and political scholars of color questioned whether the philosophical underpinnings of traditional color-blind approach are capable of supporting continued movement toward social justice in a climate of retrenchment (Tate, 1996).

CRT was initially utilized in legal studies but has since been extended to education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

CRT is a valuable lens to utilize when investigating the experiences of marginalized people (or group of people) in majority settings “because it attempts to foreground race and racism in the research as well as challenge the traditional paradigms, methods, texts, and separate discourse on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact communities of color” (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).
2000, p.63). African American senior-level administrators employed at PWIs rarely have opportunities to tell stories related to their struggle in mainstream settings. They have been underestimated, undervalued, and marginalized in these historically White spaces (Madison, 2008). To this end, I utilized CRT as a methodological tool to position race and racism to be viewed through the lens of this select group of African American administrators employed at PWIs.

*Van Manen’s Lifeworld Existentials*

This researcher also utilized Van Manen’s lifeworld existentials (1990) as an analytical tool to make meaning of the lived experiences of African American male SSAOs at PWIs. Van Manen contends that “our lived experiences and the structures of meanings in terms of which these lived experiences can be described and interpreted constitute the immense complexity of the lifeworld” (Van Manen, 1990, p.101). Van Manen offers a practical approach to conducting hermeneutic phenomenological human science research, and it includes a “dynamic interplay” of six research activities:

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon; and
6. Balancing the research context by considering the parts and whole (Van Manen, 1990, pp. 30-31).

Van Manen’s lifeworld existentials complements CRT nicely because they are both
committed to experiential knowledge and analyzing narratives with the intent to gain a deeper understanding of a particular human phenomenon. In this case, the phenomenon of interest is African American male SSAOs at PWIs. To aid in the analysis of the lived experiences of this unique group of administrators, Van Manen offers four “lifeworld existentials” or themes. The four themes are the following: lived space, lived body, lived time, lived human relation. These lifeworld existentials will be discussed in greater detail in the methodology chapter.

Conceptualizing Racism

In this dissertation, I utilize the term racism broadly to refer to the variety of ways in which people of African descent are negatively influenced in every societal institution in the United States (Feagin & Sikes, 1994). This section will provide an overview of various terms in attempt to conceptualize racism and its many variants. It is acknowledged that that racism has many conceptual meanings and operational definitions. Therefore, the terminology and concepts discussed in this section reflect the complexity of racism and should be utilized as a reference throughout this dissertation.

One of the early scholars who conceptualized racism was Ruth Benedict, who asserted that it is the “Calvinism which asserts that one group has the stigmata of superiority and the other has those of inferiority” (Benedict, 1940, p. 5). Within this context racism means that the damnation or salvation of an individual or group of individuals is determined at conception. Schaefer (1990) states that racism is a defined set of ideas or beliefs that lead people to develop negative attitudes towards an entire group of people. These negative attitudes eventually give rise to discriminatory actions
against African Americans and other people of color. Jones (1972) defines racism as resulting “from the transformation of race prejudice and/or ethnocentrism through the exercise of power against a racial group defined as inferior, by individuals and institutions with the intentional or unintentional support of the entire culture” (p. 117). Jones’s broad definition of racism also includes institutionalized racism: the network of institutional structures, policies, and practices that create advantages and benefits for Whites and discrimination, oppression, and disadvantage for people from targeted racial groups (Bell, Joshi, & Zuniga, 2007). Tatum (1997) also emphasizes the importance of recognizing that racism extends beyond personal ideology based on a system of prejudice and she states that it is a system involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices that preserve White advantages and power.

In addition to the broad definitions of racism that have been discussed to this point, several concepts are utilized within this dissertation to facilitate a more sophisticated understanding of the multiple dimensions and manifestations of racism. Overt or blatant is perhaps the clearest example of racism and it encompasses discriminatory acts that are quite evident and involves some degree of hostility (Bonilla-Silva, 1996). This type of racism includes intentional acts of racial bigotry and discrimination. Although overt racism still exists today, it was commonly experienced during the centuries of slavery and decades of legal segregation in which the material, physical, and psychological impact of blatant discrimination on African Americans was severe (Feagin & Sikes, 1994).

The end of legally endorsed racism and the racial progress made in the 1960s challenged the way in which racism manifested itself in the United States. Although civil
rights laws did not eradicate overt racism, the oppression of African Americans is more covert or subtle than in the past (Feagin, 2000). Racial micro-aggressions are a subtle form of racism that include offensive, stunning, automatic acts of disregard that stem from unconscious attitudes of White superiority and constitute a verification of Black inferiority (Davis, 1989). Racial micro-aggressions are seemingly harmless, but the cumulative weight of this form of racism over a lifetime can contribute to diminished mortality, augmented morbidity, and flattened confidence (Pierce, 1995). Tatum (1997) discusses a subtle form of racism that she describes as passive racism. Passive racism can be seen in the collusion of laughing when a racist joke is told, letting exclusionary hiring practices go unchallenged, accepting as appropriate the omissions of people of color from the curriculum, and avoiding difficult race-related issues. White privilege is a form of passive racism that refers to the benefits of access to resources, social rewards, and power to shape the norms and values of a society that Whites receive by virtue of their position in a racist society (McIntosh, 1998).

As Smith (2004) discusses racism and its variants he refers to a concept called racial priming. Racial priming refers to the socialization process in which specific messages and racial ideologies are passed on to White children. The socialization process occurs indirectly, directly, consciously, and unconsciously. Smith, Yosso, and Solorzano (2007) argue that this socialization process endorses racial stereotypes. They reference the use of games, folklore, jokes, politicians, mainstream media, music, and the curriculum found in textbooks as catalysts to get the majority to internalize racists attitudes, stereotypes, assumptions, fears, resentments, discourses, and fictitious racial scripts (Smith, 2004; Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2007).
Scholars who have investigated gendered racism among Black men have utilized the term Black misandry to describe the pathological aversion toward Black men created and reinforced in societal, institutional, and individual ideologies, practices, and behaviors (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Through this lens African American males are viewed negatively and assigned into a plethora of stereotypical categories (e.g., athlete, lazy violent, hypersexual, criminal, unintelligent). The intersection of societal stereotypes and the negative social conditioning reproduces the constant cycle in which Black men are confronted with oppressive and discriminatory acts.

Historical Background

It must be acknowledged that the history of American democracy in regard to Black people from 1776 to 1965 was a “colossal failure” (West, 2001). The United States government in general, and PWIs in specific, have a much longer history of exclusion than they do of inclusion, and this history continues to shape racial dynamics on many college campuses in this country (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). Much progress has been made to eliminate legalized discrimination of Black bodies from historically White spaces, however, the residual threads of racism have yet to be untangled from the fabric of this nation. The following section provides a historical overview of some of the racial injustices and obstacles that African Americans have navigated through to gain access to humane treatment in Whites only spaces.
Supreme Court Decisions and Federal Legislation

The United States Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) that racial segregation in public facilities were constitutional if they were equal in quality. Holmer Plessy argued that segregation, enforced by the Jim Crow laws of the South, imposed a badge of inferiority on African Americans. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court’s 8 to 1 ruling disagreed with this argument and Black segregated facilities were hardly ever equal to those provided for Whites, especially in education. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) worked diligently to develop strategies to challenge the *separate but equal* ruling. The NAACP challenged this ruling because fellow activists felt that public rights and privileges were essential to the substance and symbolism of the equal dignity of citizens in the public sphere (Scott, 2008). Moreover, this form of legalized racism socialized many White Americans to perceive Black people as inferior and their unfair treatment as socially unacceptable.

Starting in 1935 a growing number of African Americans, backed by the NAACP, filed suit against the educational systems of the South charging that the lack of adequate programs for graduate education violated their constitutional rights (Banks, 1996). In *Sweat v. Painter* (1950), the United States Supreme Court ordered the integration of the University of Texas School of Law and also the University’s Graduate School. This ruling came after the university registrar rejected his application because Herman Sweat was an African American and the University of Texas was a segregated institution. The *Sweat v. Painter* decision was critical because it ordered that states admit African American students to all-White graduate and professional schools when facilities for African Americans were unequal or nonexistent. It is important to note that this ruling
did not outlaw segregation and many southern legislatures responded to the ruling by allocating increased funds to graduate and professional schools and Black colleges.

In *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education* (1950), an African American retired professor, George McLaurin, sued after he applied to the University of Oklahoma to pursue a Doctorate in Education and university officials denied him admission solely because of his race. Under Oklahoma statutes, it was a misdemeanor to operate, teach, or attend a school at which both Whites and African Americans were enrolled or taught together. The Western District of Oklahoma ruled that it was unconstitutional, and McLaurin was subsequently admitted on a segregated basis. McLaurin was made to sit in a designated desk on the mezzanine level of Bizzell Library rather than the regular reading room and he was required to eat at a separate time from the White students in the cafeteria. Consequently, McLaurin sued again and the Supreme Court ruled that as a result of McLaurin’s segregation, he was put at a disadvantage in his pursuit of effective graduate instruction. This case was monumental for the NAACP in its efforts to eradicate the separate but equal doctrine in public education by demanding equality in graduate and professional schools.

After World War II ended, the NAACP challenged segregation in elementary and secondary schools in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas I* (1954). The Supreme Court ruled that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal, unanimously overturning the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision. The court held that segregation created a feeling of inferiority in African Americans and that segregation may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. The first decision in 1954 communicated that a good faith effort be made by the defendants to become
compliant. After massive resistance to the initial decision, the Supreme Court ruled in a second decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas II* (1955) that school districts should begin desegregation “with all deliberate speed.” In 1957, President Dwight Eisenhower ordered the 101st Airborne Division to protect nine Black students who integrated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. As a result, many school districts closed entirely until they were forced to reopen by the federal courts. In 1969, fifteen years after the initial ruling, the Supreme Court refused to postpone further desegregation in the face of public hostility and ruled that schools must be desegregated “at once.” This ruling was monumental in the United States because it also dismantled segregation in transportation, prisons, and public parks. It is also acknowledged that the rulings were largely due to the efforts of the many leaders and thousands of U.S. citizens involved with the Civil Rights Movement who risked their lives in the spirit of justice and equality.

Due to the pressure of the Civil Rights Movement, Congress passed the *Civil Rights Act* (1964) which prohibited employment discrimination based on race, religion, or sex. Although the law did nothing to address the negative impact that discriminatory practices had on the ability for African Americans and other targeted groups to compete in the labor market, the federal government initiated an affirmative action program. This program was designed for those who receive government funding to take positive steps to offer training and development to racial minorities and women.

There is evidence of resistance to desegregation at some PWIs that can be seen in the maintenance of policies that serve homogenous populations and in the prevalence of attitudes and behaviors that impede or prevent interaction across race and class.
Recently, affirmative action and desegregation policies have been under attack. In *Grutter v. Lee Bollinger* (2003), the University of Michigan’s Law School defended their use of race in admissions decisions in attempt to maintain the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body. The court ruled that the university was not in violation of the law and that the university demonstrated a compelling interest in attaining a diverse student body. However, in *Jennifer Gratz v. Lee Bollinger* (2003), the court ruled that the University of Michigan’s admission policy that automatically awarded 20 points to every member of an underrepresented minority violated the law. This case was significant because the plaintiff successfully sued the university for reverse discrimination, forcing the University to dismantle their admissions program.

The vestiges of segregation continue to have a negative impact on African Americans and other racial minorities who attempt to access and participate fully at PWIs in the United States. Although racial progress in education and a variety of other fields is undeniable in America, the vicious ideology and practice of White supremacy lingers—often in the face of the very denials of its realities (West, 2001). Some PWIs still adhere to this mode of discriminatory operandi and continue to hire African Americans for the purpose of providing services to African Americans and other minorities (Harvey, 1999). The struggle of achieving racial equality at PWIs can be properly framed when one considers the fact that African Americans gained access only after significant external pressure was placed on them to do so (Washington and Harvey, 1989). This history of how African Americans gained access to PWIs is relevant to this study because it provides a context for the type of concrete blocks and embedded obstacles that were in place as they attempted to navigate a privileged academy that historically excluded
people of color.

Upon gaining access to PWIs after the civil rights movement, many African American administrators were relegated to positions that primarily focused on providing service to African Americans in attempt to help decrease the negative experiences for this population (Jackson, 2001). African American administrators at PWIs were placed in symbolic positions with little job preparation, unrealistic job expectations, insufficient resources, and little power to have a meaningful influence on the institutional infrastructure (Collins, 1990; Dawew, 1997). They were also subject to alienation, isolation and discriminatory practices that created an inhospitable environment for the entire African American campus population (Jackson, 2001).

*The Web of Racism*

To properly frame the past and present influence that racism has on African Americans and other people of color in this country, it is essential to explore racial dynamics that extend beyond education: the labor market, housing, the media, and the criminal justice system (Bell, Love, & Roberts, 2007). Racial opportunities and outcomes in these institutions are critical to a person’s social, economic, and political standing in America. Despite the purportedly more liberal attitudes toward race today, it can be seen that race is a reliable predictor of unequal levels of participation and success in all of these institutions. The notion that we have advanced beyond race is indicative of a country that views the world from a privileged paradigm and ignores the existence of a population of African Americans and other oppressed groups who are fighting tirelessly to navigate the web of racism.

*Education*
In education, disparities in access to equal education by race are greater than ever before and closely parallel disparities in school funding (Carey, 2004; Orifield & Lee, 2006). Nationally public school districts with the highest numbers of White students have on average $902 more to spend per student than school districts with the highest enrollment of students of color (Lawrence, Sutton, Kubish, Susi, & Fullbright-Anderson, 2004). It should also be noted that under-resourced schools have to deal with overcrowding, aging facilities, and teachers with lower credentials than their suburban counterparts (Lankford, Loeb, & Wykoff, 2002).

Labor Market

The inequalities that exist in education not only account for differences in academic achievement, but the weak foundation influences the ability for African Americans and other people of color to equally participate in the labor market. Over the last 30 years, the unemployment rate for African Americans has consistently been twice that of White people (National Urban League, 2006). A portion of these differences can be explained by differences in education; however, these differences are magnified by racism and poor labor practices. A recent study found that employers were 50 percent less likely to call applicants with Black names on their resumes than applicants with common White names, even though all job applicants in the study had exactly the same resume (Lawrence et al., 2004). The study revealed that many companies and institutions have been very intentional in their efforts to exclude African Americans and other people of color from jobs in which they met the hiring criteria.
Housing

Home ownership is one of the few assets that can generally be expected to increase in value over time and the accumulated wealth can be passed on to the next generation. However, racism is intertwined in housing practices in this country and African Americans and other people of color have been largely excluded from home ownership. This has been accomplished through redlining, a 60 year-old practice that was initiated by the United States government and financial institutions in the past to prevent African Americans and people of color from securing mortgages, while benefiting White people by comparison (Katznelson, 2005). Past studies have shown that banks are less likely to offer a mortgage to a Black applicant compared to a White applicant with the same earnings, the same educational level, and a comparable job (Sickinger, 1999). In addition, research also reveals that when African Americans and other people of color secure mortgages, they end up paying higher interest rates than White people with the same mortgage (Perez, 2002). These realities contribute to the vicious cycle of oppression and create racially segregated communities which further impede race relations. These realities also create a society where stereotypes can continue to permeate the perceptions that many White people have of African Americans and other people of color.

Media

The media in its many forms (newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television, and movies) has historically served as the key socializing agency in the United States and has been a vehicle utilized to inflame and propagate racism. The negative portrayal of African Americans in the media remains to be out of the direct control of people of color,
who own only 4.2% of all media outlets in this country (Gonzalez & Torres, 2006).

Unfortunately, decision-makers of these outlets select and continually repeat stories that negatively portray African Americans, which reinforce the poor perceptions that people have of African Americans and communities of color. A recent example of this racially biased reporting occurred in 2005 in New Orleans during the international coverage of the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Katrina. The media took advantage of the opportunity to further damage the image of African American men on the international stage. Dyson (2006) discussed this barrage of negative images in the media that depicted Black men as criminals and valueless beings. This played out as reports depicting a group of African American men in a grocery store holding food in their hands as looters who were taking advantage of a disaster. In the next grocery store scene, the media captured a group of White men in a grocery store in a similar fashion with food in their hands—-they were revered as family men doing everything they could to find food for their families. This type of racial discrimination illustrating White and Black people engaged in the same thing is something that you can see every day as you watch African American and Latino men being portrayed as criminals and thugs in media coverage across the country. This discriminatory lens also contributes to the casual acceptance of the racial disparities we see in who commits crimes in the United States.

*Criminal Justice*

Completing the web of racism is the oppressive criminal justice system that includes racial profiling, unequal sentencing, poor legal representation, staggering differences in incarceration rates, and unfair parole hearings. The criminal justice system targets African Americans and Latinos starting as early as their adolescence. African
Americans and Latinos youth are six times more likely than White youth to be incarcerated for the same offenses. This attack is most evident among African American men. According to the Human Rights Watch (2003), African Americans make up 12 percent of the population and a shockingly disproportionate 46 percent of the prison population. Human Rights Watch also reported that racial disparities are most dramatic in states where people of color are concentrated in urban areas and where there are higher levels of law enforcement activity.

Collectively, these five aforementioned institutions create a web of interlocking systems that yield racially different opportunities and outcomes for African Americans and White Americans, and that sustain institutional racism in the United States. Unfortunately, the outcomes have detrimental effects on African Americans striving to persist in a society that covers over its past discriminatory acts and continues to project the Black body as inferior, stained, and impure (Yancy, 2008).

Significance of the Study

In 1903, W.E.B Du Bois said, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line” (Du Bois, 1903). Although we have undoubtedly made progress in this area, race relations remains one of the biggest problems of the twenty-first century. Magnifying this dilemma are the large number of people who believe issues related to race and racism are struggles of the past, and that we live in an integrated society that is adequately inclusive of African Americans and other people of color. Tatum (2007) warns not to make the false assumption that we now live, work, and go to
school in an integrated society because of the multiracial representations of a few TV
dramas, the presence of people of color in many work environments, or the discourse of
diversity in the popular culture around us. Making these assumptions about racial
progress in the United States is inaccurate and misleading.

Plight of African American Administrators at PWIs

Many advocates of diversity perceive that senior-level administration at PWIs are
not fully committed to addressing the racial disparities that exist, and they contend that
key decision-makers are reluctant to change the institutional infrastructures necessary to
make a difference (Astin, 1993). In fact, one study found that administrative searches at
PWIs might be using a range of filters that tend to eliminate African Americans and other
people of color from the hiring pool (Sagaria, 2002). Discriminatory hiring practices of
this nature could have detrimental effects on the representation of African American
administrators. PWIs must demonstrate their commitment to achieving racial diversity
by aggressively dismantling such practices.

Colleges and universities tout diversity action plans, minority affairs departments,
advisory committees, diversity vision statements, and a variety of other efforts claiming
that the partial intent is to improve the retention of African American (and other
minority) students, faculty, and administrators. Some of these initiatives are
commendable, however, they are often perceived as surface-level public relation ploys.
These efforts are viewed in this manner partly because they (a) are often developed
utilizing flawed logic, (b) are allocated inadequate human and financial resources, (c)
lack the presence of effective accountability structures, (d) are poorly assessed in terms of
outcomes, and (e) have little influence. These shortcomings often lead to a cycle of lip
service that mischaracterizes institutional diversity efforts as multicultural programming.

When PWIs continue to implement diversity initiatives without pursuing a more substantive agenda, they create an institutional structure that preserves existing arrangements of power and unfair forms of exclusion, prejudice, and discrimination (Milem, Chang, & Atonio, 2005). These characteristics form concrete barriers that make it increasingly difficult for African Americans to break through. The challenge for key decision-makers at PWIs, who are genuinely committed to hiring and retaining African Americans, is to improve their understanding of what needs to be done so they can move forward strategically. Also, in most professions, males are highly represented in the top administrative positions while women strive to achieve parity (Jackson, 2001). However, this dynamic does not hold true for African Americans in executive-level administrative positions in postsecondary institutions and this imbalance remains open for further investigation.

Given that the percentage of African Americans and other people of color in the United States is steadily increasing, the demographic shift of the workforce is apparent. Unfortunately, what remains unclear is America’s ability to appropriately address these workforce shifts that will include more people of color. These struggles are evident in the higher education workforce, and in many ways, they are heightened due to the advanced education needed to gain access. Walters (1992) points out that the demographic changes in the United States are going to present four crucial concerns for PWIs: (a) a racially diverse workforce brings with it different values, world views, and expectations; (b) there will be an increased need to understand how to manage a diverse workforce; (c) leaders will must develop appropriate ways to capture the benefits of
diversity; (d) institutions will have to confront the difficult and delicate issues not previously addressed in the past.

Considering that demographic experts predict the number of minorities in higher education to steadily increase over the next decade, it is critical for leaders at PWIs to better understand how to align structures and processes to better meet the academic, cultural, and social needs of all students (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2007), the nation’s higher education institutions expanded their enrollments by adding 3.7 million students from 1990 to 2005. This increase resulted from considerable growth among African Americans and other minorities (see Table 1). During this same period of time, minority enrollment increased by 100 percent or 2.7 million while White enrollment increased by just 7 percent or 773,000. These statistics clearly illustrate the racial demographic shifts and the need to reexamine an institutional system that was built primarily for White males.
Table 1

*Fall student enrollment by race and ethnicity: 1990 and 2005*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Fall Enrollment (in thousands)</th>
<th>Percentage distribution</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>10,722.5</td>
<td>11,495.4</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>65.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1,247.0</td>
<td>2,214.6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>782.4</td>
<td>1,882.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>572.4</td>
<td>1,134.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>102.8</td>
<td>176.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonresident alien</td>
<td>391.5</td>
<td>584.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>13,818.6</td>
<td>17,487.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* From National Center for Educational Statistics (2007)

Despite the increasing number of African Americans enrolling in higher education in a 15 year period, the gender gap between African American males and females continues to increase. In attempt to gain a better understanding of the unique problems African American males face in pursuing positions in higher education, Jackson (2003) identified a serious breakdown in the educational pipeline. This study found that African American men have a decreased likelihood of completing their graduate studies, which eliminates many of them from getting the education necessary to secure professional positions in the academy. In 2001, African American women secured 61.6 percent of the doctoral degrees earned by African Americans compared to 38.4 percent for males.
Other scholars point to barriers encountered in the promotion and tenure process (Austin, 2002; Turner & Meyers, 2000). Additionally, salary disparities, isolation, stress, and racism were also found to have a negative impact on the ability of African Americans to advance to faculty positions (Turner & Meyers; 2000).

Building Inclusive Work Environments

In order to create an optimal learning environment, higher education leaders must implement institutional policies and practices that will contribute to a climate that is more supportive of people of color. PWIs have a civic and moral responsibility to ensure that faculty and administration are commensurate with the student population being served (Guillory, 2001). It must be acknowledged that the presence or lack of presence of African Americans at PWIs sends a strong message to African American students that may influence whether they will feel welcomed (Jackson, 2000). The current study will address this need by focusing exclusively on the experiences of African American males employed as SSAOs at PWIs in the United States.

Issues related to race and racism in the United States have long plagued African Americans in their attempt to fully access educational institutions and these issues continue to have a negative influence on higher education’s ability to make progress in the multiple dimensions of diversity: access and success; campus climate and intergroup relations; education and scholarship; and institutional viability and vitality (Smith, Garcia, Hudgins, McTighe-Musil, Nettles, & Sedlacek, 2000). Specific to this study, African American administrators who are employed at PWIs have not progressed to a point in which social justice advocates and higher education leaders can rest comfortably.

White males have highly populated the administrative workforce within the field
of higher education for some time. This overrepresentation of White males has made it extremely difficult for African Americans to become integral participants within the administrative workforce. Terms such as marginality, alienation, isolation, and invisibility are often used in the literature to describe the campus climate for African American administrators at PWIs (Guillory, 2001). It would behoove institutional leaders who are interested in improving the retention and experiences of African Americans to better understand their experiences so they can customize their strategic initiatives.

Not only is the status of all African American administrators at PWIs very poor, the lack of representation of African American males is extremely alarming. For the few who do gain access, they face some unique challenges that can be attributed to being Black and male. Nathan McCall (1994, p.346) recounts some of his daily experiences as a Black man:

Race affects every facet of my life, man. I can’t get past race because White folks won’t let me get past it. They remind me of it everywhere I go. Every time I step in an elevator and a White woman bunches up in the corner like she thinks I wanna rape her. I’m forced to think about it. Every time I walk into stores, the suspicious looks in White shopkeepers’ eyes make me think about it. Every time I walk past Whites sitting in their cars, I hear the door locks clicking and I think about it. I can’t get away from it, man. I stay so mad all the time because I’m forced to spend so much time and energy reacting to race. I hate it. It wears me. But there’s no escape, man. No escape.

This lived reality for most African American men is a result of how African American males are negatively portrayed and perceived in the United States. These preconceived notions of Black men serve as vehicle to preserve and perpetuate racism in America. Regardless of the professional credentials Black men amass, it seems that the stigma of inferiority is heightened in black men in prestigious and highly intellectual
social spaces like higher education (Jackson & Moore, 2008). In addition, people are conditioned to exhibit what is known as Black misandry. Black misandry refers to an exaggerated pathological aversion toward Black men created and reinforced in societal, institutional, and individual ideologies, practices, and behaviors (Smith, Yosso, and Solorzano; 2007). Relevant to this study, Black male SSAOs at PWIs are often viewed in alignment with four Black misandry stereotypes:

1. Criminals/predators (e.g., shoplifter, rapist, or car jacker). This influences the lived reality of many Black men as they are falsely detained, profiled, or informally investigated as criminals on campuses at PWIs;

2. street-smart experts on all things ghetto. This involves the embodiment of a deficit ghetto culture with a weak work ethic; proclivity toward violence and sexual promiscuity; and inadequate family values;

3. athlete. This involves the perception that Black men are naturally superior athletes yet intellectually inferior; and

4. anti-intellectuals. If Black men at PWIs are not athletes then they are perceived as a troublemaker, outsider, or lost individual.

Contending with racist ideologies is not new to the African American male experience; however the psychological costs are cumulative, painful, and stifling (Feagin & Sikes, 1994).

Many PWIs espouse to be committed to social justice issues and purport to value the presence of a racially diverse administrative team. However, it is quite possible that these same institutions have exclusionary policies and practices in place that negate any efforts to develop the type of inclusive campus community that they aspire. In a
study that analyzed institutional diversity action plans, Iverson (2007) illuminated how well intentioned attempts by institutions to create a more inclusive campus may unwittingly reinforce practices that support exclusion and inequality. It was argued that colleges and universities increase the risk of producing these unintended outcomes when they fail to give voice to the lived experiences of the silenced and marginalized. More specifically, the author contends that diversity action plans fail because they use White middle-class, male experiences as a standard to measure the progress and success of people of color in higher education.

Organization of the Dissertation

The literature review is presented in chapter two. The chapter begins with a discussion of United State racial desegregation case law. It then reviews the empirical work that investigates the factors that influence African Americans while they are in the educational pipeline. The literature related to the representation, retention, and experiences of African American faculty, students, and staff in postsecondary institutions of higher education will follow. The review broadens and covers empirical literature that investigates the experiences of other marginalized groups across a variety of disciplines. The chapter is concluded with a brief discussion about the existing literature and the gaps that remain unaddressed.

Chapter three describes the qualitative methodology used for this study. It provides a detailed description of the researcher’s lens, a discussion of the two conceptual frameworks, a thorough overview of the purposeful sampling strategies, how access was gained, the data collection strategies, and the use of ATLAS.ti as the primary tool for
analyzing the data. This chapter also includes a discussion of the trustworthiness of the data and ethical considerations.

Chapter four will contain the results derived from the analysis of the data collected. A profile of the 10 participants will be presented. Detailed information obtained from the interviews case by case. Following a thorough description of each case, the answers to the research questions are organized by themes.

Chapter five will provide an overview of this research project. A discussion of the findings will be presented that will consider Van Manen’s lifeworld existentials. The next section will discuss practical implications for the field of student affairs administration. The section will conclude with limitations and opportunities for future research.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this review, of relevant literature, is to set a broad context of the proposed dissertation study. It will situate the existing literature in a broader scholarly and historical context (Boote & Beele, 2005). More specifically, this chapter will review literature that informs or supports the proposed study which is to investigate the experiences of African American males employed as Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) at predominately White institutions of higher education (PWIs) in the United States. A particular focus of this researcher is to better understand how African American males describe their experiences with and responses to racism and other forms of oppression in their administrative roles. Characteristics, factors, and practices that these administrators perceive as salient to their success will also be investigated. This line of inquiry will contribute to the scant literature that currently exists and it will amplify the muffled voices of this unique sub-group of African American men who work at PWIs.

This chapter is divided into the following sections: historical background of
African Americans in higher education; representation of African American administrators; the retention of African American administrators; the experiences of African American Administrators; the discrimination and racial disparities in non-academic spaces; and the chapter summary. The historical background of African Americans in higher education section discusses the negative effects of slavery and the racial disparities and that African American students face as they pursue their academic goals. The next three sections discuss the themes that emerged in the existing literature as it relates to African American administrators in higher education (see Figure 1). The literature related to the representation of African American administrators outlines the number and types of positions that African Americans occupy. The retention of African American administrators strand reviews the scholarly literature that investigates strategies to retain African Americans at PWIs. The experiences of African American administrators section demonstrates summarizes the studies that investigate the experiences of African American administrators. The discrimination and racial disparities in non-academic spaces section discusses literature that extends beyond education. The last section summarizes the chapter and discusses the gap in the extant literature.
Figure 1. Empirical literature related to African Americans in higher education

Historical Background

The African American experience in the United States can not be fully understood without acknowledging the dramatic and lingering effects of slavery. Slavery has shaped the United States’ economy, politics, culture and fundamental principles (Dorsey, 2007). It has fostered notions of race and burned lasting images into the minds of Americans of all backgrounds. Gay and Barber (1987) add that slavery caused cultural imperialism, assimilation, and racism, which were deliberate attempts to convince African Americans that there was something innately inferior about their ethnicity, lifestyles and customs, simply because of their blackness.

Although significant strides have been made through the abolitionment of laws that support overt racism, White supremacy ideology and racial discrimination continues to have a detrimental impact on African Americans seeking to advance socio-economically in this country. Bell (2005) argues that the continued resistance to affirmative action plans and other meaningful relief for discrimination-caused harm is largely based on the
perception that African American gains threaten the main component of status for many Whites—the sense that Whites are entitled to priority and preference over African Americans. This reality is infused in every aspect of American life, including education.

Many scholars agree that gross inequalities, disparate representation, and denied access have long plagued African Americans in their quest for progress and success in the American educational system.

Decades of research have described the dismal educational conditions for African Americans and the federal legislation enacted to improve those conditions (Hoffman, Llagas, & Snyder, 2003; Nettles & Perna, 1997); however, the results have been slow and insignificant. Many scholars believe that the current academic underachievement of African American children is a consequence of centuries of systematic discrimination in all areas relevant to academic success (Cress-Welsing, 1990; Murray & Jackson, 1997; Woodson, 1990). Over the years, African Americans persevered through inadequate and unequal K-12 schooling and fought numerous battles during the civil rights era that ultimately created postsecondary educational opportunities. It was Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka I (1954) that finally determined racial segregation in school settings to be unconstitutional and it led the charge to desegregate public education in the United States. Adams v. Richardson (1973) and United States v. Fordice (1992) challenged the maintenance of dual systems of higher education and forced the state to take affirmative steps to align with Title VI, thereby dismantling existing systems of discrimination. The aforementioned rulings have assisted African Americans in gaining access to PWIs in the United States however; there have been recent attacks against affirmative action policy and other measures enacted to address past racial discrimination. In summary, the history
and legacy of racial discrimination in America has meant that, except in very isolated situations, African Americans have not received fair consideration for positions, especially positions of power and authority in predominately White colleges and universities (Harvey, 1999).

African Americans in the Educational Pipeline

The challenge pertaining to the lack of African Americans in the academic workforce can be better understood by examining the degree in which African American students have accessed and succeeded at educational institutions in the United States. This section will review the empirical literature that investigates the representation, educational attainment, and experiences of African American students. This review will cover literature specific to the educational pipeline leading to employment in the higher education workforce for African Americans.

Predominately White colleges and universities in the United States have made considerable strides as it relates to improving racial diversity in the campus student population. It is acknowledged that the efforts of many United States citizens during the Civil Rights Movement improved the status and conditions for African Americans in higher education; however, there are still some significant challenges that face African American students seeking to pursue their academic goals at PWIs. Studies have been conducted to review and analyze the educational progress made by African Americans in higher education, paying specific attention to the differences in the educational attainment of Black women and men (Cohen & Nee, 2000; DeSousa, 2001; Jackson, 2007). Prior to the 1960s and the end of legalized segregation, most African Americans received their college and graduate degrees from historically Black colleges and
universities (HBCUs). According to Cohen and Nee (2000), 600,000 African Americans were in college and 65 percent were enrolled in HBCUs in 1960. The number of African Americans enrolled in college doubled by 1980 to 1.2 million, but only 20 percent were in HBCUs. The percentage of African American students in HBCUs has continued to decline between 1991 and 1997. Some scholars attribute the increased presence of African Americans at PWIs to GI bills, Civil Rights bills, federal government TRIO programs, Pell Grants, and the expansion of community college programs (Wilson, 1994; Wilson & Melendez, 1988). Cohen and Nee (2000) highlighted the number of African Americans enrolling into higher education was stagnate during the 1980’s and early 1990’s. Research conducted by Jackson (2007) found that African American undergraduate student enrollment increased 38.8% from 1990 to 2000. As it relates to gender, he also found that African American females experienced greater rates of success in as it pertains to college enrollment and degree attainment (see Table 2). In addition, African American females earned twice the number of bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees than males in 2000.
Table 2

Percentage and Distribution of African American Students in Higher Education: 1990 and 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undergraduate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,247,000</td>
<td>1,730,000</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>485,000</td>
<td>635,000</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>762,000</td>
<td>1,095,000</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bachelor’s Degree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65,341</td>
<td>111,307</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>26,695</td>
<td>38,103</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>41,013</td>
<td>73,204</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Master’s Degree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16,139</td>
<td>38,265</td>
<td>137.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>5,709</td>
<td>11,568</td>
<td>102.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>10,430</td>
<td>26,697</td>
<td>156.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Professional</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,575</td>
<td>5,416</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>1,672</td>
<td>2,110</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>1,903</td>
<td>3,306</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doctoral Degree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,003</td>
<td>1,604</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>1,017</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Jackson (2007)*

The analysis of African Americans’ access to and educational attainment in higher education is relevant to the current study because it highlights the increased challenges that African American males have at the different stages of the educational pipeline. The marginal and disparate levels of educational attainment experienced by African American male college students presents a challenge as it relates to the ability of African American males to gain employment in the academic workforce. The findings presented in these studies also raise additional questions related to the interactions and
experiences of African American men in higher education in general and at PWIs in specific. In the section that follows, empirical literature that is relevant to the experiences of African American students in higher education will be presented with an increased emphasis on the Black male experience.

Many African American students, who gain access to PWIs, still have challenges adjusting to a campus racial climate that is often perceived as inhospitable and unwelcoming. Although the studies related to African American students thus far focus on enrollment and educational attainment statistics, qualitative research has been conducted to examine how African Americans and other students of color perceive their experiences at PWIs (Barnes, Lightsey, 2005; Constantine & Sue, 2007; Dancy & Brown, 2008; Daniel, 2007; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). These studies give voice to the African American student experience at PWIs and they shed light on the negative interactions these students experience due to their race and/or gender.

Utilizing a qualitative, focus group design, Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) conducted a study to illustrate how 34 African American students (18 female, 16 males) experience the racial climate of their PWIs. The following are research questions that guided this study:

1. How do African American college students experience racial micro-aggressions?
2. What impact do these racial micro-aggressions have on African American students?
3. How do African American students respond to racial micro-aggressions?
4. How do racial micro-aggressions affect the collegiate racial climate?

The findings revealed how the racialized context of the college campus leads to a
negative and marginalized perception of African American students. Students in the study described a very tense racial climate both inside and outside their academic climates. The authors also found that the racial micro-aggressions experienced by the students resulted in feelings of self-doubt, frustration, discouragement, exhaustion and isolation. Finally, it was revealed that African American students responded to the various racial micro-aggressions by creating counter-spaces located on and off-campus. These counter-spaces were created within African American student organizations, African American fraternities and sororities, African American student-organized academic study halls, peer groups, or organizations or offices that provide services to African American students.

Another study utilized CRT to analyze focus group interview data from African American male students, and the findings revealed that Black misandric beliefs exist in both academic and social spaces in the collegiate environment (Smith, Yosso, and Solorzano, 2007). The authors of the study used a counter-story methodology to dislocate comfortable majoritarian myths and narratives about African American male students while chronicling their everyday experiences navigating through historically White institutions. The author’s counter-stories elaborated on the nuances of gendered racism, discrimination, and hostility experienced by Black male students at PWIs.

In a similar study, Smith, Allen and Danley (2007) utilized a focus group design to investigate the experiences of 36 Black male students enrolled at Harvard University, Michigan State University, University of California, Berkeley, University of Illinois, and the University of Michigan. They examined how these African American males interpreted, reported, and responded to various racial micro-aggressions experienced in
academic, social, and public spaces on campus. Two major themes emerged in this study: (a) Anti-Black male stereotyping and marginality and (b) hyper-surveillance and control. The Black males in this study shared numerous stories from their experiences on campus and in the surrounding communities that highlighted their feelings as “outsiders” who are perceived by the campus community as “fitting the description” of an unwanted element. In each account in which these Black males experienced a racial micro-aggression, they reported having the following psychological responses (e.g., frustration, shock, avoidance or withdrawal, disbelief, anger, aggressiveness, uncertainty or confusion, resentment, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, and fear). In addition, there was unanimous agreement that the college environment was much more hostile and unwelcoming toward African American males than toward other groups.

These studies are relevant because they critically examine how African Americans students experience, interpret, and respond to racism. Collectively, these qualitative studies give voice to experiences of African American male students who attend predominately White institutions. More specifically, the findings fill a void in the extant literature and reveal the negative impact that racism and other forms of discrimination have on African American students at PWIs. Although the participants in these studies are students, the findings could inform the current study related to African American administrators.
Retention of African American Administrators

The existing educational literature that provides strategies to retain African American students and faculty is abundant; however, very little research has been conducted to fully understand how to retain African American administrators (Jackson, 2001). In the last seven years, a few scholars have begun to research policies and practices that decision-makers at PWIs could follow to better retain African American administrators. These hallmark studies are of critical importance due to the enormous void that they address in the research literature.

According to Jackson (2001), African American faculty and administrators are not only underrepresented in academic institutions, but their retention also presents a problem that needs to be addressed. He contends that out of these two aforementioned groups, administrators receive the least amount of attention in the empirical literature. Consequently, Jackson (2001) explored the concept of retention as it relates to African-American administrators at PWIs and designed a study to determine practical steps that would enable PWIs to retain them. A modified, two-round Delphi technique was used as a method to collect data for this study. The Delphi technique is an iterative process by which a group of experts anonymously reach consensus on a topic of interest where conclusive information is lacking (Clayton, 1997). The process involves a series of questionnaires, with subsequent questionnaires based on responses to preceding questionnaires. In this study, the panel of experts were recommended by their peers on the basis of their professional roles, experiences, accomplishments, and familiarity with college and university administration. They were all African American administrators at PWIs (60% female and 40% male). The employment distribution was as follows: five
worked in academic affairs, four in student affairs, and one in administrative affairs. The first round of the Delphi technique consisted of the development of the first list of practical steps. Participants instructed to write responses to a broad question. The second round consisted of the integration of recommended steps into one comprehensive list and the redistribution of that list to the panel of experts. This round of the process primarily served as a clarification step to check the accuracy of ideas presented from the panel. All questionnaires were administered via electronic email. Data analysis consisted of data reduction and data display. The results of the study yielded the following comprehensive list of practical steps:

1. Commit to the principles of diversity and affirmative action;
2. Use recruitment as a retention strategy;
3. Provide equity in wages and salaries;
4. Provide an orientation program;
5. Develop a mentoring program for junior and senior management;
6. Foster open lines of communication between the administration hierarchy and staff;
7. Empower the administrator to perform his or her job;
8. Promote the pursuit of professional advancement and development.

The author of the study also emphasized the importance of remembering that much diversity exists within the African American community. The research findings in this study are very useful because they address a significant void in the extant empirical literature that focuses specifically on African American administrators.

In a similar study, Jackson (2002a) utilized the Delphi technique to identify
professional growth factors that decision-makers at PWIs can develop to facilitate the retention of African American administrators. He contends that there seems to be a logical linkage between the use of professional development and retention. Specific to this study, he states that the opportunities to learn and grow in one’s position are positive factors that contribute to retention. Jackson utilized the Motivation-Hygiene Theory as a framework to guide this study. The Motivation Hygiene Theory classifies all human needs as they relate to work into two categories: (a) pain avoidance and (b) growth. Utilizing this concept, the researcher considered the different types of incentives or motivators that would satisfy these two sets of needs. The incentives that are classified as pain avoidance are called hygiene factors because they are maintenance factors and are primarily preventative. In addition, these hygiene factors are environmental and external to the job (e.g., managerial style of supervisor, and work climate). The incentives that satisfy growth needs and are internal to the job (e.g., achievement and responsibility) are classified as motivator factors.

The researcher utilized a modified, two-round Delphi method to collect the data because the literature provided little guidance of the topic of study, thus permitting the researcher to explore this topic by using a panel of experts. Participants were selected in a purposeful manner and included the strategy of finding typical cases where the African American administrator satisfied the criterion of a senior administrator (dean level or higher) at a PWI. The panel included six African American males and four African American females. The employment distribution was as follows: four worked in academic affairs, four worked in student affairs, and two worked in administrative affairs. The first round of data collection utilized an open-ended question to obtain opinions of
the panel of experts: What professional growth factors could PWIs implement to help retain African American administrators? In the second round, participants were asked to rank, edit, and comment on the strategies from the first round. Responses were clustered by key themes (strategies) across single cases (panelists).

Data analysis consisted of a series of passes in which data was parsed and analyzed in terms of comparison for administrators’ recommendations, and then all the data was examined for patterns of consistency. Data reduction was managed through a qualitative thematic strategy to organize and make meaning of the collected data. The data was displayed in the form of strategies supplied by panelists. After re-analyzing the data with feedback from the panelists, the following seven professional growth factors emerged:

1. Ensure that the administrator is given the authority to make decisions within the stated job description;
2. Establish mentoring programs that focus on career and academic development with seasoned mentors;
3. Provide release time and funding for research (academic administrators) and professional development activities (student affairs administrators);
4. Enable the administrator to develop knowledge about the college or university by broadening participation beyond the diversity-related committees and functions;
5. Provide a full range of leadership opportunities for the administrator within the department, unit, college, and university;
6. Provide monthly release time for the administrator as a substitute for additional hours worked (e.g., advising) with the underrepresented student populations;
7. Focus on strengthening the surrounding African American community by rewarding participation in local community organizations, business, and industry. These seven strategies contribute to the scant empirical literature that exists that focuses on African American administrators and retention. Moreover, these strategies provide a guiding framework to address the unique needs of African American administrators at PWIs. Lastly, the Delphi method utilized in this study offers an alternative research technique to future scholars who are interested in pursuing topics that are nonexistent in the empirical literature.

Utilizing the results derived from two Delphi studies (Jackson, 2001; 2002a) that explored concepts for retaining African American administrators at PWIs, Jackson developed a model for retaining administrators of color at PWIs in higher and post-secondary education (Jackson, 2002b). He argues that this study is significant because the literature abounds with recommendations for retaining students and faculty of color; however, very little empirical or practical based knowledge is provided for retaining administrators of color. The chief purpose of this study was to expand previous work into a model that could be implemented into practice. The following research question guided this study: Under what conditions are administrators of color most likely to remain at their respective predominately White institution?

Jackson integrated the two previously discussed Delphi studies (Jackson 2001; 2002a) and developed a retention model that includes four phases surrounded by two foundational concepts that are critical to its implementation. The foundational concepts suggest that colleges and universities do the following: (a) establish relationships with people of color in the community surrounding the institution and (b) commit to the
principles of diversity and affirmative action. The following four phases address concerns related to retention: pre-engagement, engagement, advancement, and outcome. Each phase is made up of one or more components. The pre-engagement phase addresses the following components: recruitment, orientation, and incentive packages. The engagement phase emphasizes the following components: importance of empowerment, leadership opportunities, mentoring, and in-service professional development. The advancement phase focuses on the following components: providing professional release time, professional development funding, and providing professional opportunities that extend beyond diversity-related experiences. The final phase, the outcome phase, emphasizes the most important component: retention can be improved by intentionally ensuring that a variety of positive components are in place.

Jackson’s research is crucial because it provides the first empirically derived retention model specific to African Americans and other administrators of color at predominately White institutions of higher education. Moreover, the model was developed by gaining input from senior-level African American administrators, who are in unique positions and can speak from firsthand experience about the retention process for African American administrators. This groundbreaking work can serve as a foundation for other research to build upon and expand.

Expanding upon the extant research as it relates to the retention of African American administrators, Jackson and Flowers (2003) focused specifically on African American student affairs administrators at PWIs. They argue that the retention of African American student affairs administrators at PWIs is paramount considering the ever-changing nature of the demographics in higher education that are becoming increasingly
more diverse. They add that this line of inquiry is significant because the presence or lack of presence of African American student affairs administrators at colleges or universities sends a message to African American students that may affect whether they will feel welcomed at the institution. Jackson and Flowers contend that the ultimate goal for PWIs situated in an environment of change and diversity should be to equally maintain African American student affairs administrators at PWIs in their positions in comparison to their White counterparts.

The purpose of Jackson and Flower’s (2003) study was to identify strategies that promote retention and job satisfaction for African American student affairs administrators. The researchers utilized Motivation-Hygiene Theory as a framework for the study and retention was conceptualized around the length of time in a position. A modified, two-round Delphi technique was used as a method to collect data for this study. Participants were selected based on the tenets of purposeful sampling and finding typical cases where the African American administrator satisfied the criterion of a senior administrator (dean level or higher) at a PWI. The participants or panel of experts in this study included six administrators employed at public PWIs: three were Vice Presidents of Student Affairs, two were Deans of Students, and one was an Associate Vice President of Student Affairs. The process of member checking is a hallmark of the Delphi technique and it was used to enhance the validity of the findings. Both rounds of the Delphi procedure were conducted online via electronic email.

The analysis in Jackson and Flower’s (2003) study occurred in three interrelated stages: data reduction; data display; and conclusion and implications. The following strategies were listed in rank order as the most effective ways to retain African American
administrators: (a) communicate and integrate a philosophy of fairness into the campus environment; (b) develop or support mentoring opportunities; (c) empower African American student affairs administrators for success; and (d) make salaries more representative of African American student affairs administrators’ job contributions. The researchers concluded that PWIs must assess retention concepts with African American student affairs administrators on their respective campuses and use the findings as a framework for action.

Jackson and Flower’s (2003) study is extremely valuable because it provides empirically derived strategies that can be used to guide the activities of leaders at PWIs who are interested in retaining African American student affairs administrators. The sample is relevant to my dissertation study because it focuses specifically on African American student affairs administrators. However, Jackson and Flower’s (2003) study has limitations because the participants only provided feedback as it relates to strategies that could be employed to better retain African Americans. Future studies of retention could build on this work if researchers identify and discuss some of the embedded obstacles that negatively influence the retention of African American administrators at PWIs. In addition, data collection techniques (outside of typed responses via email) could potentially provide participants with the opportunity to expand and give voice to their thoughts more freely.
Representation of African American Administrators

The representation of African American administrators in higher education is a very important strand of the existing empirical research. The studies conducted related to retention provide the number and percentage of people that make up the higher education workforce. In a study that examined African American student affairs administrators, Flowers (2003) utilized the theory of representative bureaucracy as a theoretical lens to investigate the topic. The theory of representative bureaucracy explains the importance of having leaders in place that represent the demographic composition of a constituency group. Representative bureaucracy as it is applied in Flowers’ study holds the premise that the composition of the administrative team should mirror the student population it serves to ensure that decision-making is reflective of the preferences of a diverse population.

To measure the representation of African American student affairs administrators, the percentage of African American student affairs administrators was compared to the percentage of African American undergraduate students. Flowers utilized existing data from the 2000 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Salary Survey and the 1999-2000 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study. In 2002, African American student affairs administrators made up 8.4 percent of the population of student affairs administrators and African American students represented 12 percent of the student population. The representation ratio was .084/.12, which translated into a representation quotient of .84. Given the representation quotient was less than 1.0 (0.70), the researcher concludes that African American student affairs administrators in higher education are underrepresented. Flowers presents an argument that additional African
American student affairs administrators are needed to ensure that effective policies and programs are in place that directly address the concerns of African American students. In addition, he suggests that colleges and universities should strive to reach a 1.00 representation quotient.

The study that Flowers (2003) conducted represents the first empirical study aimed at providing a clear representation goal for decision-makers at PWIs. However; utilizing the theory of representative bureaucracy as a theoretical argument to increase the number of African Americans at PWIs has limitations. Some PWIs have very small percentages of African American students and very small student affairs departments. If the representation quotient is employed at some of these institutions, the 1.00 representation quotient will be met very easily and provide PWIs with ammunition to support stagnate diversity initiatives.

In a similar study, Jackson (2003a) also investigated the representation of African Americans in student affairs administration. In his study, he argues that as the higher education enterprise has expanded, there has been increased scrutiny of the effect of policies on the full access and equal treatment of people of color in general and African Americans in specific. This study was conducted to investigate the degree in which institutional policies have impacted the representation of African Americans in student affairs administrative positions. More specifically, this analysis focused on the representation of African Americans in student affairs, examining individual and institutional characteristics. The data was derived from the 1999 National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Salary Survey which included 419 student affairs administrators. Of those surveyed, African Americans made up 8.5% of
all student affairs positions in 1998.

Jackson’s study provided a descriptive analysis of the African Americans surveyed (2003a). As it pertains to gender representation, African American females outnumbered males in student affairs administrative positions. More specifically, 56% of African Americans in student affairs administration were female compared to 44% for males during that same time. This is a trend that is in alignment with the undergraduate and graduate student population throughout this ethnic group (Harvey & Anderson, 2005). Of the African Americans in student affairs administration, 31.1% held a doctorate degree (Ph.D. and Ed.D.), 63.6% held a masters degree, and 8.5% held a bachelors degree, and 6.6% of those surveyed held some other type of degree.

As it relates to the institutional classification, the NASPA survey utilized the following categories to classify institutions: (1) two-year institutions; (2) four-year colleges; and (3) four-year institutions. Of the African American student affairs administrators surveyed, 11.7% were employed at two-year institutions, 26.7% were employed at four-year colleges, and 61.6% were employed at four-year universities. It was also found that public institutions employed 71.4% of African Americans in student affairs administrative positions, while 28.6% were at private institutions. As it relates to the institutional enrollment of the universities in which African Americans are employed at the largest percentage (24.1%) were employed at institutions that enrolled between 10,000 and 19,999 students. The group that employed the second largest percentage (18%) of African Americans enrolled between 1,000 and 2,500 students. Jackson (2003a) also analyzed the regions in which African Americans are employed. The region that employed the largest percentage of African American student affairs administrators
was Region III with approximately 32%. Region IV-East employed the second largest percentage with 20.7%. The region with the lowest percentage of African Americans was region V with approximately 3%. Figure 2 illustrates the NASPA regional communities.

![Map of NASPA regional communities in the United States](image)

*Figure 2. NASPA regional communities in the United States*

Jackson also analyzed the type of positions African Americans held in student affairs. Of the African Americans surveyed, it was found that the majority (65.1%) of them were located in positions lower than the dean of students. Approximately 48.6% of the African Americans sampled held director level positions. The position that employed the lowest percentage of African Americans was director of registration.

As a result of the analysis of the statistical findings and the empirical literature on
African Americans, several key findings inform the proposed study of the experiences of senior-level African American male student affairs administrators. The study illuminates the gender gap that exists at it relates to African American representation (55% female and 44.5% male). This study also highlighted that most (65.1%) African Americans are not employed in senior-level administrative positions in student affairs. Lastly, the research suggests that African Americans who are employed at private institutions are grossly underrepresented (28.6% private and 71.4% public).

Turrentine and Conley (2001) took a different approach and examined the demographic diversity of the labor pool for entry-level professional positions in student affairs. The researchers argue that students benefit when student affairs staffs are composed of people from many backgrounds because they can observe different role models and get a glimpse the workforce they will join one day. They also argue that broad racial diversity enriches the professional working environment as well. They focused on entry-level professional positions in the field because they believed these positions present the best opportunity to improve the diversity of a student affairs unit.

The researchers analyzed the total enrollment and number of degrees conferred by student affairs preparation programs in different geographic regions. They analyzed the three most recent years of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data on degrees conferred, and they conducted an email survey of the master’s level preparation programs listed in the on-line directory maintained by the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and NASPA. Program coordinators at 120 student affairs preparation programs were contacted via email and asked to provide the following information: (a) total enrollment in 1988-1999; (b) number of women; (c) number of
African American; (d) number of Hispanic; (e) number of Asian American; and (f) number of American Indian. Sixty-two programs responded to the email surveys and they represented 31 states in all four geographic regions (Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and Northwest).

For each data source, frequencies and percentages were computed and summaries were developed nationally and by region. Turrentine and Conley (2001) found that about 13,300 degrees were awarded nationally in three types of student affairs programs. About 12,500 each year were awarded in counseling programs. By comparison, administration and student personnel programs awarded only between 400 and 500 degrees annually. They found that African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and American Indian candidates comprised 18% - 24% of the total labor pool, and women candidates comprised 67% - 68% of the total. The study highlighted that the southeast region conferred the highest percentage of degrees of all the regions to African Americans (17.9%). African Americans made up 15.4% of the total students enrolled in preparation programs.

Turrentine and Conley (2001) concluded that given the projected increases in minority enrollment, the representation of African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and American Indian professionals in student affairs will not match the representation of these groups in the undergraduate student body. The authors challenge the efforts of student affairs administrators to provide positive and appropriate role models within the profession whom all students can identify with, and to provide programs and services that adequately represent the diverse voices of the campus. More specifically, they point out that male candidates of color are the clear minority in the field of student affairs and they
are clustered in the lower-level positions. These findings are particularly important given that the current dissertation study will investigate the lived experiences of African American male student affairs administrators.

In a more recent study, Jackson (2006) conducted a quantitative study that focused on the employment trends of African American males in academic leadership positions. Existing data collected from the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOF) surveys were analyzed in this study to examine changes over time and the adverse impact in the representation of African American males in academic leadership positions in comparison with other males holding similar positions. The research included significant and noteworthy findings. From analyzing national-level data across all institutions from 1992-1993 and 1998-1999, the results showed that African American males have decreased 37.5% in lower-level administrator positions and increased 21% in upper level positions; representing a total decrease of 16.5%. African American males at 2-year institutions increased 29% and decreased 13.6% at 4-year institutions. Representation decreased 29.6% at public institutions and increased 46% at private institutions. Finally, the research presented a 7.5% decline in African American male chief executive officers (CEOs). This decline in African American male CEOs is consistent with the report from the American Council on Education (2007) that revealed African American presidents have made virtually no progress from 1986 (5.0%) to 2006 (5.9%). Jackson’s study also addresses a gap in the literature and provides empirical evidence describing the details of the employment shifts African American males are experiencing in academic leadership positions. Although this study focuses specifically on academic administrative positions, the emphasis on males gives a broader view of how
African American males are employed in administrative positions in higher education.

In a previous investigation, Jackson (2004) found similar results as it pertains to African American representation in executive-level positions. Jackson conducted this investigation in response to the very few statistical analyses with regards to the gains made by African Americans in executive-level administrative positions. Jackson utilized representative bureaucracy as a theoretical lens to guide the research process. The theory of representative bureaucracy posits the importance of having leaders, administrators, or policymakers that represent the demographic composition of its constituency groups. It is bifurcated into two types of representation: passive representation and active representation. Passive representation refers to similarities in demographic characteristics between administrators and constituency groups. Active representation refers to situations in which administrators work to further the needs of a particular group who do not share their same demographic characteristics. Jackson’s study was primarily concerned with passive representation. NSOPF survey data from 1992-1993 and 1998-1999 were analyzed for this study to track changes over time in the representation of African Americans in executive-level positions. The 1992-1993 NSOPF survey included 11,000 instructional faculty and the 1998-1999 NSOPF survey included approximately 18,000 instructional faculty. Jackson focused on the variables contained in each data set that measure executive-level administrative positions (chair, dean, provost, and vice-president).

To examine trends across these data, percentage change was calculated for African Americans and Whites from 1993 to 1999 (Jackson, 2004). The findings revealed that African American academic administrators declined to 6.02% during the
period from 1993 to 1999. During the same time period, White administrators in academic administrative positions slightly increased 2.5%. The research also revealed a 67.8% increase in the department chair positions and an increase in the provost position 90.45% for African Americans at all institutions. However, African Americans decreased 39.79% in dean positions and decreased 24.40% in vice president positions.

During the same time period, White administrators decreased in the following areas: 4.79% in chair positions, 7.17% in dean positions, and 7.02% in vice president positions.

The most significant finding was that White administrators increased 94.72% in the provost position (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity/Position</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>1,236</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>-39.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>-24.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>90.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>12,898</td>
<td>12,284</td>
<td>-4.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>10,214</td>
<td>9,482</td>
<td>-7.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>1,842</td>
<td>1,713</td>
<td>-7.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>1,703</td>
<td>94.72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Jackson’s study informs the leaders and decision-makers on the progress (or lack of) being made as it pertains to including African Americans in academic executive-level administrative positions at PWIs. The results revealed that African Americans were consistently underrepresented with representation ratios less than 1, while Whites were
overrepresented with representation ratios greater than 1.0. From 1993 to 1999 African American representation in academic administrative positions decreased from 7.10% in 6.50%. In 1999, the representation ratio was .59 for African Americans and 1.26 for Whites. This study contributes to the extant literature by providing a broader understanding of the representation of African Americans in academic administrative positions.

In a hallmark study that investigated both academic and student affairs administrators, Jackson and Daniels (2007) presented several significant findings that are relevant to African Americans in the higher education workforce. African Americans in academic leadership positions had attained higher credentials than all other races; however, other groups were more successful in obtaining academic leadership positions with a bachelor’s degree or less. This finding is relevant because it dispels the myth that African American leaders somehow achieved their status in the academy due to some sort of preferential treatment. On the contrary, the data suggests that significantly more White academic leaders have managed to obtain their academic leadership positions in the academy with a bachelor’s degree or less (see Table 4). It was also found that African Americans were located at institutions with less emphasis on research. Over 60% held academic leadership positions in comprehensive and liberal arts institutions versus research and doctoral institutions. The study highlighted that the percentage of African American females was considerably larger than the males employed in academic leadership positions.
Table 4

Percentage and Distribution of Full-time Academic Leadership by Gender and Highest Educational Credential Attainment by Race and Ethnicity: 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Highest Degree Attained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Races/Ethnicities</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


One of the measuring rods of success for academic leaders is the amount of scholarly work published in refereed journals. African Americans had 10.4 refereed career publications compared to 24.4 for all other races and ethnicities. This study also revealed that African American academic leaders were less likely to be full professors and they earned $60,699 compared to $71,618 for all other races and ethnicities.

Jackson and Daniels (2007) also discussed significant findings from their investigation of African American student affairs administrators. Similar to the findings for academic administrators, African American student affairs administrators earned higher degrees than all other races and ethnicities (see Table 5). As it pertains to gender, African American females outnumbered African American males by 10% in 1998. This is a glaring disparity because when examining the gender of all races and ethnicities for student affairs administrators, it was almost balanced between males and females (50.8% to 49.2%).
Table 5

Percentage Distribution of Full-time Student Affairs Administrators by Gender and Highest Educational Credential Attained by Race/Ethnicity: Fall 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Highest Credential Attained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Races/Ethnicities</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* From Jackson and Daniels (2007)

As it pertains to institution affiliation, 71.4% were employed at public institutions compared to 62.1% for all other races and ethnicities. This study highlights the lack of presence of African American student affairs administrators at private colleges and universities (28.6%). Contrary to their colleagues in academic administrative positions, African American student affairs administrators earned $64,016 versus $59,665 for all other races and ethnicities. However, African Americans were still more likely to be employed at lower-level positions than upper-level positions. Approximately 49% of African Americans sampled held director-level positions. Of the director’s positions, the top three positions for African Americans were counseling, union, and housing.

Jackson and Daniels (2007) highlight the need for PWIs to use past research to build a conceptual framework for policy implementation. The authors of this study concluded by summarizing the needs of the changing administrative workforce demographics. This call for action provided sound knowledge for policy makers and included the following:
1. Articulation of and focus on comprehensive recruitment and retention practices that are widely needed to build a highly competitive, racially diverse workforce;

2. A new intentionality about addressing “silent” discrimination that has been muted by the fear of confronting the reality of workplace conditions for people of color;

3. Involvement of majority groups in the “authentic appreciation” of the “value-added” aspects of cultural differences;

4. Transparent assessment and evaluation procedures during the hiring process that emphasize the benefits of racial and ethnic diversity rather than the perceived challenges of managing diverse talents;

5. Connection of desired outcomes to policy development and daily practice procedures to ensure that achieving administrative diversity becomes an essential aspect of the institutional climate.

Reason, Walker and Robinson (2002) examined the effects of gender, ethnicity, and the highest degree earned on mean salaries of senior student affairs officers (SSAOs). The researchers analyzed the data collected from the 1999-2000 NASPA salary survey. They examined the effects of gender, ethnicity, and the highest degree earned (independent variables) on SSAO salary (dependent variable) at 4-year, public institutions. Analysis of covariance were used to determine the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable, controlling for size of institution ($r = .708; p < .001$). They found that women and people of color were not represented proportionally at the senior levels of student affairs administration. They also found that mean salaries of women of color with a terminal degree was approximately $38,000 more than the salary for a woman of color with an M.S./M.A. degree. The authors of this study
concluded that African American women and other women of color must secure their terminal degrees to earn salaries equitable to other groups. The mean salary for women SSAOs was $106,905 (SD = 17,519), approximately equal to male SSAOs in the sample (M = 105,679 (SD = 25,633). Consequently, it was concluded that gender in isolation when controlling for size of institution did not affect salary. An ANCOVA revealed a significant difference in mean salary based on ethnicity between the Caucasian group and professionals of color. SSAOs of color reported a mean salary of $123,126 (SD = $23,391) compared to 102,140 (SD = $21,571). The authors of this study suggest that future research employ qualitative methods to capture the richness of SSAO’s individual stories.

Gaston (2003) conducted a similar study that focused on African Americans in athletic administration at PWIs. The results of this study showed that African Americans were underrepresented in athletic administrative positions and the majority hold lower-level administrative positions. In some cases, the percentages of African American females were so low that the change in percentage could not be calculated. However, African American females experienced a 41.7 % increase in associate athletic director positions, which translates into a total of 15 positions. One of the most significant findings was that all groups experienced some form of increase except African American males. The researcher argued that Title IX has primarily benefited White women and encouraged leaders to establish additional diversity initiatives to include African Americans and other minorities in athletic administration positions.
Experiences of African American Administrators

Another theme final theme in the scholarly literature investigates the experiences of African American administrators. The empirical literature in this area is the most underdeveloped and neglected. Most of the scholarly work in this area is not empirically derived (Scales & Brown, 2003; Zamani, 2003). The commentary illuminates some of the challenges that African American administrators face as they carry out their responsibilities in a less than hospitable campus climate. Scales and Brown (2003) interviewed two senior-level African American administrators who elaborated on assisting students through challenging circumstances on campus and shared their insights. They shared the challenges of their job; their perceptions of their job performance during rest and distress; and strategies for stress, success, and secession. The findings of this study provided the following guideposts for practice: (a) remain ethical at all times; (b) like students and care about their development; (c) never do anything that you may wish you could undo; (d) be prepared to work long hours; (e) be prepared to spend most of your time in meetings and responding to correspondence; (f) keep a sense of humor; (g) always think about the career effects of your actions; (h) be prepared to leave your current position in good condition with good leadership and effective programs in place; (i) student unrest can bring out the worst in people; and (j) balance your role as an administrator with being part of your racial group. These suggestions are given with the intent to provide aspiring and/or entry-level administrators with some words of wisdom as they navigate the challenges of the field. The suggestions are very general, but could prove to be important to entry-level administrators attempting to transition into the field.

In an empirical investigation of the African American experience, Rolle, Davies,
and Banning (2000) interviewed eight executive-level administrators: six presidents and two associate vice chancellors. Utilizing qualitative methodology, the authors wanted to provide a better understanding of the experiences encountered by current African American upper-level administrators to students, faculty, and staff seeking that leadership level as a professional goal. After conducting in-depth interviews, four themes evolved out of the meaning participants made of their career experiences: (a) race, (b) self-assurance, (c) importance of communication skills, and (d) understanding the politics of education. The theme of race was further divided into four sub-themes: (1) race as an issue of first position, (2) race as a part of the administrative experience, (3) race in relation to perception of role, and (4) struggles with the predominantly White environment.

In a similar fashion, Holmes (2003) investigated the experiences of mid through senior level African American student affairs females employed at PWIs in the Midwest. The narratives of this study indicated that race and gender were significant in determining the overall experiences the women had in their respective institution. Many of the women in this study felt as though they were hired by the institutions primarily because their race and/or gender, not necessarily because of their qualifications to do the job. They also experienced alienation and isolation, difficulty establishing strong relationships with White colleagues, unusual amounts of service often at a personal expense, and imposing unnecessary rules and restrictions upon themselves in an attempt to debunk negative stereotypes. Although this study focuses on women, it is relevant to the proposed dissertation study because it gives voice to the experiences African Americans face due to race, gender, or their intersectionality.
In another study conducted by Holmes (2004), she investigated the experiences of six African American presidents. The research indicated that many of the presidents elaborated on significant investments that were made in them by their parents, community leaders, and other elders. There was a consistent obligation among them to give something back and to never forget where they came from. Another theme in the study was the strong feeling among the six African American presidents interviewed that the assault on affirmative action would ultimately have a negative impact on the representation of African Americans in upper-level positions at PWIs. This was a fear that was consistently communicated by the presidents. In regards to gender, it was found that male presidents perceived their wives as very supportive of their careers, however; African American female presidents credited their divorces to pursuing their career aspirations with very little spousal support. This dynamic revealed that African American female presidents may experience additional challenges if they are married with families. The studies that investigated the experiences of African American administrators are extremely valuable to this researcher. Specifically, it provides examples of the different lines of inquiry that can be pursued. In addition, it supports this researcher’s claim that additional research needs to be conducted that specifically focuses on the experiences of African American administrators.

The empirical investigations of African American administrators in higher education have increased considerably since the late 1990s. Studies focusing on the representation of African American administrators dominate the research conducted in this area. The studies related to representation could be more numerous because they were conducted utilizing data from previously administered national-level surveys. The
studies related to retention all utilized the Delphi Technique as a research methodology. The studies conducted on retention and representation of African American administrators is extremely valuable and can serve as the foundation for other research on the topic.

One of the large gaps in the current scholarly literature is research that focuses on the experiences of African American administrators. In this review of relevant literature, one study focused on the experiences of executive-level administrators in academic affairs (Rolle, Davies & Banning, 2000). Another empirical study focused on the experiences of African American college presidents (Holmes, 2004). Somewhat related to the interest of this researcher, Holmes (2003) conducted an investigation that focused on African American female administrators in mid to senior level student affairs positions at PWIs. Given the scant literature that exists, it is clear that additional studies would provide a better understanding of the experiences of African American student affairs administrators. More specifically, a study that focuses on African American male SSAOs

Lived Experiences and Discrimination in Non-Academic Spaces

It is important to note that African Americans and other people of color experience challenges, discrimination and inequity in environments located outside of the broad field of education. This section reviews the empirical literature that gives voice to the experiences of people of color in various work settings and countries. A review and analysis of this literature was conducted to cast a wide net and gain a broader understanding of the challenges that African Americans face and other people of color
face in the United States and beyond.

In a study of the lived experiences of African American female nurses, Wilson (2007) conducted face-to-face interviews with 13 participants and later conducted a focus group with eight participants. The research question that guided this study was the following: What is it like to be an African American registered nurse providing nursing care to individuals, families, and communities in health care settings in southeastern Louisiana? Wilson utilized Van Manen’s phenomenological approach to guide the data collection, reduction, and analysis. To increase the methodological rigor, the investigator used reflexive bracketing to allow personal beliefs, assumptions, and biases about the phenomenon under study to come into full disclosure.

The findings revealed that the registered nurses experienced a bond with patients from other cultures; however, they felt an extremely strong connection to their African American patients. All of the participants in this study communicated that being a registered nurse was a fulfilled dream and a source of personal pride. On the other hand, participants also communicated that they were constantly struggling to prove themselves. The research found that on a daily basis, participants were challenged with issues of (a) racism, (b) classism, (c) sexism, and (d) power. It was concluded that these intersecting oppressions produced unique, multiple, jeopardy situations that negatively influenced the lives of the participants. It was also found that the participants in this study perceived mentoring and role modeling as essential to their survival in the nursing profession.

Shorter-Gooden (2004) conducted a qualitative questionnaire study of a community sample of 196 African American women aimed to identify the coping strategies that Black women use to manage the stress of racism and sexism. The
participants resided in 22 states and their ages ranged from 18 to 77, with a mean age of 40.3. Ninety-four percent had at least some college experience. The aim of the questionnaire was to learn about African American women’s experiences of racism and sexism through an inductive, phenomenological approach to data gathering. The questionnaire comprised of seven questions to learn about (a) how they cope with racial discrimination, (b) how they cope with gender discrimination, and (c) overall strategies for coping with bias and oppression.

Shorter-Gooden found that the African American women in this study utilized several coping strategies to manage the stress of oppression: three strategies that serve as ongoing internal resources, one strategy that serves as an ongoing external resource, and three strategies that are invoked in response to particular acts or environments. The internal resource strategies are the following: (1) resting on their faith in God; (2) standing on the shoulders of their ancestors; and (3) valuing their own worth. The external resource strategy is leaning on the shoulders of their family and friends. The three strategies invoked in response to particular acts or environments are the following:

1. Role flexing- altering their speech, behavior, dress, or presentation to fit in better with the dominant group and to diminish the impact of bias and negative stereotypes;

2. Avoiding- Staying away from people, situations, or topics of discussion that are likely to stir racial oppression;

3. Standing up and fighting back- Refusing to role flex or to capitulate in any manner and/or to challenge directly the source of the bias and stereotypes by actively fighting back.
Chapter Summary

Much of the empirical literature that focuses on African American Administrators in higher education is related to status and representation. For example, several studies investigated the percentages of African Americans in a variety of administrative positions within the broad field of higher education administration. The literature within the retention strand illuminated that African American administrators are underrepresented in the field of student affairs. The studies related to retention aimed to gain a better understanding of who to retain African American administrators at PWIs. Although the results of the various studies yielded a long list of retention strategies, the studies did not aim to gain an understanding of the general experiences of African Americans.

The existing knowledge on African American administrators in higher education was utilized as a springboard to pursue a line of inquiry that addresses a critical gap in the literature. The current research that includes African American males in student affairs focuses specifically on retention versus their overall experience. This researcher conducted a qualitative collective case study to investigate the experiences of African American male SSAOs employed at PWIs. This line of inquiry investigates how racism and other forms of oppression have influenced the experiences of African American male SSAOs. This dissertation study utilized critical race theory (CRT) as an epistemological framework and theoretical tool for understanding their experiences. In short, CRT is a theoretical framework that draws upon and extends a broad literature base in law, sociology, history, ethnic studies, and women’s studies. This theory is built upon the work of scholars of color who believe that racism is intertwined in the fabric of American life (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT was initially utilized
in legal studies but has since been extended to education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). A CRT in education is slightly different than its legal applications “because it attempts to foreground race and racism in the research as well as challenge the traditional paradigms, methods, texts, and separate discourse on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact communities of color” (Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso, 2000, p.63). Utilizing this investigative lens, this study gives voice to this sub-group of African American administrators who have successful navigated the tumultuous environment that commonly exists at PWIs. Their stories serve as a frame of reference to help guide campus leaders and aspiring African American administrators to navigate existing barriers and build institutional structures that will effectively assist African American male administrators in the field.
Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

Life through my bloodshot eyes would scare a square to death; poverty, murder, violence and never a moment to rest. Fun and games are few but treasured like gold to me; because I realize that I must return to my spot in poverty. But mock my words when I say my heart will not exist; unless my destiny comes through and puts an end to all of this (Shakur, 2006).

The purpose of this study is to better understand how race and gender influence the experiences of African American males as they advance and transition to senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) at predominately White institutions (PWIs). A particular focus of this line of inquiry is to investigate how these men describe their experiences with and responses to racism and other forms of oppression at PWIs. Furthermore, this study will explore factors that these African American SSAOs perceive as most salient to their success. The narratives provided by this unique group of administrators will give voice to the meaning they prescribe to their lived experiences at predominately White colleges and universities.

This chapter describes the qualitative research methodology used to investigate the lived experiences of the African American males in the sample. In attempt to remain transparent and enhance reflexivity, this chapter begins with an overview of my
positionality as it relates to the Black male experience at PWIs. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) describe positionality as a reflex strategy that assumes that only texts in which researchers display their own positions and contextual grounds for reasoning can be considered good research. “Critical researchers often write in the introduction their individual social, cultural, historical, racial, and sexual location in the study” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.328). To maintain complete transparency, I begin this chapter with a summary of my significant experiences as an African American male who has been employed at PWIs for over a decade. The next section provides a detailed description of the conceptual frameworks and research design selected to investigate the lived experiences of the African American male SSAOs in this study. The selection of participants, procedures, methods of data collection, and data analysis procedures are discussed in detail. Finally, a chapter summary is provided after addressing the trustworthiness of the data and the ethical concerns that were considered.

**Researcher’s Positionality**

I have worked in the broad field of student affairs for the last 10 years at five predominately White institutions of higher education. Many of my experiences in these spaces have been rewarding; however, my Black maleness has presented me with some unique challenges. I have always been one of very few African American administrators at my place of employment. There have been many points in time in my career in which I have felt very isolated, alienated, and treated unfairly due to my Black male body. Early in my career, I contemplated leaving the field of higher education administration due to my dissatisfaction and growing resentment for what I perceived to be a hostile
environment that devalued the contributions of African Americans in general and African American males in specific. My decision to remain in this field is largely due to my passion for student affairs work and determination to have a positive influence on the lives of college students. My experiences, good and bad, have shaped my lens as a researcher and through these “bloodshot eyes,” I approached this line of inquiry critically. To this end, I utilized critical race theory as the primary theoretical lens for this study.

Conceptual Framework

*Critical Race Theory*

Two theoretical lenses were utilized in this study to guide decisions made throughout the research process. Critical Race Theory (CRT) served as a starting point due to its focus on racism and its argument that racism is endemic in US society. This was fitting because one of the primary objectives of this research was to gain a better understanding of how African American male SSAOs experience and respond to racism at predominately White Institutions of higher education (PWIs). CRT maintains that racism is deeply ingrained—legally, culturally, and psychologically (Gilborn, 2008). According to Solorzano (1998), there are five tenets that form the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of critical race theory as it is applied to educational research: (1) The centrality of race and racism and their intersection with other forms of subordination; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) the trans-disciplinary perspective.
1. The centrality of race and racism and their intersection with other forms of subordination: CRT starts from the premise that racism is intertwined into the fabric of the United States (Bell, 1992; West, 2001). It asserts that race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity and success (Harris, 1993).

2. The challenge to dominant ideology: CRT challenges White privilege and refutes the claims that educational institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity. It argues that these traditional claims are “smoke screens” to preserve or advance the self-interests, power, and/or privilege of dominant groups in the United States (Bell, 1980).

3. The commitment to social justice: CRT is committed to social justice and offers a liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression (Matsuda, 1991). Such a social justice research agenda exposes the interest-convergence (Bell, 1987) of civil rights gains in education and works toward the elimination of racism, sexism, and poverty among African Americans and other oppressed groups (Delgado Bernal, 2001).

4. The centrality of experiential knowledge: CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate, appropriate and critical to understanding, analyzing and teaching about racial subordination (Delgado Bernal, 2002).

5. The trans-disciplinary perspective: CRT goes beyond disciplinary boundaries to analyze race and racism within both historical and contemporary contexts,
drawing on scholarship from ethnic studies, women’s studies, sociology, history, law, psychology, film, theatre and other fields (Delgado, 1984, 1992).

The five themes served as the foundation of this research. The tenets informed the major research questions and research methodology employed in this study. In alignment with CRT, the main research question centers the racialized and gendered experiences of African American male SSAOs at PWIs. The qualitative methodology employed in this study was also informed by the underlying premise of CRT that states that once victims hear the voices of others injured by racism and other forms of oppression, they will realize that they are not alone in their struggle, become empowered by the stories of their community, and learn how to articulate arguments to better defend themselves in oppressive environments (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Exploring, analyzing, and presenting their stories from their perspective is critical due to the sparse representation of African American male administrators who are employed at PWIs. Probing their experiences through this lens positioned this group of successful African American SSAOs to name their realities utilizing the conceptual tools of counter-stories and narratives. Delgado (1989) suggests that there are at least three reasons for naming one’s own reality:

1. Much of reality is socially constructed;
2. Stories provide members of out-groups a vehicle for psychic self-preservation;
3. The exchange of stories from teller to listener can help overcome ethnocentrism and the dysconscious conviction of viewing the world in one way.

This theoretical framework is appropriate for researchers who are interested in exposing,
analyzing, and challenging the culturally deficient stories communicated by the dominate group (Delgado & Stefanci, 2001; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT is also informed by a concept that Derrick Bell (1980) refers to as interest-convergence. This concept argues that White elites will tolerate or encourage racial advances for African Americans and other people of color only when they simultaneously promote White self-interest. The theory also maintains that the White majority will not support civil rights policies and social justice initiatives that threaten White social status. In summary, this study utilized the tenets of CRT to inform the research design of this study of African American male SSAOs at PWIs. This paradigm centers their experiential knowledge and attempts to shed light in the dark corners that often go unexplored in these privileged academic spaces.

*Van Manen’s Life World Existentials*

In addition to CRT, this study utilized Van Manen’s life world existentials analytical lens to make meaning of the lived experiences of the African American male SSAOs in this study. All human science research efforts are really explorations into the structure of human life-world, the lived world as experienced in everyday situations and relations (Van Manen, 1990). In attempt to make meaning of the lived experiences of the African American men in this study, this researcher utilized Van Manen’s four lifeworld existentials as guides for reflection in the research process. Van Manen (1990) holds that the existential themes of lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality) pervade the life experiences of all human beings—regardless of their historical, cultural, or social situatedness. These four life-world existentials guided the development of the research questions, interview
questions, and methodology. The concepts of lived space, lived body, lived time and
lived relation will be utilized to analyze the findings in attempt to better understand the
experiences of the African American men employed as SSAOs at PWIs. These four life-
world existentials are defined and discussed in relation to how they will be utilized in this
study:

1. Lived space: Lived space acknowledges that the physical space that we
occupy often affects the way we feel. When we want to understand or
investigate a particular phenomenon, it is helpful to inquire into the nature
of the lived space that renders that particular experience its quality of
meaning (Van Manen, 1990). This existential is intrinsically linked to the
space of inquiry—predominately White institutions. “Lived space is a
category for inquiring into the ways we experience the affairs of our day-
to-day existence: in addition it helps us uncover more fundamental
meaning dimensions of lived life” (Van Manen, 1990, p.103). This study
utilizes this lens to probe into how African American male SSAOs at
PWIs describe the feelings associated with working at PWIs.

2. Lived body: Lived body is the fundamental existential that speaks to the
reality that when we meet a person we meet him or her first through his or
her physical body. “Under the critical gaze the body may turn awkward,
the motions appear clumsy, while under the admiring gaze the body
surpasses its usual grace and its normal abilities” Van Manen, 1990,
p.104). Van Manen explains that our physical presence simultaneously
reveals and conceals something about us. The participants in this study
are met through their Black male bodies. In his book, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, Yancy (2008) explores and discusses various ways in which racism and negative stereotypes influence the way in which people interact with Black people. Yancy interrogates the White majoritarian paradigm and the distorted images that are projected upon Black bodies that have been accepted as the transcendental norm. Through this distorted lens the Black body is perceived as criminal, dangerous, unruly, or inferior prior to acting. This existential will be utilized to interrogate how the participants in this study describe their lived experiences as a result of their Black male bodies.

3. Lived time: Lived time is a temporal way of being in the world—it is a subjective moment in time that appears to speed up when a person is enjoying oneself or slow down when a person is feeling anxious. This theme takes into account that whatever a person encounters in his or her past sticks to that individual as memories or as forgotten experiences that in someway has a hand in shaping him or her into the person he or she is. “The temporal dimensions of past, present, and future constitute the horizons of a person’s temporal landscape” (Van Manen, 1990, p.140). In this study, these senior level administrators recollect the past and share their experiential knowledge acquired as a result of navigating PWIs.

4. Lived human relation: This theme refers to the interactions with other human beings in the interpersonal space that we share with them. “In a larger existential sense human beings have searched in this experience of
the other, the communal, the social for a sense of purpose in life, meaningfulness, grounds for living, as in the religious experience of the absolute Other, God” (Van Manen, 1990, p.105). From the point of view of lived human relation, the meanings that these African American men ascribe to the interpersonal relationships and interactions with other people at PWIs will be analyzed.

Research Design

A qualitative research design will be utilized to investigate the lived experiences of African American men who are employed as chief student affairs officers at PWIs in the United States. Qualitative research designs are advantageous when the researcher is interested in allowing participants to tell their stories through interviews, documents, artifacts, and observations (Glesne & Peshkin, 1998). Making meaning, explaining their lives, reporting how various experiences have affected them, and other broad forms of how people interpret the world and their experiences are the basis for qualitative research and the primary reason why this method is optimal for this study (Schuh & Upcraft, 2001).

Qualitative research methods are utilized to guide this study. The methodology is especially appropriate because it is in alignment with the primary theoretical framework, critical race theory, which emphasizes subjectivity and the importance of liberating the voices of those who have been historically silenced in this society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). A qualitative research design is also in alignment with Van Manen’s lifeworld existentials which focuses on lived experiences. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996)
explain that quantitative researchers assume an objective social reality, while qualitative researchers assume that social reality is constructed by the participants in it. “Qualitative research strategies often are used to obtain phenomenological and existential information about the human condition that by the very nature of the data, would be nearly impossible to acquire through conventional statistical means” (Levers, 2006, p.385).

Qualitative research designs can be classified as interactive or non-interactive and then further delineated within each of these major types (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Interactive designs utilize face-to-face techniques to collect data from people in their natural settings. Common examples of interactive designs include ethnography, phenomenology, case study, grounded theory, and critical studies. Non-interactive designs are often referred to as analytical research. This type of qualitative design investigates concepts and events through an analysis of documents. Common examples of analytical research include concept analysis and historical analysis. This study of African American male SSAOs will utilize interactive research methods because I am interested in obtaining a thick description that can be read and lived vicariously through others.

Collective Case Study

This research utilized a qualitative, case study design that will take in-depth looks at the experiences of a unique group of African American administrators who have advanced to senior-level positions at various PWIs in the United States. Yin (1984) defines case study research as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, in which multiple sources of evidence are used. This
design is appropriate because it builds upon personal accounts to give a deeper, richer, and more complex picture of the work experiences of African American male SSAOs (Shank, 2006). This qualitative method will enable others to understand similar situations and apply the findings in subsequent research or practical situations (Schumacher & McMillan, 2006).

Stake (1995) identifies three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. An intrinsic case study is conducted when a researcher wants to better understand a particular case. An instrumental case study is a particular case that is examined to provide insights into an issue versus focusing on the particular case. The purpose of this type of case study is to go beyond the case. An instrumental case study becomes a multiple or collective case study when it is involves looking at several cases (Glesne, 2006; Stake, 2006). A collective case study is a small collection of people, activities, policies, strengths, problems, or relationships that are studied in detail.

I chose to take an instrumental approach to this case study because it provides the ability for me to study several unique cases composed of African American male administrators in an effort to gain a better understanding about issues that are external to any particular case. The collective case approach was also selected because each case has its own story and it allows phenomenon to be investigated in a bounded integrated system (Glesne, 2006). The bounded system can be a program, an event, an activity, or a set of individuals bounded in time and place. The bounded system in this study is a set of individuals-African American male SSAOs who are bounded in particular places-PWIs. By studying several cases, “the analytic conclusions independently arising from the cases are more powerful than those coming from a single case” (Yin, 2003, p.53).
In conducting a methodological review of the literature, I found three studies that investigated the experiences of African American administrators utilizing collective case study. These scholars were interested in gaining a better understanding of how these Vice Chancellors and Presidents made meaning of their career experiences (Rolle, Davies, & Banning, 2000; Holmes, 2003, 2004). Holmes (2004) employed purposeful sampling strategies to identify 15 potential African American Presidents to participate in her study. She was able to conduct one in-depth interview with six participants. Holmes tape recorded, transcribed, and coded each of the interviews. She reviewed the coded transcripts several times and used the constant comparative method to segregate the data into broader categories and themes. Given the lack of a critical mass of African American Presidents, the institutional types of the universities that they worked for were not linked to their narratives. In a separate study, Holmes (2003) also utilized qualitative research methods to gain a better understanding of how race and gender influence the experiences of African American women employed in mid to senior level positions at PWIs. In this study, she utilized the same research methods as the aforementioned study. It is important to note that this study was helpful in informing my main research question. More specifically, I modified Holmes’ research question to focus my interest in investigating the intersection of race and gender influence the lived experiences of African American male SSAOs at PWIs. As I will describe later in this chapter, Holmes’ studies also informed my strategies to protect the identity of the participants in my study due to the lack of a critical mass of African American SSAOs. in my study due to the lack of a critical mass of African American SSAOs.

Rolle, Davies, & Banning (2000) utilized a collective case study to investigate the
experiences of African American administrators. Purposeful sampling was employed to identify and secure the participation of executive-level administrators at PWIs. The participants in this study had to work at PWIs with a student population with less than 10% minority representation. The researchers approached potential participants via phone or letter. They conducted in-depth interviews with six participants. The researchers utilized phenomenological data analysis that included the steps of phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. This study was useful to my study of African American SSAOs because it emphasized the importance of defining the criteria needed to qualify as a PWI in my study. Consequently, in this study PWIs are described as an institution in which African Americans make up 10% or less of the entire student population.

There are several other examples in which qualitative, collective case studies were utilized (Crudden, 2002; Davey, Askew, & Godette, 2003; Duquette, Stodel, Fullarton, & Hagglund, 2006; Kehrwald, 2008; McNamara & Bailey, 2006; Phelan, Barlow, & Iversen, 2006; Wright, White, & Gaebler-Spira, 2004). In each of these studies, the authors were interested in gaining a better understanding about a particular phenomenon. The participants in these studies had to meet a set of predetermined criteria to be included. The number of participants ranged from 6 to 20 participants with an average of 10 participants per study. In a collective case study that examined the factors that influence the job retention of workers with vision loss, Crudden (2002) conducted in-depth telephone interviews with 10 participants with visual impairments (blind or low vision) who continued to work in the competitive labor market. The participants gave voice to their experiences and described personal characteristics they believed influenced
their ability to retain employment.

Davey, Askew, and Godette (2003) utilized collective case study and purposeful sampling to investigate how families adjust to and cope with non-terminal parental cancer. Potential participants were referred by two radiation oncologists who worked in hospitals in Georgia. Participants had to meet the following criteria: (a) at least one parent had been diagnosed with cancer in the last four years; and (b) there was at least one child between the ages of 11 and 18 still living in the home, and that child had been told about the parent’s cancer diagnoses. Duquette, Stodel, Fullarton, and Hagglund (2006) utilized a collective case study to examine the persistence in high school among students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Purposeful sampling strategies were utilized to identify eight adolescents. Data was collected utilizing in-depth interviews. All of the interviews in this study were conducted by telephone because the research budget did not permit travel to the various sites. Kehrwald (2008) utilized collective case study to investigate the online learning experience of four online learners. In-depth interviews were conducted over a 10-week period. The analysis of the data utilized a three-step process: (a) data reduction; (b) display and examination; and (c) conclusion drawing and verifying.

Selection of Participants

This collective case study utilized a purposeful sampling technique to investigate the experiences of African American male SSAOs employed at PWIs. This technique was appropriate for this study because it is an ideal tool to utilize when a researcher is interested in selecting information-rich cases for in depth study without the need to
generalize the findings to all cases (Patton, 2002). It was also selected because it increases the utility of the information obtained from small samples. When employing this strategy, the researcher searches for key informants or unique cases that are likely to provide insightful information pertaining to the particular phenomenon under investigation. Table 6 describes the different kinds of purposeful sampling approaches (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
Table 6

Description of Purposeful Sampling Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampling Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typical Sampling</td>
<td>Samples are selected because they reflect the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme or deviant case sampling</td>
<td>Cases that are rich because they are unusual or special in some unique way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity sampling</td>
<td>Cases that are information rich but are not unusual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogenous sampling</td>
<td>A small sample of individuals who share common characteristics and describe it in depth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratified, purposeful sampling</td>
<td>Consists of taking a sample of above-average, average, and below-average cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion sampling</td>
<td>Selects subjects on the basis of certain predetermined criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirming or disconfirming case sampling</td>
<td>Includes subjects who will confirm what has been learned already, or will disconfirm what has been learned; that is, they will disagree with what has been learned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunistic sampling</td>
<td>Requires that the researchers include an unexpected case in the sample because of something that occurs unexpectedly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politically sensitive</td>
<td>Included because of the politically sensitive nature of the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience sampling</td>
<td>Involves selecting individuals because they are easy to identify and invite to participate in the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowball or chain sampling</td>
<td>Respondents are asked who else among the potential respondent group may be knowledgeable about the subject under study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum variation sampling</td>
<td>Select to obtain differences of perceptions about a topic among information-rich informants or groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Miles and Huberman (1994).

Qualitative inquirers hold that the sample size is related to the purpose, the
research problem, the major data collection strategy, and the availability of information-rich cases (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Guidelines for determining sampling size are as follows:

1. **Purpose of the study**: A case study that is descriptive/exploratory may not need as many people as a self-contained study that is descriptive/explanatory. Further, a phenomenological study usually has fewer informants than are needed in grounded theory to generate dense concepts;

2. **Focus of the study**: A focused study at one site may have fewer participants than an interview study using network sampling;

3. **Primary data collection strategy**: Qualitative researchers are guided by circumstances. For instance, a study may have a small sample size, but the researcher may be continually returning to the same situation or the same informants, seeking confirmation. The number of days in the field is usually reported;

4. **Availability of informants**: Some informants are rare and difficult to locate. Others are relatively easy to identify and locate;

5. **Redundancy of data**: Adding more individuals or returning to the field may or may not yield any new insights; and

6. **Researchers submit the obtain sample size to peer review**: Most qualitative researchers propose a minimum sample size and then continue to add to the sample as the study progresses (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006).

A sample size of ten SSAOs from ten different PWIs are included in this study.
Although a collective case study is designed with more concern for representation, the opportunity to learn from the stories, counter-stories, and narratives of this unique sub-group of administrators is of central importance. This study utilized a combination of purposeful sampling techniques: criteria sampling, snowball sampling, and maximum variation sampling. The decision to utilize these strategies are directly related to the specified intent of the study, which is to investigate the experiences of African American men who are employed as SSAOs at PWIs. Given the uniqueness of my dissertation topic, participants had to meet a set of predetermined criteria. Table 7 outlines the way in which criteria sampling was utilized to identify potential participants, along with the reasoning for each. This purposeful strategy was employed in a similar study that examined racial micro-aggressions and how they influence the collegiate racial climate. Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso (2000) utilized a purposive sampling technique to identify participants who were (1) African American, (2) currently undergraduate college students, (3) enrolled at predominately White institutions, and (4) enrolled at Research-I institutions. This predetermined criteria was deemed necessary based on the extent in which the subjects could contribute to the research study.

Once African American SSAOs were identified in this dissertation study, they were asked to refer other potential participants. This technique is referred to as network sampling and it is employed when individuals sought do not form a naturally bounded group but are scattered throughout populations (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006). Network sampling is appropriately utilized because a critical mass of African American male SSAOs who are employed PWIs does not exist in any particular location. Given that African American SSAOs are often engaged in similar national activities related to
the field of student affairs, it is quite possible that they are aware of other African American male SSAOs.

Table 7

*Description of Predetermined Criteria*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description and Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>This study will examine the influence that intersection of race and gender has on the experiences of the participants in this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>This researcher is interested in studying African Americans because they have a long history of being discriminated against in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States citizen and born and raised in the United States</td>
<td>This researcher is only interested in African Americans who were born and raised in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently or recently employed as a senior-level administrator</td>
<td>I am interested in learning about their lived experiences as a result of navigating PWIs to the top of the field (Vice-President or Vice Chancellor).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently or recently employed at a four-year PWI</td>
<td>This researcher is interested in public or private four-year colleges and/or universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked a minimum of ten years in the broad field of higher education administration</td>
<td>It is important that the administrators have worked for a considerable amount of time in the field of higher education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to participate</td>
<td>It is important that that the participant be willing to set aside the time needed to be included in the study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maximum variation sampling was also utilized to secure participants from various geographic locations and institution types. It is a strategy that is commonly employed to illuminate different aspects of a research problem. I chose to focus
primarily on location and institution type because this group of administrators is small and difficult to locate. The purposeful sampling technique was employed until at least ten participants were identified who represented at least three basic institution types according to the 2000 Carnegie Classification System (Table 8) and three geographic regions in the United States. The seven regional communities, excluding locations outside of the United States, are categorized according to the NASPA (2008) regional communities as summarized below:

- Region I consists of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
- Region II consists of New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware, New Jersey, and Maryland.
- Region III consists of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.
- Region IV – East consists of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
- Region IV – West consists of Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota, North Dakota, New Mexico, and Wyoming.
- Region VI consists of Arizona, California, and Hawaii.
Table 8

*Description of the Basic Carnegie Classification System*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate-granting Universities. Includes institutions that award at least 20 doctoral degrees per year (excluding doctoral-level degrees that qualify recipients for entry into professional practice, such as the JD, MD, PharmD, DPT, etc.). Excludes Special Focus Institutions and Tribal Colleges.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RU/VH: Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RU/H: Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRU: Doctoral/Research Universities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Colleges and Universities. Generally includes institutions that award at least 50 master's degrees and fewer than 20 doctoral degrees per year. (Some institutions above the master's degree threshold are included among Baccalaureate Colleges, and some below the threshold are included among Master's Colleges and Universities) Excludes Special Focus Institutions and Tribal Colleges.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s/L: Master’s Colleges and Universities (larger programs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s/M: Master’s Colleges and Universities (medium programs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s/S: Master’s Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate Colleges. Includes institutions where baccalaureate degrees represent at least 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees and that award fewer than 50 master's degrees or 20 doctoral degrees per year. (Some institutions above the master's degree threshold are also included) Excludes Special Focus Institutions and Tribal Colleges.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bac/A&amp;S: Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bac/Diverse: Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bac/Assoc: Baccalaureate/Associate’s Colleges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2008)
Procedures

Upon receiving approval from the Duquesne University Internal Review Board, I contacted my higher education colleagues who were members and presenters in professional organizations in attempt to identify SSAOs who met the predetermined criteria established for this dissertation study. They were faculty and administrators at PWIs located in every region in the United States. I contacted them via email and via telephone. As I communicated with my colleagues, I provided them with an overview of my dissertation study and outlined the predetermined criteria (see Table 7). The professional organizations and conferences that were utilized to identify and recruit participants are listed in Table 9. These professional organizations and conferences were chosen because of the large percentage of student affairs and higher education professionals who are engaged in their associated activities. Professionals who are members and/or participants in these organizations and conferences are often connected to a larger network of higher education professionals. Consequently, these individuals served as optimal resources that assisted in the identification of potential participants who they believed met the predetermined criteria for this study.
Table 9

*Description of Professional Organizations and Conferences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American College Personnel Association (ACPA)</td>
<td>ACPA’s mission is to lead the student affairs profession and the higher education community in providing outreach, advocacy, research, and professional development to foster college student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers of the Academy (BOTA)</td>
<td>BOTA’s overarching goal is the production of high quality, publishable research and scholarship that focuses upon improving African and African-American peoples, schools, and communities (socially, politically, and economically).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASAP)</td>
<td>NASAP is a professional organization dedicated to promoting excellence in the area of Student Affairs. The organization serves as a beacon for student affairs personnel addressing the issues and needs of today’s college students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)</td>
<td>NASPA is the leading voice for student affairs administration, policy and practice and affirms the commitment of student affairs to educating the whole student and integrating student life and learning. NASPA is the largest professional association for student affairs administrators, faculty and graduate students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE)</td>
<td>The NCORE conference is the leading and most comprehensive national forum on issues of race and ethnicity in American higher education. The conference focuses on the complex task of creating and sustaining comprehensive institutional change designed to improve racial and ethnic relations on campus and to expand opportunities for educational access and success by culturally diverse, traditionally underrepresented populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Council on Educational Administration (UCEA)</td>
<td>UCEA is a consortium of major research universities with doctoral programs in educational leadership and policy. The dual mission of UCEA is to improve the preparation of educational leaders and promote the development of professional knowledge in school improvement and administration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to my request for assistance in identifying potential participants, my network of colleagues emailed me the contact information for 23 African American male administrators that they believed met the predetermined criteria. Upon receiving the names of potential participants, I conducted a website search of the institution that the potential participants were affiliated with to ensure that they were a SSAO at a PWI. There was one case in which the SSAO worked at a historically Black college and there was one case in which the recommended participant was not a SSAO. The two names were discarded because they did not meet the specified criteria. The 21 names of the potential participants that appeared to meet my predetermined criteria were categorized in an electronic database by their name, institution, title, and NASPA geographical region. I sent potential participants a letter of invitation via email with the intent to prepare them for a follow up telephone call (see Appendix A). The email included the following: (a) a brief introduction of the researcher; (b) the name of the individual or organization that recommended them for inclusion in this study; (c) a synopsis of the research project; and (d) when the researcher will attempt to telephone them. A preliminary overview of the study was given to potential participants via email to allow them to think about their willingness to participate. The preliminary email also provided potential participants with the ability to communicate to me that they did not meet the predetermined criteria.

A telephone call was made to each potential participant within 48 hours of the initial email sent. In the telephone conversation, I introduced myself, made reference to the individual or organization that recommended him for the study, briefly discussed the project, answered any questions, and sought verbal consent for their participation in the study. In that conversation, the researcher emphasized the importance of the study, the
time commitment of their participation, and the techniques that were to be employed to address issues of confidentiality. The telephone conversation concluded with discussing potential dates to conduct the interview. The confirmed participants were asked to email me their personal biography (if available) and resume. In many cases, the interview was scheduled with the assistance of the SSAO’s secretary. Following their verbal consent, participants were sent a consent form to be faxed back to the researcher (see Appendix B). Participants were asked to send the requested information back within one week of their verbal consent.

Out of the 21 African American male SSAOs contacted via email and telephone, 12 agreed to participate in this dissertation study. Eight of the participants did not respond to the emails and phone calls. In each of the cases in which the SSAOs did not respond, I contacted them via email and telephone on at least five occasions. There was one instance in which the SSAO declined because of his intense workload at the time of the study. Two of the SSAOs who agreed to participate had to drop out of the study due to unforeseen circumstances. One SSAO had to drop out because he changed jobs and one SSAO had to drop out due to personal circumstances that required him to take a leave of absence from work.

Data Collection

Data collection and analysis was conducted simultaneously in order to utilize the obtained data to inform the collection and interpretation of additional data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Yin (1994), the six most common data collection techniques are personal documents, archival records, interviews, observation, participant-
observation, and physical artifacts. Qualitative researchers depend upon a variety of methods for gathering data because it counteracts threats to validity and contributes to the trustworthiness of the data. Taking a multi-method approach to data collection is called triangulation and it is one of the most popular validation strategies that qualitative researchers employ (Shank, 2006). The data collection techniques that were utilized to investigate the experiences of African American male SSAOs in this study include personal documents, archival records, and in-depth interviews. Methods triangulation will be utilized in this study for three main reasons: (a) to elicit data needed to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences at PWIs; (b) to contribute to different perspectives; and (c) to make effective use of the time available for data collection (Glesne, 2006).

**Personal Documents, Archival Records, and In-depth Interviews**

Personal documents and archival collection is a non-interactive strategy for obtaining qualitative data with very little reciprocity between the researcher and the participant (McMillan & Schumaker, 2006). They are tangible manifestations that describe people’s experience, knowledge, actions, and values. Sometimes documents serve as substitutes for records of activity that the researcher could not observe directly. Given that the participants in this study were reflecting on their experiences at PWIs over the course of their careers, it was not critical to this study to engage in lengthy observation at one particular PWI. Each participant’s resume or curriculum vitae was collected to secure specific information about the PWIs they have worked for and the types of positions they have held in their career. In addition to the resume or curriculum vitae, an internet search was conducted to secure official documents prior to and after
interviews have been conducted. This data was utilized to learn more about the participant’s professional affiliations, prior experiences, and research interests.

The internet research included collecting data from the following: (a) online journals for written publications; (b) website databases of previous employers or PWIs (including campus and local newspapers) for annual reports, awards, meeting minutes, organizational/reporting structure, department information, staff photos, racial demographics of their department, and critical incidents; and (c) professional associations (including major national organizations). These documents were utilized to get familiar with the participants’ background and experiences. In addition, the information gleaned from these documents was utilized to build rapport with the participants prior to the interview. Building rapport was essential in this study because it increased the probability of the participants’ willingness to share personal information related to their experience at PWIs (Glesne, 2006).

In-depth Interviews

After personal documents and archival documents were collected and reviewed, each participant was interviewed two to three times with interviews lasting from 90 to 120 minutes. In-depth, face-to-face and telephone interviews were the primary data collection strategy employed in this study. Through the use of open-ended questions following a semi-structured interview guide, I explored each SSAO’s experiences at PWIs (see Table 10). In alignment with Glesne’s (2006) view that researchers should remain open to modifying their interview questions, I added or abandoned questions immediately following the first few interviews I conducted. The questions within my interview schedule were developed to elicit lengthy responses. During the interview
session, I probed to get participants to elaborate on their responses in attempt to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions, opinions, and everyday lived experiences (Kvale, 1996; Glesne, 2006). As I probed and encouraged participants to elaborate, I was also remained sensitive to ensure that I was not doing harm as I gathered data (Corbin & Morse, 2003).

Every attempt was made to interview each participant in this study face-to-face at least one time. Telephone interviews were primarily utilized to follow-up and gain a deeper understanding of the participants’ experiences. Two telephone interviews were conducted with participants because face-to-face interview were not feasible due to availability and geographic location. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with eight of the participants in this study. Face-to-face interviews were preferred because of my initial belief that it would assist me in the development and maintenance of rapport with the participants.

Face to face interviews were conducted at a setting of the participant’s choice. The settings included the participant’s office and personal home. Prior to asking questions from the interview guide, this researcher engaged the participant in an informal conversation to increase the comfort level. Prior to the interview, I also assured each participant of confidentiality, explained the benefits of the study, and reminded the participant that he could refuse to answer any question at his discretion. Once the interview began, deviations from the interview schedule were permitted to probe and explore issues raised by the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Establishing trust, being genuine, maintaining eye contact and conveying through phrasing, cadence, and voice tone that the researcher hears and connects with the person elicit more valid data
than a rigid approach (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006).
Table 10

*Interview Protocol Guide*

Main Research Question: How does the intersection of race and gender influence the lived experiences of African American men as they advance to senior-level student affairs administrators at predominately White institutions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Questions</th>
<th>Protocol Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question One: How do they describe their social and academic experiences at predominately White institutions?</td>
<td>1. How would you describe your journey to the Chief Student Affairs position?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Two: How do they describe their experiences with and responses to racism?</td>
<td>2. Please describe, in detail, experiences that stand out the most as you reflect on your career at PWIs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Three: What factors do they perceive as most salient to their success and/or failure?</td>
<td>3. What has it been like for you as an African American male navigating your career in student affairs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. At any time in your career, have you experienced overt or covert racism? If so, please share the situation(s) in detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. What strategies have you employed to assist you with the successful navigation of this field and your current position? What are some of the challenges you continue to struggle with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. What personal qualities or characteristics do you believe are critical for African American males to advance to the Chief Student Affairs position?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. What recommendations would you give to young African American males who aspire to be SSAOs? What pitfalls would you advise them to avoid?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. What institutional policies and/or practices do you feel would benefit African American males in the field of student affairs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion of the Interview</td>
<td>9. Is there anything that you would like to add that I may or may not have asked?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for use in the data analysis process. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) describe that recording interviews ensures the completeness of the verbal interaction and provides material for reliability checks. Following the interim analysis process outlined by McMillan and Schumacher (2006), comments were made in my interview notebook and reflexive journal following each interview. More specifically, I took non-judgmental notes in the interview notebook paying special attention to any nonverbal communication during the interview session. Immediately following each interview, I made entries into a reflexive journal that synthesized the main interactions in the interview. The reflexive journal includes the following: (a) an assessment of the quality of the data; (b) suggested question modifications; (c) preliminary interpretations; and (d) personal reactions. A reflexive journal is commonly utilized to maintain an awareness of a researcher’s subjectivities and potential biases in an effort to minimize the influence on data collection and analysis (Glesne, 2006, McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). In addition to reflexive journaling, I spent 20 – 30 hours reviewing and transcribing each digitally recorded interview. I transcribed each of the interviews verbatim utilizing Express Scribe® transcription playback software. Express Scribe® is free professional transcription software that assists with the transcription of audio recordings. This transcription software provides users with the ability to load and playback digital audio at variable speeds while maintaining constant pitch so that the participant’s narratives can be heard clearly. In addition, I purchased a professional transcription foot pedal that connected to my computer utilizing the USB port. The foot pedal provided me with the ability to type while controlling the playback features of the transcription software hands-free.
As I transcribed the data, initial insights and comments were hand-written into my notebook and reflexive journal. Theses notes also included a critique of my interview questions, my assessment of the quality of the interview, and preparation reminders (Glesne, 2006). The digital and print file labels were electronically filed with the date, interview length, and informant pseudonym. Digital recordings and transcripts were maintained in an electronic database system that was protected with a code known only to me. All other collected data (printed) was kept in a locked file in my office.

Data Analysis

The process of data collection and analysis was conducted simultaneously to allow categories and themes to emerge from the data. Using Miles and Huberman’s (1994) flow model of data analysis as a framework for reflection, the data analysis process consisted of data collection, coding, data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification (see Figure 3). This section outlines the theme development process in attempt to make this dissertation study as public and replicable as possible (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002).
Figure 3. Data analysis flow model

In this qualitative study of African American male SSAOs, I accumulated several hundred pages of textual data as a result of collecting written documents, conducting in-depth interviews, and writing memos. In qualitative data analysis, it is critical for researchers to be able to organize, manage, and retrieve the most meaningful bits of data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). In an effort to assist me with organizing the collected data, this researcher utilized Microsoft Word 2007 and ATLAS.ti. As interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word 2007, the data was constantly analyzed to inform data collection decisions and to identify recurring themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Utilizing ATLAS.ti as a Qualitative Analysis Tool

ATLAS.ti was utilized as the primary analytical tool to assist me during the data analysis process. ATLAS.ti is a powerful computer assisted qualitative analysis software (CAQDAS) tool that aids researchers with managing and making sense of large amounts
of qualitative data. The most valuable aspects of utilizing CAQDAS programs are their ability to quickly search and retrieve text from data collected from in-depth interviews. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) explain that qualitative data analysis software differs tremendously from statistical software in that the researcher’s input is much more involved compared to a statistical program. Muhr (1991, p.350) also points out this difference and clarifies that the design objective of ATLAS.ti was “not to automatize the process but rather to develop a tool that effectively supports the human interpreter, especially in the handling of complex informational structures.” Muhr (1991) also warns that the automatic interpretation of text cannot succeed in grasping the complexity, lack of explicitness, and the contextuality of everyday knowledge.

ATLAS.ti begins with the user creating a research project—called a Hermeneutic Unit (HU). African American SSAOs was the name assigned to the HU in this project. It should be noted that a HU serves as an electronic container for everything related to the project. The Word 2007 documents containing the transcribed interview data of each African American SSAO were uploaded into the ATLAS.ti program. These transcriptions were uploaded separately and are called primary documents (PD) in ATLAS.ti. Therefore, there were 10 primary documents representing the 10 participants in this study. In addition to the Word 2007 documents, ATLAS.ti has the capacity to store and retrieve photographs, scanned documents, audio or video recordings. In an effort to remain organized, this researcher uploaded the interview audio files, the SSAO resumes, the racial demographic profiles of the city their institutions are located in, and the Carnegie Classification profiles of each PWI they worked for in their careers. As Konopasek (2008) points out, ATLAS.ti conveniently stores all of this data and makes it
available for scrutiny with the quick click of the computer mouse.

Coding with ATLAS.ti

After interviews were transcribed, codes were attached to the participant’s narratives as a way of identifying and reordering data, allowing the data to be thought about in new and different ways (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). ATLAS.ti utilizes coding procedures that support a grounded theory approach for data analysis. Qualitative coding is the first analytic step in making meaning of hundreds of pages of interviews, notes, memos, and other documents. Grounded theory is noted for very detailed and explicit coding of texts (Smit, 2002). It includes categorizing chunks of collected data with a label that summarizes and accounts for each piece of data. “Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, you define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means” (Charmaz, 2006, p.46).

Utilizing an open coding method, each primary document within the African American SSAO Hermeneutic Unit was coded line-by-line and systematically analyzed for thematic patterns across cases (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The coding function in ATLAS.ti includes highlighting the transcribed text to be coded within the primary document and labeling the text utilizing open coding, code in vivo, or code by list. The screenshot in Figure 4 illustrates an excerpt of a coded interview transcript. I opted to use open coding, and assigned codes that accurately captured the highlighted text. Open coding is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). As labels were created for the codes, I reflected on key concepts that emerged from the review of related
literature where appropriate. After coding several narratives within the primary documents, I utilized the “code by list” function of ATLAS.ti that enabled me to quickly code a selection utilizing a previously assigned code. As the “code by list” function was utilized, reoccurring themes across the cases began to evolve.

Figure 4. Screenshot of a coded transcript within ATLAS.ti

While coding the various transcripts, the “memo” function was also utilized within ATLAS.ti to aid the research process. The memos assisted me to think, make decisions, and interpret while analyzing the data (Punch, 2000). Memos were produced utilizing informal and unofficial language for my personal use (Charmaz, 2006).
Examples of how each of the different types of memos was utilized during the coding process are provided in Table 11. The memo function was utilized to make three types of memos: a) theoretical-attached, b) theoretical free, and c) reflexive-attached. In addition to the date the memo was created, the memo note of a theoretical-attached or reflexive-attached memo indicates the participant who made the comment and the time in which the memo was created. Theoretical-free memos indicate the date and the time of the memo.

Theoretical memos included insights about the data, connections between codes, and ideas about potential broader categories being formed. Groenwald (2004) states that theoretical notes are particularly helpful in assisting researchers to reflect initially on the meaning of certain things. There were two types of theoretical memos utilized in this dissertation study: theoretical-attached and theoretical-free. Theoretical-attached memos represent notes that are directly attached and associated with a particular participant. Theoretical-free memos represent notes that I created that were not associated with any particular participant. In most cases, theoretical-free memos related to observations and insights that were related to the HU.

The memo function was also utilized to engage in reflexive memo writing. Reflexive memo writing was utilized to clarify researcher bias. Kane (2006) describes reflexive memo writing as a process in which a researcher uses self-reflection and reflexivity to identify, explore, and set aside any presuppositions and connections about the phenomenon being studied so that the researcher can maintain the focus of the study on the exploration on the subjective experiences of the participants.

As I coded the transcripts and reflected on what was being shared, I wrote notes
that captured some of my emotions, thoughts, and personal reactions. Reflexive memos were attached directly to the narratives of the respective participants and are referred to as “reflexive attached” in Table 11.

Table 11

Sample Memos Utilizing ATLAS.ti

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Memo Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/28/08</td>
<td>Theoretical-Attached</td>
<td>Many of these SSAOs mention ACPA and NASPA involvement. These organizations appear to be a critical aspect of their development… [P4:Kyle_2:17:50 AM]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10/08</td>
<td>Theoretical-Free</td>
<td>The Burden of Blackness code may overlap into the relationships with White colleagues. Especially when Black SSAOs are stereotyped into being the diversity expert [1:00:04 AM]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20/08</td>
<td>Reflexive-Attached</td>
<td>Why do we have to modify the way in which we carry ourselves so that White people can be comfortable? I understand that we do need to be aware of our environment but I don't know about going out of my way to make White people feel comfortable. Especially when they do nothing to make me feel comfortable. In fact, some of them need to be afraid or fearful of me. They need to know that they can't do just anything to me without some sort of ramification. This advice is a hard pill for me to swallow… [P10:Nelson_11:27:10 PM]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/30/08</td>
<td>Reflexive-Attached</td>
<td>This is something that I have experienced time and time again. As I am looking at this it is a challenge and burden of Blackness. Having your ideas discriminated against only to be embraced again by a White colleague…[P9:Tony_8:27:11 PM]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Display and Data Reduction

Data display is an organized, compressed assembly of information allowing researchers to begin making visual pictures of how the data are emerging from the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The visual display of the data enhanced my ability to make sense of the data and to draw conclusions. As the data was coded it was interrogated and systematically explored to generate meaning (Delamont, 2002). After numerous codes were generated and attached to the text throughout the 10 primary documents, the data was displayed utilizing the powerful visualization capabilities of ATLAS.ti. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) point out that ATLAS.ti is a useful tool for researchers who are interested in explicating and visualizing emergent patterns of concepts and the links among them. A report was generated from the “code manager” database within the ATLAS.ti program that produced a frequency table that highlighted all the codes and the frequency in which each code was assigned to quotations within the 10 cases or primary documents. The frequency code report indicated that 92 codes were created and assigned to 879 quotations across the 10 cases or primary documents (Appendix C). This visual display of the data was helpful in identifying redundant codes and codes that could potentially be split.

In addition to the frequency table, I produced reports from the “code manager” database that isolated select codes and provided me with a document consisting of all of the associated quotation text and memos. For instance, I was able to read the 23 full quotations and memos associated with the “scholarly activity” code (see Appendix D). This process was repeated several times in an effort to critically analyze the existing codes, quotations, and memos (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
ATLAS.ti also has the capability of creating what is known as code families. A code family consists of conceptually related codes and the attached comments. This researcher created four code families that were in alignment with the four research questions that guided this study (See Appendix E). The code families were given the following labels: a) social and academic experiences; b) experience with racism and discrimination; c) responses to racism and discrimination; and d) factors salient to their success and failure. This grouping of the codes reduced the overall complexity emerging in the course of the analysis (Muhr, 1991). After code families were created, the network mapping feature was utilized to display and build the semantic relationships between the codes (Appendix F). The primary purpose for creating concept networks is to refine, establish links between ideas, and map out possible organizing themes (Muhr, 1991; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The network maps permitted this researcher to visualize the relationships between codes and to gain a better understanding of how the participants were responding to the broad research question.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification Process

The final part of analysis is conclusion drawing and verification. In conclusion drawing the researcher defines what things mean— noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The constant comparative method was employed to segregate the data into broader categories and themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This analytical process involves two general processes: (a) unitizing, or breaking the text into units of information that will serve as the basis for defining categories, and (b) categorizing, or bringing together into provisional categories those units that relate to the same content,
devising rules that describe category properties, and rendering each category set internally consistent and the entire set mutually exclusive (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The two theoretical frameworks (critical race theory and Van Manen’s four lifeworld existentials), research questions, literature review, frequency of codes, coded narratives, code families, and network maps were reviewed several times to identify themes.

Code mapping was utilized to bring meaning, structure, and order to the data (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). This technique is helpful during the theme generation process. The three iterations of data analysis are outlined in Table 12. The codes, categories, and themes are presented in alignment with the four major research questions that guided this study. The first iteration of analysis consists of the initial codes that were assigned to the narratives of the 10 SSAOs in this study. Continuously reflecting on the theoretical frameworks, research questions, literature review, and ATLAS.ti visual aids, categories were generated and presented in the second iteration in the code map. The third iteration of the code map presents the seven major themes that emerged from the study.
Table 12

**Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1: Social and Academic Experiences</th>
<th>RQ2: Experiences with Racism and Discrimination</th>
<th>RQ3: Responses to Racism and Discrimination</th>
<th>RQ4: Factors Salient to their Success and/or Failure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>THIRD ITERATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Professionals</td>
<td>Racial Micro-Aggressions</td>
<td>Cognitive-Time Responses</td>
<td>Increasing Personal and Academic Capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Man’s Burden</td>
<td>Blocking Black Male Bodies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love for the Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECOND ITERATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black misandry</td>
<td>Being called to question</td>
<td>Self-imposed rules</td>
<td>Mentorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burden of Blackness</td>
<td>Employment discrimination</td>
<td>Overcompensation</td>
<td>Pitfalls to avoid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial battle fatigue</td>
<td>Covert racism and discrimination</td>
<td>Working twice as harder</td>
<td>Adding value to PWIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Collusion</td>
<td>Poor responses to racism</td>
<td>Characteristics of success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double consciousness</td>
<td>Resistance to Black</td>
<td>Internalizing racism</td>
<td>Contribution to academic mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple jobs/positions</td>
<td>leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>Making self investments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIRST ITERATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to justice</td>
<td>Age discrimination</td>
<td>Confrontational</td>
<td>Scholarly activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Stress</td>
<td>Homophobia</td>
<td>Non-confrontational</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing role &amp; responsibility</td>
<td>Overt racism &amp; discrimination</td>
<td>Strategic resistance</td>
<td>Engaging in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding meaning in the work</td>
<td>Class issues</td>
<td>Overlooking racism</td>
<td>counterspaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black male journey</td>
<td>Covert racism &amp; discrimination</td>
<td>Internalizing racism</td>
<td>More money more power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive interactions</td>
<td>Racial betrayal</td>
<td>Second guessing oneself</td>
<td>Pre-professional preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative interactions</td>
<td>Black on Black</td>
<td>Cost of racism</td>
<td>Strategies and tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>De-emphasis of race</td>
<td>Hesitancy to hire Black</td>
<td>Moral and spiritual values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black identity</td>
<td>Hypervisibility</td>
<td>Reluctance to play the race card</td>
<td>Success attributes and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of class</td>
<td>Off campus experiences</td>
<td>Directly addressing racism</td>
<td>Words of wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical incidents</td>
<td>Black as less qualified</td>
<td>Black pride</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career trajectory</td>
<td>Invisibility</td>
<td>Ignoring discrimination</td>
<td>development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Role of the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trustworthiness of the Data

To address issues of validity during the data collection and analysis, this researcher maintained a reflexive journal to guard against researcher bias. This researcher made journal entries after each interview to openly address any preconceived opinions and to reflect upon my subjectivity (Glesne, 2006). In addition, data from multiple sources and multiple sites were utilized. For accuracy and validity, I digitally recorded and transcribed each in-depth interview verbatim. Member checking was utilized in this study to help triangulate the researcher’s interpretations. Following each interview, the participants were given an opportunity to read and comment on their personal profile as it was forming. Member checking was utilized to rule out misinterpretation and researcher bias (Shank, 2002). The participants were encouraged to review the material for accuracy and make suggestions for improvements (Stake, 1995). To maximize the trustworthiness of the data, the study maintained optimal transparency by documenting and disclosing the entire research process.

Ethical Concerns

Given the low numbers of African American men employed as chief student affairs officers at PWIs, protecting their anonymity was essential. Pseudonyms were utilized to identify participants and the individuals they referenced in the interviews. The names of institutions mentioned were substituted with their geographic region or omitted when reporting the findings. Incidents, stories, or details that could jeopardize confidentiality were not included in the case report. These steps were taken to avoid revealing the personal identity of this small group of African American administrators.
Participants could refuse to answer any question or alter their level of involvement at any time throughout the research process.

Chapter Summary

A qualitative research design was utilized in this study to provide the selected African American male SSAOs with the ability to tell their own story as it related to their lived experiences at PWIs. This chapter began by providing a brief overview of my experiences and perspectives as an African American male student affairs administrators who has been employed at PWIs. I shared my stance and status as it relates to this dissertation topic as a strategy to monitor and evaluate the impact of my subjectivity.

I utilized CRT and Van Manen’s lifeworld existentials as a conceptual framework guided the entire research process. CRT was selected primarily because of its focus on racism and the experiential knowledge of African Americans. Van Manen’s lifeworld existentials was selected primarily because it was useful in making meaning of the lived world as experienced in everyday situations (Van Manen, 1990). The four lifeworld existentials (lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived relation) guided the development of the research questions, interview questions, and methodology.

The research design section described the research methods used in this study. A collective case approach was selected because it positioned me to conduct an in-depth investigation of several African American male SSAOs who were employed at different PWIs in the United States. I conducted a methodological review of the literature and utilized past empirical studies to inform my methodological decision-making process. As a result of the methodological literature review, I decided to utilize purposeful sampling,
in-depth interviews, and the constant comparative method. In addition, I modified Holmes’s (2003) research question and developed my main research question—How does the intersection of race and gender influence the lived experiences of African American male SSAOs who are employed as SSAOs at PWIs?

A purposeful sampling technique was selected because of my interest in investigating a unique group of African American administrators. The predetermined selecting criteria included the following: (a) African American, (b) male, (c) United States citizen, (d) currently or recently employed as a SSAO, (e) currently or recently employed at a four-year PWI, (f) worked a minimum of ten years in the broad field of higher education administration, and (g) willing to participate. Maximum variation sampling was also utilized to ensure that participants from different geographical regions and institutional types were represented in this study. These sampling techniques increased the utility of the information obtained from the small sample of African American male SSAOs.

Given that there are very few African American males who are employed at PWIs as SSAOs, gaining access to my participants was a critical stage in my research journey (Delamont, 2002). Consequently, I utilized my professional network to assist me in identifying potential participants who met the established criteria for inclusion in my study. A professional network of faculty and administrators from various locations across the country assisted me in identifying 23 potential participants. After identifying the 21 participants who met my predetermined criteria, 12 participants agreed to participate in my study—two of the participants dropped out of the study due to unforeseen circumstances.
Data was collected from personal documents, archival records, and in-depth interviews. The personal documents and archival records consisted of tangible manifestations that described the participant’s experience, knowledge, actions, and values. More specifically, I reviewed the participant’s personal biographies and resumes prior to conducting the in-depth interviews. I also conducted an internet search to review written publications, meeting minutes, annual reports, awards, and photos. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with eight participants and telephone interviews were conducted with two participants. The in-depth interviews followed a semi-structured interview guided and ranged between 90 and 120 minutes in duration. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. I maintained a journal that synthesized the main interactions in the interview.

Data collection and analysis was conducted simultaneously. The data analysis section discussed my use of Miles and Huberman’s (1994) flow model to guide the process of coding, data collection, data reduction, data display, conclusion, and verification. A detailed summary of the theme development process was outlined to remain transparent and to provide an audit trail (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). ATLAS.ti was utilized to manage and make sense of the data collected from the 10 African American male SSAO in this study. Transcriptions were coded utilizing an open coding method. Theoretical and reflexive memos were made within ATLAS.ti to assist me to interrogate and interpret the data during the research process. The data was visually displayed within ATLAS.ti to assist me with the data reduction and conclusion drawing phases. The data display section discusses the frequency tables, quotation reports, code families, and network mapping features utilized within ATLAS.ti to make
meaning of the lived experiences of the participants in this study. Conclusion drawing and verification process included utilizing the constant comparative method. The code mapping technique was utilized to display the three iterations leading to theme development (Table 12). The seven themes that emerged as a result of analyzing the data collected will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the analyzed data that was collected throughout the duration of the research process. The documents that were reviewed and analyzed included the following: interview transcripts, resumes, archival records, and memos. To provide a context for the reader, this chapter begins with providing socio-demographic data of the participants in this study. Given that the African American male SSAOs in this study were prompted to share their personal stories as they relate to their experiences with racism at PWIs, protecting their identity was of central importance. Consequently, extra precautions were taken during the presentation of their personal characteristics, the institutions they worked for, and the types of positions they held. After providing the participant and institutional profiles, a case-by-case analysis of the participants’ interview responses are presented and organized by the four major research questions. The next section presents the themes that emerged as a result of a cross-case analysis and they are also organized in alignment with the major research question it answers. A chapter summary concludes Chapter 4.
The purpose of this study was to explore how African American men who are employed as Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) make meaning of their lived experiences at Predominately White institutions of higher education (PWIs). The conceptual framework of this study was grounded in critical race theory (CRT). CRT is a race-based methodology that not only works to expose racism and processes of racialization, but it also works to give voice to differing discourses that seek social change (Pillow, 2003). In addition to CRT, Van Manen’s Lifeworld Existentials served as an analytical lens to make meaning of the participants’ experiences. The four lifeworld existentials of lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived human relation inform the life experiences of all human beings.

This main question that guided this research was the following: How does the intersection of race and gender influence the experiences of African American men as they advance to SSAO positions at PWIs? In addition, four sub-questions were investigated:

1. How do African American male Senior Student Affairs Officers describe their social and academic experiences at PWIs?
2. How do African American male Senior Student Affairs Officers describe their experiences with racism at PWIs?
3. How do African American male Senior Student Affairs Officers describe their responses to racism at PWIs?
4. What factors do African American male Senior Student Affairs Officers employed at PWIs perceive as most salient to their success and/or failure?
Profile of Participants

The resumes that were collected from each African American SSAO in this study were analyzed within and across cases. The information gleaned from this analysis provides the reader some useful background information that can be considered as the findings are critically reviewed. As it was briefly stated in the introduction of this chapter, it was extremely important for the identity of the participants in this study to be protected. This researcher made this decision considering the fact that only 1.2% of all SSAO positions are held by African American men and women (Jackson, 2003a). Presenting participants’ personal characteristics in great detail could potentially reveal the identity of one or more of the participants in this study. Consequently, select socio-demographic variables of the ten African American SSAOs in this study are discussed and presented in frequency tables without isolating any one participant (See Table 13 and Table 14). In addition, their socio-demographic characteristics are not linked to their narratives.

All of the participants in this study met the predetermined criteria for inclusion in this study and they functioned in the role as Chief Student Affairs Officer or SSAO. Although SSAO titles varied by institution, every participant in this study held the rank of Vice President or higher. The participants ranged between 37 and 64 years of age. The average age in this group was 53 years of age. Eight of the participants attended predominately White institutions (PWIs) for their undergraduate study, while two of the participants attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The two participants who attended HBCUs eventually received a graduate degree from a PWI. All ten African American SSAOs held a terminal degree—eight earned a Ph.D. and two
earned an Ed.D. Nine of the participants held terminal degrees related to higher education administration and one held a terminal degree that was not related to higher education administration.

The years of experience working in higher education for this group of African American SSAOs ranged between 15 and 39 years. The combined higher education work experience for this group was 278 years. Four of the participants had between 35 and 39 years of higher education work experience, four had between 20 and 29 years of higher education work experience, and two had from 15 to 19 years of work experience (see Table 13). Seven of the participants held faculty appointments in addition to functioning as a SSAO. One participant in this study worked at one PWI for the duration of his career. Eight of the participants in this study had experience working in at least five different PWIs throughout the course of their careers. The participants in this study had a combined work experience at 56 different PWIs which are located in 20 different states and located in the Midwest, Northeast, South, and West United States regions. Seven of the African American SSAOs in this study had experience working in between four and five states. Table 13 highlights select characteristics of the participants in this study.
Table 13

*Socio-demographic Variables by Education and Work Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-demographic variables</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
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<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undergraduate Institution Attended</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree Held</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Education Administration Degree Held</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of Experience in Higher Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PWIs Worked at in Career</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>States Worked at in Career</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participant’s experience as it relates to the SSAO position(s) they have held are highlighted in Table 14. As indicated in the Table 14, six of the participants had more than 10 years of experience as an SSAO and four of the participants had less than 10 years of experience as an SSAO. Seven of the participants in this study also had faculty appointments in addition to their SSAO positions. Four of the participants had experience working as a SSAO at more than one PWI. The institutional type is listed according to the basic and size classification system established by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2008). The variables provided insight into the types of institutions that the African American males served as SSAOs throughout their careers. Five of the participants were SSAOs at research universities with high to very high research activity. Three participants were employed as SSAOs at master’s universities with medium and larger programs. One of the participants was employed at a baccalaureate college and one participant had experience as an SSAO at a doctoral research university. The sizes of the institutions ranged from small to large. Seven of the participants were currently (or recently) employed at large four-year institutions (at least 10,000 degree-seeking students). Two participants were employed at medium four-year institutions (3,000 to 9,999 degree-seeking students), and one participant was employed at a small four-year institution (1,000 to 2,999 degree-seeking students). The African American population of the cities in which the PWIs were located in are also highlighted in Table 14. Two participants currently or most recently served as SSAOs in cities that consisted of between 1% and 9% African American residents. Four of the participants served as SSAOs in cities that consisted between 30% and 49%. Three of the participants were SSAOs in cities that consisted of an African American population between 10% and
Table 14

*Socio-demographic Variables Specific to SSAO Position Held*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-demographic variables</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years Experience as SSAO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Appointment as SSAO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Institutions as SSAO (current)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Type by Carnegie Classification-Basic (over career)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research University (Very High)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research University (High)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Research University</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s (Larger Programs)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s (Medium Programs)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate Colleges</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Institutional Type by Carnegie Classification-Size (current) | |
| Large four-year | 7 |
| Medium four-year | 2 |
| Small four-year  | 1 |

African American Population of City Where Employed as SSAO (over career)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African American Population</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1%-9%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%-19%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%-29%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%-39%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%-49%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case-by-case Presentation of the Findings

This section provides the results of the case-by-case analysis of the 10 African American male SSAOs that participated in this study. As it was mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the personal characteristics of the African American males will not be provided on a case-by-case scenario. This decision was made in an effort to prevent personal accounts of the participants’ experiences from being linked to a particular SSAO. This researcher felt as though providing detailed socio-demographic variables could potentially lead to the identification of a particular SSAO’s identity and put him at undue risk. Pseudonyms are utilized to protect the identity of the participants and any other person they mentioned in their interview. In addition, the names of the PWIs that they make reference to are omitted to protect the university’s identity. The findings for each case are structured in the same manner. The case begins with how the participants describe their social and academic experiences at the PWIs that they have worked for throughout the course of their respective careers. This researcher then discusses their experiences with and responses to racism. Next, I will present factors that these African American SSAOs present as salient to their success and/or failure. Where relevant, I will also present relevant findings that were the result of responses obtained from the unstructured segments of the interviews.

Participant 1: Lifting Bruce’s Voice

Social and Academic Experiences

Bruce entered the field because of his strong attraction for the work. He stated, “I had a mentor who said if you love this life so much, you ought to do it for a profession."
Consequently, Bruce’s love for the student affairs work compelled him to go to graduate school and secure his Master’s degree in the field. My initial line of questioning prompted Bruce to share how he conceptualizes his role as an SSAO:

I oversee and I have direct responsibility for all aspects of student life, cocurricular programs, and the well being of our students as it relates to creating an environment where they all feel respected and appreciate each other. That feeds their ability to be successful in the classroom and earn their degree. So that's primary and then along with that our other fiduciary and oversight responsibilities for the institution as it relates to being one of several Vice Presidents that works with the President with the overall vision and mission and fulfilling all academic aspects of the institution as well. That's part of the senior leadership team, really the welfare of the institution as a whole in that sense.

Bruce stated that he spent most of his time engaged in strategic planning. In this process, he described an internal process that he goes through: “What’s the plan? What’s the map for accomplishing objectives and goals for the institution?” Bruce also stated that he spent a significant portion of his time managing the regular incidents and issues that arise on campus with students. He said that the issues range from personal issues to issues with student organizations. Bruce explains further:

It’s critical in their eyes (laughing), therefore it has to be dealt with in a timely fashion and to an extent where it makes them feel like their valued and contributing community members. They want to know that they are being heard and that their issues are being addressed. So there are always those types of issues, scheduled or non-scheduled, that eats up a great deal of my time.

Bruce added that he has remained satisfied with his role because he still has a great deal of direct contact with students, something that he says he may not necessarily have at other universities. In discussing his decision to come to the institution where he served as SSAO, he stated that he was reluctant to move to the city in which it was located. Bruce perceived it to be a very conservative state and the university’s administration was not diverse. Bruce stated:
Even the supposed liberals here were conservative to a certain extent. As far as people of color, there was just the Director of Multicultural Affairs here at the time. There were a handful of faculty members who were either of African descent or of color period. So it was a tough decision to actually come here. I thought that I would take the chance, take the challenge, and see how things work out. I remember to this day the walk that happened with the Director of the diversity center. She walked me to my car and I said, "Look, if they make an offer, am I going to be all right coming here?" (Laughing) She said, "Bruce you will be all right. If you come here there is a good community for African Americans and you will have some support, so you would be all right." And sure enough, it has turned out to be the case.

Initially, given the lack of African Americans at the university, Bruce contemplated if he wanted to accept a position at that particular PWI. He questioned if he would be comfortable in that environment and ultimately decided to accept the position due to the presence of a support system in the community that surrounded the PWI. Bruce summarized his overall experiences working at predominately White institutions as rewarding. He also stated that he felt valued and that he couldn’t see himself doing anything else or working anywhere else:

I found my home. I don't mean just within higher education but this field and this track has led to a lot. I met my wife when I came here... Through this university and this city I have really connected to this environment. It is hard professionally to start considering a place home other than my original hometown, now I am starting to think that this is it [my home]. This has been a big part of my career.

Bruce went on to speak highly about the university. He stated that he felt valued, appreciated, and needed by the African American students on campus. However, he described a couple of situations in which the African American students accused him of racial betrayal after he wouldn’t carry out their requests. As Bruce was describing the situation, I could see from his body language and emotions that this was a challenge that stood out in his career. I probed into the specific incident and asked him how the accusation of somehow betraying African American students made him feel. He stated:
That cuts (laughing). It does. It really-really cuts! Especially if you truly have an intention and desire to help all communities. I own up to the lens I wear as to how I see African American students on this campus. I can't help but to do that because of my own personal experiences. So I own that. Fine. Do I invite all student groups or student communities to my home at least once or twice a year? No. Do I have a cookout at my home for BSU and all students of color? I'm sorry I do it. I don't do it for SGA. I don't do it for anyone else. That's the group I do it for and I own up to that, I own up to everybody on that. That's the community that I identify with. So when they come back--even if it’s one or two people and they say that I can't believe it. ‘You just aren't there for us. You have sold out. You’re just speaking the administration's language. You're one of them.’ Yes it does hurt. Yes it does.

In addition to elaborating on his relationships with students, Bruce shared that he has always maintained good relationships with the African American professionals on campus. In his sharing, he also went on to share the attempts of the African American faculty and staff to formally organize:

The African Americans in administrator and faculty roles actually decided to organize an effort to be more supportive of students of color and to start serving in more mentoring type roles. We then questioned what we could do to be more supportive of each other. Of course, it was interesting that it was always one or two individuals who led that charge. So in order to make sure we knew who all [the African Americans] were in the campus community we asked human resources for the data. They said, ‘What do you want data for? (laughing) What do you want that information for? Oh my goodness! They’re organizing! What are they doing?’ Most of us thought it was humorous, the reaction, and some of the pressurizing that took place as a result of what we were asking for. We were very good and tight and strong group. Then, a number of individuals left the institution after the tenure-track process didn't work out or our intentionality as a university in recruiting and retaining people of color failed. So the organization just kind of went away and we lost touch with each other.

The university’s poor reaction and concern in regard to the African American faculty and staff’s desire to organize with other African Americans speaks to the systematic advantage that Caucasians are granted. Tatum (1997) argues many Caucasians pay little attention to the significance of their racial advantages in predominately White settings. Tatum adds that White people usually don’t think about racism as an institutionalized
system of advantage that benefits White people in subtle as well as blatant ways.

Considering Tatum’s perspective on the advantages of White group membership in predominately White settings and analyzing what Bruce shared about the institution’s poor reaction, there was clearly no conscious consideration of the African American’s need to organize and develop a network of support with other African Americans at that PWI.

Experiences with and Responses to Racism and Discrimination

In describing his journey to the SSAO role, Bruce described a situation in his career in which he felt as though he was discriminated against on the basis of race. He stated that the Dean of Students at that institution accepted a position at another institution. At the time, Bruce was functioning in the role of Associate Dean and was the second person in the hierarchical structure in the divisional organization chart. Third on the organizational chart was a White male who was functioning as the Assistant Dean within the division. Bruce stated that the Dean and other decision-makers at the institution held a meeting in which they would determine who would assume the role as the Interim Dean upon the current Dean’s departure. He recalls the situation below:

So he comes back and he announces that the person is going to be the Assistant Dean of Students as the Interim Dean and not myself. My reply was, "You've got to be kidding me!" Here I had more experience and I had more areas reporting to me, including the revenue-generating areas. You just don't put your revenue-generating areas at [this type of institution] in anybody's hands. I had the largest budgets, etc, etc, etc. I am not going to be Interim? But we are going to have this other person that doesn't have the scope that I do? So, there was a reply [by the Dean], "Well they just see this other person and what he might bring to the table as being a little bit different." I tried to challenge them in that thought and they basically said, "We like him because of X." I was very upset at the time. I didn't scream, didn't yell, or anything like that, but it was a very pivotal moment where bottom-line--I had to decide if this going to be an issue. We all have those type of things where we ask ourselves where is that line for us. Where it could cost you
you job or not? So that line was there for me to cross on that issue. Between myself and the Dean of Students at the time I said, "You know what. You have spoken enough for me and on my behalf. Speak no more for me. I will speak for myself." I did have conversations with people within the Human Resources Department. I said, "You know what. I am not going to stand for this. So someone has to explain to me why I am not going to be the Interim Dean." They did not have an answer and in the end, I became the Interim Dean. That was a pivotal moment for myself.

In reflecting on this incident, Bruce described his internal process that was going on in response to being passed over for the position. He stated:

You shift at some point, once you get through your initial anger and disbelief, into a mode of what politically is the appropriate route to go. Where are your allies? Where are you going to find understanding? Where are you going to find fairness? Will you find fairness? If you can't find fairness within the system, are you willing to go to the outside [the university] and get it? If you go that route, what are the ramifications for doing that as it relates to this small community that we have in higher education and what that does for your reputation? Do you go there? Don't you go there? All that comes into play as far as moves that you would be willing to make. After I discerned that, I felt I had appropriate and proper allies within the community that I would trust their feedback and specifically within that human resources department. Those are the individuals that I went to-to gain feedback on how this should be and can be addressed. I have never known and don't know whether they had a conversation with the President saying, "You better make this right" and I don't care.

Bruce told me that I was the first person whom he ever told this story to outside of the university. It was obvious that this was a very difficult time in Bruce’s career. He had anger in his voice as he described his experience. His experience with employment discrimination is consistent with Feagin’s (2001) findings that many African Americans face obstacles pursuing job opportunities because of the use of screening barriers by White employers. Bruce recalled another challenging situation that occurred while he was functioning as an SSAO. The incident involved a Provost, who was a White male that was seemingly determined to sabotage Bruce and his efforts at the institution.

This guy was from the South. He professed to be "old-school South." Even though he talked a little diversity game, he was a "Good Ole Boy." He was way
too good of a "Good Ole Boy." He was filling our President’s head with all types of things about how I wasn't collaborative. He was doing whatever he could to press down my area, Student Affairs, as well as my work as an administrator. It was to the point where I think the President was questioning if I was the right person in the role.

At one point in time, the Provost communicated to Bruce that he would “learn” that if Bruce “wanted to get anything done,” he would have to “go through him.” Bruce responded by meeting with his staff and discussing an alternative strategy to maintain good working relationships with the Provost’s areas:

There was nothing that could be done between him and me. So my approach was this. I pulled in my lieutenants--my dean of students and my directors--and I said, ‘here are our guiding principles for our approach to working with individuals within Academic Affairs community. I'm not going to be that person who is going to be out in the forefront as it relates to academic and student affairs collaborations. I still believe that we have a wonderful environment here with your colleagues over in academic affairs and other areas on campus. Continue to flourish, prosper, and collaborate with them and get things done because it’s not happening here [through my relationship with the Provost].’

As I probed into the situation further, Bruce communicated that the President began to second-guess him and he eventually questioned Bruce in a one-on-one meeting about not being as collaborative as the other Vice Presidents. It should be noted that all of the Vice Presidents at the PWI were White males with the exception of Bruce. In his one-on-one meeting with Bruce, the President also indirectly accused Bruce of stabbing him in the back. Bruce did not share the specific details of the accusation, but he immediately challenged the President. Bruce shared the details of the meeting and his response to the President’s line of questioning:

I remember having a specific meeting with him [the President], where I called out the Provost and I basically said, where the hell are you getting this crap! I think I know where you are getting it and I will give you one week and you can go around and talk to anyone and everyone in this campus community. I defy you to find one other individual who will tell you that I am not collaborative and that I am seeking to stab you in the back. Because he [the President] would say, "I'm
hearing that you are doing this." I just went there. I challenged him on that and I said that I know who it is. I will give you a week to find out anything and everything that you can and when you do, you can bring that person into the room and you can be here and the three of us can go at it. I will give you that and in the end if you still feel that way, I will have my resignation on your desk. I will give it to you. You got it.

Bruce said that due to his response, the President ceased from making such accusations.

Eventually, he was able to have some deeper discussions with the President that improved their relationship, understanding, and working relationship.

In my line of questioning, I probed into Bruce’s physical and emotional health during the span of time that he was going through the ordeal with the Provost. Bruce communicated that the stress associated with what he was going through had a tremendous impact on him. He stated:

It was during that time frame that I got to a spell when you could literally see [my ribs]. I was just small. I was trying to stay ahead of the game so I wasn't doing my lunches, I wasn't eating, and I wasn't working out. So yes--It was taking a toll on me to the point where once or twice folks were like, "Are you OK?" My whole look and my demeanor was always been what has really carried me. I was positive, glass always half full… There were times where I would look at myself and its like, "You are not happy. For once in your life you are not literally happy. How long can you keep up this facade? This approach. This image." Yes, it took a major toll on my physical well being at the time.

In addition to having a physical impact, it was clear that the dilemma was affecting him mentally as well. He reflects:

I would question whether or not I was going through depression. I would personally question whether or not that was taking place because the one major symptom was the tiredness. I was tired! If I could get a nap in, I would get a nap in. I would just want to be in my recliner, flip the channels, and I wouldn't want any discussions. I would tell my wife, ‘You do not ask me anything about work.’ This is beyond the normal mutual agreement. I didn't want to relive it. I didn't want to go there. We're not talking about it. I would say there was a possibility that I was going through some form of depression. All that I had built and established as a professional and had done on this campus, regionally, and nationally--as well as the broader community in this city… How I might have to give all that up because of him. I would have to uproot my entire family life and
being because of him. That was very depressing I must say.

It should be noted that Bruce did not attribute the deterioration of his physical and emotional health directly to racism; however, he did state that his poor health was related to the negative influence that the Provost was having on his work experience.

Factors Salient to the Success of African American SSAOs

Reflecting on a wide range of experiences in the field of student affairs and higher education, Bruce shared recommendations, success strategies, and words of wisdom for African Americans who aspire to secure SSAO roles at PWIs. He stated that African Americans should take time to decide if they really want to pursue the chief student affairs position:

You really got to want to do this. …I have heard more and more individuals coming into our profession and saying, ‘I am going to be just fine staying at the director's level’ or ‘I want to be a Dean at an institution where the Dean is not a SSAO.’ You really have to want to do it and know what you are getting into.

Bruce also gave some advice to African American males related to the culture at PWIs. He shared:

This whole game of assimilation versus your racial identity… If you want to be a SSAO of African American descent you have to know who you are, where your lines are, and where your at on that spectrum. What you are able to stomach and still look at yourself in the mirror. Therefore, the type and mission of the institution is critical as it relates to whether or not you try to function in such a role. If you are going to be a SSAO of African American descent at a PWI like this one, you better be prepared for the, ‘you know what, every other year I am flying off to either Florida or Arizona… You better have a golf game because you have to golf and it better be decent… You don't have to play par but you better have no more than like a double bogey… You have to be comfortable in that environment and all of the things that you hear… All the way from those types of interactions to the day-to-day stuff that happens within predominately White environments. If you are not there where you can't stomach that and deal with that and you think you will be overly challenged with that then maybe their are other institutional types that you may feel a lot more comfortable in and still can serve in that type of senior role. Whether it is a historically Black institution,
community college, or a two-year college with a critical mass and different missions of how they approach socio-economic diversity--but you need to put yourself in an environment where you are going to be able to feel and navigate those different realms and communities properly. You have to have a wide spectrum of folks that you are willing to deal with.

Bruce’s narratives related to having a good golf game and fitting into the culture present at PWIs resonate with the concept that Du Bois coined as double consciousness (1903). Dubois spoke about the tendency of Black people to look at one’s self through the eyes of others. The challenge of a double consciousness includes the risk of conforming and changing one’s identity so it is in alignment with how others perceive the individual.

In addition to several success strategies and words of wisdom, Bruce stated that having the terminal degree and foundational knowledge about higher education are extremely valuable assets:

When you receive that doctorate in front your name and I don't care whether it's Ph.D., Ed.D., or whatever --when you do that within a university community, people lose their mind. You move into a whole other realm of being accepted into the community. I was the same Bruce but the minute I became doctor, not only did the President flaunt it every opportunity he was on stage, but now it is Doctor. I guarantee you that I would not have [been given some of the opportunities made available to me]. I was being invited to do this, that, and the other. It was just amazing. So yeah the credentials matter--they do--they matter and you use it as a tool then when it comes to policy development, collaboration, the processing that takes place at the VP's table.

Bruce also said that African American men who are interested in moving into SSAO roles should avoid being “pigeon-holed into a track.” He stated that at some point, it is important to break away from specific departmental specialties like residential life or multicultural affairs and the like. He stated that multicultural affairs is a “double-whammy” because people then perceive that all you can do is work with people of color. He said, “The bottom line is that you somehow need to become a generalist. You need to become a generalist and you have to widen your portfolio as to what you have your hands
on. That's going to create a faster and a quicker track.” Bruce’s advice is consisted with the advise that Guillory (2001) provides to African American administrators on PWIs. Guillory states that African American should strive to work from a broad base where the duties and responsibilities are not tailored exclusively for people of color. Guillory points out that the work that individuals do in multicultural-focused departments is important, but emphasizes the importance of African Americans to demonstrate their ability to work on a broader range of issues.

Participant Two: Lifting Isaac’s Voice

Social and Academic Experiences

I began the interview by asking Isaac to describe how he conceptualized his role as a SSAO. Isaac stated the following:

I view the role as being an advocate for students. Someone that is sitting at the Presidential Cabinet table who is helping the institution better understand the needs of the students and how we can support them for their success. Also, to listen to the voices and viewpoints of students, staff, colleagues, faculty, and my peers. Being a VP of student affairs, I took the leadership with working with the other VPs and making presentations to the student government, a PowerPoint presentation, on why we needed the increase in tuition and what it would pay for and what was in it for them. Sometimes in student affairs, people view themselves as second class. I never viewed myself as second class and as you review my credentials, I didn’t have to write. I didn’t have to publish. As I have mapped my career, I wanted to ensure that I would be a success.

Isaac’s conceptualization of his role extended beyond the general SSAO roles of strategic planning, budget management, project management, managing student crises, and other commonly defined functions. Isaac added that part of him being a success included helping students to grow and mentoring staff members to publish, present, or hold leadership roles in professional organizations. Isaac shared that in his role he was able to do a significant amount of traveling internationally. He stated:
In dealing with students I got involved with being a Presidential Envoy going to Tanzania, Warsaw, Poland, and Paris, France. The President sent me to represent the university to deal with encouraging our students to consider going to these countries. I met the administrators at some of these institutions, lectured about the importance of student leadership, student engagement, and also the importance of international travel. I was treated quite well there in each of the countries, particularly since there are very few brothers [African American males] in the country. I thought it was very important that we engage our minority students in the importance of international travel. That was another credential that was a part of my portfolio.

Throughout the interview with Isaac, it was clear that he was very proud about the things that he was able to accomplish. He cited many examples of students who he was able to help mold and shared many honors and rewards that he received for being an outstanding leader and scholar within student affairs professional organizations (NASPA and ACPA). However, Isaac admitted that his experiences did include their share of challenges. Isaac shared an incident he had with a student group, all of whom were White and who aggressively challenged his decision to reject their proposal:

I have dealt with many issues as it relates to student programming and I want to highlight one. Before I respond to a student issue, I try to get advice. Maybe from my campus lawyer or I will call one or two of my friends that I could trust throughout the United States--just to get their opinion and see if I am gauging it right with my reaction. Well, this particular student group wanted to go to a country located in Southwest Asia. There was a conference over there and they wanted to go there to learn more about the culture. The student finance committee of the student government funded two or three of them to go. My director of student activities supported it. Then it came in and I said that I couldn’t support this. I said that I have reviewed the proposal and I have contacted [a nearby large university]. The university has a museum and they have a continuing education program on learning more about this particular culture. Then, three or four students came to visit me because I didn’t approve it. They threatened me by dealing with a lawyer. I said that is fine. I will wait for the lawyer’s response. They sued, but they lost. I just couldn’t see spending $6,000 when they could go to a nearby university.

Isaac discussed other challenges that he had with White students and members of his staff. He said, “When I first became a SSAO, there was a White female in the office, a
student worker that did not want to respond to my requests. Within two days, she was transferred to another area. Some of your own directors will try to undercut you. Some directors may think that they can talk a good game, but they could never do that with me and I would let them know in a kind way.” Isaac processed these challenges as blatant resistance to his leadership due to his Black maleness.

Experiences with and Responses to Racism and Discrimination

Isaac described a situation in which the President he was reporting to was attempting to get him to reconsider hiring a Black male for a vacant position within the department. Isaac states:

One of the bad experiences that I had involved dealing with one of the college presidents I had. I was a young VP and we had done this national search for a director. We brought in 4 individuals. There was a Caucasian man that was working at a very prestigious institution and he impressed the committee. I kind of knew that he wasn’t going to accept the job. But anyway, he was the first choice, then there was a strong second who was a brother--an African American male. When I called this gentleman, the Caucasian person, and offered him the position, he just said he was no longer interested in the position. So I met with the President and told him that I felt that the African American male could do the job and could enhance the area, outreach to employers, and also to the students, faculty, and staff. He [the President] told me, ‘Isaac, won’t you go home and think about it overnight.” I said, no. I don’t need to do that. I said the search committee has given him [the African American candidate] some strong points and very little negative things. The man has been involved with [doing the functions of the role], he has also been a director [of a related department] and I want to recommend him to you. I really don’t need to think about it overnight.

Isaac mentioned there were other situations related to racism and discrimination in his career where there were staff members who were trying to undercut him. He also said that there were also times in which he felt he was perceived as “not as intelligent” as a Caucasian administrator. This finding is consistent with the argument that Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) make when they discuss Black misandry and the negative social
conditioning process that teaches many White people that African American men are lazy and unintelligent—among other things. The presence of Black misandric beliefs clearly present challenges to African American males who are attempting to navigate PWIs.

There were other points in Isaac’s career in which he felt he was discriminated against. One incident involved his candidacy for a vacant position. He describes the situation below:

I usually don’t tell this story but I will tell it to you. When I got my Master’s degree from…, I applied for a job at [this undisclosed institution where I eventually served as SSAO]. They didn’t have a person of color in the department, but didn’t hire me. They didn’t hire me. They hired another person and that was [some time ago]. Ten years later, I’m there at that same university as their Vice President. My second day on the job, someone came to my office and said, “You were my first choice ten years ago.” I said, “Well that’s really nice.” It was racism–discrimination. Certainly I should have gotten that job and the person that they hired never finished their doctorate…

Isaac’s experience with employment discrimination is in alignment with a study conducted by Feagin and Sikes (1994). They concluded that many stereotypes about the skills of African American workers cause White personnel officers to see African American middle-class job candidates either as a menial worker or poor risk regardless of their qualifications. Race-related factors have been known to block African Americans from gaining entrance into almost every field of work.

In addition to his experience with racial discrimination during the hiring process, Isaac also described a challenge that he had with a White senior-level colleague while working as a SSAO:

One year the SSAO at [a nearby comparable institution] got this big salary increase. So I went to the President and I told him that I need a comparable salary. He said, “No problem.” The VP of Finance & Administration was giving us hassles over it. He said, “Where are we going to find the money?” The President said, “That’s your job to find the money.” I got my salary increase but
he [The VP of Finance and Administration] was really grumpy and unhappy about it.

In sharing his perceptions on racism and discrimination, Isaac stated that he was naïve because he always felt good about who he was as a person. He said:

A lot of times it may have been racism but I overlooked it because I am not the type of African American SSAO that lets too many things get me down. Sometimes I overlooked it. It was in the best interest of my health and my stability—to be able to work at PWIs in leadership roles, being able to be a team player, to interact, and work with these individuals. My parents taught me that work is work. You work with people and at the end of the day you are going home. I’ve had a number of staff that I would not hang around with. Even at lunch or after work. I worked with them during the hours and evaluated them accordingly…

Factors Salient to the Success of African American SSAOs

Isaac provided a long list of recommendations, strategies, and words of wisdom that African Americans can utilize to guide their thinking and actions. Throughout the interview, Isaac took great pride in making reference to the number of African American males he has mentored and continues to mentor. Isaac stated that African American males who aspire to hold SSAO positions must have strong communication skills—public speaking and listening skills. He said, “Whether it be to the board of trustees or to orientation programs. You have to be ready because somebody may call you [to speak with them]. For example, somebody called me to meet with some students who were interested in this university.” Isaac explained not only does a SSAO have to be articulate, but he or she has to be persuasive and diplomatic. He said, “You have to have diplomatic skills as a VP of student affairs. You also have to be a consensus builder who is inclusive, fair, and decisive.”
Isaac was a container of knowledge as it relates to his wisdom about the field of student affairs. He passionately provided words of wisdom to aspiring African American male SSAOs. He stated:

Also, tell a person that this is not an easy world. It’s not easy to work at PWIs…in the role of a student affairs administrator. You have to deal with conflict, tension, students, faculty, your own staff, and you have to determine what is important. What is your vision? What is your blueprint for Student Affairs? You have to work with your VP and your President to determine what you are going to concentrate on. Each year I had a vision and priority statement of what we were to accomplish. I think it is very important that brothers [African American males] that are going to go into this field understand the importance of truthfulness, the importance of being held accountable for your actions, and how you spend the money.

Isaac’s acknowledgement that he sometimes overlooks racism for the sake of maintaining his health and stability is not uncommon. Feagin and Sikes (1994) state that many African Americans choose an indirect and subtle approach in attempt to deflect discrimination. Isaac’s statement suggests that he feels that there is a health benefit to ignoring racism and discrimination. It is acknowledged that acquiescence may sometimes be necessary, but Feagin and Sikes (1994) warn that ignoring racism may not be a psychologically healthy technique. While conducting my face-to-face interview, I probed about Isaac’s general health and he stated that he has always been in great health. It should be noted that Isaac communicated that he maintains a healthy diet and works out religiously at the gym.

Isaac also talked about having a passion for student affairs and being engaged with the academic mission of the university. He said, “I held academic rank. I was a full professor. I enjoyed a strong reputation in teaching, scholarship, and service.” Isaac reflected on a dynamic that he has seen over the course of his career and he said this:
We have a number of African Americans working in residence life. That’s where they are. The problem is the way I have seen it over the last 20 years—is that the Brothers and Sisters don’t want to take the time to work on their doctorate. It is very important that we respect that if you are going to be a SSAO, you have to have a Doctorate. That is first and foremost. Once you get your doctorate, you can get more involved with programs, seminars, and workshops that NASPA, ACPA, or NASAP gives to increase your skills and knowledge in student affairs… I’m so afraid that many of our African American males and females are getting burned out. Particularly in housing where you have to work a number of hours. You can’t make any money in student affairs unless you are a Dean or a VP. It’s sad the way we pay some of these salaries for our individuals and you are expected to work all of these hours. I didn’t have to do that. It was unacceptable (laughing). Who wants to work 60 or 70 hours per week? I did that one time a long time ago and I was exhausted! I prayed at night and said that this is never going to happen me again.

In providing words of wisdom and elaborating on his success, Isaac was adamant that teaching a course was paramount to his success. He stated:

When I was younger, I would teach maybe one or two courses per year. I did it because of the experience. They paid me for it but I did it more for the experience... What was important was to have the faculty status or rank because of my research and my public service. The thing about it is that you have to give up something. Some people look at my credentials and say that it doesn’t look like you gave up anything. I did give up some things (laughing)... Now, I think that the one caution is this—as you interview wait until you are offered the job by the President. In other words, don’t go interviewing [for the SSAO position] and talking about teaching. Why? Because you are interviewing for an administrator post—a VP for Student Affairs. Once you go through and they want to offer you the job, then you can talk to the President about the possibility of teaching. But always remember that you are the VP for Student Affairs. Maybe you want to teach one course a year. It could be during the summer when there aren’t that many students on the campus. But my point is that those are things that you have to know when you negotiate. You don’t negotiate with the search committee. You go in, you interview, you put your plan out, and then what you need to do is take a look at the institution and see where you fit. Whether it’s going to be ethnic studies, higher education, or student affairs, that negotiation would be with the college President first and he will let you talk with the particular school.

Isaac added that he utilized graduate assistants to aid him in “freeing up” time to work on his scholarly endeavors and involvement in professional associations. He said:

What is important to me is that for future African American administrators, particularly SSAOs, is that we be noticeable. Noticeable in professional
organizations--being President of NASPA or ACPA; or being editor of a refereed journal; or writing about the field. Remember this. Who better to write about the issues dealing with Black students than we? Caucasians can do it. They know how to do focus groups and qualitative and quantitative research but we also need to take time out of our careers.

Isaac spoke very proudly about his career. He showed me pictures and told me many of his success stories. It was clear to me that Isaac went above and beyond the call of duty throughout his long career. He shared:

As I look back and reflect, I have made my career. I could have been a normal VP--just working on campus, dealing with issues, making things happen, and then going home. One of the things that I always admired when I worked on my doctorate was I studied two pioneers--Booker T. Washington and William E.B. Dubois. Dubois talked about the Talented 10. I learned a long time ago that I am going to be one of those Talented 10 and I am going to make sure that my life and my career moved forward—that I was going to be somebody that was going to be known for my knowledge, my skills, and my contribution to the field of student affairs.

**Participant Three: Lifting Kevin’s Voice**

**Social and Academic Experiences**

To begin our interview, Kevin provided a very detailed account of how he conceptualized his role as a SSAO. As he described his role, he organized it into three tiers: (a) university governance; (b) divisional leadership; and (c) student engagement. The first tier consists of being engaged with governance, policies, procedures, and regulatory matters. The second tier involves the responsibilities related to leading a division of student affairs. He explained, “I have to be responsible for charting the course, holding people accountable, addressing the needs of the division, projecting or forecasting what the issues are going to be, and helping people to be in place that when the two cross we are in step with what we need to be doing…” The third tier involves his engagement and interactions with students. He said, “I need to be connected and be able
to interact with the student population that sees me as a vice president, but also views me as somebody they can talk to and that know where they are.” Kevin’s approach to connecting with students ranges from attending university events to playing basketball with them on campus.

As we discussed his career, Kevin stated that his first supervisor was an African American male. He continued to explain that this supervisor was influential in his development as a professional. Kevin valued this experience because despite their seemingly good relationship, his supervisor would still hold high expectations for Kevin’s professional work. Kevin stated:

If I had anybody else as a supervisor, they would have let some things slip under the radar—not him. He would say, ‘No, you didn’t get it done. At the end of the day you must be held accountable. You didn't get it done. You didn't do this, you didn't do this, and you didn't do this.’ So he held me to the bar and that was the footprint.

Although Kevin worked extremely hard, he said that he acknowledges that his being a Black male may have aided him in getting a position in his career. He stated that at the time, a particular institution was interested in hiring an African American because they didn’t have any who were within the administrative ranks. As it relates specifically to this job opportunity, Kevin’s status as an African American assisted him in securing the job. As he continued to elaborate on his experience, Kevin communicated that colleagues at that PWI criticized how he was hired and insinuated that he only got the job because he was an African American. He explained:

Later on in that job… after people got comfortable with me, a person came up to me and said, ‘You know people believe that you got this job because you're Black.’ I said, that may be true but the color of my skin did not allow me to keep this job. As a matter of fact, the track record will show that this office was the worst rated office in terms of student comments until I got here. We received the highest marks, 94% approval rate, every year that I was there. That wasn't by
accident. The proof is in the pudding.

Kevin’s experience with his colleague’s criticism of how he was able to gain access to the PWI is a result of the his colleague’s lack of understanding of or resistance to affirmative action programs. Those who are not knowledgeable of affirmative action programs don’t understand that candidates must meet the qualifications and have the necessary background to perform the job. On the other hand, there are individuals who are resistant to affirmative action programs for a number of personal reasons that range from racism to opposition of racial preferences (Crosby, Alison, & Conrad, 2002).

As Kevin elaborated he stated that his colleagues never directly confronted him about how he was hired. He said that it was always covert. He explains:

It was all covert. People were saying to me, "Hey--how you doing? Good to see you!" Covert—it happens anywhere you go; it's happening right here, right now. I'm just wise enough to know it's covert. Everybody who is friendly is not a friend. I believe it happens everywhere you go. My grandfather said to me, ‘if you are anywhere near competent about what you do, somebody is not going to like you. And they are going to look at you and wait for you to fall and trip. Then they are going to be there to say I told you so.

In summarizing his overall experiences at PWIs, Kevin described them as challenging, rigorous, adventurous, and fast-tracked. He also refers to his spirituality as being a guiding force. He stated:

It was appropriately fast tracked. It wasn't before my time but it was here is this door, get in there—explore and learn. Here is this door are you ready for the challenge? Yes. Get in there—explore and learn. It was not by pure happenstance. It was by divine design that the doors would be opened and that is a whole other component as it relates to how I do what I do everyday. I think that we [African Americans] typically as a race bring that with us, that connection, that spiritual connection that says, ‘Lord help me get through this situation.’ We either lead with or fall back on [spirituality] depending on where you are with your relationship.

In talking about what it is like to be an African American male SSAO at a PWI, Kevin
said that it is draining and challenging at times:

It is a struggle. It is a struggle and an adventure. It has been rigorous. It has been a challenge. I have made a lot of mistakes. I like challenges for some reason. I don't go out and seek them but it seems like when they come failure is not an option. Sometimes it is really draining. If you are not ready or you are not one to step up to the plate, you can get swallowed up in it, pack your bags, tuck your tail, and go home. So it hasn't been easy and when it gets easy--I get nervous because I'm relaxing. When I say relaxing I mean just letting your guard down… To be the best, you have to beat the best, you have to be able to play with the best, and the best don't sleep. I'm talking figuratively--they don't sleep. They are always thinking about what is ahead and how do we make it better. If there is not a balance of knowing when to shut it off and how to shut it off, then you can run yourself ragged.

Throughout our interview, Kevin made reference to several great relationships that he had with White mentors and supervisors. He attributed much of his success to a former professor, who was a White male, who had a very tough conversation and who told him that in order to be successful in “White-collar America,” he needs to “get a better command of the King James Version of the English language.” Kevin was initially offended by the comment, but after he thought about it, he went and took an independent study with that professor to address his broken English. Kevin attributes much of his success to that professor and taking the time to improve his speaking skills. Another White male mentor helped Kevin to make his professional transition and to understand that if he wanted to request funds from the university, he would need to draft proposals that highlight the university’s return on investment. Kevin also had a very meaningful mentoring relationship with a SSAO who was a White male and who served as his mentor while Kevin was working toward his terminal degree. After serving as his mentor and watching Kevin develop, the SSAO eventually provided Kevin with an opportunity to work as a senior-level administrator at a PWI.
Experiences With and Responses to Racism and Discrimination

Although Kevin had many positive experiences at PWIs, he shared a variety of experiences with covert racism and discrimination. He talked about specific times throughout his education where he felt he was treated unfairly or underestimated. He also shared that a past supervisor, who was a White female, motivated him to get his terminal degree because she stated that despite his good people and communicate skills, he didn’t have the necessary writing skills. Kevin described several incidents and his responses to them throughout his career. In addition to navigating the challenges associated with being a Black male, Kevin stated that his challenges are multiplied due to being younger than a significant portion of the people who report to him. Kevin shared an experience with me that he attributed to his young age, but it is important to note that his negative experience could have been attributed to the intersection of his race, gender, and age. He stated:

Somebody said the other day in a meeting, ‘I think we have spent enough time on this topic’ and we had, but I said, ‘We will move on when I finish this conversation.’ Now I should have said what he said…but I didn't. This was my meeting and I had to make the statement that we are going to move when I get ready to move--just for making the statement. Sometimes I have to do that. I don't do it often, but when I have to do it just to make the statement--I do. Now some people may not agree but in that setting, it had to happen that way. I don't often do it, but in that setting, it had to happen that way because people were looking like, ‘What is going on?’ The way it was stated… I had to say no--not yet.

Kevin went on to say this about challenges due to being perceived as a young leader:

It has always been a challenge but I overcome them by saying you know what, they are going to look at me and say he is too young--he is a kid. But after I start talking, more importantly, after I started leading, I believe I found if it is right and I am the right fit, and if I am supposed to be there--everything else will follow. So the knowledge that you bring to the table and the experiences that you have will overcome the age because there are young fools and there are old fools--and the only difference is age. Experience is the best teacher but a word to the wise is sufficient. So whether or not I have experienced everything, the wise person
would take those experiences from those who have gone through it and document it and not make the same mistakes twice.

Kevin described a situation in which he believes that he was being discriminated against during a job interview. He stated that the person who was conducting the interview asked some questions and made some statements that almost resulted in him turning down the job once it was offered to him. After reflecting on the situation, Kevin felt that the person was trying to negatively influence him because of his race. In an effort to protect Kevin’s identity, the questions that were posed to him during the interview are not presented.

Another situation involved an experience Kevin had while functioning as a senior-level administrator at PWI and it involved a cleaning staff person. The story is summarized below:

I was walking through a facility on campus and this housekeeper had just washed, buffed, and waxed the floor. When I got to where she had buffed the floor, I moved off the floor and walked on the carpet. Now I am a senior-level administrator, she knew that, because I supervised the guy, who supervised the guy, who supervised her. She also knew that because she cleaned my office. I walk over on the carpet and as I'm walking, I said, ‘I see you have got the floor buffed. It is looking sharp.’ She said, ‘Yea I see you are walking on the carpet. You are a good boy--your mama trained you right. You're a good boy--you know not to track the floor.’ I said to myself, ‘She is ignorant. She doesn't quite understand. So I got to educate her but not react to what she said because she doesn't get it.’ I'm assuming that she doesn't get it, but the other side of me says that she knows what she is saying. I said to her, ‘Whether it is home training or not, it is common courtesy [for me to walk on the carpet] because you just did some work and I don't want to mess your work up, number one.’ I said, "But number two, I want you to know that I am a long way from a boy. I have not been a boy since I was about twelve years old and then I was a young man. Now, I'm a grown man." She said, ‘Oh I'm just teasing you boy.’ I said, ‘Let me tell you again more clearly--don't ever call me boy. I am not a boy and to me that is [very offensive].’ Then I walked on away.

Kevin’s experience with the cleaning staff person can be described as a racial microaggression (Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso, 2000). The cleaning staff person’s remark
was clearly offensive and inappropriate. Consistent with Kevin’s experience, Constantine and Sue (2007) conducted a study that found that a group of African American professionals were subjected to numerous racial micro-aggressions in the workplace.

Kevin mentioned that he continues to experience racism and discrimination regularly. He stated that he feels that he is being watched very closely. He explained, “I'm the highest-ranking African-American on this campus. People are watching--White and Black. And I'm sure my colleagues are watching--if I am here early or if I am leaving late. People watch--they know my car.”

Factors Salient to Their Success and/or Failure

Although Kevin said he has always been the youngest administrator compared to his peers, he shared some words of wisdom for young African American males who aspire to be SSAOs at PWIs. Kevin stated that his success could partly be attributed to treating people fair and consistent. He said, “I believe that if you give off that karma, you get that karma in return. And that's my mantra. Being fair, honest, and consistent. Treat people the way you want to be treated.” Kevin also shared a list of things that young Black males should take heed to. His commentary is summarized below:

(1) Always live above and beyond reproach. Can it pass the newspaper test? What I say, what I do, how I act. If it is on the front page of the newspaper, how is it going to look? …So live above and beyond reproach… (2) Know that there is an inner circle within the inner circle and unless you are going to the Christmas parties consistently, the dinners on the weekends, playing golf, badminton, tennis, bingo, drinking coffee or whatever your drink of choice is, being invited to the holiday gatherings consistently, then you are not in the inner circle that is within the inner circle. I am in the inner circle at this college because there is [a small group of VPs] and the President. But do you think I am foolish enough not to know that I am not in the inner--inner circle. There is always a meeting before the meeting… (3) Know the dance. There is the tango, which is pushing and shoving,
give and take. But you can do the tango and still know it is a dance. If I tango with you, because it takes two to tango, and I walk away upset then there is going to be less opportunities for me to dance with you. I don't wear my feelings on my sleeve when I have a dance with you because if people know what gets you, then they know what not to talk about in front of you. There is the tap dance where you are always tapping and tapping over here trying to placate this person, placate that person, tapping… There is the shuffle. Are we shuffling? You know how that is…people shuffling and trying to make 'master' happy. Then there is the waltz. The optimal dance is the waltz. Gracefully moving around with different partners--in a smooth way. You are going to have to tango a little bit, you may find yourself tapping, you don't want to be shuffling, but if I can waltz then I go over here and waltz. Then the relationships are good. The tango will lead you to a waltz if you can do it without walking away with anger. I know the dance. Figure out what dance you are doing and when you are waltzing and everything is smooth--never ever, ever, ever, ever get too confident! Don't ever get too confident. The moment you start buddying up, that is the moment you give people liberties that you did not give them…

Kevin also warns aspiring SSAOs that once they secure senior-level positions, they should remain grounded in lieu of their power. He stated that once that senior-level position is achieved, people are seemingly more accommodating, overly attracted, and courteous. Kevin said that it is important to understand this dynamic and remember where you come from. He stated, “Ultimately you have to keep your feet planted solidly on the ground. I am blessed with a mother, a sister, a wife and children who remind me everyday from whence I have come.”

Kevin also shared a self-imposed rule that he created to assist him in being successful that he refers to as the 3/5 Rule. The 3/5 Rule is something that he relies on for guidance. He gives practical explanations below:

If I am in a job I need to be looking to ascend or do something different within 3 years or leave within 5 years. The 3/5 Rule. I get the job and I am a director. If I am a director for 3 years and that is all I am doing and I don't have additional responsibilities or I haven't done anything new or different, then in 5 years I need to be looking to do something else. Got this job and came in as an Associate VP and my clock started… A year later I became a vice president and my clock started again. What's going on? What am I doing? Am I getting new responsibilities? Ok then my clock starts again--you renew yourself. If you are
doing the same thing after five years then you better start looking unless things are such a way that it is good. And if it is good, you better be asking--What am I doing? How am I thinking? What is going on down the road? Because then you become static water... Whenever I'm asked a question from the President, I think 3 levels up--President, Board of Regents, Chair of the Board and 5 questions deep. Can I answer the next five questions that I think they are going to ask me? When there is a crisis situation, I want to think about five people wide: vice president of administration and finance, the provost, the lawyer, the vice president for government community relations, and the vice president for advancement... I need to think about those 5 people and 3 questions deep. What are they going to want to know? How do we respond? ...It's about discipline… I have to be disciplined every day I walk in here and everyday I leave. I'm in a fishbowl… Every move I make, everything I say, everything I do, I'm in a fishbowl. Think it through. Can't think out loud. Can't think out loud, so you got to think it through. It's discipline…

Participant Four: Lifting Kyle’s Voice

Social and Academic Experiences at PWIs

Kyle was very proud of his current institution and their reputation in the field as it relates to student affairs and preparing student affairs professionals in their graduate program. He conceptualized his role as the chief student affairs officer utilizing three components:

It's three fold really. As the chief student affairs officer, it really isn't any different from any other vice presidency... What changes it are the dynamics of the people that I work with every single day. Part of it is management of the student affairs division. Part of it is being a symbolic leader for people, either groups of people or for the university. The third would be an inspirer of ideas or direction of thought. You can call it almost scholarship if you want but it is a little different than that.

As Kyle talked about his role as a SSAO at his current institution, he communicated that he has a fantastic dean and assistant dean. He said that they are able to handle most of the issues that arise within the division. Kyle states:

I find myself spending a lot of time on ACPA and NASPA related things...trying to align our university in a way that keeps us learning and puts our graduates [student affairs graduates] in a position where they can be positive players in the
field when they leave. It is kind of aligning. It is sort of like the Yankees in a way. That is probably not a good analogy because it is probably a little too arrogant and I don't mean it that way but the Yankees are always trying and making sure they know how to be in the position to win. I am not talking about winning and losing, I'm talking about influencing. We are always trying and figuring out ways that we can influence the national agenda or advance opportunities for the students. So I devote a lot of time to that.

Early in his career, Kyle mentioned that mentors played a critical role in his development. He stated that the coaching and advice he received prepared him to take advantage of various opportunities down the road. He stated:

When I think about my entire career, it is about being around very strong leaders in the profession who provided opportunities for me to learn and see this wealth of stuff beyond just my job. They really convinced me very early on that it was a professional duty to provide back to the profession whether it is through programs or volunteer service... That advice paid off, every piece or every step of the way. It put me in a position to get another position that was the right one and aligned me not only for the next position, but for the one after that. So I was always one or two steps ahead of where I wanted to be based on the position that I had.

Kyle elaborated on his experiences with mentors and he shared stories outlining how five specific mentors have helped him to develop and grow. These mentors were student affairs professionals who were White males.

The first two mentors Kyle talked about provided him with guidance at his alma mater as an undergraduate student leader who was attempting to make career choices. Kyle stated, “When I expressed interest after serving as a RA [Resident Assistant], Student Government leader, and a host of other things, student athlete, they were the ones who coached me through the maze of getting into graduate school, articulated the importance of getting into graduate school, and what it would mean and what the profession meant.”
The third mentor Kyle talked about hired him after graduate school. This mentor is currently a Vice President at a large university. In talking about the influence this mentor had, Kyle stated:

He had 10 years in the field by that point. He was very well respected in ACPA and NASPA—very active in both of those professions. He dragged me along, along with the other newer professionals, to different commission meetings and activities like that. He also encouraged us to present and submit publications and to consider a doctorate one day so that we can advance through the field. [He also taught us] to serve our students and connect them to the profession as well. We all listened and as a result, we convinced other undergraduates to enter student affairs and get their graduate degree somewhere. He was the first coattail that I latched onto and he opened doors for me just by my association with him.

Kyle described his fourth mentor as being one of the most intelligent people he ever met. Kyle developed a mentoring relationship with him while he was working on his doctorate. He stated that his mentor eventually hired him to fill a recently developed position. Elaborating on what he learned from his mentor, Kyle stated that he helped him to develop in the areas of scholarly writing, recruitment strategies, and strategic thinking.

The last mentor Kyle talked about was a Vice President of Student Affairs whom one of the aforementioned mentors introduced him to. He stated that over the years, they would work on ACPA projects together. After about 10 years, a position opened up that Kyle applied for and subsequently secured. Kyle stated that his mentor was a fantastic role model, a great supervisor, a dedicated parent, and active within the professional associations.

As Kyle discussed the situations and people who have perceived him negatively due to him being a Black male, he stated that he doesn’t process it negatively. He said, “It’s just the burden or the responsibility we [African Americans] happen to carry. Carrying it as a responsibility and not as a burden, I think makes a big difference. I never
saw it as burdensome. I just saw it as an opportunity to really advance and breakdown barriers in avenues that maybe others could not.” As we discussed issues related to being a Black male at PWIs, Kyle described a couple additional challenges that he has been confronted with. Kyle stated that his experiences included times in which people have questioned his Black identity due to the way in which he speaks. He stated:

I knew that folks would say early on that I talked differently. Their reference would be that I didn't talk like the Black man on the street or on TV or slang or other things like that. It would be odd when I point out that I talk like my grandmother who was very Black and she talked like her father who was very Black who talked like his father who was very Black who talked like his father who was a slave. So I don't know where this language changed on me but I know that the language that I speak is the language of my ancestors. So when someone says that I'm thinking, I don't know what language you are talking about (laughing). I talk like my grandma and I talk like my father and he is the Blackest man I know. I just think that they made education very important…

Kyle shared that his Black identity has been scrutinized due to his mastery and use of the English language. This dynamic is consistent with arguments made by Kennedy (2008) who investigates racial betrayal and states that allegations of selling out are triggered by a wide range of actions—speaking White, describing oneself as multiracial, marrying a White person, acting White, and thinking White. Kyle stated that his mother and father were very Black—meaning that they were very proud Black people who despite the fact that they spoke proper English and placed a high value on education. His statement pertaining to speaking proper English yet being “very Black” is consistent with the point that Kennedy makes in his book. Kennedy (2008) argues that African Americans should identify a justified cause that extends beyond language prior to framing indictments about a person’s identity.
Kyle also talked about challenges that he is confronted with that are associated with the expectations of other African Americans. He shared how he responds to that challenge and how he frames his responsibility to assist other African Americans. Kyle stated:

There is the expectation from a career standpoint that I will be certain things for Black people and I buy into some of that. My foot is in the door but I am not enabling or accommodating. My foot is in the door knowing that it just takes a little bit of effort to come through the door, but I'm not going to push the door open for you. I'm going to say the door is right there, my foot is right in it, it is not locked, you are going to have to walk through it. I kind of say that to all students, all staff, all friends, you name it. Even cousins that sometimes have this sense of entitlement. I am careful not to get too caught up into that because it could tarnish my ability to be a mainstream Vice President on a predominately White campus. If I become too Black then I loose my emphasis, my ability to reach and even communicate with some students. So I can avoid and ride this avenue down the middle and swing these different ways. I have to be careful about that. But then it is not me anyway. I am not on the periphery by personality. I am kind of in the middle anyway and so it is a natural fit for me. But I have to be aware of that because I have other Black administrators who would expect for me to be natural affiliates of them just because I am Black--even though they have stupid ideas (laughing) or their ideas have ramifications that would be bad for our students or bad for the university or that we should be well past socially that I just can't buy into. So it is a challenge.

In response to Kyle’s statement related to becoming too Black, I probed and questioned if he ever had experienced situations in which African Americans criticized him as not being supportive or being a “sell-out.” Kyle communicated that there were times in which African Americans have been critical of him and questioned his Blackness. He stated:

I'm actually ok with that. I've been called a lot worse. I was taught sticks and stones may break your bones but names will never hurt you and I believe that. It's me who actually decides if I want to accept what you say about me or not and that's how I was raised. Regarding the sell-out side, I actually think it is who you are willing to listen to and who you are not. Whose opinion do I really value for what their saying in the context of the evaluation?
As I reflect on Kyle’s narratives related to becoming too Black, I am reminded of Dyson’s (2005) discussion of how we view our Black identity in relation to the dominant culture. He shares three strategies: (a) accidental Blackness—people who are Black by accident of birth; (b) incidental Blackness—people who are proud to be Black but don’t believe that race is nearly as important as it used to be; and (c) intentional Blackness—people who are proud of their Blackness and see it as central to their identity. It is not my intent to categorize Kyle, but his narratives related to being too Black and his self-identification of remaining “in the middle” is in alignment with Dyson’s description of accidental Blackness.

Experiences with Racism and Discrimination

As Kyle and I discussed what his experience has been like being a Black male working in predominately White spaces, he said that it was normal and simple. He also shared the following information as it relates to how people may perceive him:

People may wonder what else is in me, which confuses them and throws them off a little bit. I also happen to be Filipino and Irish so that throws folks off a little bit but they know that I am a person of color, a Black man… I get to use the benefit of distance when I want to have it and I can articulate a point of view when I want to. I can take a strong position on things without a lot of push back sometimes and I know that. But I also know that I have to be a little more careful or deliberate than I probably should.

Kyle also described some of the general experiences he has when he travels on and off campus. He explains:

You know I take off the tie and put on a pair of blue jeans and walk through Wal-Mart. I am a different person. But around this campus, I may be Dr. whatever, but I leave campus and I am a Black man. When I walk through the park that is right across the street from me, I can see people holding their purses a little differently. They may not know it, but that is a student that just two days ago, I may have waived at…but they don’t recognize me in a t-shirt and shorts walking through the park--so I am aware of that. Little subtle things that I may do: say
hello to children, shake their hands, get to their level, all to make myself available for people and to make deliberate efforts to break down some of those barriers because I know that I may be the first and only Black person someone sees maybe in their lifetime or at least until they get to college…that gives them anytime of the day. So I want to be at least a little different than the one they may see on TV or the one that they are worried about on the street corner.

Kyle’s conscious effort to break down barriers and change the way in which White people see him (and other African Americans) speaks to DuBois’ discussion on double consciousness. Dubois (1903) described Black Americans as possessing a double consciousness, always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others. Within this context, Kyle takes deliberate action to challenge the negative perceptions and stereotypes that White people have of African Americans.

When I asked Kyle if he has ever experienced racism or discrimination as a professional in higher education, he stated the following:

I can’t recall any one case where I have experienced direct racism that has faulted me or harbored me in anyway that I haven't been able to either react to it unknowingly or knowingly in a positive way. So I can't think of a story where something has been done that would have affected me in that manner.

Kyle stated that he has never been in a situation where someone has “called him out” because he was Black; however, he told a story about an incident as a graduate student that he perceived as racism and discrimination. He stated:

…but I do recall hands up against the car, guns drawn, being frisked because I fit the description as a graduate student at a university on the East coast. I do recall that very clearly and I wouldn't have been stopped if I were not Black. Call that profiling, call that racism, call that whatever you will, but it certainly fit that category and that reminded me early on that it could happen to me despite I have achieved some level of success. I was a graduate student you know. It is not like I was in prison or just been released or in an orange suit. I was in a beat up Pinto driving down a highway on my way back to campus and I'm stopped for fitting the description. I'm sure that the robber didn't race off in a beat up old Pinto (Laughing) but that was me and they questioned me and let me off on my way.

Kyle shared another experience with racism and discrimination that occurred off campus.
In addition to the story, he elaborated how he processes those instances when they occur.

He explains:

I recall times where I've been with friends walking into the restaurants and they would look at the two that I am with or the few that I'm with and say, ‘Table for two.’ I would say, ‘No, actually it was a table for three because there were three of us. Two of them but three of us.’ Those kinds of things. But I don't call those things necessarily deliberate acts against me. I'm positive there have been those, but how I perceived them or reacted to them probably pissed them off more because I didn't acknowledge them. I kind of have a blind eye to that and I think that's one of my greater faults. I will see that coming and say, ‘whatever’ and keep on going. That will probably piss you off because your coming at me thinking you might get me to react on the race card and I just move on like you are nobody. So it probably annoys folks more because I have a blind eye to it.

Kyle’s statement that he ignores and turns a “blind eye” to racism is worthy of discussion. Although he processes his lack of response as “one of his greater faults,” he also believes that ignoring it probably irritates people because they were unable to get him to react. Feagin (1994) states that African Americans who “turn a blind-eye” to racism as a protective defense for dealing with the accumulating impact of racism on their psyches and lives.

*Factors Salient to Their Success and/or Failure*

Kyle stated that the ability to be forward thinking has helped him to advance to the SSAO position. He also stated that his collaborative spirit and positive demeanor has assisted him in creating a healthy work environment across the student affairs division.

In sharing words of wisdom to African American males who aspire to be SSAOs, Kyle recommends that they “lose the bitterness and sense of entitlement” because it will get African Americans nowhere. He stated:

Because we [SSAOs] see it in our student body and we are so in tune with it right now. Students having this sense of entitlement, we see it coming long before it comes around the corner. We smell it. So if we smell it as African-American
practitioners, our colleagues smell it when we are using it as Black men. So we should lose the sense of entitlement and bitterness. No one will want to be around us if we are bitter and have this chip on our shoulder. We can have the chip, but just hide it under the jacket and use it as the means to finish the doctorate and to do good work.

Kyle perspective that African Americans should lose the sense of entitlement and bitterness is consistent with one of the responses to racism and discrimination that Feagin and Sikes (1994) coined resigned acceptance. Feagin and Sikes state that many African Americans do not address instances of racism when they occur because they are fearful of the negative impact that it would have on their job and how they will be perceived within that predominately White work setting.

Kyle also emphasized the importance of being able to speak to and connect with White people. He stated the following:

We have this ability to cross the line. Some of us with the same skin color can't cross the line. What I mean by that is if we talk to both black and white people, some of us can't. We have the ability to bring people together or to change the viewpoint of White society in a way that others can’t because we can talk the language. The gentleman on the street corner that I was referring to can't [talk the language]. He can do it by his actions, but I can do it by actions and words. I can inspire a group of people just by the stories I tell, the church that I go to, or the kids that I help, which sends a stronger signal across the room than anything else. So the method to this madness is recognizing that I have been given the tools to speak to this White community. There are many [African Americans] who could speak to the Black community much better than I. I have the ability to really speak to the White community, which then gives them the telephone to understand what the Black community is really saying. Only a few of us really can cross the line. We take crap from both sides, we really do, but that's the reward. You never get rewarded from one side or the other because you're a sellout here and you're a black man there, but you're the one holding the telephone line and you don't get rewarded for that you just know you get to do it.

Kyle feels as though his ability to connect and communicate with White people is a skill that has assisted him in being effective at PWIs. It is interesting because he attributes his ability to develop meaningful relationships and open communication lines with White people to being perceived in alignment with Dyson’s (2005) accidental Blackness
typology. Within this context, Kyle is able to connect with White people particularly well at PWIs because they perceive his Blackness as less central to his identity—he is a man, not a Black man.

*Participant Five: Lifting Marshall’s Voice*

*Social and Academic Experiences*

Marshall stated that he views the role of the Chief Student Affairs Officer as primarily an advocate for students and student issues within an administration. He believes that students should be the guiding principle and that it is his responsibility to be informed on student issues and concerns. In addition, he stated that his job is to make sure that the programs that he oversees are really student focused and designed in such a way as to help create an environment that is conducive for student learning and development.

In addition to his role as a Chief Student Affairs Officer, Marshall also holds a senior-level academic administrator position at his current university. Within that context, Marshall feels as though his dual title positions him to foster greater collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs. He communicated that the dual approach has worked very well at his institution. It was noted that he treats the units as one and holds combined staff meetings. As Marshall continued to expand on his roles, he stated that he sees his primary administrative functions as three-fold: visioning, budgeting, and personnel selection.

As we discussed people and situations that stood out in Marshall’s career, he noted that he was seemingly of a different generation than I. Marshall is much older than me and stated that he attended a HBCU in the south that was well grounded in issues of
racism and discrimination. Marshall explained that the HBCU was intentional and strategic about preparing African Americans to work in predominately White spaces. He stated:

While I was at that university in the South there was a program called the Rocket Fellow Foundation and they went to HBCUs and were looking for [African American] students who were graduating. They wanted to send us to a small liberal arts school for a year to get us prepared so that we can go to PWIs to eventually be faculty members. We were schooled in the need to advance Blacks in higher education and that program was trying to do that. I mention that because I think that experience has kind of imprinted my career… I got that experience at the historically White college and eventually ended up attending a PWI in the Midwest. I was part of the first class of African American students who the university admitted to their Ph.D. program. It was always kind of imprinted on me that we [African Americans] kind of had a role to play in terms of trying to trail blaze to make sure that we open up higher education. Having been brought up in the South, we understood issues of racism and race, but at the same time, that did not limit us in terms of our aspirations.

Upon becoming a professional, Marshall’s commitment to building relationships with and uplifting other African Americans was still strong. He stated that he accepted his first professional position because the university had a group of African American faculty who he felt would make excellent mentors and role models. The emphasis that Marshall places on his Black identity is consistent with Dyson’s (2005) intentional Blackness typology. African Americans who fit this typology are proud of their Blackness and understand that they are in a culture that is still plagued by racism. Dyson states that African Americans who favor the strategy of intentional Blackness join people like Martin Luther King, Jr., Jesse Jackson, Ella Baker, Malcolm X and a host of others.

Marshall explained that upon taking his first job, he became heavily involved in the Black Faculty and Administrators Association at that PWI. He elaborated about his involvement in the organization:

They were a bunch of older African American men who were full professors who
kind of took me under their wing and allowed me to hang around with them to learn the politics of a university and how you can bring about change and confront the administration, but do it in a way that you can maintain creditability. I got heavily involved in that. Then probably three or four years after being there, I became President of that organization. I mention that because that was the root that led me to be seen as visible within the university administration. I think that was one of the things that kind of led people to eventually ask me to serve in certain kinds of roles. I was always pretty visible within the institution, in terms of confronting the institution about issues of race, issues of discrimination, but we did it in such a way that we weren't labeled or ostracized. In looking back, I think it was some of those things that led some of the people later in administration to ask me to do some of those things that ultimately led me to the track in terms of becoming a VP.

Marshall shared that he was provided an opportunity to gain experience as a senior-level academic administrator when an African American male in the position took a leave of absence for a year. After that individual left, Marshall eventually secured that position full-time. Later in his career, another opportunity presented itself after the Black students organized a sit-in and took over the administration building at a PWI he worked for. The situation that prompted the sit-in involved a number of incidents that piled up to the point where a group of Black students decided to go behind closed doors with senior administration to discuss a list of grievances. After the students felt they were not being taken seriously, students from a variety of backgrounds “took over” the administration building and refused to leave for over a week, only after they met with the President and other senior administrators to discuss a list of demands. As a result of this conflict, Marshall was appointed to a special position that functioned as a Chief Diversity Officer. He explained:

The relationship between the [African American] students and the administration had broken down and they wanted to try to restore some of those relationships while making sure the university made good on the list of demands that they promised to give to students. So, I was asked to come in for two years to do that. In retrospect, I think it was some of my early visibility with the Black faculty and my involvement with Black students that led them to ask me to do this. That kind
Marshall continued to seize opportunities as senior-level administrative positions became vacant at the PWI he worked at. He stated that the things that stand out, when he reflects on his career, are his various mentors, being active in the Black Faculty and Staff organizations, confronting administration in a strategic manner, and being a strong advocate for students. Marshall admitted that his experience at PWIs has been a bit draining, but stated that he accepts it as part of the territory when you are “trying to blaze up trails and fight some things.”

Marshall stated that he would use four words to summarize his career: focused, strategic, vigilant and bold. When he talked about being focused, he said that he has always tried to be a person that has an agenda. He clarified that he wasn’t referring to a personal agenda and explained further:

I think that it was important for me in every role that I have been in to eventually figure out what are the two or three things that I think I would like to see in this organization… Those things are always in the back of mind and that is what I mean by focus. Now, I always have an agenda, not a personal agenda. A lot of the time, it is an organization agenda. I focus on that until I achieve it. Even when there are set backs, all I do is go back and re-strategize and come back at it again. As I look back over some things, eventually, the goal was achieved. That is what I mean by focus.

Marshall provided an example of what he meant by strategic and cited the many times he had to go back and regroup after failing to get the senior administration to move on a particular issue. He was vigilant in that he meticulously scanned the environment and identified the key players. As he explained what he meant by bold, he stated that African Americans face unique burdens at PWIs. He stated:

One of the things I found is that when you are in a position like this and you are an African American, you are going to be tested at times. People will test to see whether or not you are bold and whether or not you will just shrivel in the
background. So there are times when you have to stand up. First of all, you have to get your principles in order. There are certain lines that I won’t cross and certain things that I won’t do. Sometimes you just have to stand up even if it means that you might lose your job. My own view is that sometimes to be effective, one has to be bold and you have to have some sense about it. That’s what I mean by bold and there have been a couple of instances where I have had to do that.

In reflecting on his career, Marshall admits that many people describe him as driven due to his work habits that include putting a lot of hours in. As he attempted to explain why he works extremely hard, he described his work as his “ministry.” He stated:

I am not talking about evangelizing… I am a Christian and sometimes if you are a Christian, you understand the relationship between your Christianity and your job. I see this really as a ministry--my calling. That has also been something that has allowed me to stay and to deal with some of the issues that I have had to deal with… I am not evangelizing, but I think it has really been a fight for justice and equality for all students during my time here at this institution and there has been a need to do that. When I use it in this sense, it is really bringing about justice and equality and making sure that people’s needs are being met. And it is in that context I use it.

Experiences with and Response to Racism and Discrimination

As we began to talk specifically about how his Black maleness influenced his experiences, Marshall described his career at working at PWIs as “fun.” He attributes his ability to frame his experiences positively as to having a clear understanding of what he was getting into before he entered the space. He said:

I knew there were challenges, and my parents and others taught us early how to recognize racism and discrimination and to not be floored by it. We also learned during the Civil Rights Movement strategies in which one needs to employ to deal with those kinds of issues. So I am able to recognize racism, anticipate it, expect it in some circles, and then to move on. I haven’t really been personally floored by any of those kinds of things up until this point.

As we discussed the lack of African Americans employed in the field of student affairs, Marshall stated that he believes that we have to keep pushing if progress is to be made.
He also elaborated on what he believed to be a reluctance on the behalf of administrators of color and White administrators to hire other people of color. He said:

People of color complain within the institution about the lack of diversity but when they get into roles themselves and have the ability to do something about it, they don’t always take the opportunity. So, I push on both fronts. I push it with people of color and Whites who are my directors. I’ll have private conversations with them [African American administrators] and say, ‘look you have opportunities to do diversity too and I don’t want to see you in a room talking to White people about this [not hiring other people of color], when you are not taking the opportunity yourself.’ I also observed that many times people of color have been reluctant to bring other people of color into high positions within their units. But then you look on the other side [with White administrators], you tend see that much more rapid. So, I am pushing in both dimensions.

I continued to probe into why Marshall felt that African Americans were reluctant to hire other African Americans and he provided a couple of reasons why this occurs based upon his experience. He stated:

I think we’re not as comfortable as we ought and we think that other people will judge us negatively. Let’s say that I am a VP for Student Affairs and I have an Associate VP, why do I not have a Black Associate VP? I’ll be frank with you, one of the things I ended up doing after struggling with that and thinking about that, I said I was going to do that before I ended my career. So the first person that I brought in was a white person, a white male, then I brought in a Latino, and then the last person I brought in was an African American. I think that we are kind of uncomfortable. Sometimes I think we end up diversifying in other areas, then leaving our own area not covered. That is what I have seen some African Americans do, bring in people from all other groups. That’s fine but then you don’t do as much for your own group. I think that there is also the belief that we would be judged negatively by the White power structure if we do that. Those are some of the reasons I think. But I think we need to be conscious of it, but then bold enough to do it in some cases.

Marshall’s perception that African Americans who work at PWIs are sometimes reluctant to hire other African Americans in positions with considerable authority is very interesting. It is his belief that they are fearful of how they will be perceived by their White colleagues at PWIs. This dynamic is in alignment with the double consciousness
struggle that many African Americans experiences (Dubois, 1903). It is also in alignment with Dyson’s (1996) argument that when some African Americans achieve a certain degree of social status, they consciously or unconsciously adopt self-defeating habits that ultimately block the continued progress of other African Americans that follow. Within this self-defeating context, African Americans with hiring authority fail to recruit and hire qualified African Americans in position of power at PWIs to prove to their White colleagues that they are objective, color-blind, or both.

Marshal also stated that he experienced pressure to disassociate or modify his relationships with other African Americans once he secured a senior-level administrative post. This pressure came from African American and White senior-level officials at the PWI he worked at. Marshall stated that he “privately laughed” at the advice. I probed and asked him to elaborate on why he was given that advice and he stated the following:

Well I think his view was probably I needed to spread myself around and not be seen as just dealing with Black issues or Black people and Black causes. This same kind of comment was made by a very high-level administrator, a White administrator, and this person told me that I’m now Vice President and I shouldn’t act as if I was “a Black Vice President.” The comment was made in reference to the fact that I had a history of really being close to the Black student alliance… I think he generally thought that maybe I needed to expand myself. But I just listened to him, thought about what I heard him saying, and I think I got the point. But what he didn’t know was that I interact with a lot of student groups. Because I was Black and now Vice President, I was not going to diminish my interaction with them just because I’m Vice President and also Black. I also have this view… I have also seen in higher education that if one is not careful, particularly as a Black individual, is that whites will push you to disassociate from your people. One of the worse things that can happen, this is my view, to a Black administrator, and I saw this with some of my colleagues earlier, is you get in these positions, they will use you and then they will dump you and you can’t even go back to your own people. I made a commitment a long time ago that that would never happen to me. My own personal view is that one can be associated very much with your own people, but that doesn’t diminish the fact that you can associate with all people. So I am very comfortable and I spend a lot of time still in my position making sure that I interact with Black groups on campus, Black faculty and administrators groups, and the Black student alliance. I just want to
make sure that I remain comfortable because I have seen people that if you don’t after a while, then what you will end up finding is that you end up uncomfortable even among your own people. And to me that is a very dangerous signal.

Marshall communicated that the majority of his experiences with racism and discrimination at PWIs have been more subtle than blatant. He stated that there were many times in his career where he felt that he was left out of meetings due to being Black and that there were discussions that his White colleagues didn’t want him to participate in. He shared a few subtle examples, his responses in those situations, and his general thought process:

Sometimes in meetings, you can read verbal expressions where people make comments that one might call racist or not sensitive and I have seen those. But that brings up an interesting point. One of the things that I have said to some of my colleagues is that I have been in meetings where people have said some things that border on racism. I have had two responses and these have been strategic. At some point, I have chosen not to say anything in order for the conversation to fully develop. Therefore, that would give me an opportunity to learn and then to figure out later what I might need to do to navigate the environment and then there have been other times where some things have come up and I confronted it. This is part of a strategy, you might not agree with it, but I think sometimes when things are unfolding, it is sometimes wise to sit back and allow it to unfold. Sometimes you can say things too quickly and shut it down. Whatever is going to occur is going to occur anyway and then you have no idea of what the dynamics are. So, that has been some of my experiences, where comments have been made and I just allow it to play out and then see who it is coming from and how people respond to it. That can give me some ideas of what I might need to do later.

As Marshall summarized his experiences and the challenges of being Black male working at a PWI, he reinforced the importance of being “secure in his skin.” He stated that his Black identity is extremely important to him, but clarified that it didn’t prevent him from being effective in his role or treating people fairly.

*Factors Salient to Their Success and/or Failure*

There are a variety of factors that Marshall identified as being critical to his
ability to advance in the SSAO role at a PWI, and he provided advice to other African American males who aspire to do secure similar roles. Marshall was adamant about the importance of remaining connected to the Black community within and outside of the walls of the academy. He said, “I think that is important for a couple of reasons. Well for one, it is a good thing to do. But I also think that it gives you some protection against what the administration might choose to do you or not do to you if you are not community connected. I would be repeating myself but I really do want to stress to avoid allowing anyone to distance you from your people. To me that is very very important.”

Marshall continued to elaborate on the importance of remaining connected to a broad range of African Americans and stated that he also relies on the individuals within his network to serve as a sounding board when he needs to “emote.” In addition, Marshall states that he sometimes requests honest feedback from his confidants in regard to his performance and/or decisions. He said, “If they feel that I am messing up, they will tell me.”

Marshall holds that the way in which he views himself, coupled with the fact that he is very secure in his identity as a Black male, has helped him to overcome issues of racism and discrimination. He said, “Don't let anyone say you shouldn't be Black or that you shouldn't be comfortable being a Black male.” Marshall viewed strategy of intentional Blackness appeared to assist him as he navigated his career.

As he compared African Americans within his generation to younger African Americans of recent generations, he noted some distinct differences. He explained that he has noticed that some young African American professionals and college students have a difficult time processing and responding to racism and discrimination. He
attributes some of the challenges to their generation and the type of environment that they grew up in.

They think the world is fair. Things are coming at them and they don't know how to properly label it [racism and discrimination]. They end up internalizing things that they really should be externalized. Being secure in my own identity as a Black male, knowing how racism and discrimination works, and then being able to talk about it has helped me.

I probed further into his perception that younger African Americans tend to internalize racism and discrimination and he elaborated. Marshall said that he believed that African Americans need to engage in more “cross-generational talk,” so African American elders can share their knowledge with the “new generation.” He stated:

There are some people who disbelieve that racism and discrimination is out there anymore. So they just go out there and operate. These are Black people operating in a world as if it doesn't happen. It is happening to them, but because they believe it shouldn't happen, they end up just blaming themselves for what is going on. Back up and look at the dynamics and maybe see that things are going on because of their race, gender, or whatever... They end up being really frustrated because they think it is them totally when in fact there are some things occurring to them in their environment that is causing the problem. That's what I mean… I can recognize racism. I’m always looking for it and I’m not thrown by it when it occurs.

Marshall stated that his integrity, commitment to justice and equality for all, ability to work with all people, and his persistence have been crucial in his ability to advance his career. In emphasizing the importance of integrity, he stated:

I just think you have to have a set of principles. You have to be viewed by people as credible. If you are not viewed as credible in addition to however talented you might be, your ability to collaborate and to move the system and to build relationships [will be hindered]. In a role like this you have to interact with people, you have to be seen by them as credible, trustworthy, and those kinds of things in order to move things a long. You can push the system and people don't mind you fighting them…but if they think you lack integrity then you can't move. So I put that at the top of the list.

Marshall provided some specific words of wisdom to African American males who aspire
to be SSAOs at PWIs. The first thing he focused on was building a “broad base” of experiences. He said that one of the things that he did early in his career is get experience with the academic side of the institution. Marshall said, “It helped me tremendously. If it is possible to get a faculty rank, also a faculty appointment, along with the VP slot, to me that enhances your credibility within the academic community.”

Marshall also stated that he advises African American men to “build up” their academic credentials. He said:

Try to make sure that you get your academic credentials in order. What is going to be important in doing that is for you to start publishing. That's the other thing that I push. If you are interested in being a VP of Student Affairs try to do some writing to build up your academic credentials. Try to get a broad range of experiences. One of the things that I have found out in looking back over my career is that things that I thought were not that important, they have been things that have helped me later in my further development.

Marshall shared that he believed that mentoring could assist with the recruitment, retention, and success of African American males in student affairs. He said:

It seems that more and more African American females are being elevated and that needs to happen, but there also needs to be some recognition that in some circles, the Brothers need some real attention. There needs to be an institutional commitment to advance it… I and others who are in positions like me, we need to push this as an area and make sure we bring in Brothers and Sisters, and make sure that we mentor them… While we are mentoring I think that we need to do some more cross-generational talk. There are some local and national examples of where Brothers have self-destructed. They have been in positions and have found themselves in compromising positions, which has blown their career and a lot of other things. I think we need to do more candid talking behind closed doors about some of the vulnerabilities that we, as African American males, face and how we can reduce the temptation in terms of succumbing to some of those things that really end up derailing some of our careers. That's a huge one on my list.
Participant Six: Lifting Nathan’s Voice

Social and Academic Experiences

Although Nathan has always worked in higher education administration, he worked in an administrative unit outside of the division of student affairs for several years. Nathan stated that his experience working in that unit was becoming increasingly stressful and that he was beginning to get burned out. He attributed his dissatisfaction to his feeling that he was in a thankless position. He also stated that he wanted a change of pace, where he could make more contributions to the university. Consequently, Nathan went back to school, secured his doctorate, and eventually transitioned into student affairs.

In conceptualizing his role as a Chief Student Affairs Officer, Nathan discussed in detail the 19 departments that fall under the umbrella of the student affairs division that he leads. He stated that he spends nearly 70 percent of his time with budget management and personnel management responsibilities. Nathan explained that he is the catalyst for securing resources from the general administration, and he has to be sure that proper revenue projections have been made from his revenue-generating areas within the division. As it relates to personnel management, he stated that his job is to make sure that everyone in his division works effectively together.

Nathan explained that he has worked closely with development officers on campus because has been heavily involved in managing new construction and renovation projects that total in excess 400 million dollars. He stated:

Development is more and more part of our [student affairs] work. One of the goals that I have in the performance goals of all my departments is that they will each write a grant or get funds each year... I am sending them to fundraising
activities, workshops, seminars, etc. A couple of them have gone to CASE (Counsel for Advancement and Support of Education). I have been through that training. I used to be a fundraiser and a grant writer so I have some experience in that, but I just don’t have time to do it now.

Nathan spoke passionately about the project management responsibilities. He stated that he has built close to 10 buildings throughout his career. Nathan explained that he proud of his reputation of being a tough negotiator with contractors. He said:

When we fall behind budget, I say [to the contractors] that you are going to have to get back up to speed. If you spend more money than is allowed, then that’s on you… I know how contractors work. They are always trying to squeeze out every dime they can because that helps their profit margin. I’m here to squeeze the other way to retain as much money as possible because maybe I can add-on.

In summarizing his career, Nathan stated, “It has been rocky at times and it has been smooth sailing at times, but overall, I think it’s been a very beneficial career.”

Nathan said that across the country, he has assembled a legion of friends who serve as a network of support. As he provided examples of how he utilizes his network, he also shared his philosophy on these types of friendships. He said:

We exchange ideas without any type of judgment and if I don’t have knowledge about something, I call one of my friends who has a better expertise... I am designing a course right now and I have about three friends, both White and of color, who are helping me to design this course because they taught it for years. So that is a real important thing. You have to have friends. You have to have at least five and no more than ten. If you have at least five and under ten, you are in good shape. If you have over ten real good friends, you probably have too many. If you have less than five, then you need to find some more because they really act as your peer mentors. Everybody has an expertise that another person doesn’t have. If I have some expertise, they call me on... We do that for each other because it helps us to survive and when you get to places like NASPA, you talk to people you really can trust. Over the years, you know who you really can trust and you know who you can’t trust.

Nathan reflected on the gratifying aspects of his role as an SSAO and he stated the following:
One of the best things that I think you can do is to help students to graduate who normally wouldn’t graduate. I’ve always had a special responsibility to help students of color... Here I am the only person above the Dean’s level who is either African American or Latino. We have one other person of color but aside from that--I’m it. So besides all of my other responsibilities, it kind of falls on me to represent the students and the staff of color at the meetings. That’s good and bad... I work with kids that normally might not be able to graduate. That is probably the most rewarding thing I do... I think that I have changed some lives of some people who were about to drop out or go back to wherever they were from. They have persevered and I have directed them in the right way. These students have graduated. Some of them are lawyers.

Nathan shared that he is a member of a Historically Black Fraternity and he has always been committed to assisting Black males in their development:

Being a fraternity man you understand that the sisters got a lot better system of survival. They talk to each other. Black males are very isolated and they don’t show their feelings and they present this gruff exterior. But they are really scared inside. Unfortunately, they got this, what Frantz Fanon would call, colonized mentality. In fact, we just had a meeting talking about the Presidential Election and this student, African American male, actually said that we are a handicapped race and that’s why we will never be as successful. I said that I think you have to check that out. The only oppressor that you have is yourself. If you think you are handicapped, you are going to be handicapped. Not because the outside society is telling you that... but you are absorbing and you are reflecting that upon yourself. I told him that I don’t feel that way. I said I’m not oppressed. I know I have extra difficulties and barriers that I need to navigate. But I just jump a little higher, I run a little faster, and I have to be a little smarter. That is the way you beat the system.

During his career, Nathan recalled a number of challenges he has been confronted with at PWIs. He stated that he has often been second-guessed and he attributes it to him being an African American male. He said:

That’s one thing. As a person of color, people always challenge you because they don’t really think that you have the expertise. They don’t understand your knowledge base. They think that you are coming into a position because you are a person of color and really you are coming into the position in spite of being a person of color. Because you had to jump through more hoops and run around and be a little bit more nicer to people and make sure you cross your t’s and dot your i’s.
Nathan went on to state that he has had to deal with innuendos from White staff members and has had times in which he had to fire White staff members due to their refusal to follow his directives. Nathan believes that African American leaders have increased expectations as it relates to work performance. He said:

We [African Americans] have a different style. I want certain things in a certain manner and they may have a style of bringing it in another manner. I said I understand what you are doing but I need more information. Sometimes they ask, ‘Well why don’t you accept the information I’ve given?’ I say, ‘Because it is not substantial enough.’ I just had a conversation this morning about that before you came in. The woman that reports to me said she talked to somebody in admissions and they said that it was ok. I just said it’s not to MY satisfaction and the last time I checked, you are not working in admissions. That’s the way they challenge you and it is always a little challenge. She said, ‘I checked with the director of admissions and they said it’s ok.’ Well, do you know why? It’s because if it goes wrong, they are not on the line, my behind is in the sling and you are. Folks are good for saying, ‘He said it was ok.’ That’s my responsibility. Be it as it may, sometimes I have to go to a zero sum game and say this is a non-negotiable. I don’t do it often but I have to say this is a non-negotiable item and this is the way I want it.

Experiences with and Response to Racism and Discrimination

Nathan stated that there have been times in his career when he felt that he was discriminated against while attempting to compete for positions at PWIs. He shared a story that outlines a specific incident and his response. Nathan explained:

I had one particular instance where I had to sue my institution to get my position. I was an Associate Director and I was applying for the Directorship. The Director had left and recommended me for the position. They said if you are an acting Director, then you can’t apply for the position. So I said fine, I will stay in my current position and I will apply. I applied and jumped through all the hoops and everything. There were two finalists for the position, myself and a Director from a community college. The Dean at the time who was a woman of color, not African American, decided that neither one of us were qualified and wanted to re-open the search. I disagreed with her. I came in and said that you need to make a decision. You have two qualified candidates, there was a search committee that said we were qualified, and I would hope that you would make a decision on that. I said hopefully you will make a decision on my behalf, but if not, I think a decision has to be made. She didn’t want to do that so I sued them for racial discrimination.
Nathan stated that he followed all the proper procedures outlined by the university, including filing a grievance internally at the Human Resources Office. After he submitted all the necessary paperwork, he was told by the campus police that the Human Resources Office was broken into over the weekend and the paperwork was stolen.

Nathan elaborates:

On that Monday they came and questioned me about the paperwork that was stolen and the police came to my office and asked, ‘Do you know anything about the paperwork?’ I said, ‘I didn’t know until you told me.’ The policeman asked, ‘Where were you?’ I said, ‘No, No, No. Before we get into these questions, are you accusing me of something? Because if so, I will just call my attorney and you can talk to him... If you want to be accusatory or you want to make charges against me than do that... and I will start defamation charges on you because you are influencing my professional image if you are making these charges without any type of evidence.’

Nathan explained that the campus police began to change their positioning with him as they asked him further questions. He told them:

Before you guys leave you better look for somebody who has keys to that office. It’s a locked office... You guys know that and you know I don’t have access to that. You need to check upstairs where there are people who have keys to that office. They kind of looked at each other... I asked, ‘Anymore questions gentlemen?’ They said, ‘Oh, no-no-no.’ I never heard another peep from them.

As Nathan reflected on his response to the campus police, he explained that he directly addresses incidents of racism and discrimination when they occur to him. Feagin and Sikes (1994) categorize Nathan’s general response as active confrontation. Within the context of active confrontation, African Americans confront White racists verbally. He said:

I put people in check pretty quickly. I don’t let anyone come and negatively influence my professional reputation. Unfortunately, as people of color and as spiritual people, we do things probably too honestly and that puts us sometimes at a disadvantage for some ruthless individuals who have no ethical standards. But I always have in the back of my mind, The Prince by Machiavelli and if I have to
go into a Machiavellian type of mode, I can very easily. I try not to… I am raised just like many of the people in my generation. I come from the hood… I had to jump over drug addicts and alcoholics to get to high school, so I have no problem dealing with folks. That’s not a question. But I try not to go into survival mode because then things can bring out things that are not very good. That is an unpleasant part of my personality.

Nathan told the rest of the story, and he explained that an executive administrator within the institution met with him and assured him that there would be a full internal investigation, and that his case would be heard by an impartial panel. Nathan agreed to hold off with pursuing a lawsuit and it was determined that a decision should have been made to hire one of the two candidates. The panel also concluded that there were some illegal activities that occurred in regard to his grievance case. Nathan was also appointed as the Director. After the supportive executive administrator left, Nathan left the university. He said, “When he left, I really didn’t have any support at that level. Everybody always looked at me with a jaundice eye because they knew that the only reason that I got the job is because I was going to sue them. Even though it was fair.”

Nathan’s choice to actively resist racism ultimately had a negative impact on his ability to advance at that particular PWI—causing him to leave the institution. This dynamic is consistent with the literature that points out the potential ramifications of reacting aggressively to racism. Feagin and Sikes (1994) state that many African Americans who actively confront racism are labeled as trouble-makers and are ostracized in their predominately White work settings.

**Factors Salient to Their Success and/or Failure**

Nathan attributed his success to a number of skills that he possesses. He stated that his proficiency in project management, budget management, information technology,
and statistics have helped him to effectively advance and perform in his career. Nathan also said that strong interpersonal skills are needed to be able to handle conflicts and establish collaborative relationships.

In addition to his role as a SSAO, Nathan is also a faculty member. He elaborated on how he feels that has benefited him:

Faculty members are the key, that’s why I have always taught. I am in the School of Education. I go to the department meetings and I’m one of their peers. When they have a problem, they call me up. Not as a SSAO, but as their fellow professor. It gives you professional expertise--academic expertise. You have to be looked at as a peer. The central part of any university is instruction, so I recommend that everyone teach at least one course a semester or one course a year. Always upgrade your academic expertise and keep up because that’s how faculty will respect you... When I’m talking to a Dean, they don’t care that I am a SSAO, they have their own budget and they have their own school. But I am also an Associate Professor so they listen to me a little bit closer. That surprised me but that’s very true. You need to have that academic expertise.

Nathan talked about the importance of mentoring at different points throughout the interview. He said, “You should have a mentor group of people of color and not of color who can help you through this process.” Nathan’s emphasis on the importance of mentoring is in alignment with a study conducted by Holmes (2004) who found that African American female presidents identified personal and professional mentors as critical their development.

Nathan has mentored students and young professionals throughout his career—especially African American males. He said that it was an African American male President who gave him an opportunity and assisted him to transition into student affairs. He stated:

He gave me a break so I told him that if I came, part of my position would be to make sure that he looked as good as possible. I did everything that I could at 130%... I was there late, I came early, I volunteered for additional activities, and I designed programs for him because my job was to make him look good. Then he
told me one day that it’s time for me to leave. He just came in and said, ‘You still here?’ He said, you know you should be a Vice President somewhere. You need to work on that.’ I said, ‘yes sir.’ So my job was to get out of there because I could no longer learn at that level. He basically told me that it was time to run my own shop. He said that someone once told him the same thing… You need a validation point and that’s where mentors come in. You need somebody who has been through what you are going through, to kind of lead you through. So the light you see in the tunnel is not a train. I try to do that with other folks.

Nathan provided other words of wisdom to African American males who aspire to be SSAOs at PWIs. He said that he has seen people lose $175,000 jobs because they were doing things that they shouldn’t have. He warned, “You are always under the microscope. When you think you are not under the microscope--you are. People are watching your every move so you have to be Mother Theresa while you are in there. He also reinforced the importance of continued professional development and recommended leadership programs that are organized by professional associations like NASPA. He referenced the Millennium Leadership Institute that is coordinated by the Association of American Colleges and University (AACU). He said, “Basically what it does is train you to be a President but the same skills you need for President, you need as a SSAO. The only difference is development work, which Presidents do a lot. But the politics are very similar. You just have to do it on a more global basis.” Jackson’s (2002) research is consistent with Nathan’s recommendation that African Americans should engage in professional development activities that will assist them in gaining extensive leadership skills.

Nathan also stated that his understanding of White people has informed his actions at PWIs. He stated:

I think candidly that I understand White folks better than White folks do. I employ W.E.B. DuBois’ theory of double-consciousness... I understand much of the way the majority population thinks and the way folks of color think. I think
that has helped me because I can always analyze things from both sides of the coin. So if I’m in a meeting, most of the philosophies that I come up with basically come from the majority mindset. I am thinking the way that White folks think because that is the way 80% of my people [in the Student Affairs Division] and 80% of the students are thinking. And then I always make sure that I am not doing any harm to populations of color. I always take that into account. I try to employ that rationale of double consciousness.

**Participant Seven: Lifting Nelson’s Voice**

**Social and Academic Experiences**

Nelson entered the Student Affairs profession after deciding that he did not want to pursue his previous career choice as a high school English teacher. He said that he watched his friends have “tons of fun” working in residence life and grew more interested in becoming a student affairs practitioner. After making the transition into student affairs, he held a variety of positions with increasing responsibility. Nelson was retired at the time of this interview. Over the course of his career, he served as a Chief Student Affairs Officer and faculty member at three different PWIs.

Nelson spoke passionately about his interactions with faculty, staff, students, and parents whom he has encountered over the duration of his career. As he reflected on his work, he proudly showed me a variety of pictures, cards, awards, and small gifts throughout his office. He said:

All the things you see around here have a history to them and most of it has to do with working with students. I decided that I wanted to make an impact on someone’s life and so that has been my goal in all of my positions… I have lots of stories to tell you about making an impact on people's lives. I still get notes and pictures. I got a parent who writes me constantly about his daughter. She graduated about 10 years ago and he has become one of my friends. Those kinds of things sustain me…

There is a poem that I use quite often whenever I give a speech and the last stanza is, "and when my life on earth is done it will be final plea that someone, somewhere think or say you made a difference to me." That's what I see as my
role. To make a difference in someone's life. To help them see that the road could be crooked but it straightens out after a while. That all the things that you are talking about are not new things. They have happened to lots of people and they have made it through. To encourage and to make people feel empowered. To make them feel that they have the ability to do certain things and to also realize that there are some things that they won't be able to do. So I see a big part of my role in all that I have done and all that I am trying to do is to encourage people to believe in themselves and to admit their fears and work their way through them. You don't have to work through them alone because there are people like me who will sit down and talk with you. But don't think I am going to praise you every minute.

Nelson also stated that he developed strong relationships with faculty, staff, and students while functioning as a SSAO. He explained:

I very rarely say no to someone who wants to talk with me. Be it a staff member or a student and I think I have developed a reputation on campus of ‘Go to Nelson, you can talk to him.’ I've had faculty members come in and I've had guys who work down at the physical plant come in to talk with me or give me a call or stop by the house. I think that people see me as someone they can trust. I feel good about that because I think that is a big part of who I am--being honest and at the same time being helpful or just listening. No answers at all--just listening. I always say that God gave us two ears and one mouth and that is because He wants us to listen.

Nelson communicated that being visible and developing meaningful relationships occupied a significant portion of his time as a SSAO. He shared that he regularly attended student and staff events, visited the residence halls, and figured out creative ways to recognize people publicly. Nelson also thought it was important to develop relationships with faculty members on campus. He shared a story of how he “broke the ice” with a group of faculty members. He explained:

At lunch time, I would go over to the little formal room where there were two round tables among the other tables and they called them the community tables… What happened was the faculty sort of took over those two tables and so I decided that I was going to go and become part of that group. So I got there a little bit early and got my seat and I did that several times and sort of broke the circle and broke the ice. People found out that I did have something to say and that I did know more than things related to student affairs. They found out that I did know something about opera and I did know something about sustainability and those
kinds of things. It helped other people see me as someone who is an intellectual in addition to being an administrator.

As Nelson continued to reflect on his career, he shared a variety of stories that highlighted the value that he placed on interpersonal relationships, putting people first, and helping people to develop. He shared a story about an exchange that he had with a White student who had never had a personal interaction with an African American prior to meeting Nelson. As Nelson recalls the story, he reads an excerpt from his unpublished book manuscript. He said:

I've enjoyed working in predominately White colleges and universities because I believe that I've helped transform people. There's a short story in the book that I am writing about an interaction with a student at a university I worked for. I was a resident director at the time and I was told by this student that I was the first Black person that he had ever knew. He saw a Black person, but he never knew a Black person...

[Reading from his unpublished book] On my residence hall floor I became very close and I still am even today to many of the students. Many were natives and came from very poor farm families in juxtaposition with the rich out of state students and with a Black residence hall director, there was a lot of learning to take place. After developing a relationship with many of the students it was surprising to hear from many of them that I was the first Black person that they ever really knew. One student from a remote town asked me if he could touch my hair. He had always been fascinated by Black people's hair—so I let him. He touched it and said, ‘Wow, its just like touching pubis [pubic hair].’ Should I have been offended? I was not because I felt like ahhh, here is a chance to change someone's thinking for life. We did have many conversations about it and I told him that if he had said that to some other African American, they may not have been as kind as I was. He was embarrassed afterwards. I said ‘my talking to you is not to embarrass you but to help teach you and to help you learn those things that you should or should not do or say.’

The White student’s comment that Nelson’s hair felt like pubic hair can be characterized as a racial microaggression and attributed to the student’s ignorance. Even though Nelson seemingly subjected himself to an unpleasant interaction, he processed the situation as an opportunity to educate the White student so that he could have more
positive interactions with African Americans in the future.

Nelson also explained that he has served as a mentor to young Black males at PWIs. He described a mentoring group that he participated in:

One of the things that I would do with young Black males, in fact we had a group here called Brothers Hermanos. I don't take credit for this. One of my staff members actually started it and pulled us in. We started having meetings...after work with students. We invited them to come and just talk. Talk about anything. We used to talk about our lives and some of the things that we did. They were surprised at some of the things we said... Talking about girlfriends, talking about sex, and just saying a lot of things that they never expected to hear from us because they had us on a different level. They really went to town on this.

Nelson communicated being very secure in his identity as a Black male. He is the type of leader who isn’t afraid to show emotions to those who he encounters. Nelson described a situation when he comforted a Black male student who was having a hard time dealing with losing a student government election. As Nelson told this story, he was visibly fighting back tears:

I had a student who was running for student government President and this was a big guy. He must have been 6 feet 5 inches or so. He went all out to win this election and didn't win it. He was sooo crushed--sooo crushed. He just thought he had it in the bag and he came to my office after the election and he was asking about what he did wrong and so forth. I said, ‘That's the way life is. Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose, but it doesn't mean it’s the end of your life.’ He was just so shaken by it. What I did is, this kid was obviously taller than me, I went over and I stood up on a chair and I put my arms around him and he started to cry. I just held him there for a minute and I just felt like his hurt was being melted. I helped him. I am sure people had this image of this big, tall, rugged guy who probably was a man's man for a lack of a better word. The reason that I get misty about it is because I've seen how people have been transformed just by knowing that someone cared about them. Someone shared their hurt, their anxieties, and helped put them on the right trail.

Although Nelson embraced his role as a mentor to young Black men at PWIs, he fought hard against attempts to make him the spokesperson for all people of color. He
recalled a situation in which the university was engaged in a strategic planning process.

He said:

When this university wrote its strategic plan they didn't have anything other than a statement, a very short statement, about diversity. This university looks more like a very diverse, big city, in terms of its ethnicity than any other of the schools in this system. I raised the questions, ‘aren’t we worth more than a line in the strategic plan? Shouldn't there be something significant about what we say the importance of diversity is to this institution?’ They said, ‘Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, that's a good idea. Why don't you write something?’ I said, ‘No. I'm not going to write it because you want ME to do what WE should be doing regardless of the fact that I am African American.’ So I felt good about that but at the same time, I felt like why do I always have to be in that position where I'm the person [that has to point it out]? I think having been the Chief Student Affairs Officer at these three institutions has helped me to help other people realize the significance of diversity and that it wasn't something that we want just to say that we have a certain number of African Americans or Latinos, but that it was important to the education of all students.

Nelson’s resistance to becoming marginalized as the diversity expert is consistent with the advice given by Guillory (2001) to avoid being marginalized to diversity-related functions. Nelson summarized his experience by making a reference to appreciating his Blackness and his ability to effectively function in “two worlds.” He said:

I value being able to work in two worlds with ease. By that I mean that I could be in a White group and I can feel comfortable and I can speak the language. And I can be in a Black group and I can be myself. I could balance those and I knew when to turn it off and when to turn it on. I never referred to myself as doctor and one of the nice things that one of my cousins said to me was, ‘Through it all you never made any of us feel like you were better than us because you had your doctoral degree. People have even said that you are still the same old person.’

Experiences with and Responses to Racism and Discrimination

As Nelson described what it was like for him working at a PWIs, he said he saw it as a chance to grow. He explained:

I really do think that I am the person today because of having gone through some of those experiences. I never let myself become bitter about things that were said
or done that may have been hurtful or harmful. I always tried to use it as an opportunity to teach and to help someone have a different perspective.

Nelson stated that he thinks that all African Americans could tell stories about being discriminated against. As he elaborated on his experiences with racism and discrimination at PWIs, he included situations with White student’s parents. He said:

I had this one parent in particular who called me about her daughter being assigned to a room to live with an African American student and she wanted a change… She just went on and on and on about how this was unacceptable and if I didn't change it that she was going to talk to the President. I said, ‘You can make the appointment right now with me because she is going to refer you right back to me because we have had this problem before.’ So…she came to my office wanting to see Dr. Nelson about her daughter's housing assignment. When she walked in that office and saw this Black man sitting at the desk, you could just see her face turning red. She talked with me about her concerns. I encouraged her to talk to me about her concerns and she ended up letting her daughter stay in the same room with the Black person. And of course, as you can imagine they became good friends.

I had another incident where students were in a suite and this father didn't want his son living in a suite with a person of color and I said, "Give it a chance, let it work." He said that he would give it a couple of weeks. Anyway, he called me back and said that he wanted to thank me for not making that change because they were getting along very well.

Nelson explained that his general strategic response in dealing with racism and discrimination has been to try to educate. He said, “Part of the things that I have experienced is trying to be that person who is going to help transform the thinking of the other individual and also thinking about myself in terms of some of the things that have happened to me that I didn't want other people to experience.”

Nelson also noted experiences with racism and discrimination that have occurred in communities located near PWIs. He stated that he had experiences in stores where clerks would wait on everybody but him. He also reflected on an experience working at a PWI located in a city with a small population of people of color. He explained that he
and his wife would coordinate a time in which they would fly in a person who could cut and style African American hair.

*Factors Salient to Their Success and/or Failure*

As Nelson reflected on his ability advance at PWIs, he stated that he worked extremely hard in his various positions and developed a reputation of being someone who could be depended on to get things done. He explained:

I worked a lot more when I was younger because I was at that point in my life where I was establishing my identity. I didn't want people to think of me as a slacker. In fact, my daughter asked my wife and I not too long ago, "Why did we always eat dinner so early?" I said, ‘because your mother and I had a habit when we had no children. We would come home…talk to each other…have dinner and we would go back to work.” I would go to my office, which was in walking distance from my house, and my wife would go upstairs to our den and work. It was important to me to have people think of me as a hard worker. As I grew older and my children came, I had to put more balance in my life. So I had to work smarter rather than longer. So I started developing ways that I could do things that wouldn't require me to be in the office 10 - 12 hours a day.

Nelson places a very high value on his professional image at PWIs. He stated that he tends to “over prepare.” He said that he never wanted to be perceived as the Black professional who wasn’t prepared. He also stated that he always wore a tie. He said, “I just don’t want people to think of me as being the poorest.”

Nelson reinforced the importance of mentoring young African American males and its significance in the careers of aspiring SSAOs. He said:

Every African-American male should have and needs a mentor. It’s important to have someone who can help you through those tough times and teach you the tricks of the trade…I think what is important for me in life is to be a mentor and a listener to young people. We all need to do that more. To encourage them to take risks and set some goals for themselves...

Nelson stated that his ability to establish himself as someone who is a good listener and is authentic has helped him in his career. He said:
People know that when they come to me, I am going to be sympathetic. I am going to listen and I am also going to tell you the way that I see it... My job is to help shape and mold you so that somewhere along the line, you will have this thing called a goal that you are working toward and know some of the road blocks are that you are going to have to move out of the way in order to get there. I think I do that best by sharing my experiences with them.

Nelson engaged in an executive leadership program that was coordinated by the American Council on Education (ACE). He explained that it was a two-day program that invited approximately 15 people from around the country that were considered promising university Presidents. Nelson stated that his experience in the program helped him to properly frame the role of a college President, but he subsequently decided that he wasn’t willing to make the necessary sacrifices as it relates to family life. The importance of African Americans engaging in professional development activities is also supported in the empirical literature (Jackson, 2002). He said:

They critiqued you, they video taped you, they critiqued your resume, and they had someone come in and talk about how difficult it was to have a strong family relationship because you are always out and doing different things. I said, ‘I don't want this. I am falling in love with my kids more and more and I don't want to look back 10, 20, or 30 years from now and say I wish I had…’ Because you can't go back and relive those periods, so I decided that I didn't want to be President but I did feel that I outgrew the positions that I done prior to getting my doctorate and that I needed to grow more... It was then when I decided to look for a Vice Presidency position.

Nelson’s experience with the American Council on Education (ACE) program is consisted with the findings of an empirical study that was conducted to identify practical steps that would enable PWIs to retain African American administrators (Jackson, 2001). Jackson (2001) stated that institutions should endorse the ACE fellowship because it is helpful in assisting administrators who aspire to campus presidencies and other senior positions.
Participant Eight: Lifting Oliver’s Voice

Social and Academic Experiences

Oliver has extensive experience as a Chief Student Affairs Officer at PWIs. He stated that he has carried out a wide range of responsibilities over the course of his career. He said, “In this role, I recruit, enroll, and help to graduate students of diversity backgrounds and abilities.” Oliver oversees approximately 40 departments and 400 staff members. In addition to his responsibilities as a SSAO, he also is a full professor.

Oliver described his career and ascent to the SSAO position as traditional and linear. He started his career in student affairs as a residence hall coordinator. As he earned his Master’s and Doctoral degrees, he secured positions with increasing responsibility. All of his experience was in student affairs. He moved from holding specialists positions within residence life to generalist positions like Assistant Dean and Dean of students. He said, “I used my education and I used each position as a way of moving me in this direction.”

Oliver stated that it is important for a Chief Student Affairs Officer to be viewed viably. To this end, he feels as though having an academic appointment and teaching at the college level has assisted him in his career. While Oliver modestly outlined his work experiences at PWIs, he shared that he has turned down two Presidencies to this point.

As he reflected on his accomplishments and success, he acknowledged the significance of a mentor who played a critical role in his development. He stated:

When I first started, the Dean that acquainted me with student affairs work in the very beginning had such a profound impact on my thinking about who I was as a student. I was someone who worked very hard, was better than average, started off painfully average, and discovered I had some academic talent. I was also a student athlete… But he helped me translate all of those experiences into
something that could be a lifetime career pursuit in student personnel work. So it was him who allowed me to look more critically at my talents, my passions, my abilities, my interests, and helped to translate that into something that is now a part of who I am forever. He is no longer with me having recently passed away, but that is the most profound of an experience that I have had in all my career.

Oliver continued to elaborate on the many ways in which his mentor has helped him in his career and in his overall development as a man. He explained:

…even after all these years, he sent me a book and said I want you to read this. I think he knew he was dying and he says, ‘I want your sons to read this book too because it is so critical.’ It’s about who we are as people of African Ancestry, the title of the book is Black Spark, White Fire and it is one of the best comprehensive pieces that goes all the way back to the beginning and examines the rise of civilizations by Black people and how that has been advanced by White people and how we are all a part of one common humanity. He put all of that into a perspective for me as a young person who started a career and continued doing that up until the point that he died--both for me and for my sons. That’s the most profound experience I’ve had. There have been many many others, not equal to, but very significant--but none more so than this.

Oliver discussed the changes that occurred within himself as he became more accomplished in the field of student affairs. He said, “I had to re-invent myself each step along the way, but what was constant was the sense of duty and obligation that I had to greater numbers and greater varieties of people.” He explained that he is a “relationship person” and he values the fact that he is viewed in high regard on and off campus. As Oliver described his experiences at PWIs, he talked about how he perceived his obligation to do a good job and how closely people have watched him as he carried out his responsibilities. He said:

I never relied exclusively on the role… I had to rely on my humanity and the relationships that I created along the way… As I think about working with folks over the extent of my career, it’s been what is the quality of those relationships as I have gone forward as my duties and my responsibilities have increased exponentially over time. It’s a very heavy burden to carry. People will look to you and at you in different ways. The higher up you go, the more people who view you and they view you in different ways. Students of color come to me and say, ‘You don't know me but I want you to know how important it is that you are
where you are.’ Others who have said, ‘I've watched you and I really enjoy what you do. You mean something very important to me.’

People have given me opportunities. I am on the board of directors for a local business here and they pay me generously for that role. But they watched me carefully and I didn't know they were watching. They approached me one day and said, ‘We would like to have you as a talent on our board of directors.’ I sit on 5 other boards as well. What it says to me is someone is always watching and the longer you are doing what you do and the higher up you go, more eyes are laid up on you. That's a heavy burden to carry all along the way. Yes, you are who you are as a person, but you are also something else to others and you have to take on that mantle and manage it well. That's what it means to me going forward in my career as a Chief Student Affairs Officer.

Oliver’s reference to the burdens associated with being a Black male at a PWI speaks to the added responsibilities due to his hyper-visibility. Oliver’s use of the word burden embraces the positive and negative responsibilities and roles. It is a burden because the responsibilities increase due his Black maleness—regardless if he embraces the responsibility favorably or not. As Oliver continued to share, I asked him to elaborate on his statement that he carries a heavy burden. He elaborated:

It is a welcomed burden but it’s a burden nonetheless because you can't shake it off… Any mistake is magnified and any success is glorified way beyond proportion. So there are these exaggerated notions of who you are in terms of the role that you play. If you do it well, the expectations only grow more. If you do it poorly, there are so many that are looking on that are hurt too. So there is no room for failure. That is a burden.

Oliver then began discussing the added burden when you are Black and male working as a SSAO at PWIs. He said:

If you are African American, the consequence is far greater if it was just a White person in the role because it is as if I fail, then it diminishes the opportunity for others that look like me who might follow. I also believe in my heart of hearts that I have to be better than a White guy in this job. I can't just do it the way others would. I have to do it better. Some of it is self-imposed and some of it I think is the reality because people look at us differently. I don't know why that is—prejudice, discrimination, and bias does not begin to explain all of it. If I succeed, it will be because I know what I am doing. If I fail, race will be a part of that explanation. So failure--there's no room for that. That is a burden to have to
Oliver also stated that he feels that he has to be “twice as good to be accepted as competent.” He described it as “the African American qualifier.” He acknowledged the significance of race but emphasized that it is only one of the many social identity categories that defines who he is as a person:

Race is one of the least defining characteristics that I have. You spend an hour with me and this [pointing at his skin color] will be the last thing you remember…I work hard at that. So as a male and African American male I spend lots of my time demonstrating my broader humanity but I don't want people to take this for granted and I don't make it their burden.

Analyzing Oliver’s statement pertaining to race being the “least defining characteristic” through Dyson’s (2005) strategies of Black identity, this statement would be in alignment with incidental Blackness—his Blackness is important but it is only one strand of his identity. As Oliver talked about the burden of being a Black male in predominately White spaces, he expanded on his belief and added that Black men also bring with them a power that can be utilized to their advantage. He said:

The burden piece aside, I'm also wise enough to know that…when I walk into the room, it automatically becomes a different meeting. Were I not there, it would be a different kind of conversation. Because I am there, I make a contribution and I know race is a part of it. But now after doing that for a long period of time, it’s the least conspicuous part. They now know me as a talent. But if I was to leave that room, it’s a different experience. That is a form of power that I know I have in a situation like that. A White guy doesn’t get that because he is one of 20 other White guys sitting there, but because where we are and who we are as a society--introduce a Black guy into that mix and it makes it qualitatively different. The challenge then is what are you going to do with it? If you do it well, then the burdens back on. You can't afford to fail. Your successes, even little ones, are magnified…I mean hell that was just a little bitty [sic] thing. Your failures are magnified and it may have nothing to do with race but it becomes part of the conversation. So that's the double-edged dilemma that represents.

Oliver stated that the most challenging aspect of his career is “carrying the burden of the world and assuming it’s only a natural thing.” Oliver explained that throughout his
career, it has been more than just about him. He views himself as a trailblazer who is
paving a way for others to follow—particularly African Americans. He said:

You are given the gift of life and you really do have an obligation to take on the
burdens of other people. You have to help get them to a better place. You don't
have to carry that burden. For some they would say, ‘Boy, that sure makes it a lot
easier.’ But when you have those difficult and hurtful moments, you have choices
to make and my choice is always how do WE both come out of this hole? Not
how do I save myself or advance myself, but how do WE come out of this hole? I see
myself as an integral part of the rest of the environment that I live in and I have a profound duty and obligation in it. That's why I serve on 6 boards…
That's why I do what I do. It's my duty.

Experiences with and Responses to Racism and Discrimination

Oliver stated that his experiences with racism and discrimination at PWIs has
included what he calls “subtle indignations.” He gave one example of a situation that
occurred on campus:

I recently went to a Presidential Inauguration with the Provost and the Chair of our Board of Trustees. There were about 150 scholars from around the world present for this Inauguration, and as we were putting on our academic regalia, a very elderly gentleman came up to my Board Chair in his cap and gown and said, Who are you?’ He said, ‘I am Chair of the Board of the University.’ The elderly gentleman said, ‘Well, pleased to meet you.’ The elderly gentleman turned to my friend, the Provost and said, ‘Who are you?’ He said, ‘I am the Provost of the University.’ The elderly gentleman turned to me and said, ‘And what professional team do you play for?’ It was about the race. He could not envision me in that setting of distinguished scholars in any way other than being an athlete. It is the subtle and sometimes the not so subtle indignations that happen everyday. Sometimes as dramatic as that and sometimes not, but I use them as teaching moments.

Oliver’s experience with the elderly gentleman can be characterized as a microaggression (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007) and it also highlights the presence of Black misandric beliefs. Common Black misandric beliefs include perceiving African Americans as athletes versus intellectuals. Although Oliver was dressed in academic regalia and was clearly with the other two White male senior-level administrators—he was still perceived
as an athlete.

Oliver also shared his response to the elderly gentleman. He said:

I essentially said to him, ‘My name is Oliver and I appreciate the fact that you see something in me as an athlete. I do relate to those days but they were long ago. I almost made it to the Olympics but I used my athletic ability to get an education and I am pleased to be a professor at the university and I am pleased to meet you.’ Now if he can't see himself as a fool after that, he's got some real problems. I would like to follow-up with him at some point in time, but it will likely never happen. But that is the way I would approach it every time.

Oliver also shared that his response to racism is strategic and designed to educate and enlighten people. He shared that he spends the majority of his time trying to help people “find their better humanity.” He said:

Nobody wants to hear an angry Black man. You don’t want to hear an angry White man. But they don't know how to deal with an angry Black man so you get marginalized in a hurry. So if you find yourself in those all-White moments and you are the angry Black guy, you will just get dismissed. No matter what you have to say, if it comes from anger, nobody is going to own it. But if you can turn around the abuses, the little racial indignations, the little stupid things they do that stings and they don’t even know it…and give them the opportunity to see themselves in those moments where they don't get blown away--they get better. But that means that you must carry some of their burden so they can see themselves. If you are a decent person, they don't want you to be hurt and when they see you hurting in that way, if they have humanity, they will see that, they will see themselves, and maybe they will self-correct. My career has been one of allowing people to discover their better humanity, even in their faults. If its racists or whatever, I don't blow them away. I give them a chance to see what it does to a decent human being and then allow them to deal with that. But they must see it and hear it from you in a way that they can entertain it. If you are the angry Black guy and you say, ‘mother fucker what's your problem,’ you will lose moments and opportunities. All of my career has been trying to find those moments and those opportunities.

As Oliver describes his experiences with racism, he communicated that he conceptualizes those moments as opportunities to somehow improve White people. The other experiences with racism and discrimination that Oliver described occurred either off campus or as a college student. He described another “subtle indignation” that occurred
while he was eating dinner with his wife. He said:

This ring that I wear is what my wife bought me when I got my doctorate... We were at a table eating dinner and as we were talking someone came up to the table and began to introduce themselves around the table... He then saw me with this ring and said, ‘Oh, what team do you play for? You must have won a championship.’ My wife said, ‘No, he won a Ph.D.’ Because it has a diamond in it, he determined it looked like a football ring or a rose bowl ring...and associated it with athletics. Nothing wrong with football, but it was a stereotype that he carried in his head. The little acts of indignation pile up over time. There are hundreds and thousands of those over a lifetime. For some people, they become burdens and they get angry. I never allow myself to succumb to that. Once you become the angry Black man, you are dead--one way or another. If you see those little moments, those indignations as opportunities, you enrich yourself and you help other people save themselves from their ignorance. I choose the latter every time because these acts of indignation are going to happen everyday.

*Factors Salient to Their Success and/or Failure*

Oliver shared personal characteristics that have helped him in his career and he provided recommendations to African American men who aspire to be SSAOs at PWIs.

He shared that communication and interpersonal skills are critical in his role. He said:

I love public speaking. I love story telling and I think it’s in story telling that people can reveal and discover at the same time. I am a good storyteller and I think communications play a very important part of that. Managing people. I understand human nature and when I am in a problem-solving mode, I don't just look at the incident that is in front of me, I look at what is behind it. Why do people behave the way they behave? If you can understand that in a full and complex way, you can help yourself and you can help others better at the same time. I am sure you know student development theory and all of that. That is simply a way of having a more complex way of understanding late adolescence and early adulthood behavior. If you get a command of that and you can understand it, you can predict it, you can motivate it, and you can develop it in a much more intentional fashion. So I have the professional skills, instincts, abilities, and the like to understand human behavior and how to influence it.

Oliver was adamant that Black males should critically reflect on themselves and take time to understand who they are. He explained:

It goes back to that African proverb of knowing thy self… What motivates you? What are you good at? What are you not good at? Where do you need to grow? Then act on those things that you think are important. It the acting part that often
times people cannot do or the self-examination that people do not do… It’s that self-examination so that you really know who you are and the difficult part is determining how you choose to behave. So part of it is intellectual and emotional inquiry. The courageous part is deciding that I am going to live my life like this, as a courageous, self-examined person who will do the right thing…

Oliver also stated that his welcoming disposition and positive mindset are characteristics that have helped him to be successful at PWIs and in his life. He said:

I will say that I am a driven person. I really like different experiences and I really want to know. I am curious about the rest of the world. I am welcoming and I am open and I am driven to experience as much of this as I can. And in so doing, it gives me a breadth of relationships that I would otherwise not have. It is in those investments that many, many opportunities have been presented to me as a result. So I say it’s that openness. I am a very fair person. I am a justice person and I want everyone to enjoy the richness of life the same way I experience them. When I don't see that, then I feel an obligation to do something more.

Oliver stated that it was important for student affairs practitioners to understand that race matters profoundly and deeply. He said, “After over 30 years of civil rights legislation, affirmative action, commission reports, and all of the studies and investigations that have taken place, race still matters in this society.” He concluded with this:

For student affairs professionals not to understand the power of that both as an inhibitor and both as an asset, you must have a facility understanding how it matters and how to use it well. A not so small example of that is…when you have a highly capable, highly educated, Harvard educated Black man who could be the President and is running neck-and-neck with a painfully average and mediocre old White man and it’s a dead heat—race still matters. Nobody is going to say that. They will hint around the edges about it and then dismiss it. Obama has to say, ‘If I don't get it, it won't be because of my race it will be because I didn't sell my ideas fully.’ That was the admirable and right thing to do rather than the angry Black man… He is stepping beyond race and hoping to educate the rest of society. It’s a dead heat and it is all about race. Issues still yet unfulfilled in our larger society and in higher education and in student affairs. Brilliant Black man. Experienced, seasoned politician. Running a dead heat with a 72 year-old guy who is painfully average at best. That's the phenomenon of you got to be twice as good just to run an even race and that’s why I carry that burden to this day. I have to be twice as good and I take that burden on just to be perceived as a competent professional and I know I am better than most. I really do. But I will never ever
behave and function like that in public. I just have conditioned myself to that reality and I accept it and I am at peace with it. I am not angry.

Participant Nine: Lifting Paul’s Voice

Social and Academic Experiences

Paul spent his entire professional career in student affairs administration working at PWIs. He discussed several positions that he has held throughout his career that have contributed to his ability to advance and secure the SSAO post. Of the many skills that he acquired and developed along the way, he stated that his mastery of problem solving and handling crises situations have helped him most. As he reflected on an entry-level position he held early in his career, he talked about some of the specific crisis situations that he managed including two student deaths.

Paul conceptualizes his role as a SSAO as being like a “black box.” He said that he is responsible for the overall quality of student life. Paul explained that he has a wide range of responsibilities. He said:

Pragmatically it is truly a balance of strategic planning and problem solving. I have to deal with ridiculous stuff like parking...and I have to deal with the turf on the football field because athletics reports to me as well. In all those instances, I try to think more strategically about how we [my division] can avoid dealing with that day-to-day stuff, but about theme housing and learning communities. What we do want to do with students who are literally falling down drunk on the weekends?

As Paul discussed the criteria he utilized to guide his job search, he stated that he wanted to secure a SSAO at an institution where he could pursue his scholarly interests. Paul described himself as a SSAO who wants to teach and publish. His curriculum vita listed ten published articles and presentations made at national conferences. At the time of the interview, he did not hold a faculty appointment.
As Paul talked about his experiences in student affairs, he shared a number of challenges that he has been confronted with in his journey. He referenced the scholarly work of Charles Ogbu and Sharon Fries Britt as he talked about his relationships with African Americans and challenges experienced due to perceived class differences.

I was at a small private liberal arts school that served a very different student… There is a lot of research by Charles Ogbu and Sharon Fries Britt that talks about high functioning African American students and the challenges they experience not only in terms of White racism but also their relationships with other African American students. What I saw at this school was a real challenge in terms of class within the African American community. It spoke to me because I experienced that. I always seem to experience some challenges in regard to my perceived class standing.

Paul said that students have called him bourgeois and have literally stated to him that he is “not Black enough.” Paul said:

The students joke and they call me Carlton [a rich introverted TV character] and I play with that. In some ways, I am very conscious of the performance of race and class. I like to subvert that too. Depending on the environments I have been in, I always eventually had strong relationships with students of color and African American students in particular…What I have found since I have ascended is that there is no monolithic Black identity and that that is problematic. African American men in particular, but also African American women need to be acutely aware of that. There are social paper bags tests in the workplace and there are intellectual paper bags tests. Whether you are Black enough has been a huge issue for me. A huge issue I have seen over the last 5 to 7 years. In my last environment, there was a Vice President from Africa. There was another Vice President who said that he wasn't Black enough and I thought--he is from Africa. Just because he wears Prota, Armani, travels to China and Germany, and is a powerful figure doesn't mean that he is not Black enough. Just being caught in the middle of an absurd war over Black identity at a senior management level was surprising and shocking to me.

I probed into the challenges Paul experienced associated with class and how people come to the conclusion that he is “not Black enough.” Paul shared that he grew up in the suburbs and is a “big fan of the arts.” He also talked about the wide range of music that he listens to, including alternative Rock music. Paul described a situation that
occurred at a national conference as he was interacting with a group of African Americans. He said, “I was with a group of African American professionals and I didn't know who Mobb Deep was [popular rap group]. That undermined my credibility much more than I would have thought...that set me back a lot.” Paul also talked about language barriers. He shared that when people speak with him on the telephone initially and then later meet him, they are shocked to see that he is African American. He said:

SSAOs have to be on their game and have to speak the language. You have to do some code switching and you have to be aware of the very language you are using and how you are communicating with certain people. That equals sell out in some younger [African American] professional's minds...

Paul statement indicates that he remains cognizant of how he is being perceived by White people at PWIs. More specifically, he believes that the use of proper English assists him to some extent at PWIs and helps him to stay on top of “his game.”

Paul also stated that his sexuality has presented challenges for him as it relates to developing relationships with African American professionals. He said:

I say that I am nominally gay because I don't completely subscribe to predominantly Gay dogma. I am who I am--period. I am going to like basketball, I am going to like football, and I am going to do all of those things that gay people aren't supposed to do. I am also going to subvert other social norms to. There have been other African American professionals who have wanted me to make a choice over which one is more important...I wear pants with tennis rackets on them and do my Fonsworth Bentley or Carlton thing just to make fun of it all. People's energy immediately goes up or down around some of that.

Paul communicated that he is an advocate for diversity and that he embraces his obligation to challenge PWIs as it relates to African Americans and other students of color. As he talks about advocating at PWIs, he shares how his role as an advocator is sometimes a burden. He said:

I think in the back of my mind, I don’t want to be the squeaky wheel. It has been challenging for me to be the squeaky wheel often. I have always been the
squeaky wheel. I have always addressed those issues but sometimes I felt as if they weren't being heard because of who it was coming from. But you got to say it [long pause] you got to say it. You got to say those things and it is our job to find the language… It is our job to find to whom to say these things and how they can be heard and championed on our campuses.

Experiences with and Responses to Racism and Discrimination

As we discussed interactions that stood out the most in his career, Paul shared a comment that an African American dean made that Paul later reflected on related to hiring African Americans at the PWI he worked for at the time. He explained:

There was an African American dean and he made a comment that I didn't understand at first. He said, 'I don't want to be the only person here hiring people of color.' I understood but I didn't understand it. I think that is one of the funny ways that racism works. He was doing a good job of recruiting the best possible candidates and the rest of the campus was happy to let him do that. The rest of the campus didn’t realize that there was implied or subliminal racism present. Everyone was not on the same page and diversity was just head counting people. When you stepped back and looked at where all the diversity was, it was almost all in his division. It compromised him in some ways to have all the diversity in his division because the racism starts to creep up a little bit. People began to start questioning what is that all about. That always stood out to me. It kind of got me on the road to this notion of inclusive excellence and wanting to get the best people period. But also assuming that people of color are some of the best people too. Really being able to push others to see that too. That stands out to me.

Paul shared that he has experienced racism and discrimination on and off the campuses of the PWIs he has worked for. He talked about how it makes him feel when he has to justify to others that racism or discrimination has occurred. He said:

I have been at a couple of schools that are well known and some are very prestigious. I have worked with very intelligent people and had to explain and almost justify my experience with racism. To having other smart people ask, "You sure that was racism?" is completely demoralizing and completely isolating. You feel like not only have you had an encounter with racism, but you then have to assure a White person that the encounter was actually racist. It just gets…[pause]…you get burned out. It is very apparent.

Paul also shared some particular experiences with racism and discrimination. One
incident he described involved the rural community surrounding the PWI. He went to several barbershops in the college town in attempt to get an “army-style” haircut. He said, “I would walk in the door and people would say, ‘I can't do that here.’ I just needed someone to shave my head with a blade… I wasn’t looking for designs or anything.”

Paul mentioned that as he shared the story on the PWI he was working for at the time, he felt as though he had to justify that the experience with faculty, staff, and administrators. He said, “They just didn’t get it.”

As Paul continued to reflect on his experiences at PWIs, he recalled a situation in which he was discriminated against during a job interview. In this instance, Paul seemingly attributed this situation to the combination of being African American and gay. He described the situation as it occurred at his on-campus interview:

I was also in a search once where a Vice President was really probing me about why I didn't stay at a certain school longer. I had legitimate career reasons about why I didn’t stay, but she kept on probing. I said, ‘to be honest it was in some ways difficult to be young, queer, and a person of color in that environment.’ She said, ‘well didn't you think about that before you went?’ I said, ‘no because racism and homophobia aren't my responsibility.’ Then I asked her if that was her clinical opinion because she was a social worker. And that was in the interview… I was pretty steamed. It revealed something to me about the search. Clearly I didn’t want that job.

Paul provided an overt example that transpired with a senior administrator while he was working in residence life. As he shared the story, he communicated that he felt he had an increased level of awareness of discriminatory acts related to his sexuality. He said:

I didn't throw someone out of housing. The student had an unopened six-pack of beer in his room and I gave him a warning. Someone called me a pansy because I didn't throw him out of housing. So, I said to myself, ‘OK. I am going to start looking for another job.’ To be honest, I think I am so concerned about being taken seriously because of my sexual orientation that I am much more alert to potential instances of homophobia and heterosexism than actually exists… In my career, I have dealt so much with security, police, or athletics that I have a heightened awareness of that stuff.
In addition, Paul shared some subtle experiences with racism and discrimination related to his White colleagues’ responses to his demonstrated competence and/or proficiency. When these situations have occurred, they have been disappointing to Paul because he has felt that their perceptions of African American men are negative. He said:

It is hard when you are meeting new faculty and staff or you are in one of your first few meetings with people and you are sharing your knowledge and people seem surprised shocked. They say, ‘Oh you have a Ph.D.?’ …When I talk about the schools that I have worked at and what I have accomplished at them, the degree of surprise and shock is disappointing. I have seen other professionals do good work, manage, and there not be a level of shock or surprise. I can only attribute that to at least prejudice if not racism. That is very frustrating because I start to second-guess myself and wonder why was I brought here? To what degree was my race value-added? To what degree was it the tipping point that got me this job?

Paul also stated that there have been occasions in which he felt African Americans or other administrators of color at PWIs were not properly supervised by their White supervisors and were not provided the feedback necessary to develop professionally. These African Americans have been people who didn’t report to him. He explained how it was challenging for him to see this occurring to them:

I have been in awkward situations where it has been clear to me that feedback had not been provided to another Black person on campus or another person of color. Either people have been afraid of being perceived as racist or they didn't know how to give the feedback. It has been hard for me to watch another staff member be incompetent. To watch another Black man or Black woman suffer unfairly because they are not being called out. I have really struggled with what my voice and what my role in that should be. It is never easy. There were two recent occasions with African American women who were struggling and who had unfairly not been provided feedback about their organization, timeliness, and what it meant to their ability to succeed in their job. People were talking about them behind their backs…

During my interview with Paul, I probed into his general responses to racism and discrimination. As he shared his responses, he talked about some physiological reactions
that he has experienced in the past. I summarized his statements below:

…I remember how I felt. I felt warm, my armpits got hot, my voice got kind of shaky, and I had such a visceral reaction…I am acutely sensitive about being like the black hot head. I've had instances where I had felt like I have been picked on and I do become a different person.

Factor’s Salient to Their Success and/or Failure

Paul talked about a number of factors salient to his success and also shared some words of wisdom for aspiring African American male SSAOs. Although he stated that he hasn’t participated in a formal mentoring relationship, he did say that he has developed trusting relationships with his former supervisors and peers that have been very helpful in his career. Paul stated that these individuals are mostly people of color and women who have experienced some form of discrimination. These individuals have served as his confidants and people he can rely on for support. As he reflected on one of the African American men in his network, he said, “He and I check in. I kind of know when I need to call him…and he does the same for me.”

Paul stated that his ability to navigate the political environment at PWIs was and is critical to his ability to advance at PWIs. He said, “I have pretty good political acumen. I know how to read a situation and see where the power is and who I need to influence. I know who the formal and informal opinion leaders are.” This is a skill that Paul believes is necessary to be effective in the SSAO position at PWIs.

Paul recommends that African Americans avoid being limited to any one area within the division of student affairs. He urges them to think of creative ways to gain competency in areas that are not traditionally reserved for African Americans:

Try not to be pigeonholed in any one area. Even if you are working in fraternity advising or in athletics try to serve your campus broadly. Some of the stuff you
are going to hear...take some good risks. If there is a women's center on campus, get involved. Start a White Ribbon campaign if there is not one on campus or any campaign of organizing men to address violence against women. Shock people with your willingness to take on different areas…

He also suggests that African American men not be so quick to dismiss other African Americans as “sell-outs” or not supportive of African American issues based on their public presentation at PWIs. He communicated that many times there is a need to “code switch” to effectively function at PWIs. He said:

One of the challenges that I have seen with young African American professionals is this kind of Bourgeois versus Non-Bourgeois kind of monolithic Black identity thing. There are very powerful people in higher education that are very, very, very Black who may not appear to be so in their public performance... However they are effectively able to work the system against itself without the system even knowing… From the outside looking in at that situation it doesn't look like that at all.

Paul also advises that African American men choose SSAO positions at PWIs carefully. He warns that they shouldn’t be quick to jump at the first opportunity without properly researching the institution and ensuring that it is a “good fit.” He said:

Don't be seduced by the first Senior Student Affairs Officer job that you get unless it’s the perfect fit. Know that you are going to be supported. Know that the President and the other VPs there really value you and what you have to contribute. That's what they did [at my current institution]. Before the President offered me the job here, she read me the evaluations from faculty and from students and from staff and I was...I am getting chills just thinking about it. She told me why she wanted me to be here and how she thought the two of us could work together. And I was offered other jobs that didn't have anything near that level of commitment to me as a candidate or as a perspective employee.

Participant Ten: Lifting Tony’s Voice

Social and Academic Experiences

Tony is a SSAO with a wide range of professional experience in student affairs and the broad field of higher education administration. As he talked about his current position as a SSAO, he stated that he spent the majority of his time in meetings with
senior staff in an effort to develop strategies and objectives on campus. Tony said a great portion of his time is attending students’ activities and meeting with students to address their individual or group issues.

As Tony shared his work experiences at various PWIs, it was clear that he was a risk taker who established himself as someone who could manage crisis situations. He explained:

I had an experience where a PWI had just gone through two really horrendous incidents--there was a drug deal and a rape. They were looking for someone to come in and straighten this situation out and I had just dealt with a gambling scandal. I got a phone call after I left that night…the last young man that I had spoken with at the interview had been shot by his roommate. He was in an argument and had been shot. That was kind of interesting because in the same breath the hiring senior-level administrator asked me if I was still interested in the position--I said absolutely.

Later in his career, he took a position in which he was managing serious crisis situations on a regular basis during his first semester on the job. He said, “The fall that I went there, we averaged a student death a week in some way, shape, form, or fashion. It involved accidents and murder--it was really, really crazy! So those are some of the things that stick out in my head.” I probed into how Tony was able to deal with these incidents as they occurred, and Tony explained that his military background and early training helped him handle those situations with relative ease. He said:

Well my background was probably a little different from some in that my first job following graduation was in the Army. My branch preformed the survivor assistance function of the Army. For example, the military who come to the door to inform a loved one of a soldier that they have been killed or deceased--that was one of the things that I did. Being in the military, you become familiar with death, you don't get accustomed to it, you become familiar with it. So in my early training…I got thrown into the fire of dealing with emergencies and dealing with very difficult situations very, very early. You don't ever get used to it, but you do learn how to deal with it and how to handle it. That was one of the best things that happened to me in my career…I didn't know it but I was being prepared to deal with those kinds of situations.
Despite his early training handling crisis situations, Tony said that there have been incidents that he has had to manage that have been particularly challenging. He described an incident that stood out in his career while functioning as a SSAO and the internal conflict that was going on inside of him. He said:

I had a situation where a student had a freak accident, was shot, and wound up on life support in the hospital. I had to talk with the parents about the appropriate time to turn the life support off—that's a challenge. I'm a father and I don't know if I could—that's a tough one. Basically what you are saying is you are giving up hope. I have faith and at some point in time you get challenged. Is it giving up by taking him off of the machine? Turning the machine off means you're giving up hope and you lost your faith. There's challenge in there and when I say the word challenge, that's what I mean. It's a challenge to talk to a parent of a vibrant 18 or 19 year old and tell them you need to come to campus and pick up the lifeless body of their vibrant 18 or 19 year old that only months ago you sent off to conquer the world. That's a challenge.

Tony described his overall experiences in student affairs and higher education in general as “fantastic.” He said that it was very rewarding to see students enter college as naïve freshman, develop during their college years, and leave as sophisticated graduates who have a broad perspective on life. He elaborated:

I haven't had a job [in higher education] that I didn't like. I have yet to have one that I couldn't see myself being there for a long time… So it is fantastic. I have met people, I have had opportunities to do things, I have had an opportunity to participate in programs, events, and activities that have really made a difference in people's lives—especially young people.

*Experiences With and Responses to Racism and Discrimination*

Tony is a former student-athlete who attended a PWI in the deep South. He explained that many people believed that his athletic prowess was his only value. He said that they believed it was the only reason why he “was where he was.” Tony utilized this negative perception as fuel to secure his Ph.D. and show people that he had academic
talents as well. In reflecting on the lack of diversity at PWIs, he said, “It has been a challenge as an African American. In a PWI, you end up being the only one in a lot of settings. While some African Americans might take light in that, it gives me NO pleasure to be the only one who looks like me…I wish it were much different.”

I probed into how Tony has responded to being the only one in predominately White spaces, and he explained that it has been something that he has continuously dealt with since attending a PWI in the South as an undergraduate. He shared some experiences with racism and discrimination that he had as a student-athlete:

If the first time you begin to deal with racism and discrimination is when you become a professional, I think it's going to present some really serious challenges for you. That is something that I dealt with as an undergraduate. For example, I was one of the first African-American athletes...to attend my undergraduate university in the South. I had a sports information director make a comment to me saying, ‘You are not like the rest of them.’ That was a hell of a thing to say to an 18 year old. I am not like the rest of who? What he was saying was he obviously had some encounters with some African-American athletes, male athletes, who may have behaved a little differently, but he also had some encounters with white athletes who behaved differently too. Those things that occurred as an undergraduate began to prepare me for what I would be doing as a professional. For example when we would travel, we would go to places in the deep South and during that time, there were places that would openly say, ‘We're not going to serve your kind in here.’ I would be the only one travelling with my team. The team would say without you we are not going to eat here either—it was a very validating experience. Being the only one, you have some good and some not so good experiences. You can be isolated as the only one, and treated differently and poorly. However, there are instances where you can be the only one embraced by the group and made to feel like you're not the only one, that you're in a group of individuals who have a great deal in common and are like minded.

Tony stated that he experienced overt racism while he was in the United States Military. He stated that there were situations in which some of the White soldiers refused to salute him because he was Black. Tony explained that he challenged them directly and ultimately “locked them up” due to their refusal to follow military protocol. He said,
“That was clearly a racist act in my view.”

As Tony talked about his experiences, he elaborated on what it has been like for him as a Black male working at PWIs. He shared an experience that he had during a job interview where he felt as though he was being perceived as only being able to work with African Americans. He said:

They tend to think that is where your expertise ends. I'll never forget it. When I interviewed for a dean of students position, the question was ‘If you became the dean, how would you handle people not looking at you as being the African-American dean?’ I thought it was a very interesting because it raised the question in my mind as to how they viewed me coming in as a Black man. Whether they felt I was only going to be effective with African-American students and I would have to call on my staff to deal with the others--I don't know. I don't exactly know what it was. He asked, ‘Would you consider yourself to be the Black dean?’ My response to him was, ‘I'm African-American, I'd be the dean--well it fits.’ I'm not going to run from that--it's pretty obvious. But I did go on to say that I would be the Dean for all students…not just African-American, not just White, not just Latino, not just Asian…I would be the dean for all students. So that was a perception that they have.

Tony described some situations at PWIs involving White colleagues at the boardroom table where he felt his suggestions and ideas were unfairly dismissed or ignored. He explained:

I've had the occasion to make a suggestion in a group meeting where I was the only African American… The convener of the meeting would term it a bad suggestion, poor suggestion, or not a very good one. I've had the experience of having a White colleague of mine privately say, ‘do you mind if I take this suggestion and bring it back to the table because I think it's a good one and see what happens?’ The person did and when they presented the idea it was a good idea--the same idea. That colleague knew what was going on. I'm not so sure that the people who were doing the things that I'm talking about really understood that what they were doing was racist.

I followed up and asked Tony how he handled his original idea being rejected initially and later embraced once it was presented a couple of weeks later by a White colleague. He explained that he let it go and never mentioned anything about it. He said:
I never touched it again….because you need to know what is important to you and what you value. I had a colleague of mine who always says this, ‘We are about making progress and not making a scene.’ So, I was clearly focused on getting the issue taken care of. Not how it was taken care of, who got credit for it, or who did it—that was totally unimportant to me. It was much more important to me to get it done. We were able to do that and it is a quiet little joke between me and the White guy [who brought it back to the table]. He acknowledges it. I said to him, ‘Hey, don't go there. Leave it alone. There will be another opportunity to deal with that issue, but the real issue was getting the idea across and getting it implemented. That was the important thing.’ I think it comes with maturity and experience. I know as a youngster, I would have raised hell about that. I would still be raising hell. It was clear to me that everybody knew what happened. I didn’t have to say anything. Everybody was sitting at the same table I was sitting at. They knew. It wasn’t important to call out the leaders on that one. It wasn't that important to me. Quiet as kept, I hoped they learned something from it. I think they knew that I wasn't going to let things like that continue to go by the wayside and that I was going challenge and get it done some kind of way--by hook or by crook.

Tony added that his mindset and approaches to handling situations have changed. He said when he was young, he just knew he could conquer the world, but as he grew older, he came to realize that there is only a piece of this world that he could handle—not the whole thing. He said this difference in mindset helps you to realize that you can’t do everything by yourself and you have to become more politically savvy.

As we continued to talk about Tony’s experience with and responses to racism, he talked about an internal process that occurred as he decided if and how he was going to respond to a particular incident or situation at PWIs. Tony explained that it is important to know who you are and if the particular incident is truly important. He elaborated and gave an example:

You have to come to grips with…if I'm not a SSAO can I live with that? The answer is yes. You need to be truly clear about what you believe in, what you are willing to stand up for, and what you will and will not do. That has been my guide and that has helped me to deal with racism. I hadn't always been here as a young man. I married, had a family, had young kids, and there are some risks that you wouldn't take at that point in time. I wouldn't take them because of my obligation to those children… I'm not suggesting that I didn't have principles, but
I am just suggesting that I chose my battles very carefully... You have a family and your perspective is a little different. The older you get, the more independent you get, or the more degrees of independence you get, the better able you are to focus on... ‘What do I truly believe in? What's central to my value system? What am I willing to put my career and everything on the line for?’ That becomes a little bit clearer.

For an example, when I was working at a particular PWI, we were at a point where outsourcing was the answer to the increasing costs for personnel... The easiest way to reduce the costs was to contract out the services so you didn't have people on your payroll... The President at the time decided that he could reduce the cost to the institution by contracting out janitorial services. Now if you could imagine, 99.9% of the custodians were African American. Now that's only a part of it. A bigger part of it was that there were people who were African American who had worked at the university for over 30 years, because if you worked there for so long, your child got an opportunity to go to school free. We had African American custodians who had opportunities to take better jobs... They had been there for over 20 years for the sole purpose to provide their children with the opportunity to get a good education at a very good institution. To outsource--you instantly cut all of that off. So myself and four or five other African American administrators decided that we couldn't with a good conscious, sit back, and allow the institution to do that without us standing up and being counted.

We went to the President and told him that we were against him contracting out the services. We gave him the reasons why, and we told him that it wasn't a threat, but if he did, that we would resign immediately. It took some discussions and a lot to get to that point. At the time, my children were depending on me and it’s one of those situations where I couldn’t lose my job because my children weren’t going to understand that, but I did it because I had to do it. It’s about principle. Luckily for us, the President thought more about it and decided not to do it. He actually understood the points we were making. So to answer the question, you deal with racism and discrimination by truly knowing who you are, what you are about, and what you stand for. Having said that, there are certain institutions you probably couldn't work for if you are really true to what you believe in.

Factors Salient to their Success and/or Failure

Tony shared a number of characteristics that he believed have helped him to advance to the SSAO role at PWIs. He also shared a long list of recommendations and provided words of wisdom for other African Americans who are attempting to navigate PWIs. As he talked about what he has been able to achieve in his career, he stated:
I think the biggest thing is treating people fairly and as human beings. As Carl Rogers would say, ‘having unconditional positive regards for people.’ No matter what their station in life, no matter what they bring to the table, but giving every human being the dignity and respect that human being deserves. I think that’s been very important and the cornerstone of that is my faith. I believe in God, which is probably not popular to say in student affairs...but that really drives a lot of my behavior...treating everybody with dignity and respect..and then being fair with people.

Tony continued to expand on characteristics that have helped him to advance his career.

He pointed out that his work ethic has been critical to his success. He elaborated:

I think one of the biggest things that help me is my work ethic. Being able to work hard. That's what this is about. I don't think it’s always about the smartest...just about all of us have average intelligence... The thing that will separate people are those who can focus, who can stick with a task until its done, and those who are willing and able to work hard. There is absolutely no substitute for hard work. I don't care how smart you are. You can be a genius, but if you are lazy, you aren't going to accomplish anything. You can get a not so smart person who is a hard worker and they will accomplish a hell of a lot more. Give me somebody who can listen, who will follow instructions, and who will work hard. You give me enough of them and I will take them.

Tony is a strong advocate of mentoring and being mentored. He said, “The one thing that you must realize is that you’re not in this thing by yourself and that you are not going to achieve greatness by yourself. Anybody who has achieved greatness and thinks they can stand up and say they did it by their self is a fool.” Tony recommends that African Americans put themselves in a position to be mentored. He said, “There are people who have been there and have done what you are aspiring to do.” As he shared, he mentioned that he is a member of a historically Black fraternity. Tony believes that the Black Greek system does a good job of reinforcing the importance of brotherhood and the collective achievement of African Americans. He also added that his fraternity brothers serve as a network of support that he values tremendously. At different points in his career, he has called upon them in his time of need and they have responded
unconditionally.

As we continued to talk about the importance of mentoring, Tony explained that mentors become increasingly important when African American men are going through very stressful and challenging times at PWIs. He warns them to avoid suffering in silence. He said:

If I can tell the young folks anything--don't think you must suffer alone and quietly. Find a mentor or find somebody who may even be going through the same thing you are going through. I think the bottom line is that you must talk to somebody and share what's on your mind with somebody--you have to. You can't do this by yourself. That's what a fraternity does--think about it. The ‘Bruhs’ will come get you and say, ‘come on man we going to go do something.’ Just to keep your sanity. I think that's the mistake a lot of young professionals make. They will get in situations and they will feel like they have done something wrong or like nobody else has experienced this or it's a sign of weakness if they tell anybody. They do things and tell themselves the things that are not right because they don't have anybody to talk to… So part of it with a young professional is to get a support network and get that in a situation where you know that you can share with some people… I do this now. I've got people who I can confide in. However, the higher in the food chain you go, the fewer those people are available. You can't tell people certain things because it will come back and bite you in the butt. You must be very selective…but as a young professional, you need to find people who you can talk to and identify who you can use as a sounding board.

Tony recommends that African Americans get a broad range of experiences; however, he maintained that there is more than one way to get to the SSAO position. He said that people should not put so much emphasis on the title or position they have. Instead, he advises that they focus on the responsibilities and experiences they are getting in a particular position. He elaborated and provided examples:

For example, if you are in multicultural affairs, they tend to want to discount experiences in that area, but if you are in that area you are managing a budget, dealing with personnel, and dealing with programming. Programming is no different in dealing with minority issues than they are in dealing with Greek Affairs or some other issues. As it relates to budgeting--money is money. So I would say focus on the quality of the experience as opposed to the titles and where it's particularly located. Focus not only on the quality, but the kinds of
experiences that you are having because they are transferrable.

As it relates to career decisions, Tony warns African American males not to let other people influence them to the point where they are getting pigeonholed. He said, “Never let anyone totally guide your career. They can give you suggestions.” Tony referenced many naysayers who attempted to discourage him in pursuing particular positions. Those individuals communicated to Tony that he was “making a mistake.” Tony responded to their criticism by saying, “So be it. That is what I wanted to do, I was enjoying it, I really put my heart and soul into it, and it worked.”

Tony also talked about the decision-making process while pursuing jobs and mapping out one’s career. His recommendation was that African American men be strategic during the job search process and consider a number of variables. He explained:

You need to look at the challenges, you need to look at the environment, and you need to look at whether you can be successful or not. The thing I looked at…was what would it take to be successful? At two of the universities I worked for in the past—it wasn’t much. They were at rock bottom when I went there so anything that I did I was going to be successful. To me that's what I look at. I sum it up—can I be successful in this one? What is it going to take to be successful? Can I do this? In both situations, I made some pretty good choices. I took a pay cut to go from one university to another. I lost money, not a great deal, but I lost money. The first move was the move that I was looking at though. I needed to be a Dean of Students in order to get to a Vice President position. I didn't think I was going to go from an Assistant Director to a Vice President for Student Affairs. I have had a charmed life but not that charmed. So I wasn't looking at the first move as the payoff—that was a strategic move. That was a move to set the next move up. I was already looking down the road.

As Tony described his personal experience, he said that he bounced around a bit in his career to pursue opportunities. He explained that he didn’t “jump at just anything,” but he pursued opportunities for advancement. He said that all of the moves were not planned, but he accepted the offer when he accessed the situation and found it to be a good fit. Tony advises young African American males to be open to relocating to areas
that are not in great locations. He feels that many African Americans limit their ability to advance in the field due to their unwillingness to seriously consider pursuing excellent opportunities in locations that they perceive as undesirable. He said, “Take your butt out there and take a look at it. It might be a hell of a lot better than you think.”

As we concluded our discussion, Tony wanted to make sure that he emphasized the importance of young African Americans lifting as they climb the career ladder. Tony reflected on African Americans who are reluctant to hire other African Americans in key positions. He said:

Here's something that I may not have touched on. When we get to these positions, a lot of times, we are afraid to reach back and hire African-American men and women in key positions. We get afraid of that and I don't know why. We need to talk about it because the first time I hired my next in command, an African-American female, some of my African American colleagues said, 'Man you are taking a chance.' I responded by saying, 'She's qualified, she's good, and she just happens to be Black. That's good stuff for me and I am not going to apologize.' Sometimes we get afraid of that. Young professionals--don't get afraid and don't be afraid to associate with African-Americans. We must get over this thing of having to prove to everybody that we are so fair and that we are not biased, well. I like my people. It doesn’t make any sense at all. When is the last time you told a White person that they shouldn't hire another White person? You wouldn't even think about it.

Answers to Research Questions Organized by Themes

In this section, I present and discuss the themes that evolved as a result of answering the four guiding research questions. As described in Chapter 3, I utilized Atlas.ti and Mile’s and Huberman’s (1994) flow model of data analysis to assist with analyzing the data across the 10 cases. Nine major themes were generated after carefully reflecting on the code families, network maps, research questions, memos, transcripts, theoretical frameworks, and literature related to the broad topic. These themes are
presented in alignment with the four guiding research questions they answer.

The major research question that guided this study was the following: How does the intersection of race and gender influence the lived experiences of African American male senior student affairs officers at predominately White institutions? The themes that answer this question are outlined below in the order they will be presented and discussed:

Theme 1: Mobile Professionals.
Theme 2: Black Mans Burden.
Theme 3: Love for the Work.
Theme 4: Racial Micro-aggressions.
Theme 5: Blocking of Black Male Bodies.
Theme 6: Cognitive-Time Responses.
Theme 7: Increasing Personal and Academic Capital.

*RQ1: How do African American male SSAOs describe their social and academic experiences at Predominately White Institutions?*

**Theme one: Mobile professionals**

The African American males in this study were mobile throughout their careers in student affairs administration and higher education. As they reflected on 278 years of lived experiences at predominately White institutions, they cited the various positions, institutions, and states that were significant in shaping their reality. As it is reflected in their narratives and more specifically in their resumes, the 10 SSAOs worked at 56 PWIs located in 20 different states throughout the United States. Eight of the participants worked at five or more PWIs: three SSAOs worked at eight PWIs, two SSAOs worked at six PWIs, and three worked at five PWIs. It should be noted that one of the SSAOs
worked at four PWIs.

In addition to the number of PWIs these SSAOs have worked at in their career, their mobility can be further illustrated by the number of different states they worked in. Seven of the SSAOs worked in four or more states over the course of their career: four participants worked in five different states and three participants worked in four different states. One SSAO worked in three different states.

The participants in this study seized opportunities as to advance their careers. In many cases, the SSAOs took risks and accepted professional challenges in an effort to move their career forward. Bruce communicated that he took a risk and accepted a position at a university that was located in what he perceived as a conservative state. He said:

There were a handful of faculty members who were either of African descent or African American or of color so it was a tough decision coming here. I thought that I would take the chance, take the challenge, and see how things work out…. I said, "Look, if they make an offer, am I going to be all right coming here?" [Laughing] She said, "Bruce you will be all right. If you come here there is a good community for African Americans here and you will have some support--so you will be all right." And sure enough, it has turned out to be the case.

Kevin stated that he has applied a rule that has guided him in making decisions about whether or not to remain at an institution. He said that if he has not received additional responsibilities after three years of working at a university, his plan is to find other career opportunities within five years. Kyle explained that he has always accepted positions with the next position in mind. He said, “It put me in a position to get another position… Not for the next position--but for the one after that. So I was always one or two steps ahead of where I wanted to be based on the position that I currently had.”

Several of the respondents in this study communicated that African American
males can advance their careers much faster if they are willing to relocate to cities that are not as popular among African Americans. Tony’s narratives capture the spirit of their message:

We've got to help young professionals like yourself to know that if you get a call…don't blow it off because of its [location] and because you have never been there. Take your butt out there and take a look at it. It might be a hell of a lot better than you think. We've got to get them to broaden their scope and not limit their career possibilities based on locations or a particular environment….

Given that there are a limited number of senior-level and chief student affairs positions, it is critical for African American men to remain flexible as they consider positions and locations during their job search. The SSAOs in this study cited examples of African Americans passing up on senior-level positions and opportunities to advance their careers due to location. Jackson (2003a) conducted a study that identified the NASPA regions (see Figure 2) they were employed in. He found that approximately 11% of the African American student affairs administrators in the sample were employed in the western region of the United States—NASPA Region V and VI. Jackson (2003a) also found that 6.5% of the African Americans in the sample were employed in NASPA Region I—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Theme two: Black Man’s Burden

This theme represents the inconveniences and extra responsibilities that these African American males have experienced as they have climbed the career ladder within majority White spaces. The burdens that these participants describe are specifically attributed to their existence as African American males. Many times, these burdens were embraced as their obligation or duty to lift other African Americans as they climb. On the other hand, these burdens were sometimes frustrating and resisted by the participants.
Whether or not the burdens were embraced or resisted, they were considered to be commonplace at PWIs.

As participants described their experiences working at PWIs, they talked about the challenges associated with being the only one or one of very few African Americans at the PWIs they have worked for in their careers. Feagin (2000) points out that there are many racist images of and fears about Black men that can be found at all levels of White society. Many of the participants stated that sometimes their colleagues and students had very little engagement with African Americans and they often relied upon negative stereotypes to define the Black male body. The participants’ narratives are in alignment with empirical literature that suggests that many people exhibit a pathological aversion toward Black men—known as Black misandry (Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano; 2007). The presence of Black misandric beliefs at PWIs has positioned the African American males in this study to dispel widely held stereotypes and to educate culturally incompetent faculty, students, and staff. The participants spoke directly to this burden:

It also means that I also carry that burden on my shoulders…it was just the natural order of things. Just like being a dad or being a professional—it’s one that you take freely knowing that this is the card that I was dealt…I just saw it as an opportunity to really advance and breakdown barriers in avenues that maybe others could not… Little subtle things that I may do...to say hello to children, shake their hands…to make myself available for people for all deliberate efforts to break down some of those barriers because I know I may be the first and only Black person someone sees... So I want to be at least a little different than the one they may see on TV or the one that they are worried about on the street corner. (Kyle)

As it relates to the theme, Kyle’s statement speaks to the extra responsibility he has assumed to change the negative perceptions that people at PWIs have of Black males. He has taken action to challenge the Black misandric beliefs that many Caucasians are social conditioned to embrace. Kyle’s added role as perception manager is a result of having a
double-consciousness in which he sees himself through the eyes of others (Dubois, 1903).

Several participants in this study also talked about the burden of being perceived as an affirmative action hire and how they overcompensated by working “10 times harder” than their colleagues. This dynamic speaks to the research conducted by Feagin and Sikes (1994) which indicates that many Whites tend to question the presence or actions of Blacks who are working in traditionally White spaces. At different points throughout their careers, they established themselves as individuals with strong work ethics—simultaneously discarding the Black misandric beliefs that African American males are lazy and problematic employees. Paul said, “It’s tough because you want to achieve and you want to be known for your merit. You want to dispel any inkling that you are an affirmative action hire.” Nelson shared that his wife often tells him that he is over-preparing and taking things too seriously at work. He said, “It was important to me to have people think of me as a hard worker.” Oliver said, “I have to be twice as good to be accepted as competent. That's the African American qualifier.”

In addition to dispelling myths and enduring the critical gazes on the Black male body, most of the participants in this study communicated that they embrace their obligation to assist other African Americans on campus. The added role is something that they willingly embrace, but they admitted feeling added pressure to do so given the poor representation of African American males at the PWIs they worked for in their careers. The participants who were in alignment with Dyson’s intentional Blackness typology seemingly felt as though they had no other choice but to break down barriers. Many of the participants shared that they felt obligated to be a trail blazer and to uplift other African Americans:
It was always kind of imprinted on me that we [African Americans] had a role to play in terms of trying to trail blaze to make sure that we open up higher education…. But I have to say I knew what I was getting into when I got into these positions. So, when you ask the question, draining, yes, it's draining, but I just mainly see that as part of the territory when you are trying to blaze up trails and trying to fight some things. That just comes with the territory... So, yes draining, but I knew that was part of the job... (Marshall)

One of the best things that I think you can do is to help students to graduate who normally wouldn’t graduate. I’ve always had a special responsibility to help students of color. Here I am the only person above the Dean’s level who is either African American or Latino…I’m it. So besides all of my other responsibilities--it kind of falls on me to represent the students and the staff of color at the meetings…that’s good and bad. (Nathan)

It is a welcomed burden but it’s a burden nonetheless because you can't shake it off... Any mistake is magnified and any success is glorified way beyond proportion. So there are these exaggerated notions of who you are in terms of the role that you play. If you do it well, the expectations only grow more. If you do it poorly, there are so many that are looking on that are hurt too. So there is no room for failure. That is a burden. (Oliver)

One participant provided a slightly different perspective as it relates to uplifting other African Americans. He communicated a bit of frustration associated with the expectation that he “would be certain things for Black people.” He stated, “My foot is in the door but I am not enabling or accommodating… If I become too Black then I lose my emphasis--my ability to reach and even communicate with some students.” He also stated that it is challenging when Black administrators expect for him to be natural affiliates with them just because he is Black. In this particular case, the burden takes on a different meaning because it is an added weight that is not whole-heartedly embraced. Within this context, the African American male views his Blackness in alignment with Dyson’s (2005) strategy of accidental Blackness, whereby the individual’s Black identity is not of central importance and the individual does not feel as though they are naturally affiliated with other Black people.
Theme three: Love for the work

As the participants talked about their careers and specific experiences at PWIs, it became very evident that they found the work to be extremely rewarding. It was acknowledged by them that there have been challenges at different points in their careers; however, they seemingly processed these challenges as unrelated to the student affairs profession and the associated work. Nine of the SSAOs in this study held terminal degrees in higher education administration and six of them held master’s degrees in student affairs administration. Their educational background is relevant because it speaks to their commitment to the field and their attraction to higher education administration in general and student affairs administration in specific.

As the participants in this study talked about how they conceptualized their role as a SSAO and reflected on their entire careers, they each communicated an extremely high level of satisfaction with student affairs work. The participants provided a wide range of responses that support their love for the work. Kevin reflected on the exposure that he has had and the many public figures that he has met throughout his career. He said, “I can look back at my career and I have shaken hands, hugged, and taken pictures with Winnie Mandela, Coretta Scott King, Jesse Jackson, Cornell West, Henry Louis Gates Jr.”

Bruce talked about how much he felt valued and appreciated by the students on campus, especially the African American students. Marshall referred to student affairs work being his calling and his ministry. He said, “When I use it in this sense, it is really about justice and equality and making sure that people’s needs are being met.” Nathan reflected on the many students that he has encountered and has helped to shape. He said:
I think that I have changed some lives of some people who were about to drop out or go back to wherever they were from. Now they have persevered and I have directed them in the right way. These students have graduated. Some of them are lawyers. One of my most hard-headed students is now a district attorney. I said to him “when you went to college you would have been prosecuted by the district attorney.” It took me years to get through to him.

Tony also reflected on his contribution to the development of students as they have transitioned and pursued their goals:

To see students grow and develop. To see a very naïve…unsophisticated individual coming in and four or five years later, they mature and become very sophisticated and worldly… To watch them develop and to have some small part in their development is the best part of it for me.

Isaac is a retired SSAO and he communicated that one of the highlights of his career was the mentoring relationships he developed with students. He shares that many of them entered the field of student affairs and/or went on to become college professors. He stated that he stayed in contact with five of the students throughout the years and their families go vacationing together.

Nelson is also a retired SSAO and as he reflected on his career, he spoke proudly of the numerous relationships that he developed with faculty, staff, and students. He told story after story about students that he helped to overcome obstacles. The most fulfilling aspect of the role was making a difference in people’s lives. In summarizing his career, Nelson emphasized that he loved his job because of his ability to make a difference in the lives of the people he has encountered.

*RQ2: How do African American male SSAOs describe their experiences with racism and discrimination at PWIs?*

*Theme 4. Racial micro-aggressions*

Racial micro-aggressions are the subtle insults that are directed toward people of
color, often automatically or unconsciously (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). These insults can be verbal, nonverbal, or visual. The African American SSAOs in this study provided numerous examples of racial micro-aggressions experienced at PWIs. Although they were frustrated at times, the participants in this study experienced the racial micro-aggressions so frequently throughout their lifetime, that they were never surprised or shocked. Kevin said, “I mean I think, we [African Americans] all do [experience racism], if you work in white America, have experienced it.” Bruce was asked if he has experienced racism or discrimination and he said:

The majority of [my experiences] have been the minor micro-inequities that take place. Where you are sitting in a meeting and you are talking about diversity initiatives and addressing EEOC matters and affirmative action type of matters. I'm a student affairs guy and there are other HR folks in the room but they look at you. "So Bruce, what do you think about this affirmative action or EEOC matter? What are the specifics on this?" I said, "John is the human resources person. You should ask him." (laughing) So that type of thing takes place.

The participants cite other examples of verbal racial micro-aggressions that were received as offensive or inappropriate. These remarks were made by their colleagues and/or supervisors at various points in their careers:

I was there for five years and after people got comfortable with me, a person came up to me and said, "You know people believe that you got this job because you're Black.” I said, “That may be true. But the color of my skin did not allow me to keep this job.” (Kevin)

I've had situations where people have said, "Hey boy” and to me that is a derogatory term. I'm a grown man! (Kevin)

A very high level administrator, a White administrator, told me that I'm now Vice President and I shouldn’t act as if I was “a Black Vice President.” (Marshall)

Sometimes in meetings, you can kind of read verbal expressions where people make comments that one might call racist or not sensitive--I have seen those. (Marshall)

It is hard when you are meeting new faculty and staff…and people seem surprised
and shocked—You have a Ph.D.? …the degree of surprise and shock is disappointing. (Paul)

I'll never forget it, when I interviewed for the dean of students position…the question was "If you became the dean, how would you handle people not looking at you as being the African-American dean, meaning the dean for African-American students only?" I thought it was a very interesting because it raised the question in my mind as to how they viewed me coming in as a Black man. (Tony)

Paul stated that he has had experiences with White colleagues in which they have questioned if he was over-reacting to something he perceived as racist. He said:

I have been at a couple of schools that are well known and some are very prestigious. I have worked with very intelligent people and had to explain and almost justify my experience with racism. Having other smart people ask, "Are you sure that was racism?" It is completely demoralizing, completely isolating, and you feel like not only have you had an encounter with racism--but you have to then assure a White person that the encounter was actually racist. It just gets [pause] you get burned out.

The majority of interactions communicated involved professional staff members. However, Nelson described a situation in which a White student asked if he could touch his hair because he had always been “fascinated by Black people’s hair.” After Nelson let him touch his hair, the student said that it felt like pubic hair. Paul described an experience in which a parent questioned him about his credentials and his professional competence.

Theme 5: Blocking of Black Male Bodies

This theme speaks to racism and discrimination that is more intentional, malicious, and overt. In addition to the many everyday subtle indignities, several participants in this study described situations in which people have acted on prejudices and stereotypes. Feagin and Sikes (1994) argue that a significant dimension of modern racism is the racially motivated blocking of space. Within this context, African
Americans who access or attempt to access PWIs are subjected to negative attitudes, stares, or actions of Whites that clearly communicate that these traditionally White spaces are still reserved for Whites only. When this blocking of space occurs it creates a hostile workplace climate.

The participants in this study communicated that they felt that career opportunities and benefits were blocked at select PWIs due to their Black maleness. This is consistent with Derrick Bell’s claim that a major function of today’s discriminatory practices is the exploitation of Black labor and the denial of opportunities that would be available otherwise (Bell, 1995). Kevin recalled a job interview in which he felt he was being discouraged by the White male who was interviewing him. Kevin said that the questions that he was being asked were inappropriate and he suspected the individual of attempting to negatively influence his decision to pursue the job. He later found out that the White male that he was in close competition with for the position did not have the same level of credentials that he had. Kevin attributed the White male’s ability to compete with him for the position to racial discrimination. Tony also cited a situation in which a search committee representative asked him a question about his racial identity during a job interview. Isaac told a story about a directorship he pursued at a PWI that had no people of color on the staff. Despite his superior credentials, the PWI hired another White staff member. Later in his career, Isaac was hired as the SSAO at that same institution. As Isaac talked about the situation, he stated that there was no doubt in his mind that he was discriminated against.

Feagin (2000) points out that there is abundant literature that highlights the existence of employment discrimination. He states that each year, tens of thousands of
racial discriminations lawsuits are filed with state agencies and the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Consistent with the Feagin’s (2000) study, two of the participants in this study initiated the first phase of a lawsuit on the basis of racial discrimination. The first example involves Bruce who was functioning as the Associate Dean of Students prior to the current Dean’s announcement that he was pursuing another job opportunity. Despite Bruce’s superior credentials, increased levels of responsibility, and proven track record at the institution, the Interim Dean position was given to a White male who was serving as the Assistant Dean. After Bruce formally pursued the matter through the university’s human resources office, the decision was recanted and Bruce was appointed the Interim Dean.

A similar situation involving employment discrimination occurred with Nathan. He was the Associate Director of a department and the Director left to pursue another opportunity. The departing Director recommended Nathan for the Directorship. Nathan was immediately told by the SSAO that if he was to serve as the Acting Director, then he could not apply for the Director position. Nathan stayed in his current position and applied for the Directorship. After the job search was conducted, the SSAO communicated that he and the other finalist were not qualified and that she planned on re-opening the search. Nathan eventually started a lawsuit on the grounds of racial discrimination and after an internal investigation, he was appointed as the Director of the department.

Participants described other situations in which their White colleagues intentionally did things to make their work life miserable for them. Bruce described a situation in which a White, senior-level colleague was doing everything in his power to
discredit him. Bruce stated that his senior-level colleague was a self-proclaimed good ole boy from the “old-school south.” This individual was spreading falsehoods about Nathan to the point where the President began to question his competency and motives. Marshall communicated that he was aware that he was left out of specific meetings due to his Black maleness. Kevin communicated something similar acknowledging that he was not “foolish enough” to think he is a part of the inner circle. He said, “There is always a meeting before the meeting.” Feagin argues that “the overwhelming majority of White trustees, administrators, advisors, faculty members, and students have shown little desire to remake their campuses in order to truly integrate Black interests, history, and concerns into the center of campus life and culture (Feagin, 2000, p.171).

RQ3: How do African American male SSAOs describe their response to racism and/or discrimination?

Theme six: Cognitive-Time Responses

This theme describes the way in which the participants in this study have responded to racism and discrimination at PWIs. The African American SSAOs in this study all experienced some form of racism and/or discrimination in their careers. During the interviews, I made certain to probe in an attempt to get the participant to describe how he handled these subtle, covert, and overt discriminatory acts. The result of the probing and subsequent analysis yielded an array responses that were largely based on the following variables: (a) the intensity of the particular racial or discriminatory act; (b) the impact of the act; (c) the physical space in which the act took place; (d) the people who were present at the time of the act; and (e) the participant’s personal disposition and philosophical ideology. These variables will be discussed as specific examples are
provided and their collective responses are presented.

There were a wide range of reactions to racism and discrimination presented as the participants in this study told their stories. As I analyzed the codes and interrogated participants’ narratives, patterns in their responses began to evolve. As a result of the analysis, I categorized the participants’ responses according to (a) response time and (b) the cognitive process that occurred prior to responding. The response time is characterized as immediate or delayed. Some of the SSAOs in this study responded immediately to racism and discrimination and others chose to allow time to pass prior to responding. The cognitive process is characterized as strategic or non-strategic. Some of the participants described thinking about tactful or clever ways to respond to incidents of racism and discrimination. On the other hand, some SSAOs responded to incidents of racism and discrimination without giving their response or the ramifications of their response much thought.

In an effort to conceptualize their responses to racism and discrimination, I developed a *Discrimination Response Matrix* (see Figure 5) that illustrates how the African American SSAOs have responded to racism and discrimination at PWIs. The matrix consists of four response quadrants: (a) immediate and strategic; (b) delayed-strategic; (c) immediate and non-strategic; and (d) delayed and non-strategic. These middle-class African Americans have relied on these responses to deal with and persevere through the various discriminatory acts in White spaces. It should be noted that the discrimination response matrix represents the types of responses that the individuals described utilizing at PWIs. Participants communicated responding in a variety of ways to racism and discrimination. Consequently, no particular participant is
placed within a particular response quadrant in the matrix.

*Immediate and strategic response.* All of the participants in this study have described utilizing an immediate and strategic approach to addressing racism and discrimination. This category of responses is depicted in quadrant 1 in Figure 5. Upon being subjected to racism or discrimination, each participant said that there are times in which he has immediately addressed it. In alignment with this category, the participants thought about how they wanted to respond and then acted strategically to address the discriminatory act. Examples of immediate and strategic responses were provided by several of the participants in this study. Oliver described a situation in which he was with other senior-level administrators at a university’s Presidential Inauguration. As he was robing with his colleagues, an elderly gentleman appropriately introduced himself to the White senior-level administrators and asked them their names and what they did at the university. When the elderly gentleman got to Oliver, he asked him what professional team he played for. Although Oliver’s general approach is non-confrontational, he took an immediate and strategic approach to responding to this situation.

I essentially said to him, "My name is Oliver and I appreciate the fact that you see something in me as an athlete. I do relate to those days but they were long ago… I am pleased to be a professor at the university and I am pleased to meet you."

Now if he can't see himself as a fool after that, he's got some real problems. I would like to follow-up with him at some point in time, but it will likely never happen. But that is the way I would approach it every time.

Kevin communicated that he takes a proactive approach and attempts to think about situations in advance so he can have a pre-packaged response that is strategic. He stated that he engages in this process to avoid being “caught up.” He said, “When you get a little bit older you begin to think about if somebody calls me a Nigger and I’m in this setting, what am I going to do? [When I was younger] the first thing I was going to do
was bust them in the face. As I got older, I understood that I need to be able to respond…”

Isaac described a situation in which the President was challenging his decision to hire an African American candidate as the director of a unit within the student affairs division. The President told him that he needed to go home and think about it overnight. Isaac talked about his response to the President.

I said, “No. I don’t need to do that. The search committee has given him (the African American candidate) some strong points and very little negative things. The man has been involved with placement, he has also been a director of personnel, and I want to recommend him to you. I really don’t need to think about it overnight.

Nelson described responding in an immediate and strategic fashion to a racial micro-aggression. This was the incident involving the White student who had very little exposure to African Americans and was fascinated with Black people’s hair. The student asked if he could touch Nelson’s hair and upon touching it said that his hair felt like pubic hairs. Nelson’s disposition is one that embraces these situations and his immediate and strategic response was to educate the student about how his comment was inappropriate and offensive.

*Delayed and strategic response.* The second quadrant represents delayed and strategic responses to racism and discrimination. This category includes experiences in which the participants reflected on the discriminatory act and responded later. The discriminatory incidents within this quadrant seemed to be more serious in regard to their intensity and impact. Tony described a situation in which the President at his PWI was going to contract out the janitorial services. This decision would have prevented the custodians, who were 99.9% African American, from being able to take advantage of the
educational benefits they were relying on to send their children to college. Many of the African American custodial workers were employed at the university for over 20 years and sacrificed other job opportunities due to the tuition waiver benefit. Tony’s delayed but strategic response was to meet with the other four to five senior-level African American administrators about what they can do about the perceived racial injustice. After discussing their plan of action, they went to the President of the university and communicated to him that they would resign immediately if the university moved forward with its plan to outsource. The President ultimately changed his mind and did not move forward with his plans to outsource the janitorial services. Tony said, “He would have had to explain why five key administrators, all African American administrators, resigned at one time. He would have had to answer that question.”

Other examples of delayed and strategic responses to racism and discrimination include incidents involving employment discrimination. Bruce described a situation in which he was unfairly passed over for a promotion. In short, he was functioning as the Associate Dean of Students when he was notified that the Dean of Students would be pursuing another job opportunity. Despite his increased level of responsibility and his impressive professional portfolio, the Assistant Dean, who was a White male, was named the Interim Dean. Bruce did not respond immediately to the announcement. He questioned how the decision was made and thought about the alternatives available to him to address the matter. Bruce ultimately filed a racial discrimination grievance with the Office of Human Resources and communicated his intent to pursue the matter legally. Nathan also employed a delayed and strategic response when he perceived that he was the victim of employment discrimination. He first met with the person who was
responsible for making the hiring decision in attempt to gain a better understanding of her rationale. After being unsatisfied with her response and thinking about his options, he decided to file a grievance at the university on the grounds of racial discrimination. These two responses are consistent with the research literature that contends that many middle-class African Americans are increasingly pursuing legal action in response to discriminatory acts in the workplace (Feagin & Sikes, 1994).

Marshall described another situation in which his response to racial discrimination was delayed and strategic. He said:

I have been in some meetings where people have said some things that border on racism and I have had two responses and these have been strategic. At some point—I have chosen not say anything in order for the conversation to fully develop. Therefore, that would give me an opportunity to learn and then to figure out later what I might need to do to navigate the environment…this is part of a strategy… I think when things are unfolding, it is sometimes wise to sit back and allow it to unfold because sometimes you can say things too quickly and shut it down. Whatever is going to occur is going to occur anyway and then you have no idea of what the dynamics are. So that has been some of my experience, comments have been made and I just got to allow it to play out and then see who it was coming from and how the people might respond to it. That can give me some ideas of what I might need to do later…

Immediate and non-strategic response. The third quadrant highlights responses that are immediate and non-strategic. The participants in this study all acknowledged that this is not the best way to respond to racism and discrimination at PWIs. The participants indicated that when they were younger professionals, they were more likely to respond in alignment with this quadrant. They stated that with maturity, they have learned how to respond in a manner that would not bring them negative consequences. It is important to note that the younger African American SSAOs in this study did not report responding in this manner at a higher frequency than the older participants. In fact, there were very few instances in which the participants reported responding in this manner.
Kyle stated that earlier in his professional career, he responded to a situation in which he publicly embarrassed a White female who was being insubordinate and resisting his authority due to his status as a Black male. As Kyle reflected on the situation, he believed that he should have had a private dialogue with her. Nelson also described an immediate and non-strategic response to a situation in which he banged his fist on the President’s desk and stormed out of the room. Paul described a situation early in his career in which he got into a very loud and public argument with the campus police. Kevin provided an extreme hypothetical example of an immediate and non-strategic response when he talked about punching someone in the face if they called him a nigger. Given that these African American male SSAOs were able to successfully navigate PWIs, it is not surprising that they didn’t communicate numerous immediate and non-strategic responses. Responding spontaneously in an untactful manner to racism and discrimination in the workplace could potentially have a negative influence on African American’s ability to advance within that particular setting (Feagin & Sikes, 1994).

*Delayed and non-strategic.* The fourth quadrant yielded the least amount of responses. This quadrant represents responses to racism and discrimination that are delayed and non-strategic. Responses of this nature include resigned acceptance, blocking it out, and attempting to ignore it. This type of response was the least common method of responding to discriminatory acts. However, there were a few examples in the narratives that highlight this type of categorical response. As Kyle talked about his experiences with racism and discrimination, he communicated that he sometimes doesn’t acknowledge it. He stated:

I kind of have a blind eye to that and I think that is one of my greater faults. I will see that coming and say, "whatever" and keep on [going]. That will probably piss
you off because your coming at me thinking you might get me to react on the race card. I just move on like you are nobody. So it probably annoys folks more because I have a blind eye to it.

Bruce described a situation in which a White senior-level administrator proclaimed that he represented the “old school South.” He found the comment a bit offensive, but did not question the administrator directly about the comment. Bruce later experienced discriminatory acts at the hands of that very same administrator. On a more subtle note, Paul described a situation in which he felt insulted after his colleagues responded in amazement when they learned that he had his doctorate degree and a long list of accomplishments. Paul’s delayed response was to question internally why the institution hired him. Although this response style may seem a bit timid, it should be noted that sometimes African Americans employ this method to avoid expending the high energy costs of addressing discriminatory acts that occur regularly within predominately White spaces. Feagin and Sikes (1994) refer to the shield that many African Americans put on prior to coming to work--simply ignoring discriminatory acts is one of many coping mechanisms employed. Feagin and Sikes (1994) also point out that many African Americans who fail to assertively respond to racism and discrimination can pay psychological costs—including humiliation, poor self-concept, frustration, rage, and depression.
**DISCRIMINATION RESPONSE MATRIX**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Immediate</th>
<th>Delayed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Strategic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Figure 5. Discrimination response matrix*

*RQ4: What factors do they perceive as most salient to their success and/or failure?*

**Theme 7: Increasing personal and academic capital**

Personal capital within this context speaks to the knowledge and skills that African Americans males have acquired to perform at a high level and advance their careers. Academic capital speaks to their capacity to utilize their acquired knowledge and skills to move the institution’s academic mission forward. The participants in this study were an accomplished group of African American males who were employed at PWIs. As the SSAOs reflected on their experiences working at PWIs, they referenced the many strategic investments they have made in their personal and academic capital.

*Secure Your Terminal Degree.* Each of the ten participants emphasized the importance of African American males making the investment in their education and personal development. Although many PWIs claim that a terminal degree is preferred,
the participants in this study communicated that having a terminal degree is essential to be competitive for SSAO positions at PWIs. Each participant in this study had their terminal degree prior to securing their respective SSAO position. Isaac said:

African Americans must realize the importance of getting their doctorate and what it can do for their careers. That’s why I got my doctorate and became a Vice President. I left the position making $150,000 a year…. The problem is… The way I see it over the last 20 years is the Brothers and Sisters don’t want to take the time to work on their doctorate. It is very important that we respect that if you are going to be a SSAO you have to have a doctorate. That is first and foremost…

Bruce said, “When you receive that doctorate, I don't care whether it's Ph.D. or an Ed.D., when you do that within a university community, people lose their mind--you go into a whole other realm of being accepted into the community. Bruce’s statement speaks to challenging the racial priming and socialization process that endorses stereotypes that label Black males as anti-intellectuals (Smith, Yosso, and Solorzano, 2007). The participants in this study communicated that securing their terminal degree was critical in their ability to defeat some of those stereotypes and position themselves to pursue senior-level administrative posts.

Participate in Professional Development Activities. In addition to securing their terminal degrees, several of the participants in this study referenced the professional development activities that have been critical to their development. Isaac recommended that African Americans put in place a professional development plan that outlines the types of professional development opportunities they want to pursue. Isaac talked about the valuable skills he acquired as a result of engaging in Harvard University’s executive management training program. Isaac was also an ACE [American Council on Education] Fellow that allowed him to spend a year at a major research institution and gain valuable skills that he felt would expand his professional portfolio. He said, “…I wanted to know
more about intercollegiate athletics, fundraising & development, and assessment &
academic affairs.”

Nelson also talked about a leadership development program he attended that was
coordinated by ACE. He explained how the experience benefited him:

ACE invited about 15 people from around the country that they thought were
future or promising college Presidents. We had a two-day training on things you
should do. They critiqued you, they video taped you, they critiqued your resume
and they had someone come in and talk about how difficult it was to have a strong
family relationship because you are always out and doing things like that.

It is important to note that as a result of learning about the demands of a college
president, Nathan decided that he did not want to pursue being a president. He
determined that he valued his family life too much and wasn’t willing to jeopardize his
relationships with his wife and kids.

Nathan also emphasized the importance of engaging in professional development
activities. He referenced two leadership development programs coordinated by the
American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASU) and the National
Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). He said:

If you are going to be a Senior Student Affairs Officer, you should get into one of
the programs... One is called the Millennium Leadership Initiative... You should
go to some program that teaches you to be a Senior Student Affairs Officer
through NASPA. Through AACU, they have an institute which is for people who
aspire to be community college Presidents. Even though you may not want to be
a President, it teaches you to be a better Chief Student Affairs Officer.

The participants also talked about holding leadership positions within professional
associations like NASPA and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), and
NASAP (National Association of Student Affairs Professionals). Each of the participants
conducted a long list of presentations at regional and national conferences related to a
wide range of topics. In addition to presenting at conferences, Isaac communicated the
importance for African American males to expand their knowledge base and be highly visible in national organizations. Kyle was in agreement and referenced the leadership positions he held within NASPA and ACPA throughout his career. He said:

I find myself spending a lot of time on ACPA and NASPA related kinds of things…. in trying to align our university in a way that keeps us learning and then puts our graduates in a position where they can be positive players in the field when they graduate.

Informal and Formal Mentoring. One of the ways in which these African American males have invested in their personal capital is by developing mentoring relationships. The African American male SSAOs spoke passionately about the various formal and informal mentoring relationships they established throughout their careers. They referenced mentoring relationships that they developed with White and Black professionals in the broad field of higher education. In many cases, their mentors were the ones who introduced them to the field of student affairs and gave them professional opportunities. The majority of the mentors that they spoke about were in supervisory roles or senior-level administrative positions at the time the mentoring relationship was initiated. Many of the participants attributed their ability to secure an SSAO position to the investment that their mentors made in them. Nathan said:

If you want to be a Senior Student Affairs Officer, you need to have a group of folks who are already Vice Presidents who can talk to you about what it is going to take for you to be a SSAO. People who are already there, well seasoned folks--male and female. That’s what I have--people of color and not of color who have become my mentor group.

Tony felt strongly about the need for African American males to secure mentors. He said:

Part of that is that you are out there by yourself and you think you have to do this by yourself--that's part of it. See if I didn't tell the young folks anything-- don't think you have to suffer alone and quietly. That's why I say find a mentor. Find
somebody who may have gone through the same thing you are going through. I think the bottom line is that you have to talk to somebody, you have to share what's on your mind with somebody—you have to. You can't do this by yourself!

Kyle talked about his relationship with five mentors who provided him with professional guidance and employment opportunities at different points in his career. His mentors emphasized the importance of remaining engaged in professional organizations. Nathan and Paul talked about peer mentors that they utilized to confide in and utilized as sounding boards. Oliver talked about the special relationship that he developed with his mentor as a student and how it extended throughout his life. Oliver talked about the significance of his mentor:

He had such a profound impact on my thinking about who I was as a student--someone who worked very hard, started off painfully average, and discovered I had some academic talent. I was also a student athlete…he helped me translate all of those experiences into something that could be a lifetime career pursuit in student personnel work. It was him who allowed me to look more critically at my talents, my passions, my abilities, my interests, and helped to translate that into something that is now a part of who I am forever. He is no longer with me, having passed six months ago, but that is the most profound experience that I have had in all my career.

It is also important to note that several of the participants in this study made investments in their personal capital by assisting other African American students and professionals to navigate PWIs. They communicated that it gives them great pride and personal fulfillment to assist other African Americans who are attempting to navigate the walls within the academy. Nathan referenced his obligation to provide African American males with guidance and support. He said, “You need somebody who has been through what you’re going through to kind of lead you through. So the light you see in the tunnel is not a train.” He added that part of his job is to create Black male leaders so he can turn the mantle over to them in the not so far future.
Marshall warns young African Americans to never succumb to the pressure to disassociate with other African Americans. He said, “Be secure in your own identity. Don’t ever let anyone say you shouldn’t be Black or comfortable as a Black male. I still think that in 2008, although we want the world to be fair, the world is not fair.” He also added that he maintains strong relationships within the Black community surrounding the community and with his church. He said that not only does it provide him with a reliable network of people that he can trust, but it provides him with some “added protection” against what the university might choose to do to him.

*Engage in Scholarly Activity.* The participants in this study emphasized the importance of engaging in scholarly activity and demonstrating their contribution to the academic mission of the university. All the participants in this study have engaged in some form of scholarly activity in their careers. Their resumes indicate that they have a wide range of experience in teaching credit-bearing courses, presenting at conferences, writing books, and publishing articles in peer reviewed journals. Six of the participants held faculty appointments in addition to their SSAO role. They communicated that their status as a faculty member significantly influenced their credibility within Academic Affairs and it helped them to navigate PWIs. Marshall reinforced the importance of developing academic credentials. He advised:

Try to make sure that you get your academic credentials in order. What is going to be important in doing that is for you to start publishing. That's the other thing that I push. If you are interested in being a Vice President of Student Affairs, try to do some writing to build up your academic credentials. Try to get a broad range of experiences. One of the things that I have found looking back over my career is that things that I thought were not that important have been things that have helped me later in my further development.

Oliver said:
As a Chief Student Affairs Officer, I also am a full professor, which I negotiated as a part of the job, and as a student affairs professional, in my view, it’s imperative that one have an academic affiliation as well. So I am a full-time faculty member and I work principally with students who are writing Masters thesis and doctoral dissertations. So it keeps my academic portfolio alive. When I retire from this job, I will likely go back to the faculty part-time in retirement.

Kevin and Nelson were in the process of writing books at the time of the interview. Marshall said, “If it is possible to get a faculty rank, also a faculty appointment, along with the VP slot, to me that enhances your credibility within the academic community.” Isaac pointed out that sometimes in student affairs people view themselves as second class. He said that he never viewed himself that way because of his academic credentials. He referenced that he has published and received an award for his outstanding contribution to literature and research by NASPA. Isaac has written several books and monographs, published dozens of articles in peer-reviewed journals, secured over a million dollars in grants, and has served on several editorial boards. He said, “It is very important that other brothers and sisters see that there is someone that is writing about certain issues in student affairs.” It was evident that these African American males contributed significantly to their respective PWIs. In addition to the institution securing a talented senior-level administrator, they had academic scholars who were contributing to the academic mission of the institution.

Chapter Summary

The results reported in this chapter emerged as a result of conducting a collective case study of the lived experiences of 10 African American male SSAOs at PWIs. The participants in this study reflected on 278 years of experience working at 56 PWIs in 20 different states. Hundreds of pages of data accumulated as a result of collecting written
documents, transcribing in-depth interviews, and writing memos. ATLAS.ti was utilized as the primary analytical tool to aid in making sense of the collected data. Data analysis consisted of data collection, coding, data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Extra precautions were taken to protect the identity of the participants while presenting potentially identifiable characteristics or stories.

The themes that emerged as a result of analyzing the data were organized and presented in alignment with the research question it answered: (1) Mobile Professionals, (2) Black Man’s Burden, (3) Love for the Work, (4) Racial Micro-aggressions, (5) Blocking of Black Male Bodies, (6) Cognitive-Time Responses, and (7) Increasing Personal and Academic Capital. The mobile professionals theme highlighted that the participants in this study were extremely mobile throughout their careers, 80% worked at five or more PWIs. The Black man’s burden theme represents the inconveniences and extra responsibilities that the participant’s described experiencing at PWIs. Love for the work captures the wide range of responses that indicated that these African American male SSAOs found their work extremely rewarding. The racial micro-aggressions theme describes the subtle insults and everyday mini-assaults that the participants described experiencing at PWIs. The blocking of Black male bodies theme captures their experiences with intentional and overt racism. The cognitive-time responses outlined in the discrimination response matrix outlines four ways that characterize how the African American male SSAOs have responded to various discriminatory acts. The increasing personal and academic capital theme discusses the numerous ways in which the participants acquired the knowledge and skills to advance their careers and move their
institutions forward. Each of these themes were discussed in great detail and supported with various quotations from the transcribed interviews.

These themes were developed as a result of utilizing the constant comparative method and reflecting on the guiding research questions, interview questions, literature review, theoretical frameworks, code frequency tables, memos, quotation reports, code families, and network maps. Table 12 displays the code map that was created to maintain complete transparency and outline the three iterations of analysis that led to the development of the seven themes (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002).
CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how the intersection of race and gender influence the experiences of African American male senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) at predominately White institutions (PWIs). As the participants in this study reflected and told stories, they pulled from memories developed from 278 years of lived experiences at 56 PWIs throughout 20 states in the United States. Utilizing critical race theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), a particular focus of this line of inquiry was to investigate how this sample of African American males experienced and responded to racism and discrimination. In addition, Van Manen’s (1995) lifeword existentials was used as a secondary lens to make meaning of their experiences.

An extensive review of the literature was conducted that primarily focused on the representation, retention, and experiences of African Americans in higher education (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Flowers, 2003; Gaston, 2003; Harvey & Anderson, 2005; Holmes, 2003; 2004; Jackson, 2001; 2002a; 2002b; 2003; 2006; Jackson & Daniels,
As a result of identifying the gaps in the extant literature, a question was raised in regard to how the intersection of race and gender influences the experiences of African American male SSAOs who are employed at PWIs. This line of inquiry was guided by the following four research questions:

1. How do African American male SSAOs describe their social and academic experiences at PWIs?
2. How do African American male SSAOs describe their experiences with racism and/or discrimination at PWIs?
3. How do African American male SSAOs describe their responses to racism and/or discrimination at PWIs?
4. What factors do African American male SSAOs perceive as most salient to their success and/or failure at PWIs?

The findings from this study contribute to the scant literature that qualitatively investigates the experiences of African American males employed as SSAOs at PWIs. The information gleaned from this study gives voice to the lived experiences of the selected participants. The experiential knowledge shared through the participants’ narratives and stories will assist African Americans and other people of color at PWIs as they (a) define their own experiences in these spaces, (b) make decisions about how to respond to racism and discrimination, and (c) develop strategies to navigate their careers in ways that will allow them to achieve their goals. It should also be acknowledged that
although this study was specific to African American male SSAOs, the findings can inform all professionals of color in all disciplines who are attempting to navigate predominately White spaces. In addition, this information is useful to higher education professionals who have a genuine interest in gaining a better understanding of how African Americans conceptualize their experiences at PWIs so they can effectively serve as advocates and agents of change.

A collective case study was utilized to investigate the lived experiences of 10 African American SSAOs who have been employed at various PWIs throughout their careers. The primary data collection technique utilized in this research study was in-depth interviews. Considering the uniqueness of the sample and the poor representation of African American males in the field of student affairs, it was important to identify effective ways to gain access to potential participants. As a result, I determined that gatekeepers existed in a variety of professional organizations and associations. These gatekeepers were critical to my ability to identify and secure participants who met the predetermined set of criteria. The gatekeepers were African American faculty and administrators who regularly attended national conferences and presented their scholarly work.

The most helpful organization was the Brothers of the Academy (BOTA), an organization consisting of African American men who are committed to scholarly work that focuses on improving the social, political, and economical conditions of African Americans. Another organization that was especially helpful in gaining access to potential participants was the Barbara L. Jackson Scholars Network which functions under the umbrella of the University Council on Educational Administration (UCEA).
The Barbara L. Jackson Scholars Network is a minority mentoring program that is committed to developing and preparing educational leaders to be successful in the academy. I made direct contact with African American gatekeepers within these organizations and they were able to send messages on my behalf to individuals they believed met the criteria for inclusion in my study. This aided me in not only finding potential participants and securing their willful consent to participate, I also believe that the gatekeepers’ endorsement of my character and trustworthiness helped me to build rapport with the participants.

One of the assumptions that I made going into this study was that face-to-face interviews would increase their willingness to fully participate and share their personal stories with me. Consequently, I traveled to several cities throughout the United States and conducted in-depth interviews with eight of the participants in this study. In two instances, I traveled by airplane to conduct the interviews. In other cases, I traveled by car and stayed in hotels near the participant’s PWI. Due to scheduling conflicts, there were two participants that I was unable to conduct face-to-face interviews with. I was pleasantly surprised that the interviews were very effective, and the participants shared numerous personal stories related to the topic of interest.

The primary data collected in this study were verbatim accounts of the interview session (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). I digitally recorded each interview utilizing an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-320M with a giga-byte of storage space. Recording the interviews insured the completeness of the verbal interaction and provided material for reliability checks. I considered hiring a professional transcriptionist to transcribe the interviews verbatim, but decided against it because of the expense and my
lack of confidence in their ability to accurately translate Black vernacular. Consequently, I purchased professional transcription equipment that included transcription software, a foot pedal, and noise canceling headphones. I spent over 120 hours transcribing the interviews. The transcription process was tedious but it aided me in understanding their experiences early in the data analysis process. Glesne (2006) contends that when data analysis is done simultaneously with data collection, it enables researchers to focus and shape the study as it proceeds. As I transcribed the data I wrote memos to myself to capture my thoughts, generated a list of potential codes, and began to make sense of what was being shared in the interviews (see Table 11).

Considering the unique sample and the risks associated with exposing racism and discrimination, maintaining the confidentiality of the participants in this study was paramount. I utilized pseudonyms to identify any person mentioned in the interviews. In addition, I replaced or omitted the names of the universities that were named as the participants were reflecting on their experiences. In some cases, specific stories could not be utilized because they were so unique that it would have jeopardized my ability to maintain participants’ confidentiality. Member checking provided the participants with the ability to provide me with feedback and insured that I was representing them accurately. In three cases, the participants asked that I not report a particular story because they thought it would reveal their identity. Ethical decisions related to confidentiality were made throughout the research and writing process to insure that I caused no harm to my participants as a result of their participation in this study.

ATLAS.ti served as the primary tool for analyzing the collected data. ATLAS.ti is a powerful computer program utilized for qualitative data analysis. It is especially
helpful in research projects that have large volumes of text. This program assisted me in organizing and analyzing hundreds of pages of data that I accumulated over a 6-month period. This process included a case-by-case analysis of each of the ten African American male SSAs in this study. Codes were generated and assigned to select quotations throughout the transcripts. The codes were constantly compared, renamed, refined, eliminated, and added in ways that assisted me to better define the experiences of the participants in this study. ATLAS.ti also has a memo feature that permitted me to create memos to myself as I reviewed the transcribed text. Reflexive memos were made to protect against research bias and it provided me with the ability to express my personal reactions to what I was analyzing. I also created theoretical memos that included preliminary thoughts about patterns I noticed across cases and decisions about expanding or reducing codes. I utilized ATLAS.ti to create code families and establish relationships between the codes. This process helped me to further refine the codes and reduce the data. Each code family that I created was in alignment with a particular research question. To assist me in gaining a better understanding of how the participants were responding to the research questions, I generated four concept maps that graphically displayed each research question, the corresponding codes, and the associated quotations and memos. Miles and Huberman (1994) contend that graphic representations can be used as important heuristic devices during the analytical process. I went back and forth between the research questions, the codes, the memos, the empirical literature, the theoretical frameworks, and the transcribed text throughout the research process. A constant comparative analysis assisted me to establish relationships between the data and to segregate it into broader categories and themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)
Discussion of the Findings

Seven themes emerged as a result of the data analysis process that provides insights into how these African American male SSAOs describe their experiences at PWIs. The primary themes were generated as a result of a cross-case analysis, and they represent the collective voices of the African American male SSAOs in this study. It should be noted that the themes presented do not reflect the experiences of each of the African American male SSAOs in this study--there is no monolithic African American male experience. However, many African American males share some of the same experiences as they attempt to gain access to and thrive in traditionally White spaces. The seven themes that emerged as a result of answering the four guiding research questions are sequentially presented in Table 15. In this chapter, I will elaborate and discuss the themes that emerged. I will then discuss how Van Manen’s lifeworld existentials were utilized to make meaning of the lived experiences of the African American male SSAOs in this study. The next section discusses practical implications. This chapter concludes with a summary section and then a presentation of the limitations and opportunities for future research.
Table 15

*Presentation of Themes Organized by Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do African American male SSAOs describe their social and academic experiences at PWIs?</td>
<td>Theme 1. Mobile Professionals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Theme 2. Black Man’s Burden</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Theme 3. Love for the Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do African American male SSAOs describe their experiences with racism and other forms of discrimination at PWIs?</td>
<td>Theme 4: Racial Micro-aggressions</td>
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<td>Theme 5: Blocking of Black Male Bodies</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do African American male SSAOs describe their responses to racism and other forms of discrimination at PWIs?</td>
<td>Theme 6: Cognitive-Time Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors do African American male SSAOs perceive as salient to their success?</td>
<td>Theme 7: Increasing Personal and Academic Capital</td>
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*Theme 1: Mobile Professionals*

One of the most consistent findings in this study was that the participants were mobile professionals. All but one participant worked at numerous PWIs over the course of their professional careers. As a group, they worked at 56 PWIs. These institutions were located in every geographical location in the United States. Eight of the men in this study worked at 5 or more PWIs in their career. As they talked about their experiences, they shared a variety of reasons for leaving the positions they previously held. The primary reason they gave for leaving particular institutions was to pursue opportunities to advance their careers.
The increased mobility of these African American male SSAOs in this study is not a very surprising finding given that there can be only one chief student affairs officer at a particular PWI. Their decision to leave their previous employers is consistent with the existing research that found that the most commonly cited reason that student affairs professionals give for leaving positions is limited opportunity for advancement (Richmond & Sherman, 1991). The participants in this study were a group of ambitious administrators who were not content in positions that they felt they outgrew. They communicated that they entered administrative positions thinking about how these positions will help them to advance their careers. In addition to their willingness to leave universities to advance their careers, this group of administrators were willing to relocate to other states to pursue opportunities. Seven of the participants worked in four or more states throughout their careers. Given the limited number of senior-level and chief student affairs positions--their willingness to relocate seemingly increased their opportunities to find, compete, and secure SSAO positions.

**Theme 2: Black Man’s Burden**

Every participant in this study communicated that he experienced a number of unique burdens as a result of being a Black male professional at PWIs. An alternative name for this theme that also gives voice to the burdens experienced by the Black male SSAOs in this study is *leading-while-Black*. Despite their defined job descriptions, the participants in this study described a host of extra roles and responsibilities that they had to fulfill due to being one of the only African American administrators on their respective campuses. As they shared their stories, they communicated that some of the burdens were frustrating and other burdens were embraced as their obligation to improve the
experiences of other African Americans.

For the participants in this study, this existing dynamic translated into them having to go above and beyond to compensate for the lack of education or mis-education as it relates to African American men and a host of other diversity issues. Unique to the Black male student affairs experience at PWIs, the participants in this study communicated (a) being perceived as the diversity expert on campus regardless of their competency, (b) feeling increased pressure to serve as the advisor to Black student organizations, and (c) being increasingly called upon to interact with African American external constituents. In addition, the participants described situations in which they had to fill the role as teacher to culturally incompetent faculty, staff, and students at PWIs.

Although they still perceived it as a burden, there are some roles that the participants in this study accepted as their obligation and duty to other African Americans. The participants talked about having to be the advocate for African Americans and other people of color in meetings. Other participants talked about the added pressure they felt to succeed in their roles. They felt like their failure would have negative consequences for other African Americans who attempt to gain access to positions of authority at PWIs. This particular finding made me think about our new President—Barack Obama. I am not suggesting that these SSAOs have comparable responsibilities, but I am speaking to the added pressure that I believe President Obama must be experiencing due to his Black maleness. The room that he has for error is minimal and any failure would be drastically magnified. For instance, what if President Obama made the same mistakes that George Bush made in the White House? More specifically, what if President Obama misled the American people and made a decision to
enter a war that ultimately resulted in thousands of American deaths. I am almost certain that there would be widespread outrage among most Americans and there would be demands for his immediate impeachment. As it relates to this dissertation study, these unwanted and embraced burdens present extra weight that African American men have to carry as they navigate their careers at PWIs.

Theme 3: Love for the Work

Another consistent theme that emerged in this study was that these African Americans were extremely satisfied with their careers in higher education. The passion that they expressed during my interviews with them was consistent with their decision to remain in the field. Their experience in higher education ranged from 15 to 39 years of experience. Seven of the participants in this study worked in the field for at least 25 years. Despite the negative experiences they have encountered over the course of their careers, the African American men in this study reflected on a host of intrinsic rewards.

As they elaborated on their lived experiences, they unanimously communicated that they would not change anything about their decision to work in student affairs. Many of the participants also stated that they could not see themselves working in another field in the future. They cited several fulfilling experiences that included assisting students as they navigated challenging situations on campus and helping them to reach their set goals. Many of the participants talked about feeling valued by the African American students on campus and they cherished their mentoring roles. They also cited that positive interactions and relationships with faculty and staff over the course of their careers have contributed to feelings of job satisfaction. The finding related to positive interactions and the establishment of support systems is consistent with the empirical
literature that investigates employment retention. One study found that having support systems in place improved employee retention (Butner, Burley & Marbley, 2000). Their love for their work is also in alignment with empirical studies that identified satisfaction as one of several factors that influence retention among African American administrators at PWIs (Jackson, 2001, 2002a, 2002b).

Theme 4: Racial Micro-aggressions

One of the most consistent themes was the extent in which the participants in this study communicated encounters with racial micro-aggressions at PWIs. Racial micro-aggressions are a contemporary form of racism that can be best described as a subtle, offensive, mini-assault on African Americans and other people of color (Pierce, 1974). As the African American men reflected on their experiences, they cited a long list of examples in which they were subjected to racial micro-aggressions in the workplace.

The African American male SSAOs in this study talked about situations in which their White students and colleagues insulted them due to their cultural incompetence or their unconscious internalization of negative characterizations of African Americans. The participants’ encounters with racial micro-aggressions are consistent with a study that investigated the experiences of African American clinical psychologists. The study found that these clinical psychologists experienced racial micro-aggressions that included stereotypical assumptions being made about them (Constantine & Sue, 2007).

One African American SSAO in this study described a situation in which White colleagues questioned if he was hired as a result of affirmative action--despite his impressive professional portfolio and academic credentials. Another participant described being irritated during a board meeting due to being called upon to explain
affirmative action matters even though representatives from human resources were at the table. Another example was given in which faculty members responded with an over exaggerated degree of shock when they learned that one of the participants in this study had his terminal degree. A final example of a racial micro-aggression is a situation that a participant described in which he made a suggestion in a meeting that was dismissed by most of the members at the meeting but embraced weeks later after his White colleague repeated the same suggestion.

These examples are in alignment with the empirical literature on racial micro-aggressions that describes situations ranging from racial slights, recurrent indignities and irritations, unfair treatment, and stigmatization (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007). Many aspects of this theme are also consistent with a study that focused on micro-aggressions and African American college students (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). Students described situations in which professors had low academic expectations of them, and their White peers felt as though the African American students were only able to gain admission to PWIs due to affirmative action. Micro-aggressions are not overt racist acts and they are often done unconsciously; however, they can have a cumulative effect on African Americans at PWIs. In addition, micro-aggressions can have a negative influence on the perceived racial climate at PWIs and hinder the relationships between African American and White professionals.

**Theme 5: Blocking of Black Male Bodies**

This theme represents intentional barriers and obstacles that the participants in this study had to overcome in their careers at PWIs. Several of the participants in this study communicated that they felt that they were treated unfairly during the job search
process. Three participants described situations in which they felt members of the search committee asked them inappropriate interview questions. Unlike the unconscious nature of micro-aggressions, the African male SSAOs in this dissertation study felt as though these acts were conscious attempts on the interviewer’s part to discourage them from pursuing that particular job. The blocking of space that these African American male SSAOs experienced at PWIs is consistent with observations of segregative tracking—hiring African Americans for nontraditional jobs and putting them in low mobility positions, multicultural affairs departments, and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) offices. The concept of segregative tracking could also partially explain why African American males hold just .54% of all SSAO positions (Flowers, 2003). The blocking of Black male bodies theme and the poor representation of African American male SSAOs at PWIs in consistent with Sagaria’s (2002) finding that administrative searches at PWIs might be using filters that tend to eliminate African Americans and other people of color from the hiring pool.

This theme also includes situations in which participants were not made aware or not invited to informal or formal meetings organized by their White colleagues. One participant stated that he was well aware of not being in the inner circle and privy to the information being shared at the meeting before the meeting. In cases in which these exclusive meetings are held, African Americans are at a disadvantage because the decisions have already been made about important topics and the formal meetings are merely formalities.

There were two cases in which the participants communicated that they were illegally discriminated against and passed over for promotions due to race. In both
situations, the African American males communicated that they exceeded the qualifications for positions that they were pursuing. After not being given acceptable reasons for being passed over for the positions, the two participants filed grievances with the intent to pursue the issue legally. In both instances, the PWIs launched investigations and ultimately appointed them to the positions that they were seeking. These intentional racially-motivated acts of discrimination are consistent with a major study on African Americans that found that about 60% reported racist barriers in their workplaces in the last year (Feagin, 2000).

This particular theme points out that racism is alive and well at PWIs in the United States. As the narratives of the participants in this study suggest, there are people who are in positions of authority at PWIs who are intentionally making it difficult for African American males to gain access to and be successful in these academic and social spaces. This theme is also consistent with a study that found that African American workers are less likely to obtain jobs than Whites with equivalent credentials (Feagin, 2000).

**Theme 6: Cognitive-Time Responses**

I consider this theme to be the most interesting finding in this study. As I analyzed the narratives of the participants across the 10 cases, I began to see patterns emerge related to how the participants responded to racism and discrimination at PWIs. As a result, I developed a model called the *discrimination response matrix* (DRM). The themes that evolved that led to the development of the DRM represent the different ways the African American male SSAOs communicated responding to racism and discrimination at PWIs. The matrix consists of four types of responses to racism and
discrimination: (a) Immediate and strategic; (b) delayed and strategic; (c) immediate and non-strategic; and (d) delayed and non-strategic. It is important to make clear that the DRM is specific to their responses to various forms of racism and discrimination—including institutional, overt, covert, and subtle forms. The DRM also captures the responses to discrimination of the one African American male participant in this study who was gay.

One of the first sub-themes that I identified was immediate and strategic responses to racism. These were situations in which the African American SSAOs in this study had engaged in forward thinking about situations that could possibly occur as they were navigating PWIs. In essence, the participants developed prepackaged responses to particular racial micro-aggressions or overt discriminatory acts so they could respond immediately in a strategic fashion. In many cases, these were clever responses that forced the perpetrator of the act to reflect on what he or she said or did. Most importantly, these immediate and strategic responses were carefully crafted and artfully delivered in a manner in which the African American SSAOs maintained their composure and professionalism in the workplace. When the participants responded immediately and strategically to incidents of racism and discrimination it provided them with the ability to be assertive and send people within their work environments very clear messages about their objection or discontent as it relates to the specific act. Feagin and Sikes (1994) state that taking decisive action often provides African Americans with a sense of power and confidence.

The second type of response within the discrimination response matrix includes delayed and strategic responses. These are situations in which African American SSAOs
decided not to respond immediately to a discriminatory act. One participant described a delayed and strategic response to racism experienced at meetings with White colleagues. He communicated that he sometimes lets the conversation develop fully in an effort to learn and figure out later how he might use that information to navigate that environment. The important aspect of this response is that he intentionally delayed his response/reaction to the act with the intent to respond strategically later. Another example of this involves two participants who were victims of employment discrimination in this study. When the situation occurred, they did not respond immediately. They analyzed the situation, gathered information about how the decision was made to pass them over for a promotion, and then they moved forward in a strategic fashion to address the matter. In this case, they decided to file a grievance with the Office of Human Resources and to let them know that there were plans to move forward legally outside of the university. Utilizing official channels or filing law suits is a response style that many African American professionals have adopted in recent decades to address perceived injustices (Feagin and Sikes, 1994).

As I reflect on the delayed and strategic response to racism and discrimination, I am drawn again to President Barack Obama. Throughout his campaign, there were many offensive and racist acts that were targeted at him, his wife, and his children. For instance, on July 21, 2008 the New Yorker Magazine printed a caricature of President Obama and his wife using offensive stereotypical images of Muslims and Black militants. The caricature had a picture of Osama bin-Laden and the American flag burning in the fireplace of the Oval Office. In the forefront was President Obama wearing a one-peace Muslim garb and headdress giving a fist-bump to the First Lady who was wearing boots,
an Afro, camouflaged clothing, and an AK-47 machine gun with ammo belt on her shoulder. President Obama would have been well within his rights to lose his temper and respond in a defensive manner. Instead, he did an amazing job of maintaining his composure and responding in a clever fashion that illuminated the ignorance of his attackers. President Obama declined to make a comment initially and he released a statement through his campaign stating, “The New Yorker may think, as one of their staff explained to us, that their cover is a satirical lampoon of the caricature Sen. Obama’s right-wing critics have tried to create, but most readers will see it as tasteless and offensive. And we agree” (Mooney, 2008). President’s Obama’s response gained him more respect and admiration from many American people. I would also purport that it had to be intrinsically rewarding for President Obama to use someone’s attempt to belittle or dehumanize him as a stepping stone to get closer to his ultimate goal to impact change by becoming President of the United States.

The third type of response that I identified was an immediate and non-strategic response. This was not a common response among the SSAOs in this study. These types of responses can be characterized as emotional responses or aggressive reactions. Hypothetically, immediate and non-strategic responses to racism could range from using offensive language in a board room meeting to physically striking a perpetrator. Given that these administrators have ascended to the chief student affairs role at PWIs, it is not surprising that they don’t cite utilizing these types of responses to racism and discrimination at PWIs. However, a couple of the participants in this study mentioned situations earlier in their careers when they responded in such a fashion. One participant explained that with maturity, he learned not to respond in ways that could bring about
negative consequences to his career aspirations.

The final box in the response matrix represents delayed and non-strategic responses. This was the most passive type of response in the discrimination response matrix. These responses include situations in which the participants communicated ignoring racism or discrimination. The lack of a response had no clear strategic intent. One participant communicated that he has a blind eye to racism. Another participant described a racial micro-aggression that he didn’t respond to involving a colleague who was a self-proclaimed White male of the “old school south.” In another situation, a participant never directly addressed incidents in which White faculty and staff reacted in surprise after they learned about his credentials. The incident left him frustrated and he began to question why the institution hired him. Although the participants in this study did not cite many examples that were in alignment with this particular response, the literature does support passive responses to racism and discrimination. Feagin and Sikes (1994) found that African Americans use a variety of coping mechanisms including what they categorized as defensive shields. Feagin and Sikes (1994) found that many African Americans repress their rage over maltreatment and they it may not be psychologically healthy for some. The psychological costs of this repressed rage as a result of experiencing racism and discrimination include feelings of anger, resentment, humiliation, frustration, resignation, and depression.

I was intrigued by this particular response because two of the participants, who described utilizing these responses to racism and discrimination, also described experiencing physiological and emotional reactions to stress. The two participants described situations in their career in which they experienced mild depression, headaches,
irritability, insomnia, weight loss, gastrointestinal problems, and stress-related rashes. I want to be sure to clarify that the two participants did not attribute the physiological and emotional reactions directly to racism and discrimination—they attributed it to the general stressors associated with working at PWIs. However, Pierce (1974) points out that when individuals are subject to recurrent indignities and experience environmental stressors as mundane events, it can have a negative impact on their psychological, emotional, and physiological health.

Related to the physiological and psychological effects of racism, Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) introduced a concept called racial battle fatigue to describe the physiological strain exacted on racially marginalized groups and the amount of energy lost dedicated to coping with racial microaggressions and racism. Racial battle fatigue is comparable to the symptoms experienced by military personnel who are diagnosed with combat stress syndrome—mental, emotional, and physiological injuries in response to persistent, extreme stress or risk. For African Americans who work at PWIs, racial battle fatigue is the result of constant physiological, psychological, cultural, and emotional coping with racism and discrimination in racially hostile or unsupportive environments (Smith et. al, 2007).

Racial battle fatigue symptoms are physiological and psychological (Smith, 2004). The physiological symptoms include, but are not limited to, (a) tension headaches and backaches, (b) elevated heart beat, (c) rapid breathing in anticipation of racial conflict, (d) an upset stomach, (e) extreme fatigue, (f) ulcers, (g) loss of appetite and (h) elevated blood pressure. The psychological symptoms of racial battle fatigue include (a) inability to sleep; (b) increased swearing and complaining; (c) inability to sleep; (d) sleep
broken by conflict-specific dreams; (e) intrusive thoughts and images; (f) loss of self-confidence; (g) hypervigilance; (h) frustration; (i) denial; (j) emotional and social withdraw; (k) anger, anger suppression, and verbal or nonverbal expressions of anger; (n) difficulty in thinking or speaking coherently; (o) keeping quiet; and (p) resentment. In the opportunities for future research section of this dissertation, I will discuss the need to investigate the consequences of responding in a delayed and non-strategic fashion.

**Theme 7: Increasing Personal and Academic Capital**

Another strong theme was related to the personal and capital that these African American males acquired during their careers at PWIs. They were very intentional about building upon their strengths and broadening their professional portfolios. As they responded to the questions related to factors salient to their success, they indicated that their talents and skills enabled them to advance to the chief student affairs role. All of the African American men in this study had their terminal degrees, they participated in executive leadership training programs, they were active in professional organizations, they were engaged in scholarly research and writing, and they were mentored by professionals in the field. Rolle et al. (2000) found similar trends in their investigation of African American administrators at PWIs. The African Americans in their study made investments in their futures and ensured that they were positioning themselves for future leadership opportunities (Rolle et al., 2000). In addition, each of the eight African American administrators in the study indicated that the doctoral degree was mandatory if African Americans were to successfully secure executive-level positions at PWIs (Rolle et al., 2000).

As I reflected on this particular theme, I thought about its possible link with the
second theme—Black man’s burden. As one of the participants in this study reflected on his experienced, he talked about having to work 10 times harder to compete with his White colleagues. The amount of preparation and the accomplishments of this group of African American male SSAOs speak to their increased work ethic and high degree of professionalism.

The most impressive pattern related to personal and academic capital was the participants’ engagement in scholarly activities. Despite their demanding roles, six of the participants also held faculty appointments. They communicated that their roles as faculty members assisted them to bridge the gaps that commonly exist between student affairs and academic affairs. They also stated that it increased their credibility across the campus and established them as contributors to the academic mission of the university.

In addition to teaching, all of the participants were engaged in scholarly research and writing. Collectively, this group of African American male SSAOs produced hundreds of articles and presentations. They produced a long list of books and held many leadership positions within national professional associations.

As I reflect on the impressive portfolios of the participants in this study, I am reminded of Derrick Bell’s interest-convergence theory that argues that African Americans are only advanced within predominately White systems when they also promote White self-interest (Bell, 1992). Within this context, these African American male SSAOs did not secure their positions because the PWIs were open-minded, driven by moral standards, or interested in providing equal opportunity. An argument in alignment with the interest-convergence theory would conclude that the participants secured these SSAO positions because they were uniquely qualified—not because of
their Black maleness. The PWIs who hired these African American male SSAOs ultimately benefited economically by having them provide exemplary leadership, teach, and produce scholarship under the umbrella of their institutions. Following the premise of Bell’s (1992) interest convergence theory, these men would not have been hired if the PWIs did not see the economic value of hiring them.

Existential Considerations

I utilized Van Manen’s (1990) four lifeworld existentials as a lens to make meaning of the lived experiences of African American male SSAOs at PWIs. The four existentials include lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived human relation. In this section, I briefly revisit the themes that emerged in this study and provide examples of how I utilized the four existentials as guides for reflection.

Lived Space

Lived space acknowledges that the space in which we find ourselves affects the way we feel. This study of African American male SSAOs focused on their experiences in a particular lived space—predominately White institutions. As I conducted my investigation, it was clear that the space was not limited to the PWI that employed them as SSAOs. The space of inquiry changed as they pursued different career opportunities. The lived spaces included a variety of institutions and geographical spaces—56 PWIs and 20 cities. The spaces were further defined by (1) the number of African Americans that populated the city, (2) the number of students that populated the PWIs, and (3) the type of degrees the PWIs granted. All of these different aspects of lived space influenced how the participants in this study felt about their lived experiences.
As the participants reflected on their experiences in these different spaces, they communicated a wide range of feelings. One of the major themes related to lived space is *Black Man’s Burden*. The participants communicated that being an African American male at PWIs was burdensome. They felt this way because of the extra responsibilities that they had to assume and the extra stress they had to endure due to being Black and male in that particular space. Participants felt frustrated and angry at times due to widely held negative stereotypes about Black men in those spaces. They communicated that they felt it was necessary to work ten times harder at PWIs because they didn’t want to be perceived as lazy or incompetent. They also felt obligated to take on additional responsibilities related to diversity because they wanted to ensure that African American concerns and issues were being addressed at PWIs. They felt added pressure to succeed at PWIs because they believed that their failure could have a negative influence on other African Americans who pursued that role after them.

*Love for the Work* was another theme that was linked to lived space. The participants expressed feeling satisfied with their careers in student affairs administration. As they reflected on their experiences, they felt privileged and honored to be able to meet some of the people that they have encountered at PWIs. They felt valued by African American students and other students they mentored and assisted throughout their college careers. They communicated feeling proud about their numerous accomplishments at PWIs, and they cited many awards they received that acknowledged their hard work.

The participants in this study also talked about their experiences with covert and overt racism and discrimination at PWIs and how these experiences made them feel. One
participant cited feelings of frustration in a board room in which one of his colleagues offended him by directing equal employment opportunity and affirmative action questions to him that should have been directed to the human resources representative in the room. Another participant communicated feeling insulted when a White colleague insinuated that he was an affirmative action hire. Feelings of anger and resentment were communicated when a White colleague called one of the participants a “boy.” Feelings of disappointment were expressed when a group of faculty members reacted with surprise and shock upon learning that an African American SSAO had his Ph.D. Finally, a participant communicated that it was demoralizing when his White colleagues questioned his allegations of racism. All of these feelings surfaced while the African American men were in these predominately White spaces.

The final theme that I will discuss in relation to lived space is the *Blocking of Black Male Bodies* theme that emerged as a result of conducting this study. This theme is related to overt acts of racism in which African Americans were discriminated against during the hiring process or illegally denied opportunities to advance at PWIs. As one participant described an experience during a job interview, he communicated that he felt very uncomfortable with the type of questions being asked of him. Other participants described similar situations in which they felt uncomfortable, unwanted, or discriminated against during the interview process. There were two cases in which participants were illegally passed over for promotions at the PWIs they worked for. In these situations, they communicated feeling angry and disheartened.
Lived Body

Lived body acknowledges that we first meet people through their physical body. Within this context, the participants in this study are met through their Black male bodies. This particular existential is closely linked with the major research question that focuses on African American males. It is also important to note that the concept of lived body and lived human relations are closely related in this study. More specifically, the Black male body in many cases influenced the type of interactions that the participants had with people within PWIs.

Lived body within this context also relates to how the Black male body performs under the scrutiny or critical gaze of the majority at PWIs. This scrutiny is believed to be a result of widely held Black misandric beliefs that characterize African American males as criminals, street smart, athletic, and anti-intellectuals (Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2007). I could make an argument that all the themes are related to lived body but for the sake of serendipity, I will focus on what I believe to be the strongest links—Cognitive-Time Responses and Increasing Personal and Academic Capital

As Van Manen (1990) talks about lived body, he focuses on how the body responds under the critical gaze and the admiring gaze. He provides body response examples that range from awkward to graceful. As I reflect on the Discrimination Response Matrix that I developed to describe the various cognitive-time responses, the participants in this study responded in four different ways in response to the critical gaze. They responded in the following ways: (a) immediately and strategically; (b) delayed and strategically; (c) immediately and non-strategically; and (d) delayed and non-strategically. Comparing the participants’ responses to Van Manen’s graceful and
awkward responses under the critical gaze, one can suggest that the strategic responses were graceful responses and the non-strategic responses were the awkward responses. For instance, in the example that I provided involving President Obama being depicted as a terrorist, he responded gracefully to address the discriminatory act. If President Obama would have lost his composure under the critical gaze of the American people and responded without much thought about the ramifications, his awkward response could have potentially hindered his ability to achieve his ultimate goal.

The other link to lived body is Increasing Personal and Academic Capital theme. Within this context, the Black male body responded to the critical and admiring gazes of individuals at PWIs by pursuing opportunities to expand the African American male SSAOs’ portfolios. More specifically, the African American male SSAOs responded the following ways:

1. Secured their terminal degrees;
2. Participated in professional development activities;
3. Developed informal and formal mentoring relationships;
4. Engaged in scholarly activity;

Lived Time

Lived time is the subjective time that appears to speed up when we enjoy ourselves or slow down when we feel bored (Van Manen, 1990). This existential refers to how the African American male SSAOs felt during a particular point in time in their careers. Within the Mobile Professionals theme, some of the participants in this study stated that earlier in their careers, they were no longer satisfied with a particular position. As a result of feeling unfulfilled, they left to pursue more rewarding opportunities.
Lived time can also be utilized to analyze the *Black Man’s Burden* theme. Within this context, participants described negative feelings as a result of the burdens that they were experiencing at a particular point in time in their careers. The same interpretation can be applied to the *Racial Micro-aggressions* and *Blocking of Black Male Bodies* themes. They participants in these situations described feelings of anger and frustration during that point in time. On the other hand, participants described a *Love for the Work* as they reflected on rewarding experiences with faculty, staff, and students at PWIs. At different points in time, the participants described many positive feelings as a result of their encounters with others.

Lived time can also be utilized to analyze the comments that some of the participants made in relation to their response to racism and discrimination. A few participants in this study communicated that there was a point in time, early in their careers, when they responded to racism in an immediate and non-strategic fashion. They also stated that as time progressed, they matured and adopted more strategic responses to address racism and discrimination.

*Lived Human Relation*

Lived human relation refers to the relation we maintain with others in the interpersonal space that we share with them. Within this context, the focus is on the interactions that African American males have with people at PWIs. As I mentioned previously, there is a lot of overlap between lived body and lived human relation. In this study, the Black male body had an influence on the types of interactions the participants experienced. Examples can be made reflecting on *Black Man’s Burden*, *Racial Micro-aggressions*, and *Blocking of Black Male Bodies*. 
As a result of the negative stereotypes and racist attitudes toward African American males in this study at PWIs, their interactions and relationships with some of their colleagues were negatively influenced. The burdens that they described experiencing caused them to grow frustrated with particular colleagues at PWIs. As they experienced overt and covert discriminatory acts, their interactions were also hindered. In many cases, these acts of discrimination produced tension and feelings of resentment.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have many implications that could provide guidance to African American males who aspire to be SSAOs at PWIs; student affairs divisions at PWIs; and student affairs and educational leadership graduate programs. As it relates to racism and discrimination, I believe that the experiential knowledge of the participants in this study sheds light on how African American male administrators experience racism and discrimination at PWIs. In addition, the discrimination response matrix that was produced as a result of this study is a useful tool in conceptualizing how African Americans respond to racism and discrimination in these settings. Finally, the experiences and stories that the participants in this study share could inform practices in the field of student affairs and in student affairs and educational leadership graduate programs. In this section, I reflect on implications for the following: (a) African American males who are aspiring SSAOs at PWIs; (b) student affairs divisions at PWIs; and (c) student affairs and educational leadership graduate programs. Drawing on the themes that were produced as a result of this study, each of these implications will be discussed in detail.
Implications for African Americans Males who are Aspiring SSAOs

The participants in this study are a very talented group of African American men who effectively navigated the higher education administrative workforce and secured chief student affairs positions. These 10 men reflected on 278 years of work experiences accumulated at 56 PWIs located in every geographic region in the United States. Their experiential knowledge and words of wisdom are not to serve as a step-by-step manual on how to become a SSAO, but to serve as framework in which African American men can utilize to inform their career decisions. Although the suggestions that follow were generated specifically for African American males in student affairs at PWIs, it is acknowledged that many of these suggestions can be utilized across disciplines and by other people of color.

African American males who are aspiring SSAOs must be willing to relocate and stand ready to seize opportunities to advance their careers as those opportunities present themselves. One participant spoke directly to this recommendation and stated that African American males must broaden their scope so they can avoid limiting their career options based on the location of a particular PWI. Eight participants in this study worked at five or more PWIs. In addition, seven of them worked in four different states. Three of the participants in this study worked in cities in which the African American population was less than 9%. This finding suggests that aspiring SSAOs must be willing to relocate to cities that are unfamiliar to them or cities that have a low African American population.

Although the participants in this study communicated that African American men should remain open to relocating, they emphasized the importance of choosing jobs
wisely. The position being pursued should be assessed, and it should be identified how it is going to expand an African American male’s professional portfolio. Upon accepting the position, it should be clear how a particular position is going to aid one in getting the next position and possibly the position after that. Aspiring SSAOs should also consider accepting leadership challenges and filling roles at PWIs that may be facing specific problems. Being successful in such positions could establish African American males as exemplary leaders who can impact change.

As African Americans navigate their careers, it is important for them to create professional development plans that increase their personal capital and make them more marketable as they are pursuing advancement opportunities. Below I have outlined several recommendations that African American males in student affairs or educational leadership graduate programs should consider as they are developing their professional development plan:

*Conduct a personal assessment*

One of the most important aspects of developing a professional development plan is to engage in a critical self evaluation process. It is vital for people to know their strengths as well as their weaknesses. African American males should work to gain a clear understanding of what they know and what they need to know to advance professionally. Conducting such an assessment can assist in the development of a professional development plan that incorporates structures and supports that will enhance one’s learning and development. It is important to acknowledge that everyone has room for growth and professional development should be considered a life-long journey.

*Secure your terminal degree*
In order to advance to the chief student affairs position at PWIs, African American males must secure their terminal degree. There was a time in which people could secure SSAO positions without their terminal degrees, but that time has passed. As African American males are considering positions early in their career, they should carefully consider universities that offer compensation packages that provide opportunities for them to enroll into doctoral programs. In many cases, the employer will cover a significant portion of the tuition. These are perfect opportunities for African American men to invest in their future.

Get engaged in professional associations

NASPA and ACPA are two of the most popular conferences that student affairs professionals attend. There are a wide variety of topics that are covered within the workshops that can help one to increase their knowledge about the field. In addition to NASPA and ACPA, there are a long list of other professional associations and conferences that aspiring SSAOs should consider attending.

In addition to attending conferences that are specific to student affairs, I encourage aspiring African American male SSAOs to also attend professional conferences that are not specific to student affairs. For instance, the American Educational Research Association coordinates an annual conference in which a variety of higher education professionals attend. This conference provides an avenue in which people can learn about the latest research being conducted by scholars from all over the world. In many cases, student affairs professionals can choose to attend workshops that are specific to their areas of interest.

In addition to attending these conferences, aspiring SSAOs should seek
opportunities to present and hold leadership positions. Getting engaged at this level could establish African American males as practitioner-scholars who are dedicated contributors to the field. In addition, it provides African Americans with opportunities to market themselves on a national stage and expand their professional network.

*Conduct research and publish*

Getting engaged in scholarly research and publishing it in refereed journals is an excellent way to distinguish oneself from other student affairs professionals in the field. The SSAOs in my study had a long list of publications, and they communicated how it aided them in branding themselves professionally and increasing their credibility on campus. In addition to being regarded as a scholar within the academic community, it dispels widely held misandric beliefs that characterize Black males as anti-intellectuals.

*Seek opportunities to teach*

Teaching a credit-bearing course is another way to clearly demonstrate how one contributes to the academic mission of the institution. It establishes one’s credibility and expands their professional portfolio. In addition, it positions African American males in student affairs administration in a fashion that allows them to bridge the gaps between student affairs and academic affairs. In the event that teaching opportunities are unavailable at the PWI in which they are employed, I recommend that African American males seek opportunities to teach at nearby community colleges. The key is to expand on one’s professional portfolio and competencies.

*Secure professional mentors*

African Americans who are aspiring SSAOs should find informal and formal mentors who have genuine interest in their development. These mentors should not be limited to
African Americans. It is critical to have someone who can provide guidance and input as it relates to navigating the many issues that African American males are confronted with during their careers. Having more than one mentor has its benefits. For instance African American males may want to have someone on campus that is familiar with that political environment. These mentors can also identify and/or provide valuable opportunities for their protégés to develop and build upon their competencies. On the other hand, it is useful to have a mentor who is not employed at the same institution. These mentors can be useful in providing an outside perspective on a particular issue. Having a broad network of mentors can also help African American males in the field keep abreast of important issues and dynamics that are relevant at other PWIs. These mentors may also provide opportunities for their protégés to get involved with important regional or national initiatives.

Implications for Student Affairs Divisions at PWIs

The findings of this study also have implications for decision-makers within the student affairs division at PWIs. The recommendations within this section can assist in improving the experiences of African Americans in student affairs divisions. In addition, these implementing these suggestions could also improve the representation and retention of African American student affairs professionals at specific PWIs.

In this study, every participant communicated experiencing a wide range of racial micro-aggressions. This was the most common form of racism experienced at PWIs. This finding could be useful to senior-level administrators within student affairs divisions who are responsible for training and shaping the work climate at PWIs. Training staff in the area of multicultural competence can assist professionals within the field to develop
the multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to work effectively with African Americans and other people of color. Training of this nature can work to reduce the occurrences in which insulting remarks or gestures are unconsciously made by uninformed others. In cases in which there are no professionals available on campus to provide such training, outside workshop facilitators should be brought in to assist with the ongoing development in this area. It is important to mention that efforts to increase the multicultural competence of a student affairs staff should be regular and ongoing.

In addition to training, it is important for people to be held accountable for conscious and unconscious acts of discrimination. White colleagues and leaders within student affairs divisions should not sit back and let other White colleagues discriminate African Americans and other people of color. A culture needs to be established whereby perpetrators are held accountable by their supervisors and colleagues. A hostile work environment is created for African Americans when their White colleagues witness discriminatory acts without responding. Many times their silence communicates that they condone that discriminatory comment or act.

One of the major findings of this study also focused on racial discrimination during the hiring process for some African American SSAOs. PWIs have an obligation to ensure that the professionals that they appoint to search committees are selected carefully and are properly trained. It would seem that if PWIs are serious about increasing the racial diversity of their staff, they would ensure that the search committee values diversity as well. My suggestion to PWIs is that they consider each committee member’s demonstrated commitment to diversity. For instance, do they serve on diversity-related committees? Do they outreach to diverse populations on campus? What
are their interactions like with African Americans and other people of color? Do they have African Americans or other people of color in their respective unit? Have they ever hired an African American or person of color? These questions are important because they provide insight into a potential committee member’s commitment to increasing racial diversity. If the answers to all of these questions is “no” for every member on the search committee, then PWIs can not reasonably contend that they are serious about increasing the racial diversity of their staff.

Student affairs divisions at PWIs can also improve the experiences of African Americans in their division by linking them with other African American professionals at the institutions. This is not to suggest that all African Americans on campus are going to be interested in developing relationships with other African Americans, but it does not hurt to strategically make some introductions. As African Americans begin employment at PWIs, leaders within student affairs divisions could introduce them to a wide range of professionals on campus—being sure to include key African Americans. This strategy can assist African Americans in building relationships with African Americans who are not within the division of student affairs.

Implications for Student Affairs Graduate Programs

Findings within this study also have a few implications for student affairs graduate programs. It was pointed out in the research that African Americans hold only 8.4% of all student affairs position (Flowers, 2003). In addition, it was found that African American females outnumber African American males 60% to 40%. The obvious implication is that student affairs graduate programs need to develop strategic and intentional plans to attract more African American males into their programs.
Perhaps student affairs programs can target African American student organizations on campus and offices of multicultural affairs. They could develop mentoring programs and other special initiatives in an effort to increase African Americans’ affinity to the field.

Once African American Americans are in student affairs graduate programs, it is important for them to be linked with seasoned professionals who can provide them with some guidance about the field and what to expect as a student affairs professional at PWIs. Graduate students can begin to think about developing professional development plans in alignment with their career aspirations. They can be schooled on how to increase their personal capital and how to assess potential job opportunities. These are intangibles that are often overlooked in student affairs graduate programs.

As they are preparing African Americans to enter the field of student affairs, graduate programs need to discuss racism and how African Americans can respond to such situations when they occur. Utilizing the response matrix as a guide, professors within graduate programs can present case studies that require African Americans to reflect on hypothetical racist acts and how they would respond. It would be beneficial for young African Americans to understand the different types of responses to discrimination and the potential ramifications of their response. More specifically, the participants in this study communicated that when they were younger, they were more prone to responding to racism and discrimination in an immediate and non-strategic fashion. African Americans who aspire to be SSAOs must understand that such responses could have negative influences on their careers. Efforts can be made to guide young African Americans to respond strategically to racism and discrimination—whether it is an immediate or delayed response.
Finally, African Americans should be made aware of the potential consequences of responding to racism and discrimination in a delayed and non-strategic fashion. Although this study does not conclude that responding in this fashion is linked to particular physiological conditions, it is hypothesized that there could be a correlation. The important point that should be made is that African Americans need to find healthy ways to respond to racism and discrimination.

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

This qualitative study was limited to 10 African American male SSAOs at four-year PWIs. It would be interesting to replicate this study and include African American men who are SSAOs at two-year PWIs. Conducting a study that includes SSAOs from four-year and two-year PWIs would allow the researcher to significantly increase the number of participants in the sample. In the current study, face-to-face interviews were the preferred method of conducting interviews. Future studies could place less emphasis on face-to-face interviews. Conducting telephone interviews would lessen the economic burden of traveling to the various states to conduct face-to-face interviews. It would also reasonably position the researcher to conduct multiple interviews with a much larger sample. Increasing the number of interviews conducted with each participant and broadening the sample size to include a variety of higher education professionals could potentially lead to a deeper understanding of the African American experience at PWIs.

This study is somewhat limited due to its exclusive focus on African Americans in student affairs administration. Although qualitative studies that focus on the experiences of African American males in student affairs administration contribute to the
scant literature, future qualitative studies could expand the selection criteria to include all African American male professionals at PWIs—administrators and faculty. It would be interesting to analyze the similarities and differences that exist across the various disciplines. A similar study could also be conducted that includes African American professionals in non-academic settings. Pursuing this line of inquiry in this manner could produce a broader set of practical implications.

The current study was guided by four research questions. The four guiding research questions required that I generate interview questions that adequately addressed each of the guiding research questions. I would like to conduct a study that focuses primarily on the following research question: How do African American male administrators employed at PWIs describe their responses to racism and other forms of discrimination? In this study, I would like to build upon the Discrimination Response Matrix. It was found in the current study that participants responded to racism and discrimination in four ways: (a) immediate-strategic; (b) delayed-strategic; (c) immediate-nonstrategic; and (d) delayed-nonstrategic. I would like to expand this matrix and focus on the internal responses to racism and discrimination. Two participants in this study shared psychosomatic responses (rashes, weight loss, gastrointestinal problems, irritability, mild depression, etc.) that they attributed to stress unrelated to racism or discrimination. However, the same two participants shared instances in which they experienced racism and discrimination. After analyzing their narratives, I question if they have repressive coping styles. Future research could investigate the following research question: What is the influence of racism on the physical and mental health of African American male SSAOs employed at predominately White institutions?
Finally, future research can contribute to the existing literature by investigating the lived experiences of African American male SSAOs utilizing a mixed method research design. This could be accomplished by conducting in-depth interviews with African American male SSAOs. Findings from the in-depth interviews could be utilized to develop a survey that quantitatively assesses the lived experiences of African American SSAOs. The survey could be administered online to a large sample of African Americans SSAOs who are employed at PWIs across the United States.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative study investigated the lived experiences of African American male SSAOs at predominately White institutions in the United States. The main research question was how does the intersection of race and gender influence the lived experiences of African American male senior student affairs officers at predominately White institutions? A particular focus of this study was to understand how these African American males experience and respond to racism at PWIs. This line of inquiry also examined factors that these African American SSAOs perceived as most salient to their success. It was the intent of this researcher to give voice to the experiences of this unique group of African American SSAOs.

In pursuing this line of inquiry four guiding research questions were developed:

1. How do African American male SSAOs describe their social and academic experiences at PWIs?

2. How do African American male SSAOs describe their experiences with racism and discrimination at PWIs?
3. How do African American male SSAOs describe their responses to racism and discrimination at PWIs?

4. What factors do African American male SSAOs perceive as salient to their success and/or failure at PWIs?

This research utilized a collective case study design to investigate the lived experiences of African American male SSAOs at PWIs. Critical Race Theory and Van Manen’s lifeworld existentials served as the two conceptual frameworks that were utilized throughout this study. Purposeful and network sampling methods were employed to select 10 information-rich cases for in-depth study. Maximum variation sampling was also utilized to secure participants from various geographic locations and institution types. Upon gaining access to this unique group of administrators, in-depth interviews following a semi-structured interview protocol were conducted with 10 African American male SSAOs who were employed at four-year PWIs. Personal documents and archival records were also utilized gain a better understanding of the participants’ background, interests, and experiences.

The participants in this study reflected on the experiences they accumulated over the course of their careers. Collectively, the participants had 278 years of experience working at PWIs. They worked at 56 different PWIs located in every geographical location in the United States. Given the low number of African American male SSAOs employed at PWIs, this researcher was very careful in protecting their identity.

The narratives of these participants were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were coded utilizing ATLAS.ti. Once coding was achieved in ATLAS.ti, the data was interrogated and systematically explored to generate meaning...
This research utilized an interrelated three-phase process consisting of data display, data reduction, and conclusion drawing verification (Keeves, 1998). Consequently, seven themes evolved that answered the four guiding research questions. The narratives and themes give voice to the experiences of the African American male SSAOs in this study.

The first research question was: How do African American male SSAOs at PWIs describe their social and academic experiences? This question was answered by the following three themes: (a) Mobile professionals; (b) Black man’s burden; and (c) Love for the work.

The second research question was: How do African American male SSAOs describe their experiences with racism and discrimination at PWIs? This question was answered by the following two themes: (a) Racial micro-aggressions and (b) Blocking of Black male bodies.

The third research question was: How do African American males respond to racism and discrimination at PWIs? This research question was answered by the cognitive-time response theme and the development of a Discrimination Response Matrix consisting of four sub-themes: (a) Immediate and Strategic; (b) Delayed and Strategic; (c) Immediate and Non-strategic; and (d) Delayed and Non-strategic.

The fourth question was: What factors do African American male SSAOs perceive as most salient to their success? This question was answered by one major theme which is increasing personal and academic capital. This major theme had four sub-themes: (a) Securing your terminal degree; (b) Participating in professional development activities; (c) Engaging in informal and formal mentoring; and (d) Engaging
in scholarly activity.
REFERENCES


Dyson, M. E. (2005). *Is Bill Cosby right or has the Black middle class lost its mind?* New York: Basic Civitas.


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APPENDIX A

Letter of Invitation
Greetings Dr. Nelson,

I hope all is well. My name is Rahmon Hart and I am contacting you because you were recommended to me by Dr. Miller as someone who fits the criteria for participation in a study that I am conducting as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in education at Duquesne University. Between August and December, 2009, I will be conducting interviews for a dissertation research project that investigates the experiences of African American males who are employed as chief student affairs officers at predominately White institutions. Dr. Miller stated that he spoke with you and confirmed your willingness to participate. Please accept this correspondence as a formal invitation for you to take part in this very important study as an interview participant.

I believe that your participation in this study will prove to be extremely beneficial. Your lived experiences and unique perspectives could provide aspiring African American administrators and key institutional decision-makers with valuable information. If you decide that you would like to participate in this study, I will travel to your university to conduct a face-to-face interview at a time and location that is convenient for you. Upon your verbal confirmation, you will be asked to sign a consent form, however; you will be free to withdraw at any time without giving an explanation. Our face-to-face interview will last approximately 1 – 2 hours and will be digitally recorded. Interview contents will remain confidential. In addition, your name or your institution’s name will never appear in report summaries.

I will contact you by telephone within the next two business days to describe the study in further detail and to respond to any questions you might have regarding participation in this study. Please let me know if there is an optimal phone number or time that I should call you. Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Rahmon Hart

Rahmon Hart, M.A.
Director, Office of Multicultural Affairs
105 Duquesne Union
Duquesne University
600 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15282
APPENDIX B

IRB Approval Letter and Informed Consent
DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
424 RANGOS BUILDING • PITTSBURGH PA 15262-0202

Dr. Paul Richer
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Human Protections Administrator
Phone (412) 396-4358 Fax (412) 368-5176
e-mail: irbinfo@duq.edu

July 12, 2008

Mr. Rahmon Hart
1115 Balkan Drive
Pittsburgh PA 15239

Re: A critical investigation of the experiences of African American male seniors student affairs officers at predominantly white institutions (Protocol # 08-84)

Dear Mr. Hart:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the IRB.

Based upon the recommendation of IRB member, Dr. Joseph Kush, along with my own review, I have determined that your research proposal is consistent with the requirements of the appropriate sections of the 45-Codes of Federal Regulations-46, known as the federal Common Rule. The intended research poses no greater than minimal risk to human subjects. Consequently, the research is approved under 45CFR46.101 and 46.111 on an expedited basis under 45CFR46.110.

The consent form is attached with IRB approval and expiration date. You should use the stamped forms as original for copies that you distribute.

The approval must be renewed in one year as part of the IRB’s continuing review. You will need to submit a progress report to the IRB in response to a questionnaire that we will send. In addition, if you are still utilizing your consent form in one year, you will need to have it renewed. In correspondence please refer to the protocol number shown after the title above.

If, prior to the annual review, you propose any changes in your procedure or consent process, you must inform the IRB of those changes and wait for approval before implementing them. In addition, if any unanticipated problems or adverse effects on subjects are discovered before the annual review, they must be reported to the IRB Chair before proceeding with the study.
When the study is complete, please provide us with a summary, approximately one page. Often the completed study’s Abstract suffices. You should retain a copy of your research records, other than those you have agreed to destroy for confidentiality, over a period of five years after the study’s completion.

Thank you for contributing to Duquesne’s research endeavors.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Paul Richer, Ph.D.

C: Dr. Joseph Kush
   Dr. Rodney Hopson
   IRB Records
Consent to participate in a research study-Attachment E

TITLE: A Critical Investigation of African American Male Senior Student Affairs Officers at Predominately White Institutions

INVESTIGATOR: Rahmon S. Hart

ADVISOR: Dr. Rodney Hopson  
School of Education  
412-396-4034  
hopson@duq.edu

Background:  
You are being invited to take part in a research study that will investigate the experiences of African American male senior student affairs officers at predominately White institutions of higher education. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you would like to volunteer to take part in this research study.

Purpose:  
The purpose of this research study is to learn more about the experiences of African American male senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) employed at predominately White institutions. This research is being conducted because there is a need to gain a better understanding of the experiences of African American higher education administrators. In addition, there have been very few empirical investigations of the experiences of African American male SSAOs.

Study Procedure:  
If you choose to participate in this study, I will conduct a minimum of one face-to-face interview that will last approximately 1 to 2 hours. With permission, I may contact you after the initial interview for clarification of comments made during the interview. The interviews will be tape recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to identify common themes that might inform the research questions. Your total expected time in this study will be approximately 3 hours.
Risks:
Anticipated risks or discomforts to you as a participant of this study are minimal; however, feelings of discomfort may arise during the interviews given the topic being discussed. These risks are similar to those you experience when disclosing personal information to others. Should any interview question cause you to feel uncomfortable, you are free to bypass the question or terminate participation with no penalty. Every effort will be made to minimize any risks. There are no anticipated costs as a result of participation in this research and compensation will not be offered.

Benefits:
Your participation in this study will facilitate the development of a rich and meaningful body of data that can ultimately benefit African American administrators at predominately White institutions. In addition, the researcher hopes that the information gathered from this study will provide benefits to other minority administrators and key decision-makers.

Confidentiality:
All information obtained during the interviews is for research purposes only and will be kept confidential by purposefully masking the identity of you, the participant, and the identity of others mentioned in the interview. Further, efforts will be made to disguise incidents about which you might speak if mention of those incidents makes it possible to identify you, your university, or others specifically. Any information used in written or oral presentation will also be disguised. Your data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk. Access to the interview tapes and transcripts will be available only to the researcher. Tapes and transcripts will be kept in a secure location throughout the research process (locked file cabinet) and will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the research project.

Contacts:
The principal investigator who will interview you (Rahmon Hart) will answer any questions about participation in this study. You can contact him at 412-396-1117. You can leave a message at this number 24 hours a day. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the principal investigator, please contact Duquesne University’s Institutional Review Board Chair, Dr. Paul Richer, at 412-396-6326.

Voluntary Participation:
It is up to you whether or not to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason and the data from your interview will not be used. This will not affect the relationship you have with the principal investigator.

Consent:
By signing the consent form, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is
voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Date
APPENDIX C

Codes Frequency Report
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APPENDIX D

Quotations and Memos for the Scholarly Activity Code
Quotations and Memos for the Scholarly Activity Code

P 2: Issac.doc - 2:2 [Sometimes in student affairs p..] (7:7) (Super)
Codes: [Scholarly Activity] [Strategies and Tactics]
No memos

Sometimes in student affairs people view themselves as second class. I never viewed myself as second class and as you review my credentials, I didn’t have to write. I didn’t have to publish. I didn’t have to get this award from NASPA a few years ago for outstanding contribution to literature and research, the first person of color in 40 years to get such an award. But as I have mapped my career, I wanted to be a success. Not only with my career and how I contribute to helping students to grow or mentoring staff members to take a look at the idea of publishing or presenting at a conference or holding leadership roles in professional organizations.

P 2: Issac.doc - 2:7 [You have to work effectively a..] (11:11) (Super)
Codes: [Roles & Responsibilities] [Scholarly Activity] [Strategies and Tactics] [Values & Attributes]
No memos

You have to work effectively and respond to the needs of the students, administrators, and the faculty. I mentioned earlier that I also taught graduate courses in student affairs because I thought it was very important that as a VP for Student Affairs not only to be working in collaboration with my colleagues but also be involved with the faculty role. So when I left Alpha University I was a full professor.

P 2: Issac.doc - 2:24 [Comprehensive knowledge of stu..] (33:33) (Super)
Codes: [Scholarly Activity]
No memos

Comprehensive knowledge of student affairs: You have to know what student affairs is about and why it is important to be part of university life. That can come through coursework, general working relationships… The way that I kept myself up since I received my Ph.D. when I was 26 years old… The way that I kept up with my knowledge and skills about student affairs is not only being a scholar, but also being a leader in some of the major organizations. Like NASPA, NASAP, and ACPA. I held leadership roles in those 3 organizations. Also, I had the opportunity to be an ACE Fellow.

P 2: Issac.doc - 2:30 [Health & Safety: Very important..] (38:38) (Super)
Codes: [Scholarly Activity] [Values & Attributes]
No memos

Health & Safety: Very important. One of the books that I co-authored is being well
recognized throughout the nation dealing with campus safety issues. Health issues--we want a healthy campus and that’s why I am a proponent of working out and eating the right food.

Along the way I have been able to travel when I wanted to travel for the last 17 years. I presented at each of those conferences over the years-NASPA, ACPA, and was able to be funded by this institution. I have been to other countries and this institution has paid for it.

I can never forget at a conference at NASPA years ago, African Americans were talking about retention of African American students and when someone was going to write a monograph on this particular issue. I took note of that and myself and another African American female, (Dr. Doris Wright), we wrote the first monograph dealing with minority students with NASPA. It was called, “From survival to success: Promoting minority student retention.”

I had a passion for student affairs. The passion was not only servicing students but to be an outstanding student affairs administrator. That encompassed not only getting superior evaluations from the President. But also encompasses me writing about certain aspects of student affairs, contributing to the knowledge base. Holding my deans and directors accountable because I had a grid of expectations, assessment outcomes, providing them with adequate funding if they had an idea that they thought they wanted to try out.

It is very important that other Brothers and Sisters see that there is someone that is writing about certain issues in student affairs because once you do your research…you can see that I am one of very few African American Brothers that have done what I have
done. Are you aware of that Rahmon?

P 2: Issac.doc - 2:79 [Isaac: When I was younger, I w..] (90:90) (Super)
Codes: [Scholarly Activity] [Strategies and Tactics]
No memos

Isaac: When I was younger, I would teach maybe one or two course per year. I did it more so because of the experience. They paid me but I did it more for the experience. When I came here about 20 years ago, I taught maybe once maybe every three or four years. What was important was to have the faculty status or rank because of my research and my public service. The thing about it is that you have to give up something.

P 2: Issac.doc - 2:81 [Now, I think that one caution ..] (91:92) (Super)
Codes: [Scholarly Activity] [Words of Wisdom]
No memos

Now, I think that one caution is this. I think that as you interview, that you wait until you are offered the job by the President. In other words, don’t go in interviewing…talking about teaching. Why? Because you are interviewing for an administrator post--a VP for Student Affairs. Then once you go through and they want to offer you the job, then you can talk to the President about the possibility of teaching. But always remember that you are the VP for Student Affairs. Maybe you want to teach like one course a year. It could be during the summer when there aren’t that many students on the campus. But my point is that those are things that you have to know when to negotiate. You don’t negotiate with the search committee. You go in, you interview, you put your plan out, and then what you need to do is take a look at the institution and see where you fit. Whether it’s going to be ethnic studies like I taught, or higher ed or student affairs and see can you teach maybe once a year.

That negotiation would be with the college President first and he will let you talk with the particular school.

P 2: Issac.doc - 2:83 [RH: Have you used graduate ass..] (95:97) (Super)
Codes: [Scholarly Activity] [Strategies and Tactics] [Words of Wisdom]
No memos

RH: Have you used graduate assistants to assist with research and transcribing data?

Isaac: Yes. All of that stuff. Right. If you have the budget you should do that. That is what I would encourage you to do depending on the institution. Hire you a 20-hour graduate assistant and they would help you with your involvement in professional organizations.

Or another way I did it is mentees I mentioned. Faculty, my mentees-one at Texas A&M
University, University of Tennessee, University of Wisconsin, Northern Illinois University, and one at Binghamton University—she’s a female. We all help each other out. For example—JJ called me a month ago and said I want YOU to go to Gamma University and be the visiting professor. Not one of your other mentees, because I’m good at delegating somebody else to do the work. (laughing). I went. My point is you develop a cadre of individuals that are committed to student affairs, serious about the work, and that’s what you have to do.

P 3: Kevin.doc - 3:42 [But in the mean time, I got to..] (114:114)  
Codes: [Scholarly Activity]
No memos

But in the mean time, I got to stay fresh. So getting a handle on things here. Once we get this division in place, where we're rolling along pretty good, then I'll start looking at writing. I got a book deal with Josey-Bass. So publications, getting back in the classroom. Once I get this book done, if we can get the book done, start writing, start branching off. That's my next venture. Whether it's going up or going out into the classroom, getting tenure, always have a job, teach and consult, speak, travel.

P 3: Kevin.doc - 3:43 [RH: Do you do a considerable a..] (116:118)  
Codes: [Scholarly Activity]
No memos

RH: Do you do a considerable amount of consulting or speaking now?

Kevin: I cut back. But I used to. Because of my role. But I used to travel all over the country. All over. Speaking leadership, management, diversity, keynote addresses.

Codes: [Scholarly Activity] [Spirituality] [Values & Attributes]
No memos

Marshall: I work with all students but I have a special heart for Black students. We just did a survey this past spring asking students about their experience and how they use services. Then we had another question on there about how important is religion and spirituality in your own life. The Black students, about 85% of them said that it was extremely important. When you look at other groups— they are in the 50% range. So the whole issue of religion and spirituality, particularly among African Americans has been a very prominent force in their lives and you even see that being played out even on college campuses. I have also had an interest from a research point of view on the psychology of religion and the historical influence of the Black church.

What I think that has done for me is if you look back into the 1950's and the 1960's, a lot
of the civil rights leaders really grew out of the Black church. What the Black church did was instilled in people a push for justice and equality and the whole social justice movement. So what that's done for me, is what I stated earlier-ministry, because what I'm trying to do on campus is to bring about justice and equality for all people. But that's bedded in a faith tradition. Because I am a person of faith it moves me then to say that at this university I have to look about ways to bring about justice and equality for all people. That's in a sense how it plays out in my life.

Try to make sure that you get your academic credentials in order. What is going to be important in doing that is for you to start publishing. That's the other thing that I push. So if you are interested in being a VP of student affairs try to do some writing to build up your academic credentials. Try to get a broad range of experiences. One of the things that I've found looking back over my career--is things that I thought were not that important--they have been things that have helped me later in my further development.

If it is possible to get a faculty rank, also a faculty appointment, along with the VP slot, to me that enhances your credibility within the academic community.

You have to be collaborative. You have to be able to work with especially academic affairs and fiscal affairs. I spend a lot of time on emails and they are my friends. They have to be my friends because they control the money and the faculty. Administrators are just add-ons, faculty is the key. That’s why I have always taught. I teach because I am on the school of education faculty, I go to the department meetings because I’m one of their peers. So when they have a problem they call me up. Not as the Vice Chancellor, as their fellow professor. Plus it gives you professional expertise-academic expertise. You have to be looked at as a peer. The central part of any university is instruction so I recommend that everyone teach at least one course a semester or one course a year and always upgrade their academic expertise and keep up. Because that’s how faculty will respect you, if you are one of them. So when I’m talking to a Dean, they don’t care that I am the Vice Chancellor, they have their own budget, they have their own school…but I
am also the Associate Professor so they listen to me a little bit closer. That surprised me but that’s very true. You need to have that academic expertise.

As a Chief Student Affairs Officer I also am a full professor, which I negotiated as a part of the job, and a student affairs professional in my view it’s imperative that one have an academic affiliation as well. So I am a full-time faculty member and I work principally working with students who are writing Masters thesis and doctoral dissertations. So it keeps my academic portfolio alive. When I retire from this job I will likely go back to the faculty part-time in retirement.

It’s important to me that the Chief Student Affairs Officer is someone who is viewed viably...as the Chief Executive Officer of a university as well. So having an academic appointment and teaching for 14 years at the collegiate level as well as being an executive officer or Chief Student Affairs Officer, all of those are important prerequisites in my view to a Presidency. Actually taking one...we'll if it is meant to be it will. If not, I will be very content as a professor half time when I retire.

That was.. My criteria were access to an airport, having a dry cleaner. My criteria were really slim and really small. I wanted to make a move that could get me closer to my family. I am like an actor that wants to direct. I am a VP who wants to teach [laughing]. I've got to publish so I wanted to come to a small community where I have a coffee shop, where I can literally sequester myself and knock out some publications. So the community integration wasn't a priority for me. Having a large city nearby was a definite benefit.

Taking those risks early and taking the responsibility early too. We published a journal
article when I was in that role. it was really really instructive.

P11: Nelson-rev.doc - 11:1 [Nelson is currently writing a ..] (5:5) (Super)
Codes: [Scholarly Activity]
No memos

Nelson is currently writing a book

Codes: [Scholarly Activity]
No memos

Secondly, another piece of advice is that because we are in student affairs, it does not mean that this is all we know and enjoy. We need to get out to more functions where the faculty are present, and “hob-nob” with the academicians about things of interest to them… show them that you have some interest in the same subjects.
APPENDIX E

ATLAS.ti Code Families
Code Family for Social and Academic Experiences
Code Family for Racism and Discrimination
Code Family for Responding to Incidents of Racism and Discrimination
Code Family for Factors Salient to their Success

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- Bilingual (4-6)
- Bicultural (4-6)
- Family (1-6)
- Employment (3-1)
- Get The Right People On the Bus (5-6)
- Good Friend (4-5)
- HBCU (1-6)
- I am very secure in my own skin (3-4)
- Language Skill (4-5)
- Life as They (10-9)
- More Money, More Power (1-6)
-Out To Avoid (1-6)
- Peer Professional (2-4)
- Professional Development Activities (1-6)
- Strategies and Tactics (6-6)
- Values & Attributes (71-6)
- World of Famine (6-6)

- Age (5-6)---
- Am I too Black or keeps? (1-6)
- Am I not Black Enough? (1-6)
- Background (4-6)
- Black and White (1-6)
- Black Faculty & Staff Relationships (1-6)
- Black Identity (9-6)
- Black Male Culture (4-6)
- Black Majority (6-6)
- Black Minority (6-6)
- Black on Black (2-6)
- Border of Invisibility (27-6)---
- Call To Question (12-0)
- Change (47-6)
- Class Status (4-3)
- committed to justice and equal... (6-6)
- Cost of Raising (3-6)
- Critical Black Community (2-6)
- Critical Mix (4-6)
- Critical Reflection (4-6)
- Critical Thinking (1-6)
- Critical Thinking about the Classroom (2-6)
- Critical Thinking about the Campus (2-6)
- Current Population (2-6)
- Critical to Develop (18-6)
- Deemphasis on Race (1-6)
- Delayed Strategic Response (36-6)
- Defense from Strategize (1-6)
- Employment Discrimination (11-6)
- Entering the Field (4-6)
- Experience Don’t Associate Black (1-6)
APPENDIX F

ATLAS.ti Network Maps
Social and Academic Experiences Network Map
Racism and Discrimination Network Map
Responding to Racism and Discrimination Network Map
Factors Salient to their Success and Failure Network Map