California State University,

Fullerton

THE ROLE OF MENTORING AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY EXAMINING BLACK FEMALE MID-LEVEL COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS

A DISSERTATION

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By

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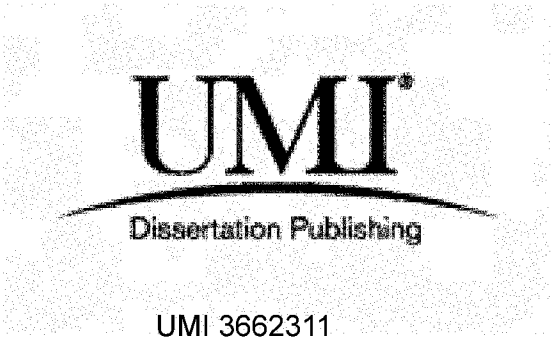

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ABSTRACT

Although Black women have made progress in securing administrative positions, historically, they remain underrepresented at the highest levels in American post-secondary institutions (Hamilton, 2004; Howard-Vital & Morgan, 1993; Moses, 1989). Lack of networking, few positive role models, and inadequate mentoring are reasons cited as explanations as to why African American women have limited opportunities for career advancement (Searby & Tripses, 2006). Many Black female mid-level administrators currently face limited opportunities for career advancement due to inadequate opportunities to interact within the greater context of the academy by virtue of their history, race and gender (Collins, 2001).

This qualitative, phenomenological study examined mentoring relationships associated with African American female mid-level administrators' career development experiences, including the relevance of the mentor's race and gender. Additionally, issues of barriers and challenges as well as sources of support were examined. Thirteen African American females who worked in the California Community College System with titles of director, assistant dean, associate dean, and dean participated in face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated that African American female mid-level administrators preferred informal mentor relationships to formal mentor relationships. While the race and gender of the mentor was not a factor, psychosocial support was

preferred from mentors over career development support. Findings also determined that numerous barriers prevented the mid-level administrators from advancing in their careers. Black Women's Support networks are necessary and offer tools for the survival of the African American female mid-level administrator.

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Mary Wilson, for providing opportunities for me to soar,

and

To my incredible daughter, Tumauni Moss; you are the wind beneath my wings.

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I would like to thank my committee members who made me better through this process and never stopped challenging me. As I learned during this process, each person has a role. Dr. Fujimoto was always insightful and charged me to think about things I had not considered. Dr. Jones was a cheerleader, encourager and deep thinker. She always reminded me that this study is important. To my "chair extraordinaire," Dr. Dawn Person, this study would not have been possible without your guidance, knowledge, and support. Thank you for always making yourself available when I called to vent about the dissertation process and for challenging me to think bigger and dig deeper.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Black women of the past and present feel an obligation to serve as exemplary models of leadership in education and in their communities (DeLany & Rogers, 2004; McKay 1997). Many Black women have been leaders in higher education serving as teachers and educational leaders. Others have been successful college and university presidents (Bass, 2009; Lloyd-Jones, 2009; Perkins, 1996). Coleman-Burns (1989) suggested that Black women regard education as the great hope for the race; they are aware that education is "designed to prepare members of the next generation to take their rightful place as tomorrow's leadership" (p. 152). Historical Black female educational leaders such as Anna Julia Cooper, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Lucy Diggs Slowe each left a rich legacy of traditional leadership in academe (Giles, 2006; McCluskey, 1989; Perkins, 1996).

Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964) was a feminist and an educator who consistently articulated the struggles of being Black and being female (Bailey, 2004; Giles, 2006). Cooper spent her life as an educator (Keller, 1999), earned a Ph.D. from the Sorbonne at age 57 (Bailey, 2004; Giles, 2006), and served as President of Frelinghuysen University in Washington, DC from 1931-1943 (Bailey, 2004; Giles, 2006). Frelinghuysen was a non-traditional institution, designed to provide "social services, religious training, and educational programs

for the people who needed them most" (Keller, 1999, p. 58). Cooper's educational vision, service, and community activism during her tenure at Frelinghuysen resulted in making that educational center an early model of a community college – merging practical, vocational training and liberal arts education for adults (Giles, 2006; Keller, 1999). Giles (2006) noted that Anna Julia Cooper "modeled excellence as an educator and educational administrator, a vocal advocate for Black women's rights, public intellectual, social activist and writer" (p. 621). Dr. Cooper was devoted to securing equal opportunity, inclusion for women, and human rights for society. She was a torchbearer in bringing consciousness to the dilemma of race, gender, and issues of social justice (Bailey, 2004).

In her book, *A Voice from the South*, Cooper (1988) states:

> The colored woman of to-day occupies, one may say, a unique position in this country. In a period of itself transitional and unsettled, her status seems one of the least confronted by both a woman question, and a race problem, and is as yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both. (p. 573)

Cooper supported the idea of racial uplift, which emphasized social uplift for the masses of disadvantaged Black women. Cooper and other educated Black women, such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary Church Terrell, and Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, were advocates for annihilating racist thinking to social equality, to which White people routinely objected (Bailey, 2004; Giles, 2006). Giles (2006) noted that Cooper and her peers "challenged the late nineteenth and early

twentieth century societal norms on race, gender, and class politics through the broad strategy of racial uplift" (p. 628). The need to promote social justice, advocacy for Black people, and racial uplift was a high priority, and, to that end, the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) was established and members embraced the motto, "Lifting as We Climb" (Cooper, 1988). Cooper was committed to the success of Black women; she created opportunities for them to receive education and ensured that they were aware of the societal injustices of that time (Keller, 1999).

In a like manner, Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955) was another notable Black female leader committed to education, social justice and equality for women (McCluskey, 1989). She believed that education was the key to the advancement for women; she made education the centerpiece in her lifelong work to achieve racial and gender equality (McCluskey, 1989). Bethune believed that education had transformative power. In 1904 she founded Daytona Beach Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls, which later became Bethune-Cookman College (Evans, 2007; Tyson, 2002). Many women with the spirit of Cooper and Bethune advocated for the uplift of Black women. A lesser-known female activist and educational leader was Lucy Diggs Slowe.

Lucy Diggs Slowe (1855-1937) was one of the earliest Black women formally trained in student personnel. She served as the first woman dean at Howard University in Washington, D.C. from 1922-1937 (Perkins, 1996). During her tenure, female students were limited to receiving education in the fields of housekeeping and elementary school teacher preparation (Perkins, 1996).

However, Slowe was an outspoken advocate for self-determination, respect, and advancement of college women. She believed that educated Black women should hold leadership positions, and to that end she sought to develop the leadership skills of Black college women (Perkins, 1996). Slowe made many contributions to the field of higher education in addition to leaving a legacy of self-determination and empowerment for Black female students and administrators.

Although early twentieth century trailblazers such as Anna Julia Cooper, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Lucy Diggs Slowe left rich legacies and examples for contemporary females and Black higher education administrators to follow, strong twenty-first century leaders are needed to serve as bulwarks and guides to ensure that the pipeline remains open for mid-level administrators to ascend to senior level positions in higher education. Although Black women have been participants in higher education for more than a century, and they continue to serve as educational leaders, reference to them in research literature is almost totally absent (Moses, 1989).

Data from the American Council on Education's 2011 Minority Status Report show that between 1998 and 2008, the total number of master's degrees earned by African Americans more than doubled from 30,616 to 61,847. Additionally, African Americans earned 7,172 doctoral degrees in 1998, and that number increased to 9,794 in 2008. In 1998, African American women earned 21,221 master's degrees, whereas in 2008 they earned 44,569, a 110% increase. Moreover, African American women's doctoral degree attainment

totaled 4,243 in 1998 and climbed to 6,308 in 2008, a 49% increase. The data regarding masters and doctoral degree attainment among African American females suggests a probable increase in the viable pool of applicants for mid to senior level positions in higher education.

In general, the number of women beginning careers in higher education with the goal to become educational leaders is increasing; however, there are very few females available to mentor them (Catalyst, 2004; Hamrick & Carlisle, 1990). Ragins (1989) found that mentors provide avenues for upward mobility and are essential in the lives of female managers, because females, in comparison to their male counterparts, face greater organizational, interpersonal, and individual barriers to advancement. Unfortunately, Black women have encountered barriers in academia, specifically, in areas of leadership (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Professional Black women have consistently faced the challenge of *double jeopardy*: being Black and being a woman (Bova, 2000). Black women stand at the intersection of race and gender, forced to negotiate the world (Collins, 2000). The demands placed on Black women as they navigate the daily barrage of challenges create significant obstacles to their full participation in and contribution to higher education (Carter, Pearson, & Shavlik, 1996). Although the double jeopardy issue has been a persistent problem, many ambitious Black women found ways to stay motivated in the face of adversity and to achieve career success. However, despite these career achievements, Black women are still overlooked and underrepresented in many fields (Catalyst, 1999).

Local, state, and national leadership development institutes that focus on women's issues are available. Unfortunately, these traditional leadership development programs do not address specific challenges Black women face; further, they have devalued the level of care Black women bring to the workplace (Logan, 2007; Trigg, 2006). There are a few leadership development institutes that focus on women of color and the workplace issues they face. To be sure, the few leadership institutes dedicated to the development of Black women leaders are successful, intentional, and effective.

Kaleidoscope Leadership Institute and the National Council on Black American Affairs (NCBAA) Leadership Development Institute prepare Black females for leadership roles in higher education. The Kaleidoscope Institute provides guidance on setting and achieving personal and professional goals and prepares participants for executive leadership positions by exploring issues in community colleges and analyzing barriers that prevent different cultural groups from connecting (Kaleidoscope Institute, 2012). Similarly, the NCBAA Leadership Development Institute prepares African American females in community colleges for leadership roles to ensure that the pipeline to executive-level positions is fluid. The NCBAA is committed to delivering an exemplary leadership development program to enhance African American females' leadership skills and to provide opportunities for professional and personal growth (NCBAA, 2012). It is imperative that Black women participate in programs like Kaleidoscope Leadership Institute and the NCBAA Leadership Development Institute to prepare for impending leadership roles. According to

Vaughn and Weisman (2003) the leadership pipeline is facing crisis because of the large number of impending community college retirements. However, participation in appropriate leadership development programs may help to improve the situation by preparing and positioning Black females to assume senior leadership roles in community colleges.

In addition to leadership programs, African American female professionals in the corporate sector and in higher education have identified mentoring as a factor that contributes positively to their career advancement and satisfaction (Catalyst, 2004). Indeed, formal and informal mentoring practices serve as powerful tools for promoting career advancement and serve as an intervention to combat conditions of an impenetrable glass ceiling (Moore-Brown, 2006). Understanding the role of mentoring in the career path of mid-level Black women in higher education community college leadership is critical to ensuring the full participation and engagement of Black women in this sector of higher education in the 21st century.

Background of the Problem

Although Black women have made progress in securing administrative positions, historically, they remain underrepresented at the highest levels in American post-secondary institutions (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Howard-Vital & Morgan, 1993; Moses, 1989). Women traditionally struggle to gain access and entry into educational administration positions (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Gupton & Slick, 1996). Lack of networking, few positive role models, inadequate mentoring relationships, lack of opportunities to develop and/or

display leadership skills, bias, and an "old boy" network (domination by one race and one sex; typically White, Anglo Saxon males) are reasons cited as explanations as to why women have limited opportunities for career advancement (Bova, 2000; Searby & Tripses, 2006). These barriers to career advancement for women translate into limited access to opportunity, low or no power within the organization, and decreased job satisfaction. These barriers also create a glass ceiling, which prevents women from advancing beyond middle-management positions (Greenhause, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990).

According to data from the fall 2013 *Report on Staffing* obtained from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, there are a total of 1,899 educational administrators employed in California's 112 community colleges. Of that total, men hold 47% or 896 positions while females hold 53% or 1,023 positions. Although women hold 107 more administrative positions than men, Black women only occupy 11% or 117 educational administrator positions while White women hold 53% or 571 educational administrator positions. Although White women occupy a higher percentage of educational administrative positions, barriers that prevent them from moving up the career ladder are a noted common complaint for them as well (Catalyst, 2004). Data from the California Community College fall 2013 staffing report is evidence that Black women continue to struggle to secure administrative positions at the same rates as White women. Moreover, as Black women prepare to advance into senior level positions, a *concrete ceiling* – one that is virtually impossible to penetrate, presents a significant barrier (Catalyst, 2004).

Problem Statement

The current literature fails to address the unique mentoring and career development experiences of Black female administrators who work in two-year colleges. Many Black female mid-level administrators currently face limited opportunities for career advancement. They have not been afforded the opportunity to interact within the greater context of the academy by virtue of their history, race and gender (Collins, 2001). Historically, many professional Black women who work in higher education in the United States have expressed that they face a double jeopardy: being Black and being a woman (Bova, 2000; McKay, 1997). At this juncture in the 21st century, college and university faculty and administrators in the United States still do not reflect America's racial and class diversity (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Henry, 2010), and Black female administrators have not reached parity with their White female counterparts or with Black or White males (Holmes, 2003). Black women continue to face adversity in their attempt to advance in their careers, and they are still overlooked and underrepresented in many fields (Bova, 2000; Catalyst, 1999).

The American Black woman's voice is muted (Thomas, 2004) and her experience is constantly influenced by the intersections of race, social class, and gender, a juncture that is extremely complicated for many to understand (Etter-Lewis, 1991). Traditionally, racism, classism, and sexism rendered individuals who were not members of the dominant group (i.e., White males) invisible and nonexistent (Thomas, 2004). The Black woman's experience and life history project a completely different perspective than that of White women (Collins,

1989), and cannot be adequately explained with an isolated emphasis on race, class, or gender (Thomas, 2004). The systematic discriminations of race, class and gender are tenacious, ubiquitous, and oppressive (King, 1988). The attempt to articulate the experience of the Black woman is much more difficult "since one cannot use the same techniques to study the knowledge of the dominated as one uses to study the knowledge of the powerful" (Collins, 1989, p. 751). Since the literature does not fully address the needs, concerns, and experience of the Black female mid-level administrator, the dominant group typically holds adverse perceptions, and stereotypical images and expectations of Black women (Bova, 2000).

A study released by Catalyst (2004), a nonprofit research and advisory organization, determined that in 2002, the number of African American women in the workplace totaled 8,469,000 or 5.8% of the labor force. In 2010 approximately 11,050,000 African American women or 7.0% were in the labor pool. This is a 59.3% increase from 1990 (Fullerton & Toosi, 2001). In 2002, a total of 2,412,000 African American women held administrative and managerial positions for a total of or 5.1% of all management and professional occupations (Catalyst, 2004). Although the number of Black women participating in the workforce is increasing, the majority of Black women do not have influence or power. Instead, they are confronted with disempowering experiences, and they rarely serve in positions of authority or experience the inner workings of the organization (Bova, 2000; Howard-Vital, 1993; Stanley, 2009).

This study benefits the field of mentoring research as it contributes to the available knowledge about Black women and their mentoring experiences as mid-level administrators in California community colleges. According to Moses (1989) there is limited published information regarding the specific experiences of Black female mid-level administrators at two-year colleges. Current research studies regarding Black females in academe focus primarily on students and faculty. This gap in the literature creates a need for examination of the career experiences and mentoring of Black female mid-level administrator in community colleges.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of Black female mid-level administrators working in the California Community College System and to explore if and how mentor relationships prepare them for career advancement to senior-level positions.

Research Questions

In order to accomplish this purpose, the following research questions were posed to guide this study:

1. How do Black female mid-level administrators working in California community colleges experience mentoring, specifically for career advancement and considering race and gender?
2. How do these women describe barriers and supports for administrators in pursuit of career advancement in community colleges?

Significance of the Study

Few studies exist that examine the experiences of Black female mid-level administrators working in community colleges who are pursuing career advancement. This study contributes to the current literature on mentor relationships by specifically examining Black female mid-level administrators' professional realities and the current institutional barriers and pitfalls that act as roadblocks to the attainment of senior-level positions. One possible result of Black females sharing their lived experiences is that institutional leaders may become more aware of the realities of Black female mid-level administrators at California community colleges. Furthermore, these findings can provide useful information to senior institutional leaders who are in positions to reshape and restructure institutional policies, practices, and cultures.

Shafritz, Ott, and Yang (2011) note that culture is "composed of many intangible phenomena, such as values, beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, behavioral norms, artifacts, and patterns of behavior (p.338). Further, the campus climate, which includes campus perceptions, attitudes, and expectations, define the institution and its members (Peterson & Spencer, 1990). Astin (1965) suggests that different racial/ethnic groups often view the campus differently, which has validity because it has real consequences for the individual. Therefore, the presence of Black administrators on campus could serve as a retention tool for Black students and encourage them to persist.

Finally, the findings from this study offer suggestions and recommendations that could be beneficial for Black female mid-level

administrators. Carter et al. (1996) caution that institutional leaders must identify and support minority women leaders for the sake of women themselves, the role they can play in the lives of students, faculty, and staff, and the contributions they can make to the quality of work and learning on the campus.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study refers to the parameters under which the study will be operating. Thus, the following outlines the assumptions, chosen delimitations, as well as the limitations of the proposed study.

Assumptions of the Study

This research assumed that the participants had mentors whom they felt contributed to their advancement and that mentoring of this population will improve or facilitate their career upward mobility. Additional assumptions included that the participants' experiences were similar, even if the challenges and barriers they faced varied because of the uniqueness of each institutional culture. Additionally, I assumed that the participants answered the questions honestly and to the best of their ability.

Study Delimitations

This study explored the mentoring experiences as a tool for career advancement for Black female mid-level California community college administrators. The number of Black mid-level administrators within the California Community College system may be limited; however, to understand their lived experiences, this study will only include this population. An African American woman is one who self-identifies as Black and whose national origin of

birth is the United States of America (Stanley, 2009). There are likely issues common to Black women in mid-level positions that might be obscured if the focus is on a broader group (including men or women of other racial groups). Further, this study included only individuals who were available to be interviewed in the fall 2013 semester.

Study Limitations

This study was limited to Black female mid-level California community college administrators. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews; however, telephone interviews were used when appropriate. Additionally, busy schedules and time constraints delayed the interview process from occurring in a timely manner for some participants.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms are the stipulated definitions integrated in this research study:

African American and Black

These terms will be used to reference the race of female administrators in this study. Much of the literature uses the terms interchangeably.

Black Female Mid-level Administrator

This term refers to administrators holding a title of director, assistant dean, associate dean, and dean. Mid-level administrators have authority over a portion of the institution, while still being accountable to higher authorities (Clark, Caffarella, & Ingram, 1999). Titles may vary depending on the institution site.

Black Feminist Thought

Black feminist thought is shaped and produced by the experiences Black women have encountered in their lives, even though others have documented their stories. Although the individual stories and experiences of Black women are unique, there are intersections of experiences between and among Black women. And although commonalities do exist among Black women, the diversity of class, religion, and age of Black women as a group are multiple contexts from which their experiences can be revealed and understood (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Mentors

Mentors refer to individuals with advanced experience and knowledge that are committed to providing upward mobility and support to their protégés careers (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kram, 1985).

Protégés

This term refers to individuals who receive career development advice, support, and role modeling with the goal of career advancement from experienced professionals with significantly more experience (Ragins, 1997).

Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter provided an introduction to the study, including the study's purpose, research questions, significance, scope, and definition of key terms. Chapter 2 focuses on Black feminist thought as a theoretical framework, and reviews key literature regarding mentoring relationships and African American female administrators in higher education. Chapter 3 focuses on the

phenomenological theoretical orientation, design, methodology, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the study findings, and Chapter 5 offers a discussion of the findings and the implications for practice, policy, and future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical, Philosophical, and/or Theoretical Foundation

Historians suggest the term "mentor" originated in Greek mythology in the book *The Odyssey* written by Homer around 8 B.C. "Mentor was a tutor given the responsibility of caring for Odysseus' son, Telemachus, when Odysseus left to fight the Trojan War" (Russell & Adams, 1997, p. 1). Mentor provided wise counsel and groomed Telemachus to become king (Bell, 1996; Clawson, 1980). Just as mentors were needed to provide wise counsel, guidance, and grooming in the past, they are desperately needed today to prepare the next generation of leaders in higher education. Several studies have determined that mentoring is beneficial for individuals who desire to advance in their careers to positions of senior leadership (Fagenson, 1989; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kram, 1983, 1985; Olson & Jackson, 2009; Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000).

Moreover, mentor relationships are critically important for the career development of Black women in higher education (Crawford & Smith, 2005). Black women who aspire to advance to leadership positions must seek out opportunities to develop mentor relationships with senior-level leaders who have political power to aid in their career growth (Olson & Jackson, 2009). Just as mentor relationships are important, leadership is a vital skill that Black female mid-level administrators must develop if their goal is to secure executive level

positions within higher education. Alfred (2001) suggested that participation in leadership development programs is a strategy that positively contributes to the development of Black women and propels their professional growth.

However, Black women must have a place in the pipeline if they are to successfully navigate the institutional culture of the academy. Moss et al. (1999) posit that the number of women in positions of authority is imbalanced and has negative implications for mentoring. Further, there are fewer women whom other women can ask for guidance, and as a result, this situation may prevent many qualified Black women from receiving the guidance needed to move into senior-level positions (Moss et al., 1999).

In addition, the ascendancy to senior-level positions is increasingly difficult for Black women because they tend to work in lower level administrative positions where they are responsible for carrying out policy instead of formulating policy (Moses, 1989). Crawford and Smith (2005) purported that this occurrence is due to the lack of mentoring and leadership development opportunities. Typically, Black women are positioned on the boundary of the organization with little guidance and direction from mentors, often they are unable to distinguish between the espoused theory of an organization and its theory in use (Schon, 1983). In the world of music, regular patterns of pulses and beats create melodic and harmonious rhythms. Likewise, there are organizational cultures, which consist of norms and standards that govern behavior, which if understood, could potentially place Black women in more advantageous positions to advance in their careers (Crawford & Smith, 2005). According to Moustakas (1981),

"Rhythm is the tacit realization of what is within one's own self and the flow of life to others" (p. 9). Typically people of African descent instinctively respond to the beating of drums by dancing or clapping their hands on the downbeat. Conversely, White people respond to music by dancing or clapping their hands on the upbeat. Interestingly enough, the rhythm of life and higher education operate on the upbeat, which is controlled by ideologies and policies designed by those in power, typically, White males (Holmes, 2003). Indeed, hegemony, whiteness, maleness, and class privilege continue to control higher education and most areas of life (Bova, 2000; Crawford & Smith, 2005).

This chapter examines Black feminist thought as the theoretical framework for this study and a definition of mentoring is provided that is supported by the literature. Additionally, the importance of formal and informal mentor relationships is explored, as well as issues of diversity in mentoring programs, followed by themes of race, gender, and opportunity in mentor relationships. Finally, this literature review considers women and mentoring and mentoring and career advancement for Black female administrators.

Theoretical Foundation

Black women faced the "woman question" and a "race problem" as the Black feminist movement began to emerge in the mid 1960s, which was a continuation of the intellectual and activist tradition, which began more than a century and a half earlier (Guy-Sheftall, 2003). Black feminist thought evolved from the work of Black women scholars and intellectuals for the purpose of empowering the Black woman (Collins, 1990). A basic premise of Black feminist

thought is that Black women cannot be fully empowered unless intersecting oppressions such as racism, sexism, and classism are eliminated (Byrd & Stanley, 2009). Patricia Hill Collins (1989) documented the experiences of Black women and further developed black feminist thought (BFT), a critical social theory. Black feminist thought is a commonly used framework in which the experiences and ideas of Black women serve as the focal point of analysis; BFT is often challenging to define, as the framework frequently contains diverse meanings. BFT provides context to the Black woman's experience (Henry, 2010) and helps to articulate the intersectionality of race, class, and gender (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). Race is typically understood as a socially constructed category, which denotes a difference among people and is used politically to assign people to categories (Banton, 2000). Gender is not only a social construct, according to Bell and Nkomo (2001), it is a "set of assumptions and beliefs on both individual and societal levels that affect the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, resources, and treatment of women and men" (p. 16). Social class provides a distinct difference between the powerful and the powerless. Bell and Nkomo (2001) assert that social class determines one's access to social networks that influence success and social privilege. In broader society, "social class is a way of asserting power, maintaining exclusion, and sustaining oppression" (Stanley, 2009, p. 552). Stanley (2009) further states, "social class creates multiple layers of realities, relations, and experiences that differ according to race, gender, and one's stage in the life cycle" (p. 552). Black feminist thought "centers on the empowerment of

Black women and the assertion of their voices as central to their experiences" (Patton, 2009, p. 516).

Collins (1989) posits, "While Black feminist thought articulates the taken-for-granted knowledge of African American women, it also encourages all Black women to create new self-definitions that validate a Black women's standpoint" (p. 750). Collins (1986) suggests that Black women produce ideas that clarify standpoints about themselves. There are three key themes in Black feminist thought. First, although others have documented stories about Black women, the framework is shaped and produced by Black women to articulate their personal experiences. Collins recommends that Black women realize the importance of affirmation and develop the practice of self-definition and self-valuation. According to Collins (1986), "Self-definition involves challenging the political knowledge-validation process that has resulted in externally defined, stereotypical images of Afro-American womanhood" (p.16). The self-valuation process involves replacing controlling, dehumanizing, and "externally-derived images with authentic Black female images" (p. 17). Black feminists question the credibility of those possessing the power to define and insist that "the act of Black female self-definition validates Black women's power as human subjects" (p. 17). Second, Black women's life experiences are unique; however, they share similar oppressive intersections of race, class, and gender experiences between and among them (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). These multifaceted identities are immersed in oppression and subordinate their "status in an array of either/or dualities" (Collins, 1986, p. 20). Black women have been perpetually dominated

due to their perceived inferior status based on either/or dualities. Third, Black women share many commonalities; however, the diversity of class, region, religion, age, and sexual orientation shape their individual lives, which results in different expressions of these common themes (Collins, 1986). The intention of the third theme is to encourage Black women to develop, redefine, and explain their own stories based on the importance of their culture. According to Howard-Hamilton (2003), the aim of Black feminist theory is to "provide a deeper context and meaning for African American women who have been searching for a voice within rather than one heard from outside" (p. 22). Therefore, Black feminist thought was selected as the framework for this study because it takes into consideration the complexities that comprise the everyday experiences of Black females.

Review of the Scholarly Empirical Literature

The following section provides a review of the literature, which begins with a definition of mentoring and continues with the importance of mentoring relationships. Next, formal and informal mentoring relationships are considered, in addition to diversity in mentoring programs. Further, issues of race, gender, and opportunity in mentoring relationships are addressed, as well as matters of women and mentoring. Finally, the section closes with a review of Black female administrators, mentors, and career advancement.

Definition of Mentoring

Many studies have defined mentoring as an intense interpersonal exchange between a senior experienced colleague (mentor) and a less

experienced junior colleague (protégé) (Noe, 1988; Russell & Adams, 1997; Smith, Smith, & Markham, 2000). Levinson et al. (1978) provide the following definition:

> The mentor relationship is one of the most complex, and developmentally important, a man can have in early adulthood. . . . No word currently in use is adequate to convey the nature of the relationship we have in mind here. Words such as 'counselor' or 'guru' suggest the more subtle meanings, but they have other connotations that would be misleading. The term 'mentor' is generally used in a much narrower sense, to mean teacher, adviser, or sponsor. As we use the term, it means all these things, and more. . . . Mentoring is defined not in terms of formal roles but in terms of the character of the relationship and the functions it serves. (p. 97-98)

According to Ragins (1997) mentors are needed to provide three types of behaviors or functions: (a) career development functions that help the protégé's career advancement; (b) psychosocial functions that provide counseling, acceptance and personal support; and (c) role modeling functions. The mentor is usually a senior, experienced employee who serves as a role model and who provides support, direction, and feedback to the younger employee regarding career plans and interpersonal development. The mentor is committed to providing upward support and mobility to the protégé's career and increases the visibility of the protégé to decision-makers in the organization who may influence career opportunities (Baugh, Lankau, & Scandura, 1996; Bolton, 1980; Clawson,

1980; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Klauss, 1981; Levinson et al.,1978; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Importance of Mentoring Relationships

Levinson et al. (1978) conducted a longitudinal study that demonstrated the dynamics of successful mentoring relationships in the lives of young men. Most researchers have defined mentoring in terms of the functions provided by a mentor or by the roles played by a mentor in relation to a protégé (Jacobi, 1991). Levinson et al. (1978) suggests that mentors provide the following six functions in successful mentor relationships, (a) acceptance, support, and encouragement; (b) advice and guidance; (c) social status; (d) socialization as host and guide; (e) sponsorship and advocacy; and (f) training and instruction.

Kram (1985) expanded on the ideas of Levinson by clarifying the impact of mentoring relationships on the development of protégés. However, her previous research (1983) established a framework for effective mentoring functions that included both career functions and psychosocial functions. Career functions are those aspects of the relationship that enhance career advancement and include aspects of the mentoring relationship that prepare the protégé for career advancement. Kram (1983) suggested that effective mentor relationships involve exposure and visibility. The mentor may intentionally create opportunities for the protégé to participate in significant projects at work in an effort to expose his or her desirable skills and talents. Mentors often have substantial social and/or political capital in the work place that can be used to sponsor the protégé. Sponsorship involves helping the protégé make lateral moves within the

organization in order to gain work assignments that will provide the necessary experience for promotion and career advancement (Noe, 1988). Coaching is another element of the career function within the mentor relationship. Coaching involves providing feedback, sharing ideas, or suggesting strategies to complete challenging task. Further, the coaching element allows the mentor to protect his or her protégé by working to reduce or eliminate risk that may threaten the protégés image.

The psychosocial functions of Kram's (1983) mentoring framework suggested that the psychosocial functions in the dyad relationship are designed to enhance the protégé's sense of competence, identity, and work-role effectiveness. Role modeling as a psychosocial function allows the mentor to display appropriate attitudes, values, and behaviors. The mentor exhibits unconditional positive regard by providing acceptance and confirmation of the protégés work. The mentor serves as a counselor, which provides space for the protégé to speak honestly about anxieties and fears, thereby creating a friendship, which allows the mentor and protégé to engage informally and with ease (Baugh et al., 1996; Fagenson, 1989; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Noe, 1988). Kram (1985) conducted in-depth interviews with protégés to identify the specific impact mentors had on their protégés. The interview data determined that mentoring relationships significantly influenced career development and psychosocial outcomes of the protégés. Olson and Jackson (2009) recommended encouraging protégés to find and to develop relationships with leaders who can offer opportunities for development and provide advice that will

shape their career trajectory and success. It is assumed that career advancement is difficult without the help of key leaders who can advocate for a lower level employee (Lankau & Scandura, 2002).

Successful mentoring dyads are built on solid relationships that include open communication, compatibility, and security. For a mentoring relationship to be effective, both the mentor and protégé need to learn from one another in a relationship that is built on trust and commitment to the other's growth while respecting differences, preferences, and past experiences (Olson & Jackson, 2009; Thomas, 2001).

Formal and Informal Mentoring Relationships

According to Olson and Jackson (2009), many companies have designed formal mentoring programs with the goal of developing people who can be promoted to higher levels of leadership responsibility. Data from formal mentoring programs have been inconsistent regarding a positive impact on developing employees who are capable of assuming higher levels of leadership responsibilities, particularly for people from diverse backgrounds (Allen, Eby, O'Brien, & Lentz, 2008; Olson & Jackson, 2009). Previous research studies conducted on the impact of formal mentoring relationships have shown that these programs do not consistently achieve the desired outcomes (Allen et al., 2008; Olson & Jackson, 2009). Furthermore, the literature related to formal mentoring programs and the effects on the development of people of color is limited (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Olson & Jackson, 2009). On the other hand, several studies have determined that informal mentoring relationships produce positive

results when the mentor and protégé share similar racial, gender, and cultural backgrounds (Allen et al., 2005; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Olson & Jackson, 2009; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Smith et al., 2000).

Additionally, informal mentoring may be more effective than formal mentoring programs because protégés and mentors naturally select each other based on similar interests and personal characteristics. In informal mentoring relationships, mentors and protégés typically share similar racial, gender, and cultural backgrounds (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Olson & Jackson, 2009, Thomas, 1990). The key difference between formal and informal mentoring relationships is that informal mentoring relationships develop spontaneously, whereas formal mentoring relationships develop with organizational assistance (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000).

Diversity in Mentoring Programs

Research has determined that mentors typically select protégés who look like them and who have similar backgrounds and interest (Allen et al., 2005; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Olson & Jackson, 2009; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Smith, et al., 2000). As an unfortunate result, if mentors seek protégés like themselves, and if there are few women of color in senior positions, then few protégés will be women of color. Thus, professionals from diverse backgrounds with aspirations to advance to leadership positions within their organizations often lack available mentor opportunities, which create major challenges to their career advancement (Olson & Jackson, 2009).

Olsen and Jackson (2009) conducted a study with 34 protégé-mentor pairs who participated in two consecutive 18-month mentoring programs to determine whether a formal mentoring program could have a positive impact by increasing the number of people from diverse backgrounds who are promoted to higher-level leadership positions. The mentors, who were all White, completed diversity training, and both the mentors and protégés completed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and participated in interviews. At the conclusion of the two 18-month formal mentoring programs, 14 protégés were promoted and 12 received role expansions.

Thomas (2001) encouraged protégés from diverse backgrounds to develop relationships with network leaders who are able to consider them for promotion into significant leadership roles. Thomas suggested that mentors must be able to suspend negative stereotypes that would affect their ability to build an open relationship with their protégé as well as to sponsor their protégé for high-visibility assignments with their peers in the organization.

Ragins (1997) introduced the notion of the diversified mentoring construct in which relationships are composed of mentors and protégés who differ on one or more group memberships associated with power in organizations. A diversified mentoring construct in a male-dominated organization, for example, may include a majority mentor (a White male) paired with a minority protégé (a woman or another member of a minority group) or a minority mentor with a majority protégé, which is a typically less common dyad. Conversely, homogeneous relationships consist of either a majority mentor and majority

protégé pair or a minority mentor and minority protégé pair. Homogeneous pairs result in stronger role modeling and psychosocial outcomes. Furthermore, Ragins (1997) posited six propositions related to diversified mentoring relationships: (a) Role modeling and psychosocial functions will be stronger in homogeneous than diverse mentoring relationships; (b) relationships involving minority mentors will provide fewer career development functions than relationships involving majority mentors; (c) homogeneous mentoring relationships involving majority members will provide greater protégé outcomes than any other combination of the mentoring relationship; (d) the degree of diversity in the mentoring relationship will have a positive relationship with the mentor's accruement of knowledge, empathy, and skills relating to diverse groups; (e) minority mentors in homogeneous relationships will report more generativity and fulfillment than any other combination of mentoring relationship; (f) majority mentors in homogeneous relationships will receive more positive peer recognition than any other combination of the mentoring relationship.

Race, Gender, and Opportunity in Mentoring Relationships

In her research, Kram (1983) concluded that effective mentors provided opportunities for exposure and visibility for their protégés and that mentors created opportunities for protégés to participate in significant projects at work in an effort to expose their desirable skills and talents. Dresher and Cox (1996) agreed with Kram's research. In their quantitative study, Dresher and Cox (1996) were concerned with how race, gender, and mentoring experiences affected compensation outcomes for MBA graduates. This research hypothesized that

African-American and Hispanic workers were less likely than their White counterparts to establish mentoring relationships with White men, and women were less likely to form mentoring relationships with men. Questionnaires were completed by 1,018 MBA graduates. The respondent group included 742 men and 276 women, made up of 243 African Americans, 75 Hispanic Americans, 36 Asian Americans, 656 White or Anglo-European Americans, and five American Indians. The findings indicated that Black and Hispanic MBAs were less likely than their White counterparts to establish mentoring relationships with White men. The data also suggested that women established mentoring relationships at a rate equal to men; however, they were less likely to establish mentoring relationships with White men. Finally, the data indicated that White MBAs with established mentoring relationships received higher compensation than their counterparts of color. They asserted that having access to information, visibility in appropriate networks, and the opportunity to demonstrate competence provided opportunities for career advancement. Dresher and Cox also posited that White male protégés experienced greater advantages for access and opportunity because they were paired with a white male mentor. Conversely, males of color and female protégés did not experience the same level of access and opportunity.

Women and Mentoring

Although the number of women beginning careers in higher education is increasing, Hamrick and Carlisle (1990) claimed there were few females available to mentor them. Women occupy approximately 40% of all faculty and

senior staff positions in higher education (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). The percentage of female minority presidents has increased from 8.1% to 12.8% since 1986 according to *The American College President: 2002 Edition*, produced by the American Council on Education (Hamilton, 2004). However, according to Twale and Jelink (1996), women are less likely to advance to senior-level positions in their careers without the assistance of mentors. Much of the literature on mentoring indicate that women who have aspirations to obtain high level administrative positions fare better with the assistance of a mentor (Blackhurst, 2000; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Johnsrud & Wunsch, 1994; Munoz, 2010; Searby & Tripses, 2006; Wasburn, 2007). As previously noted, mentoring relationships work best when the mentor and protégé share similar backgrounds, values, and experiences (Allen, Day, & Lentz, 2005; Dunbar & Kinersley, 2001; Olson & Jackson, 2009; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Dunbar and Kinnersley's (2011) quantitative study sought answers to the following questions: (a) What percent of female administrators report one or more mentoring relationships? (b) Are there differences in the perceptions of protégés who experience formal mentoring versus those who experience informal mentoring? (c) Did factors such as race, gender, or rank of the mentor affect the protégés perception of the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship? (d) What are the perceptions of female administrators regarding how mentoring helped prepare them for leadership? Two hundred and thirty-nine women from Tennessee colleges and universities responded to the Kinnersley Mentoring Survey. The instrument addressed the mentoring experiences of female

administrators and was vetted by experts to determine content validity and clarity. Additionally, the results determined that protégés involved in "informal mentor relationships perceived that their mentors provided more career-mentoring functions" (p. 21) than protégés who participated in formal mentoring relationships. This finding supported previous studies on mentoring relationships. Respondents from the same study indicated that female mentors had an impact on the mentoring relationship; however, there was no significant difference between male and female mentors. Moreover, the respondents specified that mentors of higher rank provided more career-development functions. However, this finding did not support previous research. The study indicated that mentoring relationships prepared female administrators for leadership positions, which supported previous studies.

Another quantitative study by Twale and Jelinek (1996) surveyed 40 senior women student affairs administrators to gather data regarding their mentor experiences throughout various stages in their career development. The results indicated that 60% of the respondents had a mentor while they were in graduate school, and 56% of the respondents had a mentor as an entry level professional. The study also determined that women who had mentors as entry-level professionals were significantly more likely to serve as mentors.

Furthermore, Blackhurst (2000) conducted a quantitative study to examine the effects of mentoring on women student affairs administrators. The following variables were identified as critical to women's success and satisfaction: (a) role conflict and role ambiguity, (b) organizational commitment, (c) career satisfaction,

and (d) perceived sex discrimination. This study also determined that mentoring is beneficial for women as student affairs professionals.

Other studies suggest that if limited mentoring opportunities for women persist, there will be an underrepresentation of women senior student affairs administrators to lead colleges and universities in the future (Twale, 1995). Additionally, Twale's (1995) study indicated that "women of color did not benefit from their mentoring relations in the same ways as White women" (p. 582). The study also determined that White women with mentors were more committed to their institution and experienced less role ambiguity than White women without a mentor, while women of color without a mentor reported "higher levels of role ambiguity, sex discrimination, and lower levels of organizational commitment than White women with mentors" (p. 582). The findings from this study did not support the assumption that mentoring would enhance the career satisfaction of women student affairs professionals; however, the results suggested that there are benefits to having a mentor.

Black Female Administrators, Mentors, and Career Advancement

Mosley (1980) conducted the first study on the status of Black women administrators in higher education. The investigation sought to identify the following: (a) the number of Black women employed in predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and the type of administrative positions they hold; (b) the general status of the Black women who hold those positions; (c) the professional and personal characteristics of Black female administrators at PWIs; (d) the level (or lack) of decision making power Black women have at their institution; (e) the

opinions and attitudes of Black women on issues affecting higher education; and (f) the barriers and pressures identified by Black women in higher educational administration. One hundred and eight Black female administrators who participated in the 1975 Summer Institute of Educational Management at Harvard University responded to a three part, category questionnaire focusing on: personal and status information, institutional information, and personal attitudes and opinions. The study findings indicated: (a) Black female administrators are few in number, and the number is shrinking; (b) they occupy positions that are outside of the main university structure; (c) they have little to no institutional power; (d) they receive little or no institutional or peer support; (e) they are underpaid and overworked; and (f) many are disillusioned with higher education and have considered leaving their positions.

Mosley offered the following suggestions to improve the climate for Black female administrators: (a) White academia should act immediately to review and revise institutional policies and procedures to include affirmative resolve for Black female administrators; (b) White females should address and correct the hypocrisy of their actions in relation to their "sisterhood" discourse; (c) Black men and women should consider open communication and support for one another and realize who the real enemy is; (d) the status of hiring and promotion of Black women is in need of special attention by governmental agencies responsible for creating policy to ensure equity in hiring practice and promotional opportunities; (e) research agencies and educational organizations funded to report on the employment status of Black females should cease their practices of hiding the

disgraceful condition of Black females in higher education; and (f) Black female administrators should become more vocal about their plight. Mosley (1980) stated, "Black women administrators are an endangered species" (p. 308).

In her study, Ragins (1997) suggested that mentoring relationships create opportunities for the mentor to effectively secure and leverage resources within the organization to benefit the protégé. The mentors' success and influence serve as a direct benefit to the protégé; however, the level of success the protégé experiences is predicated upon the mentors access to power within the organization (Ragins, 1997). The barriers and challenges to career advancement Black female mid-level administrators experience may decrease considerably if mentor relationships are established with senior-level administrators early on in their careers.

In the same study, Ragins (1997) discussed mentor relationships from a power perspective. She posited that mentoring relationships have two kinds of influence. One of the relationships, which is situated internal to the relationship and focuses on interpersonal influence and the other refers to the external position of the relationship that involves the development of power in organizations. Ragins suggested that the two powers are interrelated. "The external organizational influence can affect the interpersonal influence in the relationship and vice versa" (p. 487).

In earlier research, Smith (1978) suggested that the peculiarity of the black administrator might be a deterrent to success and career advancement in higher education organizations. Smith (1978) asserted that many Black higher

education administrators find themselves in the position of being in line officer positions that have little to no basis for exerting significant power within the organization. The researcher went on to suggest that as staff officers, Black administrators function outside of the administrative structure of authority and are limited in power and authority. As a result of this positioning they primarily function as a knowledge transmitter to the person with decision-making power.

Moreover, career advancement and leadership are frequently mentioned in the mentoring literature. Mentoring is often cited as an important element in leadership development for Black female senior-level administrators. Crawford and Smith's (2005) qualitative study examined: (a) whether African American female administrators were given the opportunity to work with mentors at their institutions; (b) how they maintained their positions without the aid of a mentor; (c) how a mentor could have facilitated their career growth; and (d) whether a mentoring relationship could have eased the stress and strain felt by the women in the study. According to Crawford and Smith (2005), the literature on mentoring has not addressed how mentors are relevant to the career choices and development of African American women administrators in higher education nor has the literature determined how race and gender affect the career decision-making process of African American women in higher education. The researchers suggested that mentoring is a tool to enhance job satisfaction and advancement; however, this tool is not always available for African American women. Further, Crawford and Smith (2005) stated that, "Mentoring would give African American female administrators greater responsibility and visibility and

would encourage young African Americans to choose higher education as a career" (p.53).

In order to understand the experiences of senior-level female administrators, Crawford and Smith (2005) obtained life histories and conducted open-ended interviews of seven women who worked at two-year and four-year colleges and universities. The study was limited to African American women with working titles of assistant dean, associate dean, dean, vice president, executive vice president, associate vice president, assistant to the president, provost, chancellor and president. Of the seven participants, three had Ph.D. degrees and the remainder had master's degrees; the women with earned doctorate degrees felt they were overqualified for their positions. Several themes emerged. The study indicated that all of the women had strong ties to their family, friends, and community. Many of the women mentioned that their families had a strong influence in their lives and that their parents were positive role models. Each of the respondents reported that they had never had a mentor. They each felt that having a mentor could have provided assistance with planning career goals, greater job satisfaction, and opened doors for career advancement. The researchers further determined that the individual respondents' institutions failed to capitalize on their talents due to the lack of mentoring opportunities.

An exploratory study by Bova (2000) investigated mentor relationships from the perspective of Black women. The purpose of the study was to explore the role mentoring had played in the professional development of Black women and to understand the mentor relationship from the Black woman's voice and

personal experience. Fourteen Black women with diverse professional backgrounds including higher education, banking, nonprofit, and the airline industry participated in open-ended, in-depth interviews. Each of the women indicated that mentoring was important to their career development and that it was difficult for them to find a mentor within their respective organizations. Ten of the women noted that they had White male mentors and four indicated that they had White female mentors. Three themes emerged from the interviews: (a) The women faced stereotypes and subtle racism; (b) it was important that they mattered to someone in their organization; and (c) they received group mentoring through their church or sorority (Bova, 2000).

Due to the lack of available Black female mentors, the study participants stated that they "allowed their boundaries to be penetrated" and developed mentor relationships with White mentors (Bova, 2000, p. 13). Bova suggested that formal cross-cultural mentor relationships in the workplace have the potential to erase false stereotypes, increase positive communication skills among mentors and protégés, and increase job satisfaction for mentor program participants, with proper training of the mentor.

Chapter Summary

The literature overwhelmingly confirms that mentoring relationships are important and positively contribute to career advancement, job satisfaction, and in many cases, increased compensation for protégés. The literature has also determined that there are not enough female mentors for women who want or need one. Female student affairs administrators are encouraged to seek out

mentor relationships, whether formal or informal, to increase opportunities for career advancement.

While the literature provides extensive information regarding the link between mentoring and career success, it does not effectively provide information on African American female mid-level administrators. The majority of career development and mentoring studies related to African American females are typically quantitative and are conducted at predominantly White four-year institutions. Moses (1997) found that the majority of Black female administrators are employed in positions below the dean level, are in student affairs and other specialized positions, and are most often employed at two-year institutions. There is a strong need for qualitative research studies to be conducted on African American female mid-level administrators working at two-year colleges.

In order to understand the lived experiences of African American female mid-level administrators working at two-year colleges, it is necessary to understand the methodology associated with this study. The following chapter provides information regarding the design and methodology used for this qualitative study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Although Black women have made progress in securing administrative positions, historically, they remain underrepresented at the highest levels in American post-secondary institutions (Hamilton, 2004; Howard-Vital & Morgan, 1993; Moses, 1989). Lack of networking, few positive role models, and inadequate mentoring are reasons cited as explanations as to why African American women have limited opportunities for career advancement (Searby & Tripses, 2006). Many Black female mid-level administrators currently face limited opportunities for career advancement due to inadequate opportunities to interact within the greater context of the academy by virtue of their history, race, and gender (Collins, 2001).

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of Black female mid-level administrators working in the California community college system and to explore how mentor relationships prepare them for career advancement to senior-level positions. In order to accomplish this purpose, the following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How do Black female mid-level administrators working in California community colleges experience mentoring, specifically for career advancement and considering race and gender?

2. How do these women describe the barriers and supports for administrators in pursuit of career advancement in community colleges?

This chapter will provide a detailed description of the methodology, research design, setting, sample, qualitative instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and the role of the researcher.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative interviews allow the investigator an opportunity to make discoveries with underrepresented groups. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested that quantitative research studies may ignore underserved groups by only focusing on successes and not the specific challenges that could be highlighted to bring attention to needed changes. Interview settings can resolve these omissions and reveal valuable information, often critical to decision making.

A qualitative approach was the most appropriate research method for this study. According to Creswell (2009), "Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 232). Phenomenological research assumes that we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness. Further, it assumes "there is an essence or essences to shared experiences" (Patton, 1990, p. 70), and these experiences are shared with others who have also had similar experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Qualitative data is a useful method to describe the lived experiences of Black females in the academy. Further, qualitative methods

provide an effective approach to uncover the lived experiences of multiple identities through qualitative collaborations (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Strauss and Corbin (1998) proposed that qualitative research offers the researcher an opportunity to gather relevant knowledge about the social aspects of society, using methods other than quantitative methodology as the primary interpretation. Likewise, Generett and Jefferies (2003) state, "The essential nature of qualitative, narrative research is constantly under attack because the methodology attempts to validate individual, often marginalized voices in an academic world that expects measurable outcomes and generalizable interpretations" (p. 8).

Research Design

Phenomenological research will serve as the methodological framework for this examination of mentor experiences of Black women, who are mid-level administrators in the California community college system. Phenomenological research provides a space for the researcher to understand how people describe things and experience them through their senses (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 1990.

Phenomenology utilizes research methods that seek to engage respondents in conversations where a more complete exploration of their experiences can occur. Phenomenological researchers attempt to understand how respondents make sense of their worlds using phenomenological inquiry (Crotty, 1998). Patton (1990) stated that, "phenomenological inquiry is used to inductively and holistically understand human experience in context specific

settings" (p. 37). Phenomenology is interested in "(a) how people interpret their experiences, (b) how they construct their worlds, and (c) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2002, p. 38). Phenomenology is grounded in a constructionist framework, which focuses on meaning and interpretations (Crotty, 1998). Phenomenology will serve as the epistemological framework for this study. The theoretical framework for this study will draw on Black feminist thought, and interviews will be used as the principal method for data collection.

It is suggested that phenomenological approaches are good at surfacing deep issues and making voices heard (Lester, 1999). Additionally, phenomenological research seeks to understand what people experience and how they interpret the world (Patton, 1990). Phenomenologist do not assume to know what things mean to the people they are studying. They act as if they do not know much detail about the phenomenon in an effort to find out what is taken for granted (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). From a methodological standpoint, phenomenology implies that the only way for us to really know what another person experiences is to experience it ourselves (Patton, 1990). Thus, one limitation of phenomenological research is subjectivity. Qualitative researchers in their effort to understand other people's point of view may in fact distort the informants' point of view (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Research Methods

As stated previously, this research project used phenomenological methodology. Qualitative researchers seek to understand behavior from study

participant's frame of reference (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Furthermore, qualitative research allows the researcher opportunities to have valuable interaction with study participants (Glesne, 1999). This study sought to understand the lived experiences of Black female mid-level administrators working in the California community college system and to explore how current mentor relationships prepare them for career advancement to senior-level positions. In this section, I will describe the research methods used in this study. Specifically, the setting, sample, data collection, data analysis, and the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness are discussed.

Setting

Thirteen participants participated in face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, which lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. Interviews were conducted at neutral, mutually agreeable sites. Six interviews were conducted by telephone.

Sample

The California Community College System consists of 112 colleges in urban, rural, and suburban locales. Black females who worked in the California community college system with titles of director, assistant dean, associate dean, and dean and have authority over a portion of the institution, while still being accountable to higher authorities (Clark et al., 1999) served as study participants. Homogeneous sampling was used for this study. I purposefully sampled individuals based on their membership and subgroup affiliation as suggested by Creswell (2012). Black women who are members of culturally specific

professional organizations such as the Association of Black Women in Higher Education (ABWHE), the Western Region Council on Black American Affairs (WRCBAA), and Black women in my own professional network were invited to participate in the study.

Approximately 20 Black women who are members of the Association of Black Women in Higher Education and the Western Region Council on Black American Affairs and who work in the California Community College System received an email describing the study and an invitation to participate in individual in-depth interviews. The purpose of qualitative sampling approaches is the selection of individuals who "have the information, perspectives, and experiences related to the topic of research" (Gray & Airasian, 2000, p. 139). Snowball sampling, which consists of "selecting a few people who can identify other people who can identify still other people who might be good participants for a study" (Gray & Airasian, 2000, p. 139), was used to recruit study participants.

Data Collection and Management

This section outlines the instrumentation, procedures for data collection, and data management strategies used in this phenomenological study.

Instrumentation

Data collection included 60 to 90 minute semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews to elicit stories of study participants' life experiences (Goodson & Sikes, 2001), educational backgrounds, and employment experiences. I developed an interview protocol that was designed with questions

for African American female, mid-level leaders. I selected open-ended questions (Atkinson, 1988) and piloted the interview questions prior to the interview process. Pilot testing of the interview protocol was conducted because "what may seem like good questions in the abstract may turn out not to be in practice" (Esterberg, 2002, p. 100). During the pilot testing, I conducted face-to-face practice interview sessions with African American female mid-level administrators who did not participate in the actual study to refine the interview protocol. The pilot test determined that the questions were appropriate for the study (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Glesne, 1999).

Procedures

All interviews were audio recorded. During the course of the interviews, I recorded observations of the participants. I incorporated these notes into the interpretation of the data. According to Creswell (2012), documents provide a good source for text data for qualitative studies.

Data Management

I secured Institutional Review Board approval as required by California State University, Fullerton prior to the study investigation. I recognized and maintained confidentiality of all disclosed information to ensure protection to study participants and maintained the best practices for research involving human participants. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used throughout the study; neither participants' names nor their institutions are identified in the finding.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section outlines the steps used to analyze the qualitative data, the process used to ensure trustworthiness, and describe the role of the researcher.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis requires commitment, extensive review and interpretation of a large amount of information (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). "Phenomenological research uses the analysis of significant statements, the generation of meaning units, and the development of an essence description" (Creswell, 2009, p. 184). Analyzing data for this study included several steps. First, the data was organized and prepared for analysis, which included transcribing interviews, typing field notes, and sorting data. Within twenty-four hours of each interview, I submitted text data to a transcription service to transcribe the audio recorded data. Immediate transcription of text data is the most effective method (Esterberg, 2002). Delayed transcription yields fewer opportunities for using the data to develop additional questions throughout the study (Glesne, 1999). Timely transcription of text data also minimizes data management problems and increases the researcher's ability to utilize the data throughout the research process (Esterberg, 2002).

The second step involved reading through the data to gain a sense of the information to determine its general meaning (Creswell, 2009). Step three initiated the analysis process of coding, in which the text was organized into sections. Coding is a critical component in analyzing the data and served as one of the steps in identifying and selecting themes embedded within the data

(Esterberg, 2002; Glesne, 1999). Step four required the use of a repetitive process of reading each transcribed document to identify themes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This process involved hand coding the data. Hand coding the data enabled me to organize text files, analyze data and code them (Creswell, 2009). In step four, themes or categories were developed from the detailed descriptions about people, places, or events that were generated by coding the data.

Step five provided an opportunity to describe how the themes were represented in the qualitative narrative. In step six meaning was assigned to the data. In order to assign meaning to the data, I asked the question "What were the lessons learned?" in an effort to identify the essence of this idea (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Procedures to Ensure Validity and/or Trustworthiness

To ensure validity of this research study, multiple strategies were used to assess the accuracy of the findings. First, member checking was used as a strategy to ensure validity. Data and the interpretations of the data were shared with study participants to determine accuracy (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Study participants received copies of the transcriptions via email so that participants could provide corrections, feedback, and assurance that the information was accurate. Member checking provided an opportunity for participants to ensure the accuracy of interview transcripts in addition to fulfilling a partial requirement of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Additionally, a peer debriefer, someone who knew a great deal about the substantive area of inquiry and methodological issues reviewed and asked questions about the study to enhance accuracy (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of rich thick descriptions provided detailed accounts of the participants' experiences (Denzin, 1989), and was used to achieve external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative researchers should engage in reflexive activities regarding their position in relation to the research participants and research setting (Esterberg, 2002). In particular, positionality is used to examine issues such as the researcher's group membership, alliance, selection of the topic, personal beliefs regarding the topic, and the methodology used throughout the research process (Merriam, 2002; Reed, 2007).

As a Black woman with over twelve years of professional experience in higher education, I am aware that my race, gender, familial, and societal influences have shaped who I am as a person and as an educational administrator. I also understand that the dynamics of the intersectionality of race, class, and gender within the California Community College System and my status as a Black female mid-level administrator generates constant concern regarding equity, opportunity, and institutional barriers, which have impeded career advancement for Black women. These issues are indeed cause for concern.

In this study, Black feminist thought was used to analyze and better understand the role of mentoring and career advancement among Black female community college mid-level administrators. In this paradigm, race, gender, cultural background, social status, as well as the experiences of those involved in this research play a significant role.

During the course of my research, I remained aware that I was in fact an "insider," a Black female that was familiar with a number of the cultural perspectives the participants discussed in terms of their personal and professional lives and the challenges in both contexts. I share many of the characteristics of my participants. I am a Black female community college mid-level administrator; thus we share the same race, gender, and career aspirations. Also, we share a similar cultural background and social status, as well as the experience of facing barriers in pursuit of career advancement. Examining the insider status, Reed (2007) noted

> If the researcher is seen as an insider, that is, part of the culture being studied, this creates particular research dynamics. These may include familiarity with the context, which makes negotiating collaboration easier but may also require reexamination to avoid "taking the world for granted," or not being critically aware of what seems everyday and unremarkable. (p. 83)

As a qualitative researcher with known insider status, I was not certain how the participants might perceive me; therefore I made a conscious decision not to convey ethnic messages that could potentially bias their responses.

Further, to avoid the possibility of overlooking and/or misinterpreting some of the embedded themes in their stories or to potentially fail to recognize individual meanings, I reviewed the transcripts and sought additional clarification from the participants prior to representing their stories in order to ensure I had represented their meanings as faithfully as possible.

Chapter Summary

Many African American female mid-level administrators face limited opportunities for career advancement, yet the current research literature fails to address their unique mentoring and career development experiences. This chapter discussed the research methods that were used as well as the research questions, which guided my study. In this qualitative study, the role of mentoring and career advancement and the lived experiences of African American female mid-level administrators were guided by Black feminist thought and a phenomenological approach.

In the next chapter, I provide a general overview of the participants and present the findings.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of Black female mid-level administrators working in the California Community College System and to explore how mentor relationships prepared them for career advancement. This study sought to give voice to African American women in an effort to reduce a void in the literature on Black women in higher education leadership.

A systematic six-step data analyses process which included: organizing and transcribing the text data, reviewing the transcripts, line by line coding, highlighting major themes, providing descriptions of major themes, and interpreting the data was used in this study to identify themes and bring voice to the unique experiences of Black female mid-level administrators. Direct quotations gathered from the participants' comments added additional richness to this study.

This chapter presents the results from the individual interviews and is organized in two sections. Section one provides a general overview of the study participants' professional experiences, educational attainment, and family structure. Section two discusses the categories and themes collected from the data related to the research questions that guided the study, and concludes with

the actual conversations (voices) from the mid-level administrators' experiences working in the California Community College System.

Participants

A summary of the 13 participants' characteristics shows that four participants were born in the South; one participant was born on the east coast; and one was born in the Midwest. Three of the participants relocated to California as small children, and one relocated when she was a teenager. Nine of the participants were reared in a two-parent household, while two of the participants' parents divorced when they were adolescents, and three of the participants were reared by single parents. Eleven of the participants were married, and 12 participants had at least one child. The average age of the participants was 46.

Nine of the participants were first-generation college students, and four of the participants had at least one college-educated parent. Four of the participants attended a California community college and earned associate degrees, and two of the participants received bachelor degrees from historically Black colleges or universities (HBCUs). Eleven women received bachelor degrees from predominantly White universities (PWIs).

All of the participants had at least a master's degree. Four participants earned master of business administration (MBA) degrees, and one participant had a master of science in nursing (MSN). Two participants had master of social work (MSW) degrees, and, one earned a master of library science (MLS). Another participant had a master of physical therapy (MPT) degree, and three

participants had master in counseling (MA) degrees. Five of the participants had doctorates, and four were pursuing doctoral degrees.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Name	Age	Title	Graduate Degrees	District	Years at Institution
Samantha	56	Dean	MBA, Ed.D	Multi	26
Christina	56	Dean	MSN	Single	16
Amber	54	Director	MSW	Multi	14
Sochi	53	Director	MBA	Single	15
Lisa	48	Director	MFT	Single	23
Denise	48	Director	MA, Ed.D	Multi	12
Sasha	44	Dean	MLS	Multi	2.8
Theresa	44	Director	MA, Ed.D	Multi	2 months
Jennifer	44	Dean	MSW	Multi	9
Angel	42	Director	MA, Ph.D	Single	10
Tanya	39	Director	MBA	Multi	6
Stacy	37	Director	MBA	Single	1.5
Shaunda	36	Dean	MPT, Ed.D	Single	4

Five of the participants held administrative titles of dean and eight were directors. Seven of the participants worked in multi-college districts, and six worked at single-college districts with an average student population of 24,583. Seven of the participants worked at campuses located in urban areas, and six of the participants worked at campuses located in suburban areas.

The above general overview summarizes the participants' professional experiences, educational attainment, and family structure during their formative years. Although each of the women identified as African American or Black, their varied life experiences illustrate both similarities and differences among them, thus highlighting the tenets of Black feminist thought, which supports and validates shared experiences while valuing the diversity within the Black community.

Next, summarized profiles of the 13 women who participated in this study are described that include a brief account of their life experiences such as familial influences, educational experiences, and professional experiences.

Samantha

Samantha was born and raised in a two-parent home in the South. Samantha's mother was a stay-at-home mom and her dad was a contractor and business owner. Samantha's parents attended segregated schools, and although they did not go to college, the importance of education was stressed in the home. Samantha received her K-12 education at local public schools. She attended Jackson State University, where she earned a BA in business and an MBA., Samantha later earned her doctorate in higher education administration. Samantha is married with children and serves a dean at an urban community college.

Christina

Christina was born and raised in a two-parent family in southern California. Christina's mother was a stay-at-home mom and her dad was a

business owner. Her parents did not attend college; however, they placed a high value on education. Christina has six siblings and is the second oldest child. She attended inner-city public schools and graduated high school with honors. Christina attended a California community college, earned an associates degree and transferred to a four-year institution and earned her BSN. Christina earned her MSN and began teaching in the California Community College System. Christina serves as a mid-level administrator at a suburban community college.

Amber

Amber was born and raised in a two-parent family in an urban city in California. Although Amber's parents did not graduate from college, they stressed the importance of higher education. Amber's mother worked for the Social Security Administration for 33 years, and her dad was a long distance bus driver for 40 years. Amber is the oldest child, and has one sister. Amber attended a California community college and earned an associates degree; she graduated from a university in the California State University System with a BA in sociology. Amber earned an MSW from a private university on the east coast. She currently serves as a mid-level administrator at a suburban community college.

Sochi

Sochi was born and raised in the South in a two-parent household. Sochi's mother was an educator. She earned a BA and MA in education and served as superintendent for the local school board. Although Sochi's father did attend college, he owned a thriving auto body shop. Education was a priority in the

family. Sochi and her two younger sisters attended Catholic schools from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Sochi attended a historically Black college where she earned her BA in speech pathology, and she earned her MBA from a private college in southern California. Sochi is married with children and she currently serves as a mid-level administrator at an urban community college.

Lisa

Lisa was born on the east coast in a two-parent household. Her father did not attend college; however, her mother earned a BS in engineering from Buffalo State University. When Lisa's parents divorced, she relocated to California with her mother and sister. Lisa attended Catholic schools from kindergarten through twelfth grade. She received an undergraduate degree from a University of California institution and later earned an MFT from a California State University institution. Lisa is married with children, and serves as a mid-level administrator at a suburban community college.

Denise

Denise was born in southern California in a single parent household. Denise's mom attended a California community college and earned a LVN degree. After graduating from high school, Denise attended a local California State University institution. She dropped out and decided to attend community college. After completing transfer requirements, Denise enrolled in a private university in southern California and earned her bachelor's and master's degrees. Denise later earned a doctorate in higher education administration.

Denise is a single mother, and she serves as a mid-level administrator at an urban community college.

Sasha

Sasha was born in the South in a two-parent household. Her family moved to California when she was an infant. Sasha comes from a third generation, college-educated family. Her grandfather was a high school principal; her mother was an educator. Her father earned a bachelor's degree and a master's degree and worked in the medical field as a physician's assistant. Sasha's parents met at an HBCU and always stressed the value of education. Sasha received her K-12 education in Catholic schools and attended a university in the University of California System where she earned a bachelor's and master's degree. Sasha is married with children and works at an urban community college.

Theresa

Theresa was born and raised in southern California in a two-parent household. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom, and her dad worked as a technician for a major firm in the Los Angeles area. He later opened his own business. Her parents attended college. While they did not graduate, they stressed the importance of education. Theresa and her siblings received their K-12 education from local Catholic schools. Theresa attended a University of California institution where she earned a BA in psychology, a MA in educational counseling and an Ed.D. Theresa is married with children and serves as a mid-level administrator at an urban community college.

Jennifer

Jennifer was born in the South in a two-parent household. The family moved to southern California when she was a toddler. Her mother worked as an executive administrative assistant at a local high school; her dad worked as a delivery person for a major beverage company. Later he started his own custodial business. Jennifer's parents did not graduate from college; however, they stressed the importance of education. Jennifer earned a BA in psychology from an institution in the California State University System and later earned an MSW from a historically Black university. She is currently pursuing her doctoral degree. Jennifer is married with one child, and she serves as a mid-level administrator at a suburban community college.

Angel

Angel was born on the east coast to military parents. The family moved around the country before settling in the Los Angeles area. Angel's parents divorced when she was 10-years old. However, both of her parents remarried and maintained a good relationship. Angel's biological parents did not graduate from college; however, both her biological parents and step-parents insisted that she get a good education and graduate from college. Angel earned a BA in psychology from a university in the University of California System, a MA in counseling from an Ivy League university, and a Ph.D. in counseling psychology from a private university in southern California. Angel is married with children, and she works as a mid-level administrator at a suburban community college.

Tanya

Tanya was born and raised in California in a two-parent home. Her parents divorced when she was a young child and her father reared her. Tanya's dad did not graduate from college; however, he is a contractor and business owner. Tanya attended a community college and later transferred to California State University institution where she earned a BA in business. She later earned her MBA from a private university in the Los Angeles area. Tanya is single and has no children; she serves as a mid-level administrator at a suburban community college.

Stacy

Stacy was raised in a single parent household in southern California. She received her K-12 education from schools in the Los Angeles area. Her mother attended a California community college and earned an associates degree and is currently enrolled at a California State University institution. Stacy's mother stressed the value of getting a good education and graduating from college. Stacy earned a BA in liberal studies from a University of California institution, and she has an MBA from a private university in the Los Angeles area. Stacy is married with children. She serves as a mid-level administrator at a suburban community college.

Shaunda

Shaunda was born on the east coast in a two-parent household. Her family relocated to the southern California area when she was a toddler. Her mother was an executive with a major telecommunications firm and her father

worked as a technician in a major service industry. Both of her parents attended college. Her mother completed her degree; however, her father did not. Her parents stressed education and made it clear that Shaunda and her brother would graduate from college. Shaunda earned her bachelor's degree and master's degree from a private university on the east coast and she earned an Ed.D. at a private university in the Los Angeles area. Shaunda is married with children, and she works as a mid-level administrator at an urban community college.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. How do African American female mid-level administrators working in California community colleges experience mentoring, specifically for career advancement and considering race and gender?
2. How do these women describe barriers and supports as mid-level administrators in pursuit of career advancement in community colleges?

Themes

This section presents the findings of the study. The categories and themes that emerged from the data are identified along with their conceptual relationship to Collins' (1986) three key themes in Black feminist thought: (a) the BFT framework is shaped and produced by Black women; (b) Black women share similar oppressive experiences; and (c) diversity of class, religion, age, and

other factors shape the individual lives of Black women. The BFT framework was used to analyze and interpret the data.

The findings in this study offered four salient categories to frame the themes that emerged based on the research questions driving this study. These categories included, the mentor experience, barriers to career advancement, sources of support, and the need to establish a Black women's network.

The women defined the mentor experience as a positive interpersonal exchange between the mentor and protégé. The following themes emerged based on the responses regarding the mentor experience: psychosocial and career support, formal and informal mentoring relationships, race and gender relevancy, and effective mentors. The second category, barriers to career advancement, was defined as various imperceptible obstructions that prevent opportunities for career advancement. The following themes emerged from the second category: perceptions of lack of credibility, double jeopardy, the glass ceiling, lack of support, and the underrepresentation of Black female administrators. The third category focused on sources of support, was defined as structures that provide capacity for agency and reinforcement. The fourth category addressed in this study was the need to create a network of supportive Black administrators with the purpose of providing psychosocial and career development support. Each of these categories are explained and the emerging themes described. Exemplars to validate themes are provided.

Table 2

Categories and Themes

Category of Findings	Definition	Themes
The Mentor Experience	Positive intentional interpersonal exchange between mentor and protégé	Psychosocial and career development support Formal and informal mentor experiences Relevance of race and gender Effective mentors
Barriers to Career Advancement	Various imperceptible obstructions that prevent opportunities for career advancement	Misperceptions Perceptions of lack of credibility Glass ceiling Lack of support Underrepresentation
Sources of Support	Structures that provide capacity for agency and reinforcement	Family Colleagues
Black Women's Network	Network comprised of Black female administrators within the CCCS to provide psychosocial and career support	

The Mentor Experience

Many of the study participants indicated that they experienced positive mentoring relationships in which their mentors offered valuable support, encouragement, training, and coaching. A central theme in Black feminist thought focuses on empowerment. As a means to increase opportunities for career advancement, the women in the study empowered themselves and made attempts to foster mentor relationships to achieve their professional goals.

Study participants suggested that successful mentoring relationship should include intentional interpersonal exchanges between a senior experienced colleague and a less experienced colleague. The participants

agreed that in order for the mentor relationship to cultivate an intentional interpersonal exchange, it was important for the mentor to have several years of professional experience. Additionally, the women stated that open communication and transparency was crucial in the mentor experience. The women also communicated that the mentors' experiences could serve as teaching tools and provide lessons for protégés in their preparation for career advancement.

According to study participants, it was important to have a mentor who had advanced in his/her career and who openly shared the ways in which s/he was able to make successful career transitions. Samantha, shared that she had a mentor with several years of experience who eventually worked his way up the faculty ranks to vice president, and finally to college president. Echoing similar sentiments, Christina, noted,

> I have also sought mentors through my entire career. I look for those who have the knowledge and nurturing spirit to want to share their expertise and experience. I have found some good mentors that have been long time career coaches and some became special friends.

The positive mentor experiences shared by Samantha and Christina suggest that their mentors had substantial experience and knowledge as administrative leaders. This experience allowed the mentors to confidently share valuable information and to provide developmental opportunities for their protégés, which may increase the likelihood of career advancement for the protégés. For example, Shaunda mentioned that her mentors shared valuable

information that allowed her to better to navigate her career. She stated, "My mentors taught me early on how to find out what's really happening on the campus and how to research positions in terms of were they really vacant or if there was an internal candidate." Likewise, Christina's mentor provided effective developmental opportunities. She stated, "My mentor taught me about educational policy, how to change policy, and how policy impacts students in and out of the classroom."

Psychosocial and career development support. The issue of mentors providing psychosocial and career development support garnered much feedback from the participants. The notion of psychosocial support suggests that mentors help their protégés adapt and relate to institutional cultural and social norms; whereas, career development support implies that mentors assist the protégé to obtain promotions and increase wages. While all of the women believed that both psychosocial and career development support were beneficial, their comments overwhelmingly indicated that psychosocial support provided greater self-confidence and self-efficacy to perform well in their current positions. Additionally, psychosocial support offered by mentors served to increase the protégés' courage to apply for positions that required more responsibility and demanded the use of underdeveloped skill sets.

One assertion of Black feminist thought encompasses self-definition and involves challenging the political knowledge-validation process that has resulted in externally defined, stereotypical images of Black women. Shaunda shared that her mentors have pushed her to apply for positions beyond her current set of

experiences. She stated, "My natural inclination is to think, oh, I only have six out of the ten job requirements, and my mentors tell me that I can in fact do the job. Their encouragement helps me to realize that I am qualified."

Prior to her interview for this study, Samantha was unaware of the terms psychosocial and career development; however, she recalled an incident when her mentor provided support as she prepared for an interview:

> When I applied for the position I'm in now, my mentor guided me through for weeks. We did a lot of work on my resume. We did interview prepping. My mentor informed me that some of the things I said in previous interviews really hurt me.

For Lisa, family and a balanced life were important when she considered applying for higher-level positions. She shared that her mentors provided psychosocial support by helping her understand the responsibility and time commitment a dean position would require. Lisa worked with her mentors and together they determined that it would be in her best interest to wait until her children were older to seek out dean level positions. Lisa stated, "I think my mentors helped me feel okay with that [decision] . . . based on my priorities." Angel shared,

> Psychosocial support is more important for me, just because I spend so much time at work and work so closely with students and staff. I think it's important for me to be in a place where I feel like I'm contributing, like I'm important, like I'm making a positive change.

The women in the study also agreed that the psychosocial aspect of mentoring provides a sense of support and encouragement. Theresa stated, "The psychosocial support I received from my mentor helped me feel like I could do it." Finally, Stacy, summed up her experience this way:

> I didn't have a mentor until about four years ago or so and I think that mentor relationship was more about the psychosocial. Without that I would have not been able to advance and get the position that I'm in now.

Overall, the responses and examples cited suggests that both psychosocial support and career development support are important; however, the majority of the participants benefitted most from psychosocial support received from mentors.

Informal and formal mentor experiences. Three study participants disclosed that they participated in the Association of California Community College Administrators (ACCCA) mentor program. According to the website, "the ACCCA mentor program is a statewide, year-long professional development course that provides an invaluable personal and professional development experience for selected individuals" (ACCCA, 2014). Shaunda confirmed that she was able to advance in her career as a result of her involvement in the ACCCA mentor program. She further stated, "I don't think I would have gotten to the position I'm in right now if it hadn't been for my formal and informal mentoring experiences." She also shared, "The ACCCA program was great for the way that program was structured, but I've done a lot better with kind of an informal [mentor] situation."

Many of the study participants mentor experiences had been informal, serendipitous, and developed organically. Denise shared that she participated in the ACCCA mentor program and had a positive mentor experience; however, her efforts to secure a mentor both formally and informally after she completed the ACCCA mentor program had been challenging. She stated, "I've never been selected by a mentor, so to speak. . . . There have been times in my life where I thought, 'Wow, nobody's interested in mentoring me, I wonder why. Am I not mentor material?'" After some thought, she shared,

> What I have experienced is an informal mentoring process that developed over time. Our VP of Business Administrative Services has become a mentor. I didn't seek her out to be one; she didn't seek me out, but because of the dynamics of our relationship, she has been someone that I go and ask, "Now what do you think? What are your thoughts?"

Amber disclosed that she did participate in the ACCCA mentor program and had a good experience; however, she has a different set of professional needs at this point in her career and is seeking specific mentor support,

> I'm actually trying to find another mentor now besides [my ACCCA] mentor. . . . I really would like to find a Black woman that I could trust to help me as I am going [through my career] on this side of 50 [years old]. What does that look like for people my age and my level, you know?

The experiences of Shaunda, Denise, and Amber resonate with the second theme of BFT, which suggest that Black women's life experiences are

unique; however they share similar experiences at the intersection of gender and race.

The majority of the study participants agreed that informal mentor relationships have worked well. Although Shaunda and Denise participated in a formal mentor program, they each stated that they prefer informal mentor dyads.

Relevance of race and gender. The relevancy of the race and gender of the mentor was viewed through several different lenses. The third theme in BFT suggests that the diversity of Black women shape their individual lives; however, their experiences allow them to develop and explain their own stories. The race of the mentor appeared relevant for Samantha. She stated,

> Of course, race to me matters. It was important for me to have an African American mentor—someone who could relate to me as a person; someone who could relate to our culture; someone who understands the struggle of African American administrators.

Denise suggested that race was relevant in her ideal choice of a mentor. She stated,

> I think there's some value in having a White, male mentor who has your best interest at heart. I say that because White men have power, relationships, and connections that many of us don't have.

Shaunda thought it was important for the mentor and protégé have the same gender and ethnicity and stated, "I think a woman can speak to certain issues and concerns that a man can't possibly understand, particularly if they are married, have children, and [can share] how they've managed the personal and

professional demands." Shaunda had several opinions regarding the gender of the mentor; she stated, "I would say the only negative is, there were times, when a man served as my mentor, and I felt he was a little condescending, as if I needed things to be spelled out for me."

The concept of self-valuation, replacing controlling, dehumanizing acts, was a concern for Shaunda in one of her previous female/male mentor dyads. However, as she contemplated her previous thoughts regarding the relevancy of the mentor's gender, she added, "I think that as a woman though, a man provides a different perspective. The men that I've had as mentors have pushed me well outside of my comfort zone, which is good."

Conversely, the majority of the study participants reported that race was not relevant. Amber shared her mentor experience with a White woman,

> Honestly, it [race] didn't really come into it. This woman is incredible. She taught me about White privilege, what it meant and
>
> ways of getting around it until you can stop it. I'd never heard the term.

Although the race of the mentor was not relevant to many of the study participants, they agreed that the mentor should be able to relate, to understand their needs, and to have their best interests at heart. Amber shared that the race of her mentor did not matter. She stated, "While my mentor is not a Black woman, she has a clear perspective and a clear thought process about race relations and the inequities and challenges that people of color experience." Similarly, race was not relevant for Theresa. She shared, "I don't know that it

really matters what their race is or gender. I think what matters is that the mentor has your best interest at heart; they're interested in you and encouraging."

Effective mentors. The study participants shared that effective mentors exhibit traits such as honesty, authenticity, and have a strong understanding of politics. Several of the women said that good mentors should speak truthfully about issues experienced by the protégés. Jennifer shared that her mentor relationship was positive and beneficial because her mentor was forthcoming with relevant information needed to handle situations appropriately. She stated, "My mentor is honest when I go to her for information regarding the right steps to take. She doesn't tell me what I want to hear."

The participants unanimously agreed that it is important for the mentor to offer constructive critiques by providing an evaluation of the protégée's strengths and areas of weakness. Shaunda stated,

> I think it is most important for the mentor to be authentically genuine, and tell you what they see in you—where your strengths lie, what areas you really need to look at improving, and do it from a compassionate place to help build that person up and not break them down.

The participants stated that good mentors are adept in understanding cultural issues and nuances within the organization, and they have the ability to teach protégés how to navigate political minefields, and, according to Theresa, they can share "insider-type knowledge." Further, Theresa stated, "I really want to know the real deal. . . . Sometimes I just need to be told, point blank, this is

the situation. Similarly, Sasha stated that a mentor should "help you understand the culture of an organization, give you tips on how to be political, and provide information to navigate the institution."

Barriers to Career Advancement

The second research question in this study sought to understand how Black female mid-level administrators described barriers to their pursuit of career advancement. During interviews the study most participants discussed barriers experienced while working in the California Community College System; however, a few of the women were unable to identify barriers. Further, participants discussed feeling discomfort felt when they discovered colleagues held negative perceptions about Black female administrators and their work performance. Further, the participants shared their experiences with the "glass ceiling," a lack of support, and with the limited number of Black women employed in the CCCS.

The central principle of Black feminist thought is the simultaneity of oppression at the intersection of race, class, and gender. The participants were asked what barriers they were confronted with as African American female mid-level managers. Christina and Amber noted that they were unable to identify barriers. Christina stated,

> I have the challenges and interactions with certain groups of people. I don't know about barriers. In my job I have now, I don't know if some of the barriers are because of being an African American female or they're

barriers because there are barriers to educational leadership now. Similarly, Amber was unable to identify barriers that impeded her career advancement; she stated,

> While it may be true [barriers exist]. I think I have some benefit and I have opportunities that maybe other counterparts haven't had. Even though it's not a perfect situation, it's not adverse enough to make me want to leave the college. So I think I have had some opportunities to do some things.

Shaunda did not cite barriers; however, she noted challenges that could potentially affect opportunities for career advancement:

> You wonder who really supports you and why they support you. You wonder about your detractors, if your gender, ethnicity, has anything to do with why they don't support you. You work harder. . . . To me all those are not negatives; I think it's just the reality of our society. I think that women as administrators have it harder regardless of your ethnicity because of all the stereotypes about women—women are kinder, they're not able to make the tough decisions. You know when you make the tough decisions or you have that air about you, you're labeled a bitch or unapproachable. So it's walking that fine line between being that person that can make those tough decisions, but do it in a way that sits with your core values.

Misperceptions. A large number of the participants cited misperceptions when asked to describe barriers they have experienced while serving as mid-level administrators in the CCCS. The women shared stories that often pointed

to misperceptions by others about Black women. Further, the participants explained that colleagues who are unaware of their personal history or professional background placed misperceptions upon them. Misperceptions and stereotypes represent externally-defined, controlling images of Black womanhood that have been central to the dehumanization of Black woman, which BFT strives to overcome. Amber shared an experience of misperception with the president at her college,

> I think [my current] president and the previous president were a little afraid of me, not in a boastful kind of a way, but because they hadn't taken time to know me and also because I have under my purview students of color who are also educationally disadvantaged. . . . I think they were afraid that I had an agenda that, maybe, they weren't ready to deal with.

Similarly, Lisa explained that misperceptions arise for Black female administrators with responsibilities for programs that serve students of color who are also first-generation college students. She stated that when she advocates for students to ensure resources are available, her colleagues perceive that she has a hidden agenda in favor of Black students. Lisa shared her experience advocating for program resources,

> I think when we're discussing policies and procedures that have the greatest effect on African Americans, my passion comes out, and I think people are surprised. . . . For example, if you have a policy that's going to take away from the lower level English courses and put all the money into

> transfer-level English courses, students who need that lower level English are not going to have classes to take, and many of those students are African American students. So whenever I speak in that sense, I think they tend to think I'm speaking just because I'm African American, not because it's going to take away from the underprivileged students. Sometimes I think my message gets diluted. Where if someone else said it who looks different than me, they might hear the message clearly and think it's a more levelheaded comment as opposed to a self-serving comment.

Amber shared another incident of misperception that she experienced with her college president:

> With this president, she's a White female, comes straight from instruction, straight from accreditation, so she has no connection at all. So when I'm sitting in her office, I'm kind of leaning into her saying, "You know, look, we were trying to get a full-time counselor, and I have funds [to cover the position]. I have my own funding. I won't need to deal with the Fund 10 at all, the general fund." Leaning into her saying, "Listen, I can fund this." And watching this woman lean back in her chair, a little bit—what does that tell me? Okay, are you afraid of me? Do you think I'm going to jump across the table?

Perceptions of lack of credibility. The interlocking nature of race and gender oppression was also viewed as a challenge by the women. Although study participants were very well educated and had vast experience, their

colleagues assumed they were not qualified to serve as mid-level administrators, simply because they were Black and female. Study participants cited their White colleagues had misperceived them as less capable or less talented. Theresa shared, "As an African American person, there's this notion that you always have to be so much better than your competition in order to just measure up as average." The issue of not being respected was a point of contention for Sochi. She stated,

> Even though you have your integrity, you have your skills, you have the education, you still don't get the respect that other White women get. If you're not a strong Black woman and have a strong shell, you really will be destroyed; your self-esteem will be shattered. So you have to be strong to work in this type of environment because it will take you down.

Christina shared her experience serving as supervisor to predominantly male faculty. She stated, "Sometimes there are challenges being heard. I know that to be taken seriously and to be recognized or respected in this role, I have to come with my A game." Theresa wondered whether her colleagues perceived her as lacking credibility "because I'm a woman, or perhaps because I'm African American."

Glass ceiling. A basic premise of Black feminist thought is that Black women cannot be fully empowered unless intersecting oppressions such as racism, sexism, and classism are eliminated. Many women experience the glass ceiling effect—an impediment to career advancement. Study participants stated

that there have been times where promotional opportunities at their institution had eluded them. Amber described her experience with the glass-ceiling barrier,

> My biggest barrier is not being able to move forward. Whenever a position has come open, it's not even a matter of getting the interview and going through the process, that gets circumvented. . . . The president puts the person [she wants] in [the position].

Likewise, Jennifer explained that she felt there was opportunity for her to move forward in her career when a female provost was at the helm of her district. She stated, "Right now there are male presidents for each college in our district, even our chancellor [is male]. When the female provost was here, I thought I had a shot [to move forward]. . . . It doesn't feel as attainable [now]."

Sasha described the glass ceiling this way, "I think just like with any other thing, the glass ceiling has not gone away. People have become more subtle and more nuanced at hiding the glass ceiling, but it is ever present." Finally, Shaunda shared a somber point of view regarding the glass ceiling,

> Well, I think equity can't be achieved because of the hierarchical system that we have. Ultimately, your board, your president, your VPs have the final say so. You may or may not be invited to the table to share your opinion.

Lack of support. Lack of support was another barrier that emerged as a theme. The study participants stated that lack of support from immediate supervisors created barriers to career advancement. Many of women shared that their immediate supervisors were not invested in their career advancement.

Additionally, they shared that senior-level administrators were not interested in providing opportunities for their professional development. They indicated that their supervisors never inquired about their future plans, encouraged them to attend conferences or to participate in professional development activities. Tanya stated,

> I've been working extremely hard in this position. I've advanced this program significantly within my first year. All of my supervisors have been White males; however, my current supervisor is a White female. None of them ever asked me about my goals or encouraged me to participate in professional development, none of them.

Sasha cited lack of institutional support as an obstruction. She stated, "I don't know whether I can attribute it to being an African American female mid-level administrator, but the lack of training opportunities is a barrier." Theresa shared a slightly different, but relevant, point of view regarding institutional barriers. She stated, "If no one perceives there's a problem, then no one is going to develop a program to support African American women."

Underrepresentation of black women. Many of the women in the study perceived that Black women employed on their campuses and within the California Community College System (CCCS) as a numerical minority. The participants shared that the shrinking number of Black women is noticeable at CCCS statewide conferences, district meetings, and on local campuses. Further, they stated that the limited number of Black female administrators is problematic and translates into a barrier to career advancement opportunities. Conversely,

one participant noted that Black women might be underrepresented due to lack of experience. Further, another participant was uncertain if race was related to the low number of Black female administrators. Amber discussed her thoughts on the shrinking number of Black California community college employees this way:

> We are down to two Black administrators at this college. Within the system, if I just look at it from an EOPS association point of view, the numbers are shrinking. I've been in this game 14 years, and I used to know everybody in the EOPS system. [When] I go to EOPS association meetings I just see a lot of young Hispanic people. So most of our people are retiring and then the new people who are coming in are Hispanics. So within the system, it appears to me, the numbers are shrinking.

Sasha cites a similar example regarding the number of Black mid-level administrators in her large urban multi-college district: "When I go to teamsters meetings within my district, and we are a very large community college district, African American females, I think there might be three in the room, and on my campus, I am the only one." Samantha also shared her perspective regarding the limited number of Black mid-level administrators on her campus,

> There are not enough of us. And it's not that we aren't qualified; it's just that we're not given an opportunity. I do interview after interview, and sharp, very on-task Black women are never given the opportunity. There are not enough of us to make the [hiring] decisions. We're outnumbered. I don't know how much the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity

> Commission) helps either. Even with a compliance officer sitting [in the interview], it doesn't make a difference.

Many of the study participants stated that they feel the effects of the shrinking numbers of Black women in the CCCS. They shared that they were either the only Black female mid-level administrator or that there were very few Black administrators on their campus. Christina stated,

> I'm the only African American, female administrator at my institution. At my institution, a single college district, among the 19 administrators, from the president, vice presidents, deans and associate deans, there are 2 African American males and 1 African American female, me.

Shaunda's experience is similar to Christina's. Both women are deans at single college districts. Shaunda stated,

> On my campus, I think I'm the only dean that's African American and a woman. I think we have 80 individuals that fall into our management structure, I would say there's no more than five [Black women] that I can think of. I think that's also another problem is that we're highly visible in some regards on campus and not visible enough in other regards. So you're either high profile or low profile.

Stacy shared that the Black administers may be underrepresented within the California Community College System due to lack of experience or to limited experience:

> As far as the Black female administrators at my campus, I think there are two others here and one has a doctoral degree and the other doesn't.

> One is a dean and the other is a VP. The VP doesn't have a doctoral degree; the dean does. But both of them, what they bring to the table, the one that doesn't have it and she's the VP, she has just a wealth of heavy community college system experience. There aren't a lot of us. I think it has a lot to do with experience.

Finally, Tanya shared her experience:

> Here in this particular district, I am the only African American female in my Area; I would say in the management rank. I wasn't really raised to— How would you say it? Look for how people aren't treating me or how they should be treating me. I tend to just take people for who they are, see them for being their own individual, and I hope they do the same.

The study participants shared varied examples of barriers they are faced, however, a few of the women were able to find supportive colleagues, while the majority found support from their families.

Sources of Support

The second research question in this study also asked study participants to describe their supports as mid-level administrators in pursuit of career advancement. Although many of the women in this study indicated that they had received occasional support and encouragement from mentors, many of the women specified that they maintained their agency and reinforcement by seeking support from familial structures and trusted colleagues.

The third theme of Black feminist thought suggests that Black women share many commonalities; however, the diversity of class, religion, age, etcetera,

shape their individual lives (Collins, 1986). The intention of the third theme is to encourage Black women to develop, redefine, and explain their own stories based on the importance of their culture. Many of the women pursued and received support from common sources familiar with their personal and professional experiences. The support the women received from colleagues and family allowed them to freely tell their stories, cope, and maintain a sense of self-value when they received invalidating messages from the work place.

While the majority of the participants indicated that they receive support from their families, three of the women noted that they found support in a few colleagues. Samantha, a 56-year old academic dean in one of the largest community college districts in California shared that she has worked at her college for 26 years stated, "Believe it or not, sometimes I have to revert back to the classified staff [for support] . . . sometimes I found myself really just confiding in them and finding that comfortable space." Similarly, Jennifer, a dean at a small community college district was fortunate to find support in one of her colleagues, she stated, "There is a faculty member, who is an African American female...she's a really good friend, and I found great support from her." Sasha, an academic dean shared that she was really surprised to find support in her colleagues, she stated,

> Just recently, I have been able to tap in on campus to a few other administrators who have said, "I'll help." I was in a meeting yesterday and I said "I don't know that much about budget," and she said, "I'm a

budgeter, I'll help you in whatever way I can." And I was like, "Wow, thank you!"

Although a few of the women found supportive colleagues, the majority of them indicated that they received support from their husbands and families. Stacy, a director at a single college district, summed up the sentiment of the majority of the participants this way, "If I didn't have my husband, and if he didn't have a schedule that allowed him to really be a part of the kids' lives, then there's no way that I could have a position like this." As the women continued to push forward, they were vocal in their desire to implement some form of support for Black female mid-level administrators with the goal to ameliorate barriers to career advancement.

Black Women's Network

Because many of the women in the study have experienced barriers while attempting to advance in their careers, they suggested creating a Black women's support network for mid-level administrators who work within the California Community College System. Although a few of the participants stated that this effort was attempted in the past, many of the women agreed that a Black women's network is greatly needed. A premise of Black feminist thought suggests that Black women must practice self-valuation, namely, creating different and empowering stories. The participants shared that Black female mid-level administrators need opportunities to engage with Black female senior-level administrators to gain a better understanding of the steps required in order to move forward in their careers and to establish informal mentoring relationships

with them. Samantha plainly stated, "We need to create an African American, female, mentoring organization in southern California." Sasha suggested,

> There should be a mechanism for us to vent. Because we are not just talking about being mid-level administrators, being women, but it's so multi-layered. It shouldn't have to be that every African American woman who steps on a campus has to go through trial by fire. I firmly believe that those few that have made it up to the VP or the presidents' ranks should reach back and make it easier for Black people who come behind them.

Denise and Shaunda mentioned that they had once participated in an effective Black women's network that is now defunct. Shaunda stated,

> It's funny because one year at the Association of California Community College Administrators conference there was a good number of Black female administrators in attendance, and we tried to pull together this monthly group that would meet and be of support. Unfortunately, it died. I think we got maybe a year of meetings. Even within that year it might have been six or four meetings put together, which is unfortunate, because I think it was a great opportunity for those of us that were aspiring to be VPs or higher to tap into Black female senior-level administrators. But for a variety of reasons it didn't work out.

Denise also mentioned the network and stated, "I actually think the Black Woman's Network allowed some of us to connect."

Chapter Summary

The research questions were designed to gather information from Black female mid-level administrators regarding their mentor experiences and the barriers and supports that they have experienced in their pursuit of career advancement. The study participants shared many challenges that connected with Black feminist thought, as BFT focuses on the experiences of Black women, a marginalized group, and how they view the world. Additionally, BFT offers an understanding of the intersecting identities of race, class, and gender of Black female mid-level administrators working within the California Community College System.

The findings determined that mentor relationships are crucial to Black female administrators working in higher education. The relevancy of the mentors' race and gender was viewed through several lenses. For Samantha, a 56-year-old dean, who was born and reared in the South, it was important to have a Black mentor. However, the race of the mentor appeared relevant for only a few of the study participants. For the majority of the study participants, the race and gender of the mentor was not a factor.

It was noted that the mentor should be the best person equipped for the relationship, and the mentor must have the protégées best interest at heart. However, the participants made it clear that the mentor should be aware and conscious of any racial differences. The participants felt it was important for the mentor to acknowledge the challenges Black females face, specifically related to career advancement.

Additionally, it was found that for a few of the participants gender was a relevant characteristic. The participants indicated that female mentors tended to relate more to their situation regarding marriage, family, and career. However, it was noted that White male mentors often have the power and connections needed to assist Black female mid-level administrators with career advancement.

Study participants indicated that psychosocial support from mentors was more beneficial than career development support. Psychosocial support provided an opportunity for the women be empowered, which is a premise of BFT. The findings also suggest that an important aspect of the psychosocial support provided by mentors was honest feedback, which the participants saw as important when making professional decisions. Furthermore, the findings suggest that psychosocial support from their mentors provided encouragement to protégées that helped them get through tough situations and aided the protégées in understanding institutional norms and cultures. It was also determined that informal mentor relationships provided better outcomes for these administrators because they were viewed as authentic and as creating long lasting bonds when they developed organically.

The findings suggest that barriers were erected for the participants due to false perceptions. Study participants stated that unfounded perceptions about Black female mid-level administrators held by numerous colleagues and senior-level administrators created barriers to career advancement. It was also noted that erroneous assumptions about Black women's ability to perform their jobs are troubling and unnecessary. Overwhelmingly, the study participants suggested

that false perceptions could be eliminated if colleagues would take the time to get to know the Black female mid-level administrators on their campuses.

Just as false perceptions create barriers, the findings indicate that the glass ceiling is an ever-present barrier for Black female mid-level administrators within the California Community College System. It was noted that senior-level administrators are more nuanced at hiding and maintaining the glass ceiling.

Moreover, study participants overwhelmingly agreed that there are few African American female mid-level administrators and their numbers appear to be shrinking. Finally, the women suggested that a network consisting of Black female administrators is needed to provide psychosocial and career development support to assist mid-level administrators who aspire to advance in their careers.

Chapter 5 will reflect on and summarize the findings from this chapter and offer recommendations for practice.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of Black female mid-level administrators working in the California Community College System and how mentor relationships prepared them for career advancement. In order to accomplish this purpose, I posed the following research questions to guide this study:

1. How do Black female mid-level administrators working in California community colleges experience mentoring, specifically for career advancement and considering race and gender?
2. How do these women describe barriers and supports as mid-level administrators in pursuit of career advancement in community colleges?

Black feminist thought was selected as the framework for this study because it takes into consideration the complexities that comprise the everyday experiences of Black females. Black feminist thought proposes a stance that some Black women embrace to bring awareness to their dual identity. It encompasses the multiplicity and complexity of the experiences of their race and gender in reference to their own worldview and perceptions, as well as how others perceive them (Collins, 1990). Black feminist thought recognizes the commonality of experiences that all African American women share as a result of

living in a society that devalues Black female identity. Further, BFT illustrates the variation in responses to core themes that Black women will have based on their individual, environmental and social perspectives. Finally, BFT suggests that as a group all African American women may share common experiences as a result of living in a racist and patriarchal society; however, it should not be assumed that a collective consciousness exist among all women (Holmes, 2008).

This chapter presents a statement of the problem, a summary and interpretation of the findings, the implications of the study findings and recommendations for senior administrators.

The current literature fails to address the unique mentoring and career development experiences of Black female administrators who work at two-year colleges. Many Black female mid-level administrators currently face limited opportunities for career advancement. They have not been afforded the opportunity to interact within the greater context of the academy by virtue of their history, race and gender (Collins, 2001). They face a double jeopardy: being Black and being a woman (Bova, 2000; McKay, 1997), and Black female administrators have not reached parity with their White female counterparts or with Black or White males (Holmes, 2003). Black women continue to face adversity in their attempt to advance in their careers, and they are still overlooked and underrepresented in many fields (Bova, 2000; Catalyst, 1999). This study benefits the field of mentoring research as it contributes to the available knowledge about Black women and their mentoring experiences as mid-level administrators in California community colleges.

Interpretations/Conclusions

As each participant shared her narratives through open-ended, in-depth, candid descriptions regarding the use of mentors, barriers, and supports in pursuit of career advancement within the California Community College System, several themes emerged. The pursuit of career advancement theme centers on both of the study's two research questions. The first question centers on the mentor experience, and the second question investigates the barriers and supports. The first research question on the mentor experience of Black female mid-level administrators produced four themes: (a) psychosocial and career development support, (b) formal and informal mentor experiences, (c) relevance of race and gender, and (d) effective mentors. The second research question, barriers and supports consisted of six themes: (a) perceptions of lack of credibility, (b) double jeopardy, (c) glass ceiling, (d) lack of support, (e) the number of Black females, and (6) Black women's network.

The Mentor Experience

The participants unanimously agreed that mentoring is crucial to career advancement. During the interview sessions, I introduced Ragins (1997) definitions for the terms psychosocial support: the mentor helps the protégé adapt and relate to the institutions cultural and social environment and for career development support: the mentor helps the protégé obtain job promotions and increased compensation. After the introduction, each participant discussed her mentor experiences and cited the importance of receiving psychosocial and career development support.

Many of the participants indicated that psychosocial support increased their sense of self-efficacy and validated their experience as effective mid-level administrators. One of the study participants stated, "Without psychosocial support from my mentor, I would not have been able to advance to my current position." Kram's (1983) mentoring framework suggests that psychosocial functions in the mentor dyad are designed to enhance the protégées sense of competence, identity, and work-role effectiveness.

Additionally, study participants suggested that career development support provided by their mentors created opportunities for career advancement. Career development support involves mentors using their professional networks to help protégés obtain job promotions and increased compensation (Ragins, 1997). One of the study participants discussed her experience preparing to apply and interview for a higher-level position. She shared that her mentor worked with her to improve her resume and coached her through interview preparation sessions. Based on the data received form the semi-structured interviews, mentoring coupled with psychosocial and career development support is an effective tool for career advancement.

Many formal mentor programs have been designed with the goal of developing people who can be promoted to higher levels of leadership responsibility (Olsen & Jackson, 2009). However, data from studies of formal mentoring programs have been inconsistent regarding successful outcomes for people of color who participate in them (Allen, Eby, O'Brien, & Lentz, 2008). The participants discussed their experience with formal and informal mentor

situations. The majority of the women suggested that they faired better in informal mentor dyads. One woman who participated in a formal mentor program stated, "I don't do as well with structured mentoring, I've done a lot better with informal mentor relationships. The Association for California Community College Administrators mentor program was great for the way it was structured, but it [the mentor relationship] feels really forced."

As stated previously, the impact of formal mentor programs do not consistently achieve desired outcomes for people of color (Olsen & Jackson, 2009; Underhill, 2006). Crawford and Smith (2005) and Underhill (2006) suggest that this may be because in informal mentor relationships protégés and mentors naturally select each other on the basis of similarity of interest and personal characteristics. For example, several of the participants indicated that they often developed working relationships with senior-level colleagues with common interest and goals, which over time organically developed into informal mentor relationships. Crawford and Smith (2005) posit that informal mentoring may be more effective than formal mentoring programs when protégées and mentors select each other based on similar interests and personal characteristics.

Johnson (1998) suggests that homogeneous mentor relationships make it easy for both parties to identify with each other, connect emotionally, and build a relationship. However, the issue of the mentors' race and gender was not a significant factor among the majority of the study participants, although one participant suggested that it was important for her to have an African American mentor; one that is able to relate to her culture. The literature suggests that

mentors typically select protégées who look like them and who have similar backgrounds and interest (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Olsen & Jackson, 2009; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

A few study participants suggested that White male mentors could assist in their career advancement by virtue of their power and connections, which Black female mid-level administrators typically do not have. According to Dresher and Cox (1996) protégées paired with White male mentors experience greater advantages for access and opportunity. Although the relevancy of the race and gender of the mentor was viewed through several lenses among the participants, the data from the study revealed that overall it was important to the participants that the mentor should have the ability to relate to them and have their best interest at heart.

Further, data collected from the semi-structured interviews determined that it was important that Black female mid-level administrators have access to effective mentors. Study participants shared that an effective mentor is honest, authentic, and politically astute. The women agreed that effective mentors should provide constructive feedback to the protégé regarding skills that require improvement, share relevant information necessary to help the protégé make appropriate professional decisions, and teach the protégée how to successfully navigate political environments. Kram (1983) suggests that effective mentors often have substantial social and political capital, provide feedback, share ideas, and suggest strategies to complete challenging task.

Barriers to Career Advancement

Participants voiced concern about misperceptions held by their White colleagues. Stanley (2009) suggests that the everyday lived experience of Black women positioned within an interlocking system of race, gender, and class is not easily understood by White men or White women. Although each participant in this study was highly educated and had earned post-secondary degrees, many expressed that their White colleagues did not view them as credible or as qualified to hold a mid-level administrative position. Jennifer stated, "I didn't know when I pursued this position that I would be faced with racist [people]. I thought my accolades or my educational background was enough." Black women in leadership positions are not typically perceived the same way as White women or Black men who hold similar positions. Stanley (2009) suggests that the experience of Black women have been largely framed by perceptions that have been influenced by history. Further, history has created and engrained stereotypical images of Black women in subservient roles; therefore, it is difficult for some Whites to perceive Black women as qualified leaders (Stanley, 2009).

Black women serving in leadership roles in higher education face numerous barriers to career advancement, for example, false perceptions, intersectionality, and the glass ceiling. These barriers have impeded job promotions for far too many Black women. Although formal and informal mentoring practices have served as powerful tools to promote career advancement, Black women continue to experience issues of the glass ceiling (Moore-Brown, 2006). Study participant Amber stated, "My biggest barrier is not

being able to move forward." Similarly, Jennifer stated that she did not feel that promotional opportunities are available for her because all of the college presidents and the CEO in her district are male.

According to Byrd and Stanley (2009) the "good ole boy" system allows prejudice and a social stratification that exclude Black women leaders form social circles where promotional opportunities may exist. Likewise, Bell and Nkomo (2001) suggests that Black women are faced with the concrete ceiling, a barrier that prevents access to social connections and career advancement opportunities.

Further, study participants cited lack of support from supervisors and the institution as a barrier to career advancement. The data from this study revealed that the many of the participants' supervisors do not inquire about their future professional goals or encourage participation in professional development activities. Lack of investment in professional development for the Black female mid-level administrator from both the supervisor and the institution disempowers and mutes the voice of the Black female mid-level administrator (Thomas, 2004).

Frequently, Black women do not have access to influential senior colleagues or the inner workings of the organization. Further, their opportunities for career advancement are limited (Bova, 2000). A basic premise of Black feminist thought suggests that Black women cannot be fully empowered unless intersecting oppressions such as racism, sexism, and classism are eliminated (Byrd & Stanley, 2009).

Black female mid-level administrators will continue to experience barriers to career advancement as long as racism, sexism, and classism persist. In addition, Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003) suggest that Black female administrators will continue to face obstacles in higher education until there is a critical mass of Black students, faculty, and staff. Further, Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003) posit that a critical mass exists whenever there are enough individuals from a particular group to feel comfortable participating in conversations rather than as the spokesperson for their race.

Study participants were asked to discuss their perception of the number of Black women on their campus, in their district, and within the California Community College System, it was noted that the number of Black women is low. For example, Sasha serves as a dean at a large community college district. She stated that when she attends the district wide deans meeting there are a total of three Black female deans. Likewise, Christina stated that she is the only Black female administrator on her campus. Often Whites are not sensitive to the feelings of individual Black women being alienated, unaccepted, undervalued, and alone when they are the only one in a group setting (Stanley, 2009).

According to data from the fall 2013 *Report on Staffing* obtained from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, there are a total of 1,899 educational administrators employed in California's 112 community colleges. Of that total, Black women only occupy 11% or 117 educational administrator positions while White women hold 57% or 571 educational administrator positions. The participants suggested that critically low numbers of Black female

administrators employed within the California Community College System is alarming and cause for concern. The Chancellor's Office must recognize that the limited number of Black female administrators is a crisis situation that must be addressed immediately.

Sources of Support

The women in the study were cognizant of the low numbers of Black female administrators on their campuses, and the lack of support available to them. The study participants were asked where they find support, three of the thirteen women indicated that they have one or two colleagues on their campus or in the district who provide support. The majority of the women stated that they receive support from their families. According to Patton and Harper (2003) women establish support networks through family, friends, and the community to help them survive and excel in their personal and professional lives.

Jennifer, a dean at a small community college district stated that she felt fortunate to have an African American female faculty member who is a friend and a colleague who offers support, whereas, Samantha, a 56-year old academic dean at one of the largest community college districts in California shared that she has worked at her college for 26 years stated, "Believe it or not, sometimes I have to revert back to the classified staff [for support]."

Although a few of the women found supportive colleagues, many stated that they received support from their families. Stacy shared, "If I didn't have my husband, and if didn't have a schedule that allowed him to really be a part of the kid's lives, then there's no way that I could have a position like this." Without a

critical mass of African American faculty and staff on college campuses the cycle of limited support and resources will remain constant (Hughes and Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Black Women's Network

Finally, the participants suggested that a support network is needed. A structured support network comprised of Black female mid and senior-level administrators within the California Community College System is needed to combat the negative issues that stifle career advancement for Black administrators, as well and to as to create a positive space provide to learn, share and support one another. Henery (2010) suggests that support networks are necessary for Black female administrators in terms of feeling safe, and to explore appropriate optional behaviors when faced with racist or sexist confrontations.

Many of the women stated that the due to the critically low number of African American women employed within the California Community College System, the Chancellor's Office should provide resources to create a statewide mentor program specifically for Black women. Although this type of state funded support network is unprecedented, the employment data speaks for the need to address the critical issue to support Black female administrators serving within the California Community College System.

Unexpected Findings

The majority of the participants indicated that they have experienced barriers in pursuit of career advancement simply because they were Black and

female. One unexpected finding from this study centered on three of the participants who could not identify barriers that could potentially impede their career advancement.

Study participants Christina, Amber, and Shaunda all work at single college districts. Christina and Shaunda have working titles of dean and Amber is a director, each one is either the only, or one of two Black female deans or directors on campus.

When asked to cite barriers that they have experienced, they shared that barriers may exist; however they did not feel obstructed or encumbered by them. Christina stated, "I have challenges and interactions with certain groups of people. I don't know about barriers. In my job now, I don't know if some of the barriers are because of being an African American female or they are barriers because there are barriers to educational leadership now." Similarly, Amber was unable to identify barriers that impeded her career advancement; she stated,

> While it may be true [barriers exist], I think I have some benefit, and I have opportunities that maybe my counterparts haven't had. Even though it's not a perfect situation, it's not adverse enough to make me want to leave the college. So I think I have had some opportunities to do some things.

Shaunda did not cite barriers; however, she noted,

> You wonder who really supports you and why they support you. You wonder about your detractors. If your gender, ethnicity has anything to do with why they don't support you. You work harder. . . . To me all those are not negatives, I think it's just the reality of our society.

Although the sample population for this study was homogeneous, three of the participants held very different views regarding barriers and obstacles that could impede career advancement. The third theme of Collins (1986) Black feminist thought suggests that Black women share many commonalities; however, the diversity of class, religion, age, and so forth shapes their individual lives, which result in different expressions. In terms of Christina, Amber, and Shaunda's status of being the only Black woman on their campus or in an administrative position, they may feel the need to deny that barriers exist by trying to avoid drawing negative attention to themselves by assenting with institutional status quo or by shielding themselves from any displeasure or disapproval by senior-level administration as a means of protecting their positions.

According to Thomas (2004) certain dimensions of behavior of Black women in some context closely resemble that of White women, and in other instances Black women's behavior may stand apart from Black women. King (1988) described this phenomenon as "both/or" orientation—that is the art of being simultaneously a member of a group yet standing apart from the group. Although Christina, Amber, and Shaunda, share multiple commonalities with the other participants in this study, their dissimilar beliefs and ideals regarding barriers presented as an unexpected finding in this study.

Implications

The findings of this study suggest several implications. First it is evident that immediate action is needed to resolve issues of the imbalance within the

California Community College System administrative staffing pool. Black female administrators make up only 11% of the total number of administrators within the California Community College System. The low number of Black female administrators is at a crisis level and is a cause for concern. Future research in the form of employee climate surveys should be conducted with the 117 Black female administrators to identify and to address current or potential problems and to create a positive work environment. Also focus groups should be conducted with the female administrators to gather qualitative data to understand the issues and concerns they may have as underrepresented employees within the CCCS.

Findings also reveal the many Black female mid-level administrators do not have regular opportunities to engage with Black senior-level administrators or participate in professional development or leadership programs. In terms of implications for practice, it would benefit the California Community College Chancellor's Office to support an affinity-based professional development program to support African American female mid-level administrators. The affinity group should include opportunities to discuss in a culturally compatible context ways in which Black female mid-level administrators can develop the necessary skills needed for career advancement and professional networking and the strategies needed to develop cultural competencies,. Additionally, it would benefit the women to have Black senior-level administrators serve as group facilitators.

Implications for Policy

In terms of policy implications, the Chancellor's Office has no written policy on staffing equity listed on the webpage. Although every community college represented in this study included information in their mission statements proclaiming the value of diversity and inclusion, there is no mention of the importance of maintaining a diverse team of faculty, staff, and administrators. Based on the inadequately low number of African American female mid-level administrators on each campus within the California Community College System, executives and senior-level administrators may not always be actively promoting principles of diversity and equity in their hiring practices. Policy makers should strongly and directly authorize support for increasing the number of African American female administrators within the California Community College System through a statement that makes clear the importance of maintaining a diverse leadership team at each of the 112 California community colleges. Further the statement should declare that African American female administrators are a valuable part of the community college system and will continue to be so in the foreseeable future and will be supported as such.

Decisions to include Black females in senior level positions appear to have far-reaching effects on the experiences of Black students at institutions of postsecondary education. For a large number of African Americans, Community colleges have been a point of entry for accessing higher education (Harvey, 2002). In fact, most African Americans begin their college careers in two-year institutions (Nettles & Perna, 1997). With the increase of students of color on

college campuses, community colleges have not paid much attention to the recruiting and retention of Black administrators (Henry, 2010). However, Black female administrators at two-year colleges can significantly influence the lives of students (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Due to the limited number of Black female administrators employed at community colleges in California, African American students do not have access to potentially supportive administrators to help them put difficult academic and/or socially unfamiliar concepts in context or to teach them how to navigate the transition, retention, and matriculation process (Stewart, Russell, & Wright, 1977; Turrentine & Conley, 2001). Further, as the California Community College System grapples with approaches to successfully implement and reach the goals of the Student Success Act of 2012 (SB 1456), it is imperative that the Chancellor's Office is aware of and acts on the research, that suggests that having African American female senior-level administrators on the leadership team often mitigates many factors that present barriers to the retention and completion rates for students of color in community colleges (Zamani, 2003a). It is vital that all students see that Black women are capable of obtaining senior level positions that hold authority. Implications of this study stress the need for the California Community College System to be strategic in increasing the scope of diversity by committing to the hiring of diverse staff members. There is a myriad of stakeholders within the California Community College System such as students, parents, and alumni of color who would benefit from interacting with a diverse administration. Therefore, it is imperative that the

Chancellor's Office initiates changes to the current staffing policies to include diverse administrators that represent the student population.

Moreover, African American female mid-level administrators would benefit from personal development and leadership training. There are leadership development programs such as the National Council on Black American Affairs Leadership Development Institute and Kaleidoscope Leadership Institute that focus on training African American females to become future leaders. The mission statements for these organizations explicitly state that they welcome those who want to become vice presidents, presidents, and chancellors. Policy makers need to support African American female mid-level administrators who wish to participate in leadership development programs that provide a leadership curriculum that is delivered in a culturally specific context.

Further, it is imperative that the California Community College Chancellor's Office implement policy to examine issues of equity and diversity on an annual basis to ensure the faculty, staff, and administrator ranks are diverse. Finally, the Chancellor's Office should require each of the 112 campuses to review staffing equity on an annual basis. Each campus should develop policies and practices to ensure that diverse faculty, staff, and administrators are serving each campus. When the campus community is diverse and students see faculty, staff, and administrators that look like them, there is greater opportunity for students to be successful and meet their educational goals.

Implications for Future Research

This work has provided insight into the challenges of career advancement for African American female mid-level administrators who work within the California Community College System. I recommend that further inquiry be conducted in the following directions:

1. Future study incorporating race, ethnicity, and gender coupled with theoretical frameworks such as critical race theory can be used to examine organizational characteristics and the complex structural practices used to recruit, hire and retain African American women to colleges within the California Community College System.
2. The same research methods can be used to examine strategies used by upper level administrators to secure their positions, juxtaposing White and Black, female and male administrators.
3. The role of higher education professional organizations in the professional development of African American professionals should be studied. This research can provide information regarding the theory and practice of the socialization process required for career advancement.

Recommendations

This work has provided additional insight into the lived experiences of Black female mid-level administrators working in the California Community College System. Based on the findings from this study, I make several recommendations to improve career advancement opportunities and support

structures for Black female mid-level administrators and to reduce negative perceptions and stereotypes about them among administrators within the CCCS.

Cross Cultural Mentor Program

Mentoring relationships create opportunities for junior level employees to work with more seasoned employees to gain critical skills needed for career advancement (Noe, 1988). However, mentors typically select protégés who look like them, have similar backgrounds and interest (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). As a result of common homogeneous White male mentor dyads, professionals of color who desire a mentor typically do not have opportunities to enter into mentor relationships (Olsen & Jackson, 2009).

I recommend that the California Community College System implement a statewide cross-cultural mentor program. According to Bova (2000), cross-cultural mentor relationships in the workplace serve a dual purpose. First, cross cultural mentor dyads allow for mutual testing of stereotypes, acknowledgement of differences, and the opportunity for the dyad members to develop cross-cultural communication skills. Second, the cross-cultural mentor relationship provides opportunities for the junior level employee to work on projects that my increase skills sets, and expand her/his professional network, which may lead to job promotions.

Further, in an effort to close the gap between administrators of color and White administrators, it would benefit participants of the cross-cultural mentoring program to participate in a race summit. A race summit will provide opportunities to address issues of inclusiveness by encouraging dialogue between cross-

sections of employees. The objective of a race summit is engagement in positive communication. Mentors and protégés would participate in activities that teach them how to open up affirmative lines of communication and to stimulate constructive discussions about race. The goal of a race summit is to focus on productive dialogue, minimize assumptions, and gain a better understanding of diverse cultures.

Senior Administrators Must Make a Paradigm Shift

Senior administrators, hiring managers, and the two-year college community in general must denounce the false notion that Black female administrators are somehow inadequate or deficient in relation to male administrators. Senior administrators within the California Community College System must examine the hegemonic order that is embedded within institutional dynamics, and the societal assumptions and biases that keep Black female mid-level administrators from advancing to senior level positions. Gramsci (1971) defines hegemony as a process in which dominant groups maintain control through a combination of coercion and consent. Roof and Wiegman (1995) suggest that hegemony is maintained in higher education through institutional structures of power and privilege that normalizes certain social identity groups such as senior administrators and trustee members.

Based on the Chancellors 2013 staffing data, which indicated that 117 African American females hold administrative positions within the 112 colleges within the California Community College System, there must be a clear recognition that exclusionary conditions exist. I recommend that senior-level

administrators and trustee members within the California Community College System participate in diversity training to understand why it is important to have diverse administrative teams, and specifically, to realize the importance of having Black women serve in prominent leadership positions.

Create a Pipeline

In terms of the small numbers of African Americans in leadership positions at two-year colleges nationwide, greater attention should be paid to leadership development opportunities in advancing effective educational leaders (Zamani, 2003b). Moreover, the California Community College Chancellor's Office and community college presidents should, in general, give more consideration to determining how to attract more persons of color, and specifically, hiring more African American female administrators, which in turn demonstrates an institutional commitment to diversity and promoting an inclusive educational environment.

Further, the American Association of Community Colleges published a list of six competencies for community college leaders, which can be used to create succession plans, and develop a "grow your own" professional development pipeline. The California Community College System has a wealth of resources to prepare talented individuals to become future leaders. I recommend that the Chancellor's Office provide support, financial and otherwise, to each of the 112 colleges in developing a diverse professional development pipeline.

Support Networks for Black Female Mid-Level Administrators

Data collected from this study indicated that some Black female mid-level administrators did not have opportunities to participate in professional development nor did they receive support from their supervisors or from the institution. Black women in higher education have been historically oppressed, and work on the margins due to their race and gender (Collins, 2004; Simien, 2006). To assist Black female mid-level administrators become full participants within the campus community, senior-level administrators need to develop support programs for women of color. Support could be structured from district or college wide mentors, professional development opportunities, and community support groups to help women in establishing professional as well as personal peer relations. Once established, the initiatives should be evaluated.

Sister Circles

As previously mentioned, according to data from the fall 2013 *Report on Staffing* obtained from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, Black women only occupy 11% or 117 educational administrator positions while White women hold 57% or 571 educational administrator positions. According to Holmes (2003), there have been numerous reports of limited career advancement opportunities, feelings of powerlessness, isolation and alienation, subtle and overt forms of race discrimination, and lack of mentorship and networking opportunities for Black women in higher education. The Black woman is the most isolated group within the academy. "She has been called upon to create herself without model or precedent" (Carroll, 1982, p. 126).

The data clearly justify the need for Black female administrators in higher education to seek support within sister circles. The literature acknowledges that group experiences validate Black women's perceptions, help decrease stress, and prevent illness (Collins, 2001; Henry, 2010; Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). It is my recommendation that the California Community College Chancellor's Office support statewide efforts for the 117 Black female administrators to plan and create regional sister circle groups.

Summary of the Dissertation

Many Black female mid-level administrators face limited opportunities for career advancement, yet current research literature fails to address their unique mentoring and career development experiences. The findings from this study overwhelmingly indicate mentoring, and opportunities for professional development and support networks are needed in order for Black female administrators to advance in their careers. If acted upon, the recommendations offered in this study will benefit all employees of the California Community College System. Cross-Cultural mentoring relationships will allow diverse dyads the opportunity to learn about different cultures, ask questions to demystify stereotypes, and realize that people are more alike than they are different.

The implementation of campus sponsored support networks for Black female administrators will benefit individual campuses. When employees have opportunities to fully participate with all colleagues, they invest more time and energy into upholding the institutional mission and ensuring that goals are met.

Finally, given the current staffing data, it is clear that Black female administrators need to be supported. Further, it is evident that the Chancellor's Office must respond to the woefully low numbers of Black female administrators employed within the California Community College System. I urge senior-level administrators at the California Community College Chancellor's Office to immediately respond to the Black female administrator crisis.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INVITATION /CONSENT FORM

THE ROLE OF MENTORING AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT FOR BLACK FEMALE MID-LEVEL COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS

Dear Dr./Ms. XXXX,

My name is Yvette Moss and I am currently a doctoral student in the Education Leadership Program at California State University, Fullerton. I am writing to seek your assistance via participation in a research study I plan to conduct on The Role of Mentoring and Career Advancement for Black Female Mid-level Community College Administrators. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from this project at any time.

The research literature indicates that more Black females are receiving terminal degrees, yet the data do not show gains in their career advancement. The 2004 Catalyst report indicates that the number of Black women beginning careers in higher education is increasing, however, there are very few females available to mentor them. Although Black women have made progress in securing administrative positions, they are still underrepresented at the highest levels in post-secondary institutions.

You were selected for this study primarily due to your significant contributions as an administrator in the field of higher education. I am sincerely hoping you will share your experiences and perspectives regarding mentoring and career advancement as a mid-level manager and your professional life in general.

This research study will be conducted (upon your consent), using 90-minute audio-recorded interviews, which are semi-structured and open-ended. The interviews will be conducted face-to-face, at a public location of your choosing, via Skype, or by telephone. If you consent to participate in the study, I will contact you by email or telephone to schedule the study interview and provide additional information.

Your responses to the interview questions will be kept confidential. All research records obtained from this study will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. All data collected will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home and on my personal, password-protected computer. I am the only one who will have access to it. I will keep the study records indefinitely. The results from this study may be published; however, your name and identity will never be associated with the responses, nor will your information be shared with anyone.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from all or part of the study at any time you deem appropriate. I have no conflict of interest in this study nor will I receive any financial gain.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Yvette Moss at yvettemoss@csu.fullerton.edu, or via phone at 310-991-5717. You may also contact Dr. Dawn Person, faculty advisor, at dperson@fullerton.edu.

Thank you.

For the Participant

I have carefully read and/or I have had the terms used in this consent form and their significance explained to me. By signing below, I agree that I am at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in this project.

Name:_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Project: The Role of Mentoring and Career Advancement

Date:

Time of Interview:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Background

A1 Please tell me a little bit about your background (where you are from, your K-12 education). Optional: What is your age?

A2. Where did you attend college and what degrees have you earned?

A3. Tell me about your mother and father (or other person(s) that reared you). What are their occupations? Tell me about their educational background? Did your parents attend a segregated high school or college?

A4. What were their roles within your family? What were some of the important messages you received from your parents that you feel helped to shape who you are today?

African American/Black Female Mid-level Administrator

B1. How long have you been working at your present institution (if retired, how long did you work at the institution)? How long did it take you to

reach your current (former) position? Please describe your career path within the academy.

B2. Describe your current position, primary responsibilities, and challenges.

B3. Does your position involve critical "decision making" where you can create opportunities for other Black females or women in general? Please explain.

B4. What influenced you to pursue a leadership position in higher education?

B5. What is it like to be an AA/Black, female, mid-level administrator?

B6. Are there any advantages and/or disadvantages to being an AA/Black, female, mid-level administrator?

B7. Who do you talk to regarding advice, steps to take for career advancement, or career challenges you experience?

B8. Did someone encourage you to pursue your current position or did you decide to pursue the position on your own? Describe your relationship with the person who encouraged you to pursue your current position.

B9. What recommendations or suggestions would you provide senior-level administrators regarding the need for professional development for African American/Black, female, mid-level administrators?

B10. What advice would you give to other African American/Black women or other women in general who are pursuing similar professional goals?

Your Institution and the California Community College System

The data show that African American/Black females are achieving graduate and terminal degrees at an accelerated rate; however, they are not moving into higher administrative positions within the academy.

C1. What is your perception of the quantity of African American/Black female administrators on your campus, in your district, and within the CCC system? If it is sparse, what initiatives exist to increase the numbers? If the numbers are increasing, to what do you attribute it?

C2. In your opinion, what is the overall climate for African American/Black female administrators on your campus, in your district, and within the CCC system?

Barriers and Challenges

D1. What barriers, if any, are you confronted with as an African American/Black, female, mid-level administrator?

D2. What do you see as factors that present as obstacles to the AA/Black woman's full and equitable participation in higher education administration?

D3. What are your greatest challenges, personally and professionally? Do you view these challenges as forms of oppression? If so, how?

D4. From what source(s) have you found support?

D5. Have you ever gotten to the point where you considered resigning or leaving higher education due to some of the issues you face as an African American/Black female mid-level administrator? If so, why did you stay? What do you believe led to your retention?

Persistence

E1. What persistence strategies do you utilize in your position?

E2. What skills do you believe AA/Black females need in order to persist as a mid-level administrator?

Mentor Experience

Mentors are individuals with advanced experience and knowledge, who support and guide protégés toward career advancement (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kram, 1985). According to Ragins (1997), mentors provide two functions, career development and psychosocial support. Career development includes assisting the protégé obtain job promotions and increased compensation; psychosocial support involves helping the protégé adapt and relate to the institutions cultural/social environment.

BEHAVIOR/FUNCTION	PROTÉGÉ OUTCOME
Career Development	Promotion, Compensation
Psychosocial	Job satisfaction, Socialization, Organizational commitment, Job stress and burnout, Work alienation, Turnover

F1. Have you experienced career development and/or psychosocial mentoring functions in your mentoring relationship(s)? If so, which of the two mentoring function categories is more important to you?

F2. Describe your experiences as an African American/Black, female, mid-level administrator regarding mentoring in your career advancement.

F3. Did you seek a mentor, or did a mentor select you (If applicable)?

F4. Tell me about your experience of seeking a mentor.

F5. If you did seek a mentor, what, if any, difficulties existed?

F6. Do you think it is critical to secure several mentors in order to achieve career advancement, if so, why?

F7. How have these relationships shaped your career and supported you professionally, personally, or spiritually?

F8. What are your thoughts regarding the relevance, if any, of the mentor's race and gender within the relationship?

Career Success

G1. What is your definition of career success?

G2. What are your greatest successes, personally and professionally?

G3. In what ways do you feel the mentor relationship enhanced your success?

G4. What is something you wish your mentor(s) had shared with you that would have made a difference in your career? Where did you learn it if not from your mentor?

G5. What are your future goals?

G6. Do you view yourself as a role model for other African American women?

G7. Do you serve as a mentor?

G8. Would you consider serving as a mentor to other African American females?

G9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Name	Age	Title	Graduate Degrees	District	Years at Institution
Samantha	56	Dean	MBA, Ed.D.	Multi	26
Christina	56	Dean	MSN	Single	16
Amber	54	Director	MSW	Multi	14
Sochi	53	Director	MBA	Single	15
Lisa	48	Director	MFT	Single	23
Denise	48	Director	MA, Ed.D.	Multi	12
Sasha	44	Dean	MLS	Multi	2.8
Theresa	44	Director	MA, Ed.D.	Multi	2 months
Jennifer	44	Dean	MSW	Multi	9
Angel	42	Director	MA, Ph.D.	Single	10
Tanya	39	Director	MBA	Multi	6
Stacy	37	Director	MBA	Single	1.5
Shaunda	36	Dean	MPT, Ed.D.	Single	4

APPENDIX D

CATEGORIES AND THEMES

Table 2

Categories and Themes

Category of Findings	Definition	Themes
The Mentor Experience	Positive intentional interpersonal exchange between mentor and protégé	Psychosocial and career development support Formal and informal mentor experiences Relevance of race and gender Effective mentors
Barriers to Career Advancement	Various imperceptible obstructions that prevent opportunities for career advancement	Misperceptions Perceptions of lack of credibility Glass ceiling Lack of support Underrepresentation
Sources of Support	Structures that provide capacity for agency and reinforcement	Family Colleagues
Black Women's Network	Network comprised of Black female administrators within the CCCS to provide psychosocial and career support	