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Sandra Jackson

Tyler County Hospital District, sjackson@tchospital.us

Sandra Harris

Lamar University, sandra.harris@lamar.edu

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AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS: CAREER PATHS TO THE PRESIDENCY

Sandra Jackson
Sandra Harris

The purpose of this study was to investigate the career paths and educational preparation of African American female college presidents. Forty-three of the 59 college presidents responded to a Likert-type survey. Findings indicated that African American female college presidents were more likely to hold a doctorate in education and came to the presidency from a variety of positions, often from other institutions or outside of education.

African American women are underrepresented in higher education leadership roles (Ross & Green, 2000; Ross, Green & Henderson, 1993; Rusher, 1996; Touchton & Davis, 1991; Walton, 1996). Although there are qualified, interested and capable African American females in the education field (Grogan, 1996; McFarlin, Crittenden, & Ebbers, 1999), few African American females hold the position of college president. Edwards-Wilson (1998) concluded that a disparity exists even in the lack of studies available regarding African American females in higher education leadership positions.

This void makes it difficult to obtain a clear picture outlining previous preparation, career paths, experiences and perceptions of barriers that African American female junior college and four-year institution presidents have experienced to ascend to the presidency. With a limited number of African American female college and university presidents, it is extremely difficult for aspiring African American female leaders to find African American role models who have been successful in breaking through the barriers of race and gender.

During the 1970s and 1980s, researchers noted that women who sought leadership positions in administration faced many barriers, but the bulk of these studies focused mainly on white women (Dorn, Rourke &

About the Authors

Sandra Jackson, Ed.D., currently works as a nurse administrator at Tyler County Hospital District in Woodville, Texas. The District is made up of an assisted living center, rural health clinic, hospital, foundation and vocational school of nursing. She also serves as a part-time local pastor of the United Methodist Church for the Livingston Circuit.

Sandra Harris, Ph.D., associate professor, is a former public and private school teacher and administrator. Currently, she is director of the Center for Research and Doctoral Studies in Educational Leadership at Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas. sandra.harris@lamar.edu

Papalewis, 1999; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Kochan, Spencer & Mathews, 2000; Mertz & McNeely, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1999). Barriers, such as stereotypic attitudes and racial discrimination, were found to limit access to top roles for female minorities in education. Often these barriers resulted in women giving up because they were overwhelmed in dealing with visible or invisible obstacles (Giscombe & Sims, 1998; Growe & Montgomery, 1999). Furthermore, Wilson (1989) found that African American women faced a double oppression as women and as people of color, and have only recently been recognized as a phenomena in need of study.

Similarly, a significant body of literature exists on the American college and university presidency. In 1993, the American Council on Education (ACE) conducted a study to provide comprehensive data profiling the chief executive officers of higher education institutions in the United States who were in office during 1986-1990. In 1990, African Americans constituted 12.1% of the U.S. population but only 5.5% African American males and females had served as presidents of these institutions. Caucasians and other minorities held 94.5% of the college and university president positions. Consequently, there are few quantitative studies that illuminate the backgrounds and career paths, as well as, perceptions of barriers of these African American female higher education leaders (Edwards-Wilson, 1998; Ross et al., 1993).

This paper is part of a larger study that focused on the experiences, preparation, career paths, and perceptions of barriers to the college or university presidency. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What educational preparation and specific career paths lead to the college and university presidency for African American females?

2. Is there a sequential order for entering the presidency through academia?

Review of Literature

Rusher (1996) lamented that the number of African American women administrators in higher education is not impressive. Although several institutions have implemented aggressive recruitment programs to attract and retain minorities, their efforts have not resulted in significant increases in the number of African American women administrators. Regardless of the recruitment method used, White males remain the favored group in all areas of higher education (Lindsay, 1999). Although the actual count of African American women administrators is low, the number of qualified African American women in higher education is more than sufficient (Rusher, 1996).

We know more about the barriers, such as, glass ceiling, gender and race discrimination than we do about effective responses (Shakeshaft, 1999). The term “glass ceiling” was coined in the early 1980s referring to artificial barriers in the advancement of women and minorities that keep minorities and women from rising to administrative positions of higher academia (Cotter, Hermnsen, Ovadia & Vanneman, 2001). A 1984 survey by Quinta, Cotter and Romenesko (1998) suggested that the “glass ceiling” might be a primary culprit for the existence of such a small percentage of minority presidents since, often, it enforces inequality by creating a gender or racial difference, that is not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee.

Although Congress enacted three laws in the 1960s and 1970s to promote equality for women and minorities and eliminate gender and race discrimination, equality has not been attained. The first law passed was the Equal Pay Act, that prohibited sex discrimination in employment. The second law enacted was Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, that declared it unlawful to discriminate in hiring, firing, compensating, promoting and other conditions of employment. The third law passed was Title IX of the Education Amendment, that prohibited sex discrimination in institutions receiving federal grants, loans, or contracts (Rai & Critzer, 2000). However, Brunner (1998) still identified race and ethnic discrimination as primary barriers in the selection process effecting African American females.

African American women exist in the pipeline of education but are not present throughout the ranks of higher education administration. Only a few of the 117 historically Black colleges and universities in existence in 1998 had female chief academic officers or presidents (Ross & Green, 2000). There is an awareness of the prominent African American women educators

of the 19th and 20th centuries who were teachers, principals and school founders, little is known of the role of African-American women educators in higher education (Rusher, 1996), History revealed that few Black females have pioneered the frontier in education as leaders (Gill & Showell, 1991).

African American Female President – The Wave Descriptor

From the beginning of higher education in America with Harvard in 1636, until far into the late 20th century, females were absent from the chief executive leadership positions of president, principal, chancellor, as well as absent from the policy leadership positions as chairs of Boards of Directors, Overseers and/or Trustees. According to Gloria Randle Scott, former president of Bennett College for Women, there were no African American females in the chief executive position of baccalaureate or higher degree granting institutions, until 1903 when Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune became the founding president of Bethune-Cookman College (Scott, personal communication, April 7, 2003).

It is therefore possible to chronicle the presence of African American females in such positions with highly reliable documentation. As one views this chronology, five time frames or “waves” appear to anchor the appointments of African American females as chief executive officers of baccalaureate and masters/doctorate degree granting institutions. These five “waves” are: (a) 1903-1905; (b) 1955-1970; (c) 1970-1987; (d) 1987-1992; and, (e) 1992-2002. The first waves were of mostly single individuals, ascending one at a time. It was only in 1987 that there were multiple appointments of African American female presidents (Scott, personal communication, April 5, 2003).

The first wave. This time period of African American female presidents occurred from 1903 to 1905. Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune was appointed President of Bethune Institute, later to become Bethune-Cookman College in 1904. She was the only African American female president until the 1950s (Bethune-Cookman College, 2002).

The second wave. The years from 1955 to 1970 are considered the second wave of African American female presidents. Dr. Willa Beatrice Player was appointed President of Bennett College for Women, initiating the second wave of appointments; the other appointment was Dr. Yvonne Taylor at Wilberforce College in 1984. She was appointed following the death of her father, Bishop D. Ormonde Walker, who had served as president (Wilberforce University, 2002).

The third wave. This wave of African American female presidents occurred from 1970 to 1987. Dr. Mable McLean was appointed President of Barber-Scotia College in 1974 (Barber-Scotia College, 2003). She was the

only African American president of a baccalaureate or higher institution in 1974. Five women were appointed as presidents in two-year community and junior colleges during this period. In 1978, Dr. Jewel Plummer Cobb, a highly productive and capable academician led the spotlight to Spelman College as the first female to reach the final two/three in the candidacy for the president (personal communication, April 5, 2003).

Unfortunately, Dr. Cobb was not appointed to Spelman as president at this time. This caused a widespread controversy including a student sit in and “lock in” of the Board of Trustees with the expressed desires of students, alumnae, faculty and supporters to have an African American female appointed at the all female institution that was founded in 1881. The national publicity within the higher educations community raised the level and exposure of the dialogue and debate about the ability of African American women to serve in the Presidency. Though the appointment went to an African American male, the process had indeed opened the door for the next wave of appointments, nine years later, when the selected president for Spelman was an African American female (personal communication, April 5, 2003).

The fourth wave. The fourth wave of African American female presidents was from 1987 to 1992. In 1987, for the first time in history, there were three or more African American presidents of four-year colleges and universities serving simultaneously. They were all appointed to Historically Black College presidencies, Dr. Johnetta Besch Cole to Spelman; Dr. Gloria Dean Randle Scott to Bennett College for Women; and Dr. Niara Sudarkasa to Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. During this half-decade, several African American females were appointed president of two-year colleges, thus providing a “true wave” of multiples and opening the door for many other appointments, as Board of Trustees, became “comfortable” with the successes of these women leaders (Bennett College, 2002; Scott personal communication, April 5, 2003; Spelman College, 2003).

The total number of African American female presidents in 1990 numbered 18 out of 133 African American presidents representing a very small percentage of the total African American college and university presidents. African American female college and university presidents increased from 7.4% in 1986 to 13.5% in 1990; the latter represented 18 presidents. African American males decreased from 92.6% in 1986 to 86.5% in 1990, the latter represented 115 presidents. Of the 18 African American women in office in 1990, 14 presided at public institutions of which nearly half were public two-year colleges while only 2 of the African American women were presidents of independent baccalaureate colleges (Ross et al., 1993).

After 1992, though still far below parity, the considerable increases in African female presidencies made the fourth wave substantial. This wave included women at all levels of institutions from two-year community colleges to research universities.

The fifth wave. The fifth wave of African American female presidents occurred from 1992 to 2002. The total number of African American female college and university presidents who participated in the 2000 ACE study was 38, while the total number of African-American male presidents who participated numbered 110. Approximately, one in four (26%) of African American college and university presidents were women. In 1995, minority presidents continued to be under-represented relative to the higher education workforce where minorities accounted for 14% of faculty and senior staff (Ross & Green, 2000). In 2001, 36 African American women and 113 African American men participated in the 2002 ACE Study of American College presidents (Corrigan, 2002).

The National Presidents' 2000 Study included information from 2,380 college and university presidents. The study profiled women and minority presidents during 1998. The minority president section reported information on minority men and women by African American and Hispanic combined and did not allow extraction of data just for African American females (Ross & Green, 2000). Thus, very little information was available on African American females in the women president profile.

The Selection Process in Career Path

College oversight boards and review committees make the final decision when it comes to hiring a president. Jamilah (1998b) reported, "While trustee boards themselves are beginning to diversify as well, the predominance of White males who sit on the boards has been a major barrier that many cite for lack of African American presidents" (p. 30). Dr. Liz Rocklin, the Director of Board Services for the Association of Community College Trustees in Washington, DC, found through her presidential search firm at times disturbing comments from trustees, such as, "We want diversity but we want quality" (Jamilah, 1998a, p. 6). She found in 120 presidential searches that the board had more problems with women and minorities with imperfect records than with Whites who had similar, slightly tarnished work records.

Vaughan (1986) reported that women and minorities find job interviews slightly different than White male candidates. For example, women and minorities are often asked questions about family relocation, or their ability to adjust to a predominantly White environment. Female college presidents face challenges that men in those jobs do not, including boards unaccustomed to dealing with women in power (Basinger, 2001).

The Leadership Institute for a New Century (LINC) Program is a combination of national and state community college leaders, community leaders, trustees and university faculty members, to offer personal and professional development activities for participants. In 1996, 113 of the LINC members responded to a satisfaction and perception survey. The majority of women surveyed believed their biggest hurdle to advancement was the mind-set of community college boards of trustees (Ebbers, Gallisath, Rockel & Coyan, 2000). This was attributed to the selection process in which boards appeared to favor candidates by their fit in a male-dominated environment, their tendency to favor candidates most like themselves and the stereotypical male images that persist about leaders and effective leadership (Pfeffer, 1977; Taylor, 1989, Twombly & Amey, 1991).

The America Council on Education (ACE, 2001), from 1998 until 1999, conducted 13 roundtable discussions with 130 female college presidents across the country, and interviewed search firm executives. Participants in all of these sessions said that boards continue to be uncomfortable with women presidents. The problem began as early as the presidential search. Boards were usually male dominated and uncomfortable working with women leaders. Having women on the board does not always help a female president; in fact, women on boards may be considered lesser players and not able to control the board as chairperson.

The Struggle Continues

It is crucial for the future of the Black liberation struggle that women remain ever mindful that they are in a shared struggle for which they are each other's fate (hooks, 1992). Clearly, the literature supports that women in leadership roles face barriers to advancement as the glass ceiling is still intact. However, African American females are now visible after 30 years of affirmative action efforts. African American women have made significant strides in educational leadership positions but must continue to break barriers in the area of higher education administration. In 2002, African American females comprised only 59 of the 3,848 presidents and CEOs of university/college systems (personal communication April 5, 2003). Although efforts have been made, there is still a long journey before all women (including African American females) are recognized in an equitable position to men.

Methodology

A descriptive research inquiry design was utilized for this study of African American female college and university presidents. Appropriate to

descriptive research, we used a Likert-type survey with open-ended questions to gather data (Neuman, 2000).

Sample

The study population was purposeful and consisted of African American female college and university presidents from the year 2002. Subjects consisted of 100% of the population of presidents at two-year and four-year colleges and universities in the United States who were African American females. The subjects were drawn from historically Black institutions and traditionally White two-year and four-year colleges and universities (both private and public). We used the list of 59 Black female college and university presidents identified in the *Black Issues in Higher Education* (2002). Forty-three of the 59 presidents participated in the study.

Data Collection

The survey instrument was developed from preliminary discussion with Black women administrators, examination of existing survey instruments, and a review of the literature. To test for content validity, the instrument was submitted to a panel of experts. Among the persons reviewing the instrument for content validity were educational leaders, including doctoral faculty, staff and students. The Educational Leadership Chief Executive Officer/President's Study I (ELCEOPS) contained 24 questions describing educational preparation, career paths, experiences, and strategies for breaking perceived career barriers. The ELCEOPS II consisted of 10 open-ended questions related to experiences and barriers. This study focused on educational preparation and career paths.

To increase the reliability of the survey instrument, ten presidents were selected, at random, from the 1998 *Black Issues in Higher Education* list of African American female college and university presidents to complete the survey. Data were collected and the survey instrument was then refined based on this input. The population queried in this study included all African American female college and university presidents in office in March 2002.

In November 2002, 59 letters of introduction were sent, with questionnaires to all African American females who were college and university presidents in March 2002. Because the 2001 ACE survey responses were shared with us, the presidents who participated in the 2001 ACE survey received a three-page survey. Those presidents who had not participated in the 2001 ACE survey received a five-page survey. Thus, busy participants were not asked to duplicate information.

Eighteen questionnaires were returned within three weeks. Due to the low response rate from the initial mailing, we conducted a second mailing.

An additional 12 questionnaires were returned after a follow-up letter to bring the total to 30. Phone calls were made and a letter was faxed to the non-responding presidents, an additional 13 surveys were returned bringing the total to 43 written responses. Fifteen of the original letters generated no response even after repeated attempts to contact the presidents. Three of the presidents declined to participate in the study. Three of the respondents indicated that they were interested in the study and wished to receive the study results.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics. Raw data were systematically organized for analysis using Statistical Product and Service Solutions formerly Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (George & Mallery, 2001). A detailed codebook was created and an identification code assigned for each case. A second person double checked numbers entered to avoid errors in transferring information to the computer. Various data were applied to the appropriate research questions in order to identify education, preparation and career paths to the presidency.

Findings

Research Question One

The first research question was: What educational preparation and specific career paths led to the college and university presidency for African American females? Respondents' previous education was examined in terms of their doctoral and master's program and degree experiences. In regard to doctoral work, 93% of the presidents reported having a doctoral degree (see Table 1).

Table 1
Highest Degree Held (n = 43)

Degree	Frequency	Percent
Ph.D	25	58.1
Ed.D	15	34.9
MS	2	4.7
MA	1	2.3
Total	43	100.0

The presidents were asked to indicate their major field of study for their highest earned degree. Table 2 presents the field of study of their highest earned degree and indicates that an overwhelming 69.8% of the presidents held their highest degree in education, followed by humanities and social sciences.

Table 2
Field of Study (Highest Degree) (n = 43)

Field	Frequency	Percent
Education	30	69.8
Humanities	4	9.3
Social Science	3	7.0
Business	2	4.7
Health	2	4.7
Agriculture	1	2.3
No Response	1	2.3
Total	43	100.1*

*Exceeds 100% due to rounding

The career paths for African American college and university presidents are reported in Table 3. Nearly 60% were first-time presidents, 20.9 % held a previous CEO position, and 18.8% of the presidents held two to six previous CEO positions. This finding anchors the foundation for the question of a sequential order for entering the presidency.

Presidents were asked to indicate the date when they were appointed to their current CEO positions. Table 4 lists the year each responding president was appointed to her current presidency in order from 1969 to the present. Only one of the presidents was appointed to the presidency prior to 1990 while 95% of the presidents were appointed after 1990.

The African American female presidents were tracked according to their position at a two-year college or university. More than 72% of the African American female presidents held this position at a two-year college, while 27.9% were at a four-year college or university. The presidents also noted that their average year of birth was 1944, although the earliest year of birth was 1924, and the latest year of birth was 1954.

Table 3
Number of Prior CEO Positions Held (n = 43)

Prior CEO Positions	Frequency	Percent
0	25	58.1
1	9	20.9
2	2	4.7
3	2	4.7
4	2	4.7
6	2	4.7
No Response	1	2.3
Total	43	100.1*

*Exceeds 100% due to rounding

Table 4
Year Appointed to Current President/CEO/Chancellor Position (n = 43)

Date Appointed	Frequency	Percent
1969	1	2.3
1990	1	2.3
1991	1	2.3
1992	6	14.0
1993	1	2.3
1994	1	2.3
1995	1	2.3
1996	3	7.0
1997	3	7.0
1998	6	14.0
1999	3	7.0
2000	4	9.3
2001	9	20.9
2002	2	4.7
No Response	1	2.3
Total	43	100.0

The presidents were asked to indicate in how many presidential searches they were invited for an interview prior to obtaining their first presidency. Data in Table 5 indicated that 41.9% of the presidents had not been in a presidential search prior to their first presidency. Sixteen percent had been in one presidential search.

Table 5

Number of Presidential Searches Prior to First Presidency (n = 43)

Searches	Frequency	Percent
0	18	41.9
1	7	16.3
2	5	11.6
3	5	11.6
4	5	11.6
No Response	3	7.0
Total	43	100.0

The presidents were asked if a search consultant was used in the search that resulted in their selection for their current presidency. Data reported indicated that 51.2% (22) had not used a search consultant in their present job, while 44.2% (19) indicated that a search consultant had been used.

Research Question Two

The second research question was: Is there a sequential order for entering the presidency through academia? To answer this question, data were collected from each participant completing the Educational Leadership Chief Executive Officer/Presidents' Survey (ELCEOPS). Data (as shown in Table 6) indicated that the immediate prior position of the president was most likely to have been chief academic officer and/or provost or president/CEO/chancellor. Respondents reported an almost equal balance between direct ascension from the chief academic office or provost. The category of "other" positions, such as dean, and the category of senior executive in development were both reported by 14% of the respondents.

Table 7 illustrates the prior positions held by the presidents. Twenty percent of respondents listed senior executive academic as the first position held as a prior position. The next most likely position held as a prior position was the category of "Other" with 18.6%. This category consisted of

Table 6
Immediate Prior Position (n = 43)

Position Title	Frequency	Percent
Chief acad. off/provost	12	27.9
President/CEO/chancellor	11	25.6
Senior executive in development	6	14.0
Other	6	14.0
Other senior exec in academic	2	4.7
Senior executive finance/admin	2	4.7
Senior executive student affairs	1	2.3
K-12 administrator	1	2.0
Local/state/fed govt	1	2.3
No Response	1	2.3
Total	43	99.8*

*Does not equal 100% due to rounding

Table 7
Prior Prior Position (n = 43)

Position Title	Frequency	Percent
Senior exec. academic	9	20.9
Other	8	18.6
Senior exec. student affairs	6	14.0
President/CEO/Chancellor	5	11.6
Chief acad. off./provost	4	9.3
Senior exec. in development	4	9.3
K-12 admin	2	4.7
Senior. Exec. finance/admin	1	2.3
Chair/faculty	1	2.3
Private business	1	2.3
No Response	2	4.7
Total	43	100.0

positions/titles, such as dean, vice president, assistant superintendent of educational programs and services. Senior executive student affairs was listed next with 14%, while 11.6% listed the job title of president/CEO/chancellor as a prior position.

Discussion

Research Question One

The first research question addressed was: What educational preparation and career paths led to the college and university presidency for African American females? Results indicated that African American college and university presidents were more likely to hold a doctorate in education than other presidents and that African American males were more likely than women to attain this position.

African American female college and university presidents were more likely to hold a doctorate than other presidents. A composite of characteristics of African American female college and university presidents emerged from the data. The majority of African American female presidents reported being an average of 58 years of age or older, married, held a doctorate in education, and 72% served in this position at a Junior College. The results of this composite were not surprising based upon prior assumptions about these women and were supported by the literature. This was consistent with prior findings, such as Howard-Vital (1989) who suggested in a study of women in higher education that African American females should pursue the doctoral degree to advance their careers.

African American female college and university presidents were most likely to hold their highest degree in education. Our study findings were consistent with other findings, such as Rusher (1996) who noted that the majority of the African American females who earned doctorate degrees did so primarily in the field of education. Jamilah (1998a) noted that the majority (89%) of the two-year college presidents in 1996 held a doctorate, Corrigan (2002) found in the American College President's Study that all women presidents were more likely than their male counterparts to have earned a doctorate. Additionally, minority presidents (male and female) were also more likely than their White counterparts to hold a doctorate.

The female presidents identified education, humanities and social science as their most likely degrees. These same results were found by the American College President's Study for all women (Corrigan, 2002). Although education was the most common field in which minorities and non-minorities earned their highest degrees, African American (male and female) presidents

were more likely to have earned their degrees in education with social science and humanities as the next most likely fields of study.

More African American females were being hired into the presidency, but were still underrepresented in the presidential population. Our findings indicated that women presidents were employed an average of 6.35 years outside of higher education and 8.32 years as full-time faculty. Also, findings reported that 58% of the presidents had not held a prior presidency and were appointed after 1990. Corrigan (2002) posited in the American College President's 2001 Study that women presidents were less likely than men to have been presidents in their prior positions. Data in this study supported this observation. Together with the increasing number of women presidents, this finding suggested that more African American females were being hired into the presidency; however, the percentage was much lower when compared to White women and numbers of presidencies. Additionally, African American men were more likely than African American women to become presidents.

When hiring a president, the Board of Trustees makes the ultimate decision, yet African American women faced some obstacles on this pathway (Jamilah, 1998b). Through a community college survey, Vaughan (1989) noted that women and minorities reported an interview process that was different from their White counterparts. Our findings indicated that 51% of the African American presidents were invited for an interview as a part of a presidential search. However, 52% of the African American presidents had not used a search consultant that resulted in their selection for the current presidency.

Research Question Two

The second research question was: Is there a sequential order for entering the presidency through academia?

African American females came to the presidency from a variety of positions such as provost, chief academic officer or another senior office. Our findings reflected that the immediate prior position was chief academic officer/provost with president/CEO/chancellor second. Only two presidents had held the position of president/CEO/chancellor before assuming their current presidency. Corrigan (2002) also found that women were less likely than men to have been presidents in their prior positions. They were more likely to have served as provost/chief academic officer or another senior executive in higher education prior to assuming the presidency. However, Corrigan found that African American male and female presidents were more likely than White presidents to be serving in their second or third presidency.

African American females were more likely to come from outside education or a different institution. Our findings reflected that the majority of African American female presidents (67.9%) also had a prior job from another/different institution or outside of education. The findings for African American females were not consistent with minority males and females for tenure. Only 22.6% of the African American female presidents currently held a tenured position; however, these findings were consistent for all women presidents regardless of the level of service of a community college or a university.

Findings from the College Presidents 2001 Survey reported that African American male and female presidents were more likely to have come from outside education or from another institution. Minority male and female presidents were more likely than non-minorities to hold a tenured position as a faculty member which may be related to the fact that minority presidents were more likely to serve at public institutions where tenure for administrators is more common (Corrigan, 2002).

Implications

Commonalities emerged from studying these African American female college and university presidents. They entered the career track to the presidency with the assumption that they would have to exceed job expectations, hold jobs that had high visibility, obtain a doctorate and develop leadership skills outside of education. They also had a mentor or became part of a network to improve their career opportunities.

There has been a gradual rise in the number of African American female presidents as indicated by the five waves of presidents. These findings suggest that although African American females can become university presidents, they must follow the career paths and acquire the appropriate education.

The results of this study have several implications for females aspiring to the presidency.

- Universities and search committees need to recruit from the African American female population.
- University preparation programs need to provide ways to encourage and prepare African American females for higher education leadership.
- Search committees and universities need to seek African American females in a variety of positions by expanding recruitment alternatives, such as K-12 superintendents and state agencies (Ross et al., 1993; Vaughan, 1986).
- African American females need role models.

- University preparation programs, as well as staff development opportunities need to provide training in leadership programs that educates regarding stereotyping, male, female and racial.
- African American females should participate in seminars, internships and workshops designed to improve management and leadership skills.
- African American females who aspire to positions in higher education should recognize the perceived importance of educational preparation to career achievement.

As this is the first study of African American female presidents, additional research is needed on future presidents. However, despite career difficulties, the African American female presidents in this study were unique women who pioneered in positions generally held by males.

From the days of the leadership of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune in the early 1900s, more than 100 years have passed. Still African American women leaders have continued to make a place for themselves in the world. As Reagon (1982) wrote, "We must be everywhere our people are or might be." The African American women college presidents in this study are making a place for themselves, and in the process they are enlarging the space for others to follow.

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