

PAVING THE WAY FOR FUTURE SCHOLARS: HEARING THE VOICES OF FOUR
AFRICAN AMERICAN, CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE, WOMEN PROFESSORS AT
PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to learn more about African American, women professors who are culturally responsive. Three research questions guided the study: 1) What motivates African American women professors to be culturally responsive? 2) What are the challenges associated with African American women professors who are culturally responsive? And 3) How do African American women professors transform into culturally responsive educators? The researcher analyzed the findings through interpretive and thematic analyses. The data revealed five themes, Black pride; Me, Myself and I at a PWI; Resilience; Advocacy and Self-Care. The last chapter provided discussion, conclusions, recommendations and implications for further research.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband Dr. Kevin L. Jones, my two children Olivia Grace and Kevin Levar Carter Jones and all my family members, mentors and culturally responsive scholars who selflessly continued the legacy of “paying it forward.” Your Black pride, resilience and advocacy will never be forgotten. They will remain a constant reminder of the legacy that influences my desire to become culturally responsive.

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Contributors

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All work conducted for this dissertation was completed by the student independently.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION OF STUDY	1
Introduction.....	1
Being Culturally Responsive, Whiteness and Privilege	4
Personal Story	5
Theoretical Framework and Socio-Cultural Theories.....	11
Storytelling/Counterstorytelling	11
The Permanence of Racism	12
Nigrescence.....	13
Ethic of Care	15
Statement of the Problem.....	15
Purpose of the Study	16
Significance of the Study	16
Research Questions.....	17
Definition of Terms.....	17
Organization of the Study	18
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	20
First Black Woman Graduate from a Four-Year College.....	20
First Black Woman to Receive Ph.D.	20
First Black Woman Professor.....	21
African American Women Demographics as Professors.....	21
Theoretical Frameworks	22
Critical Race Theory.....	22
Nigrescence.....	24
Ethic of Care	26
Disadvantages/Barriers in the Professoriate	28
Advantages/Benefits in the Professoriate	30
Motivation for Culturally Responsive Teaching.....	31
Characteristics of Transformation.....	35

Characteristics of Cultural Responsiveness	39
Summary	46
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY	47
Introduction.....	47
The Institutions	48
Purposeful Sample	48
Criteria	48
Research Design.....	49
Positionality	50
Interviews.....	51
Observations	53
Complementary Data Gathering Techniques.....	54
Audio and Video Recordings.....	54
Field Notes	54
Non-Verbal Cues	54
Data Analysis	54
Trustworthiness and Credibility of the Study	55
Member Checking.....	55
Transferability.....	56
Dependability and Confirmability	56
Summary	56
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	58
Introduction.....	58
Participants Profiles and Miniature Biography (Historical Background).....	59
Historical Background - Kimberly.....	60
Historical Background - Ciara	63
Historical Background - Irina	67
Historical Background - Felicia	71
Findings.....	74
Emergence of Theme - Black Pride	79
Emergence of Theme - Me, Myself and I at a PWI.....	87
Emergence of Theme - Resilience	97
Emergence of Theme - Advocacy.....	100
Emergence of Theme – Self-Care.....	102
Summary.....	104
CHAPTER V DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS	
FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND SUMMARY	105
Introduction.....	105

Question one: What motivates African American women professors to be culturally responsive?.....	105
They Had Black Pride.....	105
Question two: What are the challenges associated with African American women professors who are culturally responsive?	109
Me, Myself and I at a PWI.....	109
Question three: How do African American women professors transform into culturally responsive educators?	111
They Demonstrated Resilience	111
They Practiced Advocacy	114
They Engaged in Self-Care.....	118
Conclusion	118
Recommendations.....	119
Implications for Further Research	120
Summary	121
Reflections and Personal Contributions.....	122
REFERENCES.....	124
APPENDIX A.....	139

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION OF STUDY

Introduction

We are a nation that has been given the charge of teaching students from many cultures at the university level. Scholars have determined that lack of cultural responsiveness is a factor that contributes to low success rates among students of color in higher education. Cultural responsiveness relates to the effectiveness of professors' dealings with differences such as race, ethnicity, class and gender in class settings. University faculty often recognize the need to adapt their teaching methods for an ever increasingly diverse student population. For decades, the issues surrounding diversity and teaching have been well documented in K-12 literature (Banks, 1993; Gay, 2000; Grant & Sleeter, 1986), and the focus on these issues in higher education has only recently obtained more attention.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2009) native and international students of color are transforming the demographics of predominantly White institutions (PWI's) of higher learning. In the last decade, the literature has indicated that challenges linked with teaching diverse students increase as student populations become more diverse in colleges and universities (Colbert, 2010; Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009; Museus, Nichols and Lambert 2008; O'Hara & Pritchard, 2008). For example, according to Museus, Nichols and Lambert (2008), the racial climate on college campuses impacted both positive and negative experiences and resulted in distinct outcomes for students of color.

Furthermore, universities have turned their efforts to establishing numerous diversity initiatives to help in the retention and academic success of students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Mitchell and Rosiek (2006) noted that several institutions have tried to increase

the racial diversity between faculty, believing that students would have “a natural affiliation” toward their same-raced professors, thereby positively effecting their retention and persistence on campus. Although researchers found that race plays a major part in classrooms, the meaning of race differs with each student (Mitchell & Rosiek, (2006). The professor/student dynamic is not the only issue that is complicated. According to Gollnick and Chinn (2002), educators have to think about linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds, skills, and additional attributes that effect instruction and the learning process within the class. Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007) stated these characteristics of effective teaching must be culturally responsive pedagogical approaches.

Guy (1999) noted that in past pedagogical approaches, instructors were trained to identify adult learners as a homogenous group. For this reason, they expected learners of diverse backgrounds to learn in the same manner as those in the dominant culture. Consequently, various authors (Caffarella & Merriam, 2000; Lee & Sheared, 2002; S. B. Merriam & Kim, 2008) stated that students with diverse backgrounds often find that their personal experiences do not coincide with what is being taught in higher education. Therefore, education practitioners who instruct students of numerous social, cultural, racial and linguistic backgrounds are often not prepared to serve them. Many educators imposed their biased values and mainstream ideologies on the learner, while others, recognizing the dilemma, searched for ways to transform into culturally relevant educators (Amstutz, 1994; Gorski, 2006; Guy, 1999).

Ladson-Billings (1992) created the term “culturally relevant teaching” to describe a “kind of teaching that is designed not merely to fit the school culture to the students’ culture, but also to use students’ culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions and conceptualize knowledge” (p. 314). Furthermore, she stated

that culturally responsive teaching uses the learners' cultural referents to empower them academically, socially, psychologically, and politically (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Canniff (2008), Gay (2000, 2010), and Sealey-Ruiz, (2007) contended that teachers who utilize culturally responsive pedagogy have a favorable impact on the social development of their students, particularly students of diverse backgrounds. This approach develops interchangeable pedagogies to go with the educational experiences of their students.

Although the contemporary literature has emphasized the need for culturally responsive professors in higher education (Alvarez McHatton, Keller, Shircliffe, & Zalaquett, 2009; Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009; Mitchell & Rosiek, 2006), there is little research on the experiences of culturally responsive professors and the influence of their pedagogies in the classroom. The data indicates that a high percentage of professors may be interested in becoming culturally responsive, to become effective in the classroom (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2009; Canniff, 2008; Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009; Sealey-Ruiz, 2007; Wlodkowski, 2003). However, there are few investigations into the process of becoming a culturally responsive professor.

A well-known subject in the scholarship of culturally responsive teaching with professors of numerous races (Blum, 2000; Canniff, 2008; Sleeter, 2008; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005; Vaught & Castagno, 2008) was the need for White professors to incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy, because of the damaging effects that hegemonic Eurocentric beliefs can have on diverse students. However, it is necessary to mention that White professors are not the only professors who experience difficulties when teaching students from diverse cultures. There is a void related to experiences of African American professors and how they became culturally responsive. Gay (2010) and Jost, Whitfield, and Jost (2005) expressed that

African American professors may not know their own histories, or the histories of other people with diverse backgrounds, and may not even be mindful of the cultural differences within their racial group of different nationalities. While African Americans may be sensitive to their own racial challenges, they might carry bias and insensitivity toward the racial discrimination of other marginalized groups. Moreover, Peterson (1999) stated that African American educators can hinder the learning of their African American students by enforcing mainstream practices and beliefs about the use of Ebonics and harboring resentment towards lower class African Americans perceived to represent the stereotypes correlated with African Americans. For this reason, one can make a case for examining the pedagogy and attitudes of African American professors with students of diverse sociocultural backgrounds.

Being Culturally Responsive, Whiteness and Privilege

In the midst of a culture of racism there are African American professors who forge a past of culturally responsive professionalism in their workplace. There are various examples of important identifiers that mark culturally responsiveness in educators; however, there are three widely accepted attributes: (a) demonstrate appreciation for diversity; (b) adopt culturally responsive teaching practices; and (c) advocate educational reform (Prater & Devereaux, 2009; Richards et al., 2007; Taylor, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

White power and privilege are deeply embedded in every aspect of society (Bell, 1992). White privilege is a component of the substructure of racism (Baumgartner & Johnson-Bailey, 2010). All aspects of Whiteness and privilege can also be observed in the academic realm in higher education. According to Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey (2010), White privilege is the “hidden infrastructure” that gradually guides and propels all sides of the educational process, from student retention, admissions and even the curricula. As a consequence of racism and

White privilege in higher education, Whites have benefits associated with success in academia, people of color are placed in a position of disadvantage. This proposed study targets accessing the voice of African American university professors who are culturally responsive.

Personal Story

Beginnings and endings are political. I have learned that where one chooses to start a story, what they benchmark, and how they conclude a story, is all a matter of perspective and position. As the primary research instrument in this proposed study, it is important to reveal my own positionality. Throughout my life, my personal and educational experiences have played a significant role in determining the subject for this dissertation and the passion that motivates me to pursue equity in every aspect of my work. I have come to understand that culturally responsive educators have a zeal for education and a strong sense of facilitating equity for their students. Caring deeply about equity has its origins in my racial identity. I identify as an African American woman. However, I was born and raised in a predominately White, upper middle-class community, located in the suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. When I was thirteen years old, and in my final year of middle school, my family moved to Texas, just outside of Houston.

Growing up, I always felt different. Being raised in a predominately White town meant that as a Black family, we stood out. Because I am the youngest of seven children (five sisters and one brother), we really stood out among other families. My parents worked hard to instill in us a sense of pride and compassion for others. My parents pushed education and excellence. If there was a barrier, particularly a racial barrier, we were told how to push through, rise above, and work to help others who had not yet, “made it for themselves.” Being a part of a large family sometimes meant that resources were limited or scarce, but my parents taught us what it meant to share and depend on each other. My parents would often said, “Your siblings are your

best friends,” when other White children did not want to play with us or play fairly. These were valuable lessons. It taught me to look out for those who have less and to befriend those who experienced isolation because I knew how painful it could be. Finally, I knew the importance of excelling regardless of what was being expected of me. Education, a good education, was promoted as transformative in my relationships with others. From my childhood, some of the greatest lessons I have learned were two-fold: to strive for equity (for myself and others) and to pursue educational excellence.

My first encounter with how important education was came at a young age. I was five years old and was getting all dolled up, but not for church or a wedding. I was going to my mother’s graduation party. She had earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, from Loyola University Chicago. It was an extravagant party held at a hotel. Family members and friends had flown in from all over the country to celebrate my mother’s accomplishment--becoming the first in her family to earn a doctoral degree. As a child, I do not remember her long nights writing or her going to the library to study. I do not remember all the sacrifices that had to be made or how difficult it must have been running a household of seven children. However, I do remember being excited. At five years old, I did not understand what a doctoral degree was, and yet I could see the impact her education would have on my family. I could see the pride my father and her parents had that night. A seed was planted in my mind about what education could do for one. My mother’s educational journey was my first encounter with transformative learning. Now, nearly thirty years later, because of her perseverance, devotion and endless hard work, I am in a Ph.D. program pursuing my degree in Educational Leadership. My mother’s legacy is something I will always cherish. I fully understand what it means to use education as a

vehicle to do great work and counter oppression and discrimination. I intend to instill in my own children the pursuit of educational excellence.

In addition, my first encounter with an understanding of equity also came during childhood. As the youngest of seven, I was completely invested in making sure I was not shortchanged. As a child, I constantly complained about fairness. Who got more, who got the best, who got seconds, was everything to me. One particular day, I was complaining about something not being fair with my sister. I wanted the same thing she had. What that something was is not important, but I will never forget how my mother responded to my tantrum. She said, “Victoria, fairness is not giving everyone the same thing! Fairness is meeting everyone’s needs. You both got what you needed.” Then she went further to tell me that I did not “need” whatever it was I was trying to get, but my sister did. After she explained the meaning of fairness to me I thought it was just another way for her to tell me why I could not have something that I really wanted. I was after all, still a child. I did not understand. What I realized as an adult was that my mother was actually distinguishing the difference between equality and equity. It was not until much later that I fully understood the difference between equality and equity, but it came at a heavy and unexpected price.

Before I go into explaining what brought me into my full understanding of equity, I need to share some background information about my brother, William. My brother was 5 years older than me and we were always very close. Growing up he was the typical boy that liked to hang out with his friends, ride his bike, and enjoy the carefree lifestyle that most kids experience growing up, except for one thing. My brother was born with sickle cell anemia, which is a genetic blood disease that is produced in a person’s body. Our bodies normally produce circular shaped red blood cells, but with the sickle cell disease, the red blood cells form abnormal shapes

that can “sickle.” When this happens, the crescent shaped red blood cells obstructs small blood vessels that transfer blood to the bones. It’s incredibly painful, debilitating, and in worse cases, life threatening. This sickling is often referred to as a “crisis.” Most days my brother was lively, funny, and passionate about life, but whenever a crisis occurred it caused severe pain for several hours or days. A crisis could lead to hospitalization, blood transfusions, and invasive medical procedures.

Trips to the doctor and ER became a way of life. Because sick days and hospitalization was so common with my brother, I did not always recognize the seriousness of the disease. At times, I thought William was exaggerating his pain to get out of chores, schoolwork, or gain my parent’s attention. Even though my parents always told us about the severity of his disease, I never thought of it as life threatening, even when he went to the hospital. As a child, I believed as long as he came back home, all would be well and, in a few days, we would both be back to riding bikes or climbing trees.

One day, I woke up and did not feel well. In fact, I was positive I was coming down with a cold and desperately wanted to stay home from school and sleep in. When I told my parents, they checked my temperature. It was a little high, but nothing serious. They gave me some medicine and told me to go to school. I looked at them surprised. I pleaded with them, “But I’m not feeling well, can’t I just stay home?” My parents told me the medicine would help and unless I had a fever or other physical signs of being ill, I was going to school. It was futile to win any battle with my parents. I knew I could make it through a school day. However, moments later I learned that my brother was not feeling well either and they instructed him to stay home from school. Infuriated, I confronted William. “You’re staying home? What’s wrong with you?” I questioned. He replied, in a calm and unbothered way, “I am having a crisis.” I

scoffed. He looked and sounded normal to me. How was it he could stay home without even demonstrating a “fever or physical signs” of being ill? At that moment, I could not believe how unfair my parents were being. I was unconvinced. He stayed home, while I went to school. It was all I thought about, until school was over.

When I came home, my dad gathered me and my sisters around him. He did not want to alarm us, but his face looked grave. He told us that my brother was at the hospital. He had a severe crisis and he would be in the hospital for the entire weekend. I remember going to visit my brother in the hospital and seeing him in bed, with tubes and an IV in his arm. He was sick and he looked it. I could tell that he did not want us to worry, so he made attempts to talk and joke. Mostly, he wanted to reassure my mother that everything was going to be ok. No parent wants to see their child in pain.

When I returned home from the hospital all I could do was cry because I knew I was wrong and self-centered. A couple days later when my brother came home, he walked into my room and asked how I was doing. I began to cry again. I told him about how I resented him being sick. I had accused him of faking his pain. I felt horrible. It’s funny how I became so consumed with his alleged trickery, that I did not even take the time to realize how much better I felt after my parents gave me medicine. Just like any typical big brother, he laughed at me. “You’re such a spoiled brat,” he taunted! But then, he embraced me. He placed his arm around my shoulder and said, “Tori, that day I told you I was having a crisis, I really was. Sometimes my pain slowly builds up before it becomes extremely painful.” His tone was serious and genuine. He added, “Just because it might not look like I am in pain, just know, sometimes I do a good job of hiding it. Even though I joke around with you a lot, at the end of the day, I know what I need when it comes to my pain.” So did my parents.

At that moment, it clicked. Everything my mother tried to tell me about equality and equity made sense. Equality, could have been detrimental for my brother that day. He needed to stay home, and furthermore he needed professional care. If I had stayed home, I would have likely gotten in the way of the serious attention my parents needed to give to my brother. Equality does not always require deep thought or sacrifice. In some ways, equality is the path of least resistance. But equity means recognizing both the collective and the individual. Equity requires analysis, process, and context to meet a diversity of needs.

Parenting, much like teaching, is hard work. The love, care, and attention my parents worked so hard to give to each of their seven children is similar to the task of any good educator who is seeking the best for their students. In my educational journey, I strive for excellence, high standards, and equity. I believe that we are all equipped with the ability to learn and most importantly, correct our mistakes. With empathy, we can look beyond what is expedient and into what are best practices for our students. My childhood has shaped the woman I have become today. These hard lessons inform the kind of educator I want to be. I have learned giving each child the same thing is not only ineffective, but in certain cases, equality is dangerous. When we take the time to learn what fairness can accomplish if implemented properly, we can see just how transformative and even lifesaving these approaches can be especially for children placed at risk and underserved.

Culturally responsive professors at institutions throughout the country are doing the hard work of engaging in equitable practices. My research will ask: What motivates women who are African American professors, to be culturally responsive? What are the challenges associated with their lives as professors and culturally responsive teaching? How does one transform into a

culturally responsive educator? These questions are grounded in the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, Nigresence, and the Ethic of Care.

Theoretical Framework and Socio-Cultural Theories

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was created from the field of law. It supplies a critical examination of race and racism from a legal viewpoint. CRT establishes the basis for the study of African American Women professors in academia at PWI's. Bell (1992) is credited with developing CRT and views racism as entrenched in the DNA of our American culture and society. He believed that a person did not have to be a racist as an individual, in order to benefit from institutionalized racism, which is (in his theory) prevalent and inescapable in the dominant culture (Bell, 1992). This theory was the lens that he used to analyze the American power structure. CRT describes American power structures as entities that are based on White privilege, racism and White supremacy, all of which discriminate against and marginalize people of color (Bell, 1992). There are 7 tenets that guide his framework, but only two will be discussed: 1) Storytelling/Counterstorytelling, and 2) The Permanence of Racism.

Storytelling/Counterstorytelling

Storytelling/Counterstorytelling shares an individual's reality, utilizing narrative to investigate experiences of racial oppression. These stories give voice to many censored by White supremacy and challenge existence of White supremacy. Counterstories value oral family histories and parables which are vital in protecting the heritage of marginalized people whose experiences are never normalized within the dominant culture's narrative. It challenges colorblindness while revealing racism in the DNA of the foundation of America.

The Permanence of Racism

The Permanence of Racism, it is imbedded in the fiber of American society and will not be uprooted in the foreseeable future. Permanence of racism considers how well intended institutional processes and procedures sustain racist practices when working toward improving diversity and inclusion. According to Delgado (1995) and Ladson-Billings (1998), CRT emerged in the 1970's with the early work of Bell who was distraught about the slow pace of racial reform in the United States. During this time period, theories and methodologies in the field of law, did not recognize or address the complexity of structural and institutionalized racism that marginalized populations and created disparities among people of color. There were philosophies about race that shaped research, but because investigators were not critical about their relationships to their racial and social contexts, they could not write creditably about racism in their work (Ford & Airihenbuwa, 2010).

Since it was developed, CRT has spread to many disciplines. By 2002 CRT was taught, innovated and adapted in fields such as education, political science, women's studies, ethnic studies and sociology (Ford & Airihenbuwa, 2010). In terms of significance, CRT scholars believe that Bell's racial typology can be used to deepen understanding of the educational barricades for people, as well as researching how these barriers are resisted and how to overcome them (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). CRT, however, was not introduced into the field of education until 1995 by a number of scholars (Closson, 2010; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ford & Airihenbuwa, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor & Gillborn, 2009). Scholars applied CRT to the educational field by using Bell's theoretical and analytical framework in educational research. Scholars addressed areas such as school achievement, science, intelligence, beauty, and Whiteness (Ladson-Billings, 2009). CRT is also

referred to as a theoretical and/or interpretive framework as well as a movement (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Therefore, when examining and studying African American Women professors in academia at PWI's, CRT sets the foundation for exploration.

Nigrescence

The Nigrescence Theory emerged from Cross (1991) in the 1960 and 1970s during the time of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements (Worrell, 2008) and was labelled as a “psychology of Black liberation” (p. 13) in five stages. These five stages are: Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization Commitment.

The pre-encounter stage clarifies the identity prior to the encounter, and refers to a viewpoint that will change once exposed to the encounter. In this first stage, one is oblivious of their race and the social consequences that are associated with it.

In the encounter stage, individuals face an experience that unexpectedly takes race into perspective, and is usually an emerging moment into racial consciousness. The encounter stage makes the individual susceptible to a new racialized viewpoint. In some cases, this experience is compared to a child when they experience being treated differently for the first time because of their skin color.

Immersion-emersion is the third stage, when the individual acts as if they “just discovered Blackness.” Furthermore, the individual takes apparent pride in who they are and is often adamant in “proving that one is Black”. In this process the individual simultaneously disparages White culture. In the third stage, one becomes more intentionally involved with members of his/her own ethnic group and detaches from other groups. This stage is frequently labeled by being fully immersed into Black culture and a Black reference frame, and an ensuing emersion from the overgeneralized, and commonly racist immersion experience that inundates

the early part of this stage. At some point, the individual's extremely emotional response to the encounter initiates the plateau and this "psychological defensiveness" is exchanged with "affective and cognitive openness," which permits more critical analysis.

The internalization stage is when an individual obtains a strong enough sense of their racial identity, to rejoin societies and develops connections with members from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. During this phase, the person is able to start resolving problems within their worldview prior to the encounter and once the encounter is over. Before this phase, the person is apprehensive about his self-identity. Within this stage the individual has a positive affinity toward pro-Black notions and activities.

The fifth and last stage is internalization-commitment which means obtaining a level of ease in the individuals own racial/ethnic identity and the racial/ethnic identities of different people. Within the internalization-commitment, people make the distinction among others that internalized their recently developed identity but terminate their participation in the development for social change, including those that have internalized their identity and persist with being representatives of social transformation. To see a "successful" shift into this phase, the person has to change into their new identity, while participating in significant events to advocate social equity and political justice for their group members.

Throughout an individual's life, it is possible to revisit or repeat different stages of the identity transition as one reformulates their racial identity and opinions. Furthermore, revisiting stages is not a relapse but frequently a part of a greater process of incorporating new information and reexamining thoughts with more depth and maturity. The movement through each stage was indicative of traveling from self-denigration and low self-esteem to self-acceptance and psychological well-being. Additionally, even though real ages were not given to each stage, an

implied belief was that a larger amount of youth were in the Pre-Encounter stage and a larger amount of middle-aged and older people were in the Internalization phase. Moreover, people within the intervening developmental phases being primarily in the Encounter and Immersion-Emersion stages.

Ethic of Care

Caring is considered a process rather than a product; it is relational, contextual, and concrete (Gilligan, 1982; Mayeroff, 1965; 1971; Noddings, 1984; 2002; Tronto, 1993). It is a part of a belief system that inspires and acts as a compass that guides our way (Pang, 2005). A caring centered approach to multicultural education is built on the significance of establishing trusting relationships (Alidou, Larke & Carter, 2002) and understanding the sociocultural context of learning. Essentially, it is a relationships-centered and culture-centered framework in education (Pang, 2005).

The connection between the student and teacher is a powerful part of student achievement for students of color in classrooms today (Siddle Walker, 1993; Strahan & Layell, 2006). Discourse regarding teacher care affirms that students yield positive school outcomes in the areas of attendance, attitude, self-esteem, effort and school pride, if they feel the teachers care for them (Noblit, Rogers & McCadden, 1995; Noddings, 1995 & Steele, 1992).

Statement of the Problem

The National Center for Education Statistics predicted that between 2010 and 2021, the enrollment of White students will increase 4%, while the enrollment of Black, Hispanic and Asian students will increase 25%, 42%, and 20%, respectively (NCES, 2009). International enrollment has steadily increased each year since 2008. According to the Institute of International Education, foreign student enrollment has increased from 2.9% in 2009 to 5.7% in 2012. These demographic shifts have led to a concern for diversity and its consequences on teaching and learning. There is a call by some scholars for professors to engage in culturally

responsive pedagogy (Donkor, 2011; Potts & Schlichting, 2011; Prater & Devereaux, 2009). Much has been written about White teachers being out of sync with the lived realities of their culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse students, and therefore, are not culturally sensitive to their pedagogies. However very little has been studied about African American women professors at PWI's and their impact on culturally responsive teaching, therefore, additional studies are warranted.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore what motivates African American, women professors to become culturally responsive, their processes of transformation and how they transform self and pedagogy as a result. Further, the study examined how those experiences influenced their practices in the classroom. This qualitative study focused on three African American culturally responsive women professors at predominately White institutions.

Significance of the Study

A significant amount of literature has been written about defining culturally responsive pedagogy, as well as theoretical and real-world approaches to reaching students of color. Regardless, there is a void in the lived experiences of higher education, African American women professors, which can inform others about significant challenges concerning culturally responsive teaching in higher education.

These voices can provide a “snapshot” of the makeup of a successful educator whose teaching styles help students from various cultures towards cultural awareness, transformation and self-discovery in the classroom. The findings of my study should provide insight to educators in higher education and encourage the development of culturally responsive African American professors.

Research Questions

The following questions will serve as guides for this study:

- 1) What motivates women who are African American professors, to become culturally responsive?
- 2) 2.What are the challenges associated with African American, woman professors, who are culturally responsive?
- 3) How do women who are African American professors, transform into culturally responsive instructors?

Definition of Terms

African American

United States citizens who are non-Hispanic and classified as “Black” by the Bureau of the Census. African Americans include individuals descending from any of the Black racial groups of Africa. (Nettles & Perna, 1997).

Culture

A particular way of life that includes knowledge, values, artifacts, beliefs and other aspects of human endeavor peculiar to any group or groups of people (William, 1976).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

A major concept in multicultural education that stresses the ability of teachers to respond to their students by incorporating elements of students’ culture in their teaching (Irvine & Armento, 2001). Culturally responsive teaching is another concept that Gay (2000) defines the term as using the cultural knowledge, prior experience, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant.

Leadership Styles

A leadership style is an approach to leadership that includes influence and subtle, identity relevant practice, infused with organizational visions and values (Drew & Sorjonen, 1997; Potter, 2005).

White Privilege

For this study, I used the definition of White privilege according to Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey (2010), who expressed it as a system that allows Whites to dominate and is the counterbalance to racism, a system that disadvantages people of color. They wrote that “White privilege is a large part of the hidden infrastructure of American society, directing, driving, and often invisibly and subtly determining outcomes such as employment, housing, education, and even interpersonal relationships” (p. 27).

Organization of the Study

The research in this dissertation includes five chapters. Chapter I includes the introduction and background of the study that examines women who are African American professors at a predominately White institution. It also includes the statement of problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, theoretical framework and research questions of the study. Chapter II, a review of the literature, explores the manner in which I conceptualize the study and the research studies that are important to the focus of my topic. Chapter III focuses on the methodology. It describes the methods used in data collection and analyzing the data. Due to the purpose of this study, this research, as a qualitative inquiry was comprised of interviews and observations of four women who are African American professors.

Chapter IV includes the findings that result from the data analysis, once the study was completed. Chapter V provides an overall summary of the study, implications for future research, recommendations and the conclusion.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

First Black Woman Graduate from a Four-Year College

The struggle for recognition of scholarship by African Americans in American society have been an ongoing challenge, and Mary Jane Patterson, who was born into slavery, was no exception. Despite being the daughter of fugitive slaves, Patterson is recognized as the first African American woman in the U.S to graduate from a four-year college (Smith & Phelps, 1992). After graduating from Oberlin College in 1862 (Green, 2016), she was well-known for having a prominent career as an educator and was a mentor to countless African Americans (Green, 2016).

First Black Woman to Receive Ph.D.

The first African American women scholars to receive their PhD's was Georgiana Simpson graduated from the University of Chicago (German philology), Sadie Mossell Alexander, from the University of Pennsylvania (economics) and Eva Dykes from Radcliffe College (English philology) (Gates & Wolf, 2017). Even though Alexander and Simpson graduated first in 1921, Dykes was the first Black woman scholar to complete the requirements for a doctoral degree (Gates & Wolf, 2017), but was delayed because of graduation being held in the spring.

According to historians, African American scholarship was present since the 1800s, but due to racism and the social plight of the academy, Black scholars' voices were not heard (Blassingame, 1982; Carby, 1987; Cruse, 1967; Kunjufu, 1987; Lowenburg, 1976; Sterling, 1984; Washington, 1988). Despite, institutions forbidding scholars to write about subjects pertaining to African Americans, unless it was in a historical context of slavery or abolition,

these three women went on to pursue their first passion concerning Black subjects (Gates & Wolf, 2017). Essentially, these Black women paved the way for future scholars to study, pursue and recognize practices such as, culturally responsive pedagogy.

First Black Woman Professor

Another woman who paved the way for African American women was Sarah Jane Early Woodson. Woodson was the first Black woman to become a college professor in 1858 at Wilberforce University (Lawson & Merrill, 1984). This achievement was not her only accomplishment. She was known for being the first African American person to teach at a historically Black College or University (HBCU). According to (Lawson & Merrill, 1984), Woodson (and five other African American women) were elected as national superintendents of the Colored Division of the Women's Christian Temperance Union beginning in 1888. In 1893, Woodson was asked to speak at the World's Congress of Representative Women in Chicago (Lawson, 1981). Her presentation was called "The Organized Efforts of the Colored Women of the South to Improve Their Condition" (Lawson, 1981).

African American Women Demographics as Professors

African American women represent the largest female demographic in the workplace (NABCP, 2014), yet their career and life experiences have been underrepresented in scholarship. Additionally, their representation in the hallowed walls of academia are not representative of the overall workforce trends. Faculties of color continue to be underrepresented, making up 23.8% of total full-time faculty (NCES, 2016). In the past two decades, the status and experiences of diverse faculty in academe have been addressed by more than 300 authors (Turner, Gonzales, & Wood, 2008), but the underrepresentation persists.

In fact, The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2016) reported there are over 800,000 full-time professors at degree granting Universities and Colleges in the United States and 374,330 are women. In the same year, there were 264,968 White women, 25,425 African American women, 18,427 Hispanic woman and 32,906 Asian women. Over the years the numbers have only slightly increased, and the fact still remains that there is a scarcity of African American women in the professoriate.

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race Theory. Critical race theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework was developed from the legal field in the 1980s. Scholars for instance Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado researched ways to specifically confront racism and race in the United States. They did this by questioning the ways in which racial power and race were represented, constructed, and employed through the law (Roberts, 2010). Even though, CRT originated from legal theory; it has had an influence on the field of educational research throughout recent years.

Tate (1997) identified five principles outlined in CRT to address matters of gender, class and race. According to Tate (1997):

CRT recognizes that racism is endemic in U.S. society and deeply ingrained legally, culturally, and even psychologically; CRT crosses epistemological boundaries by utilizing philosophies and principles from various disciplines; CRT reinterprets civil rights law in light of its limitations, illustrating that laws to remedy racial inequality are often undermined before they can be fully implemented; CRT portrays dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy as camouflages for the self-interest of powerful entities of society; and CRT challenges a historicism and insists on a contextual/historical examination of the law and society (p.234-235).

CRT contributes perspectives to multiple areas such as disability studies, sport and leisure studies, Whiteness studies, critical race feminism, and history, but originated out of radical developments in education and critical legal studies in North America (Solórzano and Yosso, 2001, 2002).

Howard (2008) wrote, “CRT examines racial inequalities in educational achievement in a more probing manner than multicultural education, critical theory, or achievement gap theories by centering the discussion of inequality within the context of racism. . . CRT within education also serves as a framework to challenge and dismantle prevailing notions of fairness, meritocracy, colorblindness, and neutrality in the education of racial minorities” (p. 963).

DeCuir and Dixson (2004) portrayed five tenets which represent CRT:

- 1) Permanence of Racism
- 2) Whiteness as Property
- 3) Critique of Liberalism
- 4) Interest Convergence
- 5) Counter-storytelling

In the first tenet, permanence of racism, conscious and unconscious racism is a permanent element of American life (Bell, 1992). It is systematically connected to the allocation of social, economic and political resources (Crenshaw, 1995; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). The Whiteness as property indicates how the right to be White according to law encompasses interests and legal property rights that people of color will never be able to enjoy (Harris, 1995). Whites’ identity was connected with economically valuable and tangible benefits that come with White privilege.

The critique of liberalism tenet, inspects basic notions embraced by liberal legal ideology to colorblindness, meritocracy and neutrality of the law (Crenshaw, 1988). The interest convergent tenet focuses on the significance of African Americans achieving only when consistently aligned with the needs of Whites (Bell, 1980, 2004). Counter-storytelling, the final tenet, is a technique of storytelling used to spread doubt on the validity of accepted premises held by the majority (Matsuda, 1995). This tenet is used to construct, capture and reveal experiences of people of color while challenging the narratives of mainstream stories accepted as objective truths.

Ladson-Billings (1998) stated that most of the scholarship of CRT focuses on the role of ‘voice’ in shifting additional power to discourses of racial justice. In this study, CRT emerged through the examination of African American women professors’ voices sharing perceptions of their leadership styles and experiences, in addition to their approaches to creating a culturally responsive environment at predominately white institutions.

Nigrescence. Personal identity development for Black students is produced in stages. For some students, their life experiences determine the level of acceptance of their skin color. Several 4-year institutions miss out on the full potential of their diverse students because they are not aware of the needs of these students based on their actual stage of self-identity and realization of “being” Black. Ritchey 2014 said, “They [PWIs] continue to operate under the melting pot theory, where everyone is expected to fit into the mainstream White middle-class value structure. This creates barriers and a climate that is not conducive for students whose identities fall outside of being White and middle-class” p. 101. Furthermore, throughout a Black woman's life she encounters experiences of racism, classism, sexism and ageism that change their beliefs and perceptions of the world. Throughout this life journey there understanding of

who they are and how they perceive their personal experiences is continuously changing. When they move from their infancy, to adulthood and transition to diverse careers, their self-identity is continuously evolving. These changes, within their identify, is a necessary process for Black women to identify their strengths in self-awareness and use these qualities to focus on the success of their career. Throughout higher education, Black women need to be aware of their own level of cultural identity in order to concentrate on the identity development of their students (Ritchey, 2014).

In 1971, Cross wrote about the different stages of Black identity development and recognized the term as Nigrescence. Cross established five stages of identity development as follows: (1) Pre-encounter Stage-Minimal significance is placed on race and a person does not notice they were brought up with White westernized standards, because it is deeply rooted in their culture; (2) Encounter Stage-An incident takes place that molds how one looks at their race and this experience has a personally significant effect to create change in their thinking; (3) Immersion-Emersion Stage-African American people will start to let go of their previous world views and create a new perspective with the knowledge they now have about race. Even though change has not happened, an obligation to change is present; (4) Internalization Stage-African Americans think critically about their latest racial identity. They accept and love being African American and it is evident in their lifestyle; (5) Internalization-Commitment Stage-Longevity is the focal point of African American affairs over a prolonged amount of time by achieving a healthy racial identity with favorable beliefs about oneself. Cross (1991) combined stages four and five to incorporate four total levels of identity awareness toward Nigrescence (Ritchey, 2014; Cross, 1991). The historical context of this research can be explained through an examination of Nigrescence. Black women have escaped the oppressive system of American

slavery, to becoming students, teachers and college professors in universities. It is essential to identify the stages of Black identity experienced by Black women in an effort to provide evidence of the value of their lived experiences as they evolve into new careers (Tillman, 2002; Ritchey, 2014; Cross, 1991).

Ethic of Care. The ethic of care is the primary foundation for Multicultural Education (Larke & Carter, 2002) and a central component of our commitment to students; this commitment encourages people to liberate schools from discrimination and prejudice. Caring also motivates us at personal levels to include in our daily actions culturally relevant practices that make schools more meaningful, effective, and equitable (Pang, 2005). The point of culturally responsive teaching is to react to students in ways that create and maintain significant, positive relationships (Larke, 2013), that is, to “care for” them rather than “care about” them. In respect to learning, it is a two-way responsibility. The teacher must care enough to provide relevant and well-developed learning experiences and equally students must study and work hard in order to become successful in their learning (Larke & Carter, 2002). Caring centered teachers encounter difficult challenges. As individuals, they are guided by their own sense of justice to examine their personal racial, social class, disability, and gender biases in social institution such as schools (Pang, 2005).

While educators experience obstacles in the class, school leaders play a crucial role in establishing a culture in the educational institution that respects diversity. The expanding diversity in schools call for innovative approaches to educational leadership where leaders’ display culturally responsive behaviors, organizational practices, and competencies. Bass (2009) examined the leadership of five female educational leaders and teachers serving students on various levels and found that ethic of care was central to the way they lead. They were passionate

about helping others and selfless in their response to the injustices students of color faced in the educational system. As a show of care, they placed themselves at risk and were willing to accept the consequences.

Noddings (1992) challenged school leaders to embrace the ethic of caring to empower educational institutions to become caring communities that support every child, despite their race, genders or class. In a qualitative study describing how a culturally responsive school leader promoted equity in a racially and linguistically diverse school, Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) asserted that culturally responsive school leadership was exercised on a personal level, environmental level and curricular level. There are six characteristics of the Ethic of Care, that are embedded in leadership, which are: 1) Caring and 2) Building relationships 3) Being persistent and persuasive 4) Being present and communicating 5) Modeling cultural responsiveness and 6) Fostering cultural responsiveness.

Caring is described as showing care for students, parents, and teachers and demonstrating a strong commitment to working with students of color. Culturally responsive leaders that care want students of color to be successful which is demonstrated through nurturing behaviors, sharing of information, a passion for educating students and a value for the parents' perspective. Culturally responsive leaders believe that the success of the students is contingent upon building relationships. They are persistent and persuasive as they inspire others to adopt an inclusiveness regarding the realization of the school vision. Culturally responsive leaders are highly visible in the school and promote the use of culturally responsive curriculum material to teach students (Mayo & Larke, 2013). Finally, they foster a community that respects, and is responsive to one another. In conclusion, an ethic of caring does not construct a list of guiding principles to follow, but rather moral standard for decision making that effect an entire campus. Culturally

responsive, caring leaders create an atmosphere that uses caring as the context for interacting with students and teachers.

Disadvantages/Barriers in the Professoriate

Dominant social powers use several identity categories, such as gender and race to define the social status of the oppressed. People then use these constructs to prohibit those who are different (Crenshaw, 1991). Other barriers happen when Black women “struggle to break with the hegemonic modes of seeing, thinking, and being that block our capacity to see ourselves oppositionally, to imagine, describe, and invent ourselves in ways that are liberatory” (hooks, 1992 p. 2). Snow (2011) discovered a variety of common challenges in a study of African American woman faculty members regarding success throughout their journey toward becoming a professor. The difficulties they encountered while navigating the faculty ranks in academia include: isolation, marginalization, stress within their families and careers, and the exhaustion of organizational structures. They also found political barriers within the departments, discriminations/racism, and disrespect and ingratitude from other faculty members.

Studies carried out by Catalyst (2004), a non-profit research advisory organization that advocates for the advancement of women of color in corporate America, demonstrates a small number of Black women have been successful in navigating barriers. These barriers consist of a shortage of mentors, as well as formal and informal networking systems, and lack of high visibility into positions that are traditionally available to White men. Robertson, Mitra, & Van Delinder (2005) indicated that the social isolation of Black women may produce four modes of adaptation: (a) affirmation mode, (b) assimilation mode, (c) withdrawal mode and (d) separation mode. Each mode portrays the ways Black women professors make an effort to deal with and navigate through their new and occasionally uninviting campus environment. The affirmation

mode represents a movement with the dominant culture where they have multiple encounters with White people on a personal and professional level, creating a sense of partnership. The assimilation mode depicts a movement embracing the dominant culture where she abandons Black culture and doctrine for a more “favorable” White experience. The withdrawal mode of adaptation is moving away from White culture, where they tolerate White encounters but hold on firmly to African American culture as a source of identity. Finally, the separation mode is a movement against the dominant culture where the principles of White culture is totally rejected and the African American experience and culture is highly esteemed as “best”. These comprehensive modes of adaptation could serve as a great resource to assist institutions in providing support when establishing successful Black women professors in diverse departments.

Several women find an absence of professional socialization to be a barrier to reaching their success in higher education (Souto & Ray, 2007; Crawford & Smith 2005). Intra-racial strains are reported when African Americans generate biases and prejudices against other African Americans based on topics of good/bad hair; light/dark skin complexions; including the Oreo complex that several African Americans experience when others think they talk and act White (Johnson-Bailey, 2010). African Americans and women are not a homogenous group, so being an African American woman is to provide higher expectations and greater standards within higher education, incorporating diverse needs, perspectives and personal affinity groups.

Several studies have documented that Black women often feel stretched to their limits with their ability to keep their personal and professional responsibilities stable (Edwards, 1997; Rusher, 1996; Moses, 1989; Reid-Merritt, 1996; Wolfman, 1997). This is especially true when Black women are in short supply on their individual campuses, the demands for representation

and role models can be overwhelming. These overwhelming feelings can hinder personal and professional success.

Scott (1997) conducted a study of four Black woman in higher education administration positions, and concluded that time demands can negatively influence relationships with significant others and family members. In addition, a study of fourteen senior level African American women administrators discovered that Black women tend to overburden themselves with obligations that effect their ability to balance (Chatman, 1991). Historically, Black women have demanded much from themselves in order to encourage and uplift their families and community.

Advantages/Benefits in the Professoriate

This section presents excerpts from several African Americans in academia that highlight the benefits/advantages of working in higher education. For instance, in Johnson-Bailey & Cervero (2008), Johnson-Bailey shares her own benefits of being a Black woman in the professoriate: “I’ve dipped my toe in the Nile, seen the stars from Down Under, met incredible scholars, and had the wonderful freedom that comes with being in the professoriate—the luxury of being paid to nurture my intellect and to live in my own mind (p. 317).” Another excerpt followed: “Today, as African American women move “inside” institutions of higher education, they now have “access to information about the decision-making processes, resources, opportunities, and strategies that make up organizational activity...it is also helpful in opening up opportunities for other Black women” (Proudford & Thomas, 1999, p. 4).

Furthermore, Souto & Ray (2007) emphasized that despite barriers and confrontations such as racism, sexism and work/life balance continuing to be a threat to Black women working through the professorate, she perseveres because of her family, church and mentors that have

supported her throughout her career. “We challenge all faculty, administrators, and policymakers to problematize their assumptions, examine their practices and policies, and seek to get “beyond the big house” model in which white faculty are privileged” (p. 283).

It is essential for the ongoing development of accurate research on the experiences of Black women faculty to help confront the barriers and advantages of having Black faculty women in the ‘ivory tower’ (Gregory, 2001). In order to change the faculty and essentially the world, “[Black] Women must discover the power within themselves” (Green & King 2001, p. 158). These excerpts emphasize what is required of Black women, as well as the resilience needed when it comes to being a successful professor in the academy.

Motivation for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Teachings has a multitude of emotional, political and curricular difficulties (Kieschke & Schaarschmidt, 2008; Lars-Erik, 2008) that make the study of motivation an appropriate subject for educators trying to persevere in their profession. Becoming culturally responsive intensifies the challenges because transformation demands teachers to adjust the ways they teach (Gay 2010). Research on the topic of professors’ motivation to become culturally responsive is scarce. Furthermore, within this section, almost all of the research collected focused on how professors motivate their students to learn or pre-service teachers’ motivation to teach, instead of the genuine motivation of professors to transform their instruction. Although, looking at the literature, one can make certain conclusions based upon research that places emphasis on motivation and instructional change.

Sanchez (2011) discovered, rather than professors’ teaching methods altering their values, professors’ values change their teaching methods. For that reason, one can see that the motivations to modify particular practices start with a transformational shift of pedagogical

beliefs (Larke, 2013). The following section will focus on factors that hinder and factors that facilitate teachers' motivation to transform their teaching techniques.

Factors That Hinder Motivation. Motivational factors for pursuing and staying in the teaching line of work depends, however some studies have demonstrated that teachers usually go into this career for altruistic reasons rather than for salary or social status (Alexander, 2008; Richardson & Watt, 2006). Nonetheless, teacher's loose motivation for teaching, when they discover meeting their own expectations is more challenging than they envisioned. Sanchez (2011) found a reoccurring theme that can cause a teachers' passion to diminish is when they find their teaching ineffective, but do not know how to modify their practices. This, in addition to added institutional barriers to teaching transformation, produced difficulty in finding the motivations to change teaching habits (Sanchez, 2011).

Studies have also displayed that new and experienced university faculty are prone to resist changing their practices. Alters and Nelson (2002) recommended that they do not adhere to study any empirical or theoretical studies that give attention to the techniques of teaching that are best utilized for fields of study. Furthermore, past studies (Alters & Nelson, 2002; Boice, 1991; Hativa, 1997) have demonstrated that teachers are in favor of teaching based on their personal experiences, mostly using the techniques that were demonstrated to them as students, instead of using current data. In the past, these teaching methods were successful because students shared the same epistemologies and culture as their professors. Nevertheless, according to Sanchez (2011), since professors steer clear of deviating from routine approaches, they might experience irritation and discouragement because of student demographics that make their teaching practices unsuccessful.

Factors that Facilitate Motivation. Despite the current motivational barriers, some educators decide to modify their teaching techniques to become more effective in teaching their students. Studies have shown that teachers are influenced to alter their teaching approaches by extrinsic, intrinsic and altruistic factors (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Moran, Kilpatrick, Abbott, Dallat, & McClune, 2001; Müller, Alliaata, & Benninghoff, 2009). Claeys (2012) explained “individuals’ external influences such as material benefits and job security”, intrinsic factors such as “internal desires for personal growth, development and working in educational/school settings” and altruistic factors as desire and “a tendency to serve society” (p. 16).

Frost and Teodorescu (2001) stated that some institutions have searched for ways to stimulate professors towards teaching change through external motivational incentives, for instance increases in salary, promotions, public recognition, or accolades for teaching excellence. Other universities enhance teaching techniques through seminars, professional development and by producing teaching centers (Frost & Teodorescu, 2001). They also recognized that external motivations can be helpful, however they do not support systemic and long-term evidences of teaching improvement.

It has been reported that the majority of teachers choose teaching and persevere in their careers predominately for altruistic and intrinsic reasons (Chan, 2004; Harms & Knobloch, 2005; Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006). Consequently, one can reason that motivations for instructional change and advancement are also altruistically and intrinsically linked. According to Dunkin (2002), a few of the factors that play a role in teachers’ willingness to adjust their teaching techniques are their own sense of perusal efficacy and the reactions they are given from the instructional change. Within Sanchez (2010) study of 20 professors, she found that educators’ convictions, contextual influences, peer influence, modification outcomes, colleague

objectives, occurrences in faculty professional development and individual temperament were all motivators in executing instructional change. In addition, studies have suggested that fellow colleagues can influence professors to alter their opinions and practices. Professors enhance knowledge from social interactions with colleagues that inform their teaching practices (Coronel, Carrasco, & Fernandez, 2003; Dancy & Henderson, 2007; Stevenson, Duran, Barrett, & Colarulli, 2005). Furthermore, Blackmore and Blackwell (2006) stated professors' motivations to continue teaching can be enhanced when faculty support and encourage each other. While data advocates that the majority of teachers are motivated intrinsically and altruistically in the U.S, this is not the case globally. For example, a few findings throughout multiple countries and cultures have demonstrated that educators are motivated altruistically. In comparison to other educators, for instance the ones in Smulyan's (2004) studies showed that they were mostly motivated by social justice and extrinsic factors, for example work agendas and other family and individual needs. For the most part, studies on faculty motivation and culturally responsive teaching needs to broaden (Alidou, Larke & Carter, 2002).

Overall, there are several layers to the examination of issues concerning culturally responsive pedagogy in higher education (Larke, 2013). There are challenges to executing cultural responsiveness throughout universities and among educators. Furthermore, possessing the desire to become culturally responsive consists of addressing their personal and pedagogical beliefs and reshaping them into practices that reflect their conversion.

Characteristics of Transformation

A personal and professional transformation must take place when transitioning towards becoming a culturally responsive educator. According to Mezirow (2000), the prime expert on transformative theory, transformation is merely "the process by which we transform our taken

for granted frames of reference" (p. 6) which occurs when one has the chance to critically reflect on a topic through straightforward dialogue with someone in a secure environment.

Additionally, he expressed the highlights of transformational theory focuses on "how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8).

Hence, when people transform, their beliefs change as well as their behaviors. Therefore, teachers have experienced a mental process where they analyze their beliefs and knowledge regarding themselves, other people and society as a whole, therefore impacting their pedagogical framework. Due to the nature of the experiences necessary to rethink the present epistemologies and pedagogies that restrict culturally and linguistically diverse students in postsecondary education, researching transformational theory is particularly relevant (Vescio et al., 2009).

Scholarship demonstrates that transformation demands more than sudden and rational change of mind and conduct. Tolliver and Tisdell (2006) believed it deeply influences the entire person when they wrote that "transformative learning is best facilitated through engaging multiple dimensions of being, including rational, affective, spiritual, imaginative, somatic and socio-cultural domains through relative content and experiences" (p. 38). Another side of transformational learning is that it irreversibly broadens the creation of meaning and expands one's understanding of self (Cranton & King, 2003; Poutiatine, 2009; Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006). This position claims someone cannot decide to "unknow" what they have known without deliberate denial. Put another way, once a paradigm has been expanded and arranged differently, the framework from which the world is viewed is foundationally and immutably transformed (Poutiatine, 2009).

Thus, when it comes to culturally responsive teachers, it is normal for people to start the process of transformation when they encounter an incident that invokes critical reflection (Canniff, 2008; T. Howard, 2003). Critical self-reflection and culturally responsive educators. Self-reflection is the starting point towards transforming into a culturally responsive educator (T. Howard, 2003). Palmer (2007) asserted that teachers cannot know their content area or students until they first understand themselves. He claimed:

When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life and I cannot teach them well. When I do not know myself, I cannot know my subject--not at the deepest levels of embodied, personal meaning. I will only know it abstractly, from a distance, a congeries of concepts as far removed from the world as I am from personal truth. (p. 3)

There are at least three areas that culturally responsive teachers are engaged in with regard to Critical reflection: their assumptions and ideologies, their histories and other peoples' histories, and the hegemonic social structures that influence themselves and their students (Canniff, 2008; McCalman, 2007; Vescio et al., 2009). Several scholars promote critical-reflection as the means for expanding a sociocultural consciousness because it questions preconceived thoughts and beliefs (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

When it comes to engaging in critical reflection for cultural responsiveness, the first steps begin with examining how cultural belief systems effect the experiences of students and educators' beliefs about their students (Canniff, 2008; McCalman, 2007). According to Smolen et al. (2006), faulty assumptions and incorrect beliefs can saturate a professor's teaching and curriculum. They stated that even professor' self and cultural identities can affect their ability to

motivate preservice educators towards becoming culturally competent. A substantial amount of this literature where this is apparent can be seen in teacher education scholarship.

Gere, Buehler, Dallavis, and Haviland, (2009) carried out a study in a Teach for Tomorrow program where they collected data on fifteen pre-service students as they responded to multicultural reading assignments. They discovered, in their efforts to create more race conscious students, that the instructors themselves realized how their own races, in interacting with their students, brought forth stereotypes and impacted the nature of the class assignments and the reactions of the students.

Additionally, culturally responsive teachers also analyze their personal histories, the histories of other people, and how each person's history has molded their beliefs and outcomes in society (Richards et al., 2007; Vescio et al., 2009). Richards et al., (2007) talked about the significance of educators analyzing their ancestral background in order to grasp why they view themselves as a raced or non-raced person. They asserted that when educators understand the historical foundations of their ideologies, they are able to better relate in their interactions with others. On the other hand, teachers that do not analyze their histories lack understanding on how they have been privileged or disadvantaged by society.

It is vital for teachers to study how their culture formed their lives because as Ladson-Billings (1992) stated, culture both "constructs and constricts" the frame of reference through which they observe society. Consequently, they should try to comprehend not only who they are and who they think, but test their notions of knowledge, question their speculations, and to recognize the framework from which they are teaching. Furthermore, McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) declared that people who do not grasp how racial, cultural and ethnic differences are created will view their students as having deficits.

It has been realized that sharing and analyzing personal histories are useful in producing open-mindedness among others. Canniff (2008) described how she used a classroom assignment that focused on her pre-service educators' educational history to help them comprehend how former educational policies effected their families. She instructed her pre-service educators to think about how their families' social identities helped mold their educational journeys. When the educators learned how specific laws from the past benefitted certain students' families and deprived others, they discovered that ones' social identity (race, gender, class) played an instrumental role in the quality of education, including the level of education, achieved in their family. Furthermore, they learned that there are multiple ways of determining intelligence and success than depending solely on academic success. This study exhibited one example in which critical reflection supports educators in the process of becoming culturally responsive.

In addition to self-reflection and personal historical inquiry, culturally responsive teachers learn to examine the hegemonic social constructions that support social norms, which effects people throughout, and outside, of our education system. Also, Villegas and Lucas (2002) declared that educators "need to understand that social inequalities are produced and perpetuated through systematic discrimination and justified through a societal ideology of merit, social mobility, and individual responsibility" (p. 22). Critical reflection is important to becoming culturally responsive because reflections demands educators to make sense of how their positionally influences the relationships with their students (Canniff, 2008).

Many scholars have advocated that teachers should accept and take responsibility for their dominant group membership and get involved from within that membership (Banks et al., 2001; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Quezada & Romo, 2004). An examination of oneself and acknowledgment of both their bias and privileges is the first step to becoming a culturally

competent educator. A major factor in critical self-reflection emerges when teachers understand that social and political forces are in play with everything they do and take into consideration their actions.

Cochran Smith (2004) stated they must then ask themselves, "How are we complicit intentionally or otherwise-in maintaining the cycles of oppression that operate in our courses, our universities, our schools, and our society"(p.83)?

McCalman (2007) proposed the first steps toward becoming culturally responsive is grasping one's own culture and how it influences their interactions with people, or simply put, becoming culturally conscious. Being culturally responsive is an ability that must be refined over time and is the result of introspection, self-inquiry and transformative learning, it does not come naturally. These characteristics are mandatory precursors to enhancing cultural consciousness leading to cultural responsiveness.

Characteristics of Cultural Responsiveness

There are many specific traits by which to identify culturally responsive educators (Garmon, 2004; Prater & Devereaux, 2009; Smolen et al., 2006). However, three of the most widely accepted traits are an ability to do the following: (a) demonstrate an appreciation and dedication to diversity; (b) espouse culturally responsive teaching practices; and (c) advocate as well as engage in educational reform (Prater & Devereaux, 2009; Richards et al., 2007; Taylor, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The following section describes the distinguishing characteristics of culturally responsive educators and what sets them apart in the classroom.

Demonstrate Appreciation for and Dedication to Diversity. One of the distinct characteristics of culturally responsive educators is a dedication to sustaining diversity. Appreciation for diversity cannot simply be practiced as a holiday or as Black History Month.

Demonstrating an appreciation for a dedication to diversity must be constant. Accordingly, the work of a culturally responsive educator is never complete. Daily, educators must exhibit their values through the practice of teaching. (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Richards et al., 2007; Smolen et al., 2006). Appreciation alone, is never enough. Many professors can acknowledge an appreciation for diversity, while taking no steps to achieve an effective culturally responsive environment.

In their study regarding education professors' beliefs about a commitment to diversity, Smolen et al. (2006) interviewed 116 faculty in the colleges of education across four universities. In this study, they found that while many professors reported varying degrees of gratefulness for diversity and recognized the need for different perspectives and experiences in the classroom as vital; few acted beyond their sentimental stance or sought to implement their beliefs into their teaching. Culturally responsive educators do not teach a lesson on diversity as an isolated topic, rather they incorporate diversity and social pluralism in every part of their teaching, regardless of the subject being taught (Gorski, 2006).

Richards et al. (2007) professed that a culturally responsive educator must implement an appreciation of diversity that can be recognized in their teaching practice. They surmised that culturally responsive educators reject any idea that one group as more valuable than another. Furthermore, these educators strive to normalize differences by teaching from a diversity-centered perspective. Other scholars agree regarding a dedication to diversity that requires a decentering of mainstream educational beliefs and subjects when teaching (Gorski, 2006; Nieto, 2000). Often, professors face resistance to their teaching style because it works to decenters dominant views. Guy (2009) discussed his commitment to cultivating an inclusive classroom

environment while explaining the difficulties of trying to maintain a diversity agenda in the classroom:

In my adult classrooms, democratic participation strikes me as a worthy goal. I value engaging in critical dialogue and fostering equitable participation in my teaching. However, prejudiced patterns of behavior and attitudes have tendency constrain these beliefs and practices. Unlike in the broader context [of society], the adult educator has considerable say regarding how social relationships are constructed. Thus, I work adamantly to hone constructive dialogic, ask open ended questions, and nurture participatory environments in which all individuals, regardless of background or identity, can voice their thoughts and expect to be heard (p. 43).

Donkor (2011) argues that faculty should “adopt a philosophy of pluralism” (p.19) in their pedagogy that recognizes and values the different cultural norms of the students represented in class. Additionally, Villegas and Lucas (2002) contend that culturally responsive educators have a “sociocultural consciousness” which helps them understand that everyone’s reality is constructed by their race, class, gender and other aspects of being. Having a sociocultural consciousness allows these educators to see how learners of different backgrounds communicate, construct knowledge, and learn. Rather than regarding difference as deficits that need to be corrected to foster learning; sociocultural consciousness helps educators to appreciate the differences of the students as strengths and resources (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Adopt Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices. Because educators “teach what they are” (Palmer, 2007), culturally responsive educators do not aim to influence their colleagues. Conversely, they motivate their peers to adopt a sociocultural consciousness as well in the area where they have the most influence: the classroom. A large portion of the literature concerning

culturally responsive pedagogy is committed to methods and forms of instruction that are required to effectively teach students. Because the scholarship of culturally responsive teaching has its origins in education, most of the literature focuses on K-12 teachers. This suggests there is a remarkable gap in the area of culturally responsive teaching in higher education (Chávez, 2007; Donkor, 2011). Though scholarship indicates many similarities between the two realms of teaching; not all scholars agree on what constitutes culturally responsive teaching.

Culturally responsive teaching is not “simply a matter of applying instructional techniques, nor is it primarily a matter of tailoring instruction to incorporate assumed traits or customs of particular cultural group” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 24). Gay outlines five aspects of culturally responsive teaching (2000). As one of the originators of the paradigm, Gay contends her approach recognizes that the ethnic heritages of all cultural groups are valuable, particularly in influencing a students’ personality and learning processes. Accordingly, that value must be part of in the curriculum. She expressed:

It acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum. It builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived socio-cultural realities. It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles. It teaches students to know and praise their own and each other's' cultural heritages. It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools (2000, p. 29).

Chavez's (2007) research examines four multicultural professors. She built upon Gay's work and further established the factors that lead to creating an inclusive classroom. The findings of her qualitative study claim that there are six factors that "empowered" students to cultivating multicultural learning communities: (a) a safe space; (b) an willingness to take risks; (c) the similarity of the professors' practices and beliefs; (d) encouragement to put knowledge to practice; (e) the recognition of a student's multiple roles and learning styles; and (f) reciprocal validation among professors and the students.

Similarly, Richards et al. (2007) argues culturally responsive instruction should be composed of eight factors: (a) recognition the similarities and differences of learners; (b) representation of diversity in the curriculum; (c) diversity is taught; (d) endorsement of equity and respect for all; (e) valid evaluation of student capability and accomplishment; (f) motivation of learners to actively participate; (g) stimulation of learners to think critically; and (h) the development of social and political awareness. If the academic tools of instruction are conflicting with the students' cultures, then these scholars claim students will reject the curriculum and break from the school, either by withdrawing from participation or by dropping out of school altogether.

Additional scholars offer various strategies for creating a culturally responsive environment. Clark (2002) argued that faculty should create both culturally responsive instructional information and culturally responsive teaching and evaluation methods. She also stated that faculty should look for opportunities to foster relationships with their learners of differing backgrounds. Relationship building is key to making students feel valued and supported in higher education. Colbert (2010) confirmed that professors should work to affirm and support, this is particularly important for graduate students.

Additionally, providing support for the learning differences of international students ranks among top concerns. While some culturally responsive scholars encourage their peers to give voice to underrepresented students in class (Gay, 2010; Sheared & Sissel, 2001), Colbert (2010) stated that educators should also be cognizant of international students, because being vocal in class may not be desirable in their culture. He, therefore, suggested ways to include and support international students without imposing an unfair evaluation of their class participation.

Culturally responsive teachers need curriculum that fosters a safe space for multiple perspectives to be represented (Canniff, 2008; Gere et al., 2009; Richards et al., 2007). Teaching from a single perspective is neither authentic nor beneficial for learners. Thus, their beliefs compel them to ensure a platform for underrepresented students. For culturally responsive educators, education is not benign or apolitical and can be used to transmit information that has historically been disadvantageous to a minority group and advantageous to the dominant group (Gorski, 2006). As change agents, they seek to disrupt and dismantle the hegemonic discourses by allowing learners to “reconstruct education to give all students opportunities to learn in academically rigorous ways” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p.24).

Advocate Educational Reform. The third distinguishing characteristic of culturally responsive educators is they desire reform for the educational systems in which they work. Donkor (2011) stated, “A faculty must establish the goal of changing the dominant power structure of current school organization and curriculum, if need be, to make learning experiences more inclusive of and validating for the students’ varied cultural perspectives” (p. 19). Meaning, culturally responsive educators try to collectively transform the curricula, students, administration, and the organizational structure in which they work. With a focus on faculty and

organizational reform, the following discussion illustrates some of the ways in which professors transform their classes. Changing the dominant power structure means academics are obligated to make pedagogical changes first, before they can instruct them to their students. Research in the field has revealed that several scholars recommend reforming the institution, while others suggested transforming student perspectives. However, there is little literature to support the need for developing diversity-minded faculty (Chávez, 2007; Jenks et al., 2001; S. D. Trent & Dixon, 2004).

Despite a dearth of literature that examining the best practices for cultivating culturally responsive faculty (Devereaux et al., 2010; Gere et al., 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), most of the literature concerning faculty and culturally responsive pedagogy originates in the field of education. In this area, diversity-minded scholars who understand that the need for developing culturally responsive students begin with having culturally responsive faculty to lead them (Costa et al., 2005; Gort et al., 2007; Jenks et al., 2001).

Potts and Schlichting (2011), in their efforts to address and reform their College of Education at University of North Carolina Wilmington, they examined the path and outcomes of six professional forums composed of administrators, faculty and staff towards developing a more culturally responsive department. In their two-year project, they engaged in a variety of learning activities, resources, time, support and meaningful dialogue. Overall, they found that the participants became more committed to integrating diversity issues into their classrooms and offices.

Academics continue to detail their successes and efforts to motivate their peer's cultural responsiveness (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Devereaux et al. (2010) conducted a series of faculty professional development sessions and discovered that faculty benefitted from participating.

Faculty claimed training sessions allowed them to apply their new found understanding of cultural differences and social inequities to alter their curricula, assessments and pedagogies to better address the needs of their students.

Summary

Sobel, Gutierrez, Zion, and Blanchett offer additional examples of cultural responsiveness that lead to effective changes in a research study (2011). In their commitment to social justice, the authors' faculty team revitalized an entire teaching department by critically examining their diversity agenda. They documented the faculty's path and transformation towards becoming more inclusive in every area of their teacher education program. The authors' professional development efforts necessitated ample time and was met with resistance from some of their colleagues. However, the department began to change their thinking towards one that was more comprehensive of their diversity goals. I have aimed to emphasize some of the issues concerning the characteristics of culturally relevant educators. Becoming culturally responsive in the classroom requires that educators inspect their educational environment for: (a) communication styles; (b) teaching methods; (c) academic policies; (d) assessment criteria; and (e) curriculum that may be unsuited for the learners' culture (Guy, 1999). Educators must foster a sociocultural consciousness and participate in critical reflection about the effect of culture in the class, curriculum and institution (Alfred, 2002). There remains a compelling need for more research on the developmental process of, and the barriers to, the transformation of culturally responsive academicians. One of persistent barriers to transformation is the idea of Whiteness among White professors.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this research study, four women who are African American professors at PWIs were selected from several cities in the country. By choosing professors from various institutions, my goal was to increase the depth of my research. The participants were asked questions from my interview protocol. Further, I visited these women in their work environment to observe their interactions at their respective PWIs. I also observed them while they were teaching or sought permission to view a video tape of their teaching. This qualitative study used the actual words of the participants in order to offer insight regarding their responses. As the researcher, my partiality and personal experiences as an educator impacted what I studied, the design, and the interpretation of my findings. Therefore, I determined that interpretive qualitative design was most appropriate.

My research explored and analyzed the experiences of four African American culturally responsive professors through the following questions:

- 1) What motivates African American women professors to be culturally responsive?
- 2) What are the challenges associated with African American women professors who are culturally responsive?
- 3) How do African American women professors transform into culturally responsive educators?

This chapter begins with providing information about the institutions, the selection of my participants and the criteria for selecting each professor. The next sections discuss the research design and overall data collection of my study, which consisted of face-to-face interviews and

observations. The last portion this section highlights complementary data gathering techniques, data analysis and an overall summary of this chapter. k

The Institutions

I cited the institutions in my study based on student enrollment school and gave demographic breakdowns based on African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, and White students served. I provided context for each institution by sharing their mission statements and their vision for teaching, research and service performed by their professors.

Purposeful Sample

The sample selection of participants in this study represented a purposeful sample. The basis for purposeful sampling is to select participants that have firsthand knowledge of culturally responsive pedagogy (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1988). According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), the sampling strategy must be selected to fit the purpose of the study, the resources available, questions being asked, and constraints being faced.

For this study, I interviewed four African American female women professors at Predominately White Institutions. Each participant was given a pseudonym as a name to ensure confidentiality.

Criteria

The criteria for selecting participants included the following:

- 1) African American women professors were chosen.
- 2) They must have served as a professor for at least seven or more years.
- 3) They must have been or are presently serving in the capacity of professor.

- 4) They must be an expert in culturally responsive teaching as evidenced by their publications.

Research Design

This research study was conducted using a descriptive case study method on four women who are African American women professors at PWIs. I implemented a qualitative research framework to gain clarity on how these professors applied and perceived their leadership through interviews and observations.

According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), understanding the behaviors of humans is dependent on grasping how participants construct and perceive their thoughts, behaviors and emotions. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated that qualitative research is multi-purpose in its focus, and requires taking an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter.

Furthermore, qualitative methods will enable me to understand participants' subjective experiences, and to what degree they experience daily life and what they consider relevant or meaningful (Donalek & Soldwisch, 2004). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe five essential characteristics of qualitative research as the following:

- 1) Qualitative research is naturalistic, which shows the role of researcher as having a specific setting as a source of data to collect about whatever is being studied.
- 2) Qualitative research is descriptive, meaning data collected is not just numbers and graphics, but words, videotapes, personal documents and other records.
- 3) Qualitative research is more concerned with the process than with outcomes.
- 4) Qualitative research is having analysis, that is inductive (rather deductive), as researchers build upon data they have collected and combined, instead of gathering data or evidence to prove or disprove a hypothesis.

- 5) Qualitative research is primarily focused on interpreting the meaning of data, to make sense of peoples' lives, and their view or perspectives on reality.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that data analysis in a naturalistic inquiry is open-ended and inductive. For this reason, data analysis starts during the data collection process, and continues after the completion of the data collection.

Positionality

Alongside the research design in qualitative research methodology sits the researcher's positionality, which is an illumination of the researcher's viewpoint of (and stake in) a study which influences their perception of a particular event. Contrasting with quantitative inquiry which strives for researcher neutrality, qualitative inquiry assumes the researcher cannot be separated from their research nor is this separation altogether advantageous (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the positionality of the researcher encompasses any research design by virtue of the selecting one research design over other designs; the selection is based on the researcher's epistemological stance. By the overt acknowledgement of a researcher's positionality, the researcher establishes credibility which invites the reader to ponder how that specific position is related to the data presentation and the interpretation of findings.

According to Patton (2002) the role of the researcher is to act as a human instrument in obtaining information. The advantage of having a human instrument is the ability to examine nonverbal and verbal communication, process, clarify, and summarize the data immediately, and probe for further information (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

Research affirms that qualitative methods are stressed within the naturalistic paradigm because qualitative methods come more easily to the human-as-instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By this, it is meant that the humans gather information best, and most easily, through the

direct employment of their senses: conversing with people, observing their actions, reading their documents, assessing the unobtrusive signs they leave behind, responding to non-verbal cues, and the like (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I was the primary instrument in this study, but the interviews served as the primary source of data received from the participants' perceptions, based on research questions. The interview protocol was created following a review of literature while other questions were derived from my own experience and inquiry to inform the study and determine its purpose. Additionally, I used face to face, semi-structured interviews.

Interviews

I employed an interview guide approach to naturalistic interviews. First, I created a list of challenges that each participant addressed, while allowing other subjects to come to light. In order to reduce the chances of predetermined responses when collecting data, I crafted open-ended interview questions. The interview guide in this study was comprised of three primary concerns: 1) personal 2) challenges 3) transformation into culturally responsive instructors. Although the protocol questions were created before the interviews were conducted, I maintained the freedom to formulate questions in a way that facilitated a conversational style interview. For example, a conversational style interview maintained the flow of the interview while allowing me the autonomy to devise new questions as needed. I requested subsequent interviews after reviewing the interview transcripts to solicit further explanation, elaboration or verify certain information. For that reason, I used semi-structured interviews which will give me the flexibility to clarify important information.

An initial interview was conducted with the participants to gain insight into their self-perceptions and their leadership effectiveness. The interviews were conducted in the office of

each participant (if appropriate), which provided a private location for discussion. I interviewed every participant at least two times with majority of the interviews ranging from ninety minutes to two hours in length. To ensure the least amount of postponements, schedule conflicts or cancellations, I scheduled the interviews in advance. Promptly following each interview, notes that were accumulated during the interview were organized. This process allowed me to capture and record other notables when they occurred. Audio-taped interviews were conducted if permitted by the participant.

Each interview was typed and recorded on audiotape (with consent from the participants). The typed notes helped me capture details of the conversation, and afforded me the chance to make certain notations to myself, as the interviewer. Additionally, note taking gave me the opportunity to highlight important information without memorization (for review at a later time). Conversely, utilizing a tape recorder had many advantages, such as assuring thoroughness, and affording the opportunity to review as frequently as needed. I also gained a better understanding of my transcripts by reviewing them on tape. I also reviewed nonverbal cues such as voice pitches and pauses, which gave me opportunities for reliability checks.

Furthermore, I transcribed my interviews and verified them through comparison to the audio taped version. My participants received a copy of all transcriptions for further verification and revision, this is referred to as a “member check.”

Interviews were viewed as the most effective means of getting the necessary information (Merriam, 1998). In this study, I conducted open-ended interviews along with semi-structured face-to-face interviews to allow the participants to construct their ideas. However, for the purpose of establishing validity, I employed triangulation (three forms) with the use of additional

sources to attain data, such as audio-taped interviews, recorded field notes, non-verbal cues of descriptions from the participant.

Observations

I spent a minimum of one day, two days maximum, with each of the participants while they were at their jobs. I shadowed them and observed their relationships with faculty, students and other figures at their institution, as well as held interview sessions. If the researcher was not able to observe the participant in the classroom, I asked permission to receive a recording of them teaching.

A semi-structure, open-ended interview method was used, which will allow the researcher to discover the “here and now interviewing of the environment” (Erlandson, et al., 1993) The researcher engaged in interviews and observations of daily occurrences which provided an in-depth understanding of the constructed realities of each participant. Throughout my visit I engaged in, a minimum of 4 hours with the researcher, during scheduled meetings, as well as spontaneous meetings, walks around campus and luncheons. All visits were scheduled over the course of several weeks. The dates and times were agreed upon by both the researcher and the participant, in order to give the researcher as many experiences as possible in researching the life of a African American woman professor at a PWI.

Before I started my interviews, I spent several minutes with each participant getting to know them and going over the details of the visit. I made sure I reviewed the consent form with each participant and gave them a copy, as well as the audiotape release form. I had my interview sessions in the participants office, or another suitable location of their choosing.

Complementary Data Gathering Techniques

In order to obtain extra data, a number of other techniques and strategies were employed. The purpose of these techniques was to improve the collection and interpretation of the data. The use of field notes, tape recorder, and non-verbal cues are mentioned in the next section.

Audio and Video Recordings

A tape recorder was used to tape interviews with the participants. The transcriptions were reviewed and revised by the researcher. For informants who I could not observe teaching, I obtained a video recording of their teaching.

Field Notes

The main reason I recorded my field notes was to create a written document of the observations, dialogue, experiences, and descriptions of the participants and the events that directly or indirectly affected them. Moreover, my field notes were used to keep an account of certain feelings, reflections about the investigation, and to make note of any follow up interviews that were needed with the participants. I transcribed the field notes after each interview.

Non-Verbal Cues

The non-verbal techniques that I have in my study include: body movements, spatial relationships use of time as in pacing, probing, voice quality, accent and inflectional patterns and touching (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used these non-verbal communication techniques to gain information through non-verbal signs. I asked extra questions during the interviews so that I can obtain a deeper degree of understanding of certain nonverbal cues.

Data Analysis

Qualitative inquiry is based on an interpretivist epistemology, in my case, interpreting the meanings of my findings (Gerring, 2007). For this reason, the primary objective of my study

was to analyze and interpret the meanings and actions of my participants. Therefore, I analyzed the data using categorization and thematic analysis to search for themes, and “constant comparison, looking for emerging patterns of similarities and differences, often referred to as the constant comparative method” (Silverman, 2006, pp. 295-297). This study explored the complexity of the relationship between their lived experiences, teaching, and leadership they practice, by applying critical and interpretive lenses.

Trustworthiness and Credibility of the Study

The process of building trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry is critical (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rossman and Rallis (2003), defines trustworthiness as qualitative methods comprised of both competent practice and ethical considerations for the participants. Namely, trustworthiness is the ability of the researcher to get the technical matters and the relational matters right. The criteria for establishing trustworthiness in a study are reliability (getting the same responses consistently), validity, objectivity, and generalizability.

In addition, in an effort to engage in and maintain procedural and ethical standards, I assured the privacy of the participants and confidentiality by using pseudonyms and storing data in secure locations. Within the context of this study, member checks and a peer-review process were utilized to ensure credibility.

Member Checking

Lincoln and Guba consider member checking a necessary technique for establishing credibility. Member checking, according to Schwandt (2007), is a sociological term for soliciting feedback from participants on the researcher’s findings. Member checks were beneficial in the data analysis process as this research study served as a platform of providing voice to the participants. Furthermore, performing member checks decreased the possibility of

misrepresenting the information provided by participants. It offers them the opportunity to have their voice properly represented. The participants in this study received a copy of the interview transcript for review, clarification, and suggestions.

Transferability

Transferability has been recommended as the qualitative counterpart for external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and is closely related to generalizability. Chwandt (2007) states, transferability is the ability of the researcher to present a “thick description” or sufficient amount of information, so some degree of similarity can be established and the research findings can be interpreted and generalized to a larger population. My aim is for the readers of my study to be able to apply elements of my study to their particular circumstances and situations.

Dependability and Confirmability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), dependability, the naturalist’s substitute for reliability, can be demonstrated by “taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change” (p. 299). To establish dependability, I reviewed the records for accuracy and approved documents. Confirmability, or objectivity, were utilized during the data collection and analysis phases to confirm and construct findings that may add to prior knowledge about participants. I maintained a record of (a) the inquiry process; (b) copies of each taped interview and discussion; (c) notes from interviews and discussions; and (d) hard copies of all transcriptions as a means of demonstrating confirmability. All records were available upon request.

Summary

Qualitative research methods were chosen and utilized for my study due to the nature of the study, the setting, and my personal interest. I followed qualitative procedures to provide an

in-depth examination of my participants' perceptions of their lived experiences conveyed through their voices, their teaching and their leadership. Furthermore, I investigated constructed meanings of the relationship between their lived experiences and their style of teaching and leading at a PWI, by using interpretive lenses.

Essentially, I used naturalist inquiry, which is an approach that investigates the lived stories and experiences of selected African American women professors. The voices and interpretations of the teaching of these professors, were used as a vehicle to inform others about their perceptions as culturally responsive educators at PWIs.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivation, challenges and transformational experiences of culturally responsive African American Women professors at Predominately White institutions, and how their experiences influenced their journey in academia and teaching practices in the classroom. I searched for ways to understand the components and drive behind culturally responsive professors, the approach they took that shaped who they are currently, and how those factors impacted their pedagogy.

This research project explored and analyzed the experiences of four African American culturally responsive professors through the following questions:

- 1) What motivates African American women professors to be culturally responsive?
- 2) What are the challenges associated with African American women professors who are culturally responsive?
- 3) How do African American women professors transform into culturally responsive educators?

This chapter begins with the participant profile and miniature biography (historical background) profiles. Each profile also contains short quotes that help give a deeper explanation of who the participants are personally and professionally. The next section of the chapter contains the findings and emergent themes that address the three research questions. In this segment, direct quotes, and actual words are used from the participant to produce vivid, thick descriptions of what was revealed during the participants interview.

Participants Profiles and Miniature Biography (Historical Background)

The participant profiles were developed to tell, essentially, a condensed life history of each professor, what they are doing now and what influences them to be culturally responsive. There were four women Professors in the study: Kimberly, Ciara, Irina and Felicia. The ages at the time of the study ranged from early fifties, sixties and one unknown age. All of the participants were born in the United States. The professors' fields of study are generally in educational leadership, multicultural education, exceptional student education and Psychological and Social Foundations.

All of the educators have published scholarly works on subjects associated with cultural responsiveness; and all of them are presently working as professors. Another commonality is that all of them grew up in predominately African American neighborhoods and none of them had meaningful relationships with people of a different race until they were adults. Additionally, all four of the professors have been working in the field of education for over 2 decades and have earned tenure. Each of the participants were given pseudonyms for anonymity; I also gave the participants a moniker that I felt best described my interpretation of their character based on the research collected during interviews.

Professor # 1 “Kimberly”

Title: Associate Professor

Number of years in Education: 22 years

Age: 50

Undergraduate Degree: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Master’s Degree: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

PhD: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Areas of Interest/Expertise: Teacher beliefs, Pre-Service Teachers, In-Service Teachers, Race & Ethnicity and Qualitative Research, Social Justice & Equity in Schools, Social Foundations of Education, Higher Education, Equity & Diversity and Educational Access.

Historical Background - Kimberly

Kimberly was born on the South side of Chicago, in a predominately African American neighborhood. She grew up with both parents. Her mother was a nurse and her father was a police officer. At a young age, her parents rarely discussed, issues related to race, racism and the pressures of competing with their White counterparts. However, as she got older, these topics were commonly discussed at the dinner table. She went to Catholic school from kindergarten through 8th grade. The schools she attended were mostly Black with an African American principal.

Throughout Kimberly’s upbringing she had been immersed in Black culture and a strong sense of Black identity, but was oblivious to the significance or meaning of her background until she attended a predominately White university. During her undergraduate years she attended the University of Illinois-Champagne (U of I). Education was always important to her family. Her

grandparents did not finish high school, but her mother went to nursing school and her father completed his bachelor's degree. Despite her grandparents not meeting the strong educational standard her family believed in, all her aunts and uncles finished college and made sure their children finished school (college) and earned advanced degrees. When it was time for Kimberly to attend U of I, the influence from her family members helped shape her values and provoked her to think more critically about race. She wanted to make sure she did not let anyone down. Currently, Kimberly is an Associate Professor at an institution in Florida.

Kimberly— The Loyal Protector. *“I’m strong and I’m proud, but I feel like I have a job to do. I’m doing this as a higher calling, I’m not just doing this because it’s a job. I want to see change, and the change I want to see is that kids like my kids are going to be okay in school, and have options.”*

I gave Kimberly the moniker name of Loyal Protector. The most pronounced impressions I received from her were, at a very young age, she was committed to helping others, and was extremely dedicated in ensuring everyone received what they needed to be successful, including herself. Kimberly said when she was in college, she started out as a political science major, but soon felt disconnected from her White professors and White cohort, because they did not make her feel welcomed. However, when she ventured out of her department and enrolled in a sociology course she began to transform. In her interview, Kimberly would often say it was a sociology professor, the class and the cohort (which was predominately African American) that gave her a different look at education. These three components helped her connect the literature, articles and personal stories, discussed by her professor, to her own personal experiences and understanding of what she ultimately wanted to accomplish. She mentioned, she knew she wanted to change majors and become a professor, because she could see herself:

Training individuals that are going into school, so I can give them something they will need that will help ground them, so they can make sure they're doing what they need to do... and just really paying attention to all the kids in the classroom... That's where I needed to be, and I transferred after that next year.

Other key influences in her life and within her doctoral program were other faculty members that worked diligently to recruit, retain and support students of color. Kimberly stated that her Black professor was not an anomaly within her department and that several Black professors did a phenomenal job providing her cohort with everything they needed to be successful, she stated:

[In my] doctoral program I was well supported and validated...if you weren't proud to be Black when you started it, you left that place being proud to be Black... I see [my professors] as educational giants and to know that I was able to take classes with them have close relationships with them. I mean, still to this day, if I have a question, I'll call in a heartbeat.

After several years of working in academia Kimberly feels she has very big shoes to fill and the best way to accomplish this goal is to "pay it forward" and contribute.

Professor # 2 "Ciara"

Title: Full Professor and Lawyer

Number of years in Education: 28 years

Age: 65

Undergraduate Degree: Central Michigan University

Master's Degree: Central Michigan University

PhD: University of Kansas

Areas of Interest/Expertise: Disciplinary practices to which African American learners are disproportionately subjected, issues around ethics, power, and privilege, and strategies for African American students with academic gifts and talents. These interests also include, enhancing African American students' success by affirming their individual and cultural differences and developing culturally responsive pedagogy.

Historical background - Ciara

Ciara was born in Michigan, in a predominately African American public housing project. The majority of her upbringing was with her mother, who was a domestic worker, and her brothers. Before Ciara reached Kindergarten, she had a strong sense of self because her mother instilled in her self-esteem and ethnic esteem. Throughout her childhood her mother would tell her stories about African American accomplishments and affirm her culture, physical looks (dark skin complexion) and her overall uniqueness. In addition, every night before she went to bed, her mother would read poetry to her by Paul Laurence Dunbar in both the dialect and traditional versions. Eventually, when Ciara started school, she loved to learn, and was given several opportunities to excel. However, at times she still experienced and observed several forms of racism from her White teachers. At such a young age, she did not have the language to

know what grieved her, but she did know she could always find comfort, answers and a solution from her mother. Throughout Ciara's adolescences she continued to observe multiple occurrences of unequal treatment towards her brothers, and in time, specifically African American students.

When Ciara went to college, she earned a full scholarship to Central Michigan University where she majored in psychology. After some time, she received her teaching certificate in special education and accepted a position in a school district. She wanted to advance her career, which prompted her to enroll in the PhD program at the University of Kansas. While in the doctoral program, she determined she could make a greater impact as a University Professor. Upon graduation, Ciara decided to enter academia as an Assistant Professor with a focus on the improvement of outcomes for African American males. After reflecting back on her (and her brothers) childhood experiences of racism and unfair treatment, Ciara took another step to further her career and serve her community. She went to law school and became a lawyer. Today, Ciara is a full professor in education and a lawyer in the state of Florida.

Ciara— The Critical Connector. *“None of us have been able to find the solutions yet to close the [so called] achievement gap. We’re not there yet [even] with all of our writings, with all of our public speaking and all of our articles...We’d be kidding ourselves to think that we’ve truly made a difference. I don’t think we have it yet. They’re still waiting for scholars to rise to the occasion and for teachers to rise to the occasion. Preachers and anybody involved in the community. They’re still waiting on all of us. That’s what I mean by urban children are still waiting.”*

I gave Ciara this name because it means, “little dark one, or black”. I felt this was fitting because Ciara put emphasis on the fact that she loved her dark brown skin, and never had issues with her complexion as a child or an adult. I also gave Ciara the name Critical Connector, because she is a critical thinker who connects people. She deconstructs and examines every situation she has experienced, whether knowingly or unknowingly, to incorporate culturally responsive practices and solve problems. I also gave her the name Connector because in every aspect of her life, she is a bridge that connects and informs all types of people in diverse environments.

Probably the thing I pride myself on the most is, even if I have to stay awake at night to try and figure out a way to reach someone who’s the other, I’ll do it. I’ll try to figure out how can I get them invested. [I ask myself] how can I learn more about their culture so that we can have more effective conversations?

When Ciara was a young girl, she remembers her mother affirming her, being an advocate in school and throughout her life. As a result, at a very early age, she displayed characteristics of being a critical thinker. For instance, she remembered a time in kindergarten when her teacher asked the class to draw individual pictures so they could be displayed in the hallway for guests to see. Following the instructions of her teacher she began to draw a picture of herself. “...so, I proceeded to draw me. And as my mom had taught me, I got my dark brown crayon and colored me in, you know, I shaded me in”. As she continued to color her brown face, she knew her teacher would be pleased, however, when her teacher circled the room, she could feel her hovering over her portrait.

I was waiting for her to say, “Oh, you just did such a wonderful job,” and she never said anything. So as I looked back at her, she had like the biggest scowl on her face, and she

said, “ Ciara, I’m not going to hang your picture up in the hallway for everyone to see, “
...she made it perfectly clear, that my image was not [acceptable] and she wasn’t going
to hang it up...

At the time of this encounter, Ciara did not have the language to express why this incident with her teacher was so gripping. But, after assessing the situation, she knew how to be an advocate for herself, or in kindergarten terms, a “tattle tale”. Her mother challenged the teacher and from then on, her mother, despite being very soft-spoken, challenged her teachers and principals whenever she was wronged or treated unjustly. Ciara said she remembered her mother introducing her to stories about how she came from Kings and Queens, and sharing stories about African Americans’ great accomplishments. Her mother’s stories taught her that she was important and served to empower her. As a result, throughout her childhood, Ciara never had an identity crisis about who she was or the dark richness of her skin completion. Instead, her mother was the essential element in connecting her to her greatness as an African American woman. “I think it is my mother’s example that stays with me today. She helped me to understand what it means to be your individual, unique self.”

Currently, in addition to being a professor and lawyer, Ciara also mentors a girl’s group that has a record of multiple suspensions and behavior problems in their school. Her focus, within this group, is on developing the girls’ leadership skills, building self-advocacy, and creating goals to help them become more successful in school, despite societal obstacles.

Professor # 3 “Irina”

Title: Full Professor

Number of years in Education: Over 50 (Would not verify)

Age: Unknown (Would not verify)

Undergraduate Degree: Akron University

Master’s Degree: Akron University

PhD: University of Texas at Austin

Areas of Interest/Expertise: Multicultural education, particularly as it relates to curriculum design, staff development, classroom instruction, and intersections of culture, race, ethnicity, teaching, and learning, and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Historical background - Irina

Irina was born and raised in the northeastern part of Georgia in an extremely rural environment. Since her family was extremely poor, it was common for people in her family to leave home and “go to urban areas outside of Georgia for economic reasons”. As a result, Irina and her brother were raised predominately by her grandmother, when her mother moved to Ohio. Growing up, she had several cousins her age, however, Irina considered herself as different from her family members. As a child she always enjoyed reading books. She said, “I found more joy in books, with the few books we had around the house, than I did in other ways in which kids used their time for entertainment.” Despite her family’s lack of education, they embraced the fact that she was different and “strange,” and they allowed her to engage in the joys of reading. She recalled “...and by strange, I mean different from what family members and the people in the community considered normal, as they interacted with each other.” Even when company or family with kids came to visit the home, she was allowed to disengage. She shared “...my family

didn't insist and force me to play with visiting children..." they would grant me the space and the permission to withdraw from that." Now, looking back at her childhood, she stated, "...that may have been the best kind, or maybe the only kind of motivation and support and stimulation that they could do to support me...they were uneducated and didn't know how to assist in other ways."

When Irina started school, desegregation was legally in place, therefore, living in rural Georgia, Irina went to an all-Black elementary, middle and high school. Her education took place in a one room school house where she had one teacher. When she was in high school, she remembers "...the Black teachers were very explicit about certain kinds of...what we would call today, social capital teaching and learning about how to be Black with dignity and with decorum." Even though Irina was surrounded by Black classmates and African American teachers who stressed self-worth, she struggled with her Black identity for a significant portion of her life. Three days after Irina's high school graduation she moved to Ohio, to live with her mother and attend Akron University. She shared "I went throughout my entire [K-12] education and through my undergraduate years in college, being extremely ashamed of being black." Once she received her degree in education, she started her student teaching and became a high school teacher at the same school. Eventually, she would teach at this school for several years, where her Black students would challenge her in unexpected ways.

[My students and I] developed a partnership without necessarily saying we're going to develop the partnership. It just came into being. I told them I would honor and respect them, but they had to respect me and themselves, too. They agreed, so we developed this kind of reciprocity. I said I would help them learn and they reciprocated by saying they would help me learn, too...

Irina indicated that something unexpected happened. She learned that her students were intelligent, fun and proud of their blackness. She began to appreciate them and developed a love for them and teaching. Unbeknownst to her, it would become the birthplace of her transformation into the woman she is today, a culturally responsive educator and advocate for students.

I am indebted to those black students that helped me begin the process of my own transformation, or re-acclamation, I'm not quite sure to this day which one it is. I think that probably there were some things about being black that were positive to me...and deep seated in me growing up, but I was not necessarily conscious of them and could not name them. My students helped me [to] form my sense of Black identity, that's why I think that my process of transformation began there.

After six years of teaching high school Irina would eventually leave to attend the University of Texas at Austin for her PhD. Currently, she is a full professor at an institution in Seattle, Washington.

Irina— The Inventive Initiator. *“There is a message in my stories that I think is characteristic of the field and that is that there is a strong thread of autobiography that undergirds cultural responsiveness and multicultural education. When you listen to people in the field, especially let's say the first generation or the first generation and a half of scholars and leaders in the field, which I guess you would put me in that category, there is an autobiographical reason behind why they are there...For some it is much more straightforward and deliberate than mine... but it's there. In some ways the essence of why I do culturally responsive teaching is because I'm doing myself.”*

The name Irina is a Greek name that means “peace”. I gave her this name because it took several years for Irina to embrace her Black identity and love, appreciate and have peace about

being a Black woman. Furthermore, Irina's was given the name "inventive" because despite her family not having any formal education, she was resourceful, talented and created an abundance of opportunities for herself, even when she was unsure of how to accomplish her goals. I also called her an "initiator" because she did not create the term, "Culturally Responsive Teaching" but is known for significantly contributing to the progression of this term. Throughout her years in academia she has also become a key player in multicultural education. Her research has transformed curriculum and instruction at universities throughout the country.

When Irina discussed influential people in her life, those who helped develop her gifts and talents, she mentioned her mother, who "contributed a lot by what she couldn't contribute." As Irina went into further detail, she stated that she developed an appreciation for her mother after she traveled to Ohio to live with her mother and attend college. Her mother dropped out of school in the 7th grade and became a teenage single mother of two children, and was unable to take care of them. Irina shared that even though her mother could not contribute in a traditional way, "she figured out a way to do life that was beyond just surviving." Irina is inventive and shares the same resourcefulness that her mother had, but has been able to refine her experiences because of her education and success in the academy. Now, when she teaches her students and provides professional development, she is a fierce advocate for cultural responsiveness, remembering her mother and how she is, "...indicative and an embodiment of a population of students that I want to try to attend and be sensitive to... when I'm preparing educators to work [in schools]."

Irina has demonstrated that she is an initiator, an "adventurous spirit" and said she gets "bored" with herself if she comes up with the same ideas all the time. She stressed that:

Some people don't know how to do different and some of them are just not willing to say "I want to step out there. I know I'm going to stumble, but I'm willing to stumble, I'm willing to fall, but I'm willing to get back up and try yet again." They don't have enough adventure in them.

As a result, this kind of adventure and commitment for Irina, allows her to commit to culturally responsive teaching and, "Be the best [professor] I possible can be."

Professor # 4 "Felicia"

Title: Full Professor

Number of years in Education: 20+

Age: 50+

Undergraduate Degree: University of North Texas

Master's Degree: Texas A&M University

PhD: Texas A&M University

Areas of Interest/Expertise: Issues of race, and how those issues might impact faculty and students of color in higher education. They also include, African American Students and Faculty Experiences, Critical Race Theory and African American Students' Educational Success.

Historical background - Felicia

Felicia was born in the 1960s and was raised in Fort Worth, Texas. Her father was a basketball coach and her mother was a buyer at a company called Bell Helicopter. The neighborhood that she lived in was very segregated, during a time when Jim Crow was prevalent everywhere. However, Felicia's neighborhood was extremely socially conscious. In fact, it was

common for her parents and neighbors to have meetings at her house and in her school to discuss protests. She would later read about those protests in the newspaper. Felicia always remembered her parents being exceptionally vocal throughout her childhood and taught her to always speak up for herself.

That was part of the framework. It was athletics, academics, and activism. Some people are raised to become great pianist, they're dancers etc. For me, those three were very strong, and it was always open your mouth and don't just allow somebody to run over you, or anyone else. Don't stand for racism, or any of the isms. You just don't stand for it. So, I grew up around that stuff, around people that were not quiet, who were not having a lot of stuff. I thought that was the norm.

When Felicia was in high school, she attended a school that was run by Nuns from Germany. Their main focus was to desegregate all the students by any means necessary and their beliefs were strictly enforced. Therefore, when Felicia went to college, she adopted their beliefs and took her strong beliefs about racism and social justice with her.

The disposition there was framed by those nuns who were just not having it, so I'm thinking that is the norm. That was the early stuff that sort of framed my outlook. Since I lived in an activist household, I think I was a critical race activist before they [Derrick Bell and others] gave it that term...I know those people probably were too, but I was finally able to put a name to that framework in the academy.

Throughout her childhood and as an adult she was always happy and proud to be African American. However, when Felicia started college, she experienced a dramatic awakening about how the rest of the world dealt with race and racism. When she completed her undergraduate degree at North Texas, she stated, one of the worst things about majoring in Chemistry was,

“There were no deep discussions about race or social justice or anybody’s justice. There were no discussions about diversity and everybody in the class was White except for me and maybe one other”. Therefore, as time progressed, and unjust issues began to surface in her everyday life, she noticed, “White people thought they could say whatever they wanted to say because nobody said anything...except me.” As a result, she became the “angry back woman” and questioned why others were not as upset about how people of color were treated.

I think I have always been pissed and I have a problem with people who aren’t. Why aren’t you all mad? When someone is evil and vitriolic and claiming they are biased unconsciously...where is the anger? They have been schooled to be biased and racist. I’m mad about that. I am having a problem that nobody’s mad about that.

Felicia continued with her thoughts.

That’s what I noticed. The most surprising thing was getting to another state and seeing how vicious folks could be and folks would say it was subtle. Like, that’s not subtle when you make racist remarks or they are apologetic. If folks have to continually apologize and nobody’s saying anything... until they say something so ruthless, then people never learn.

Even after Felicia graduated and received her PhD she did not stop advocating for marginalized groups. Throughout her career she has passionately committed herself to her community, and students. She remains an activist for social justice. Currently Felicia is a Full Professor at an institution in Indiana.

Felicia—The Fearless Fighter *“My parents spoke up all the time, and I remember when folks were talking about choosing their battles. My mother and father were like - you need to choose who or what is going to die. If you choose your battle that means you are letting*

something die, and you may not be able to fight for everything but you need to figure out who or what is going to die when you're choosing those battles. You try to fight them all. I heard this sort of rhetoric growing up and then I saw it actualize in both of their jobs. And I thought that was the norm."

Several times in Felicia's interview she stated that she was fearless, so I thought it was appropriate when providing her moniker name. I also called her a fighter because she demonstrated and empathized, on multiple occasions, that she would go to battle not just for herself, but for others to receive fair treatment. Furthermore, her background with her activist parents and militant teachers (Nuns) also demonstrated that being a fearless fighter was accepted and praised within her upbringing to ensure all injustices were confronted.

Findings

The following findings were set forth based on the research questions. The participants, who were seasoned veterans in their careers of education, engaged in critical thinking about their craft and responded in ways that represented stages four and five of Crosses' levels of identity awareness toward Nigrescence. Stage 4 (Internalization Stage) was revealed through the participants thoughts about their racial identity and how they feel about being African American. At this stage, they have grown to love being African American and it is evident in their lifestyle. Stage 5 was reflected in a healthy racial identity with favorable beliefs about oneself (Cross, 1991). Five themes emerged from my study that will be interpreted and analyzed based on their responses to my research questions. The major themes that emerged from my study were: (a) Black Pride, related to research question one; (b) Me, Myself and I at a PWI, related to research question two; and (d) Resilience and Advocacy, related to research question three, as well as (f) Self-Care.

Question 1: What motivates African American women professors to be culturally responsive?

The following were findings for research question one.

Throughout Kimberly's academic career she made it very clear, to be culturally responsive, a person has to first believe that all children have the right to learn and do exceptionally well. She was passionate about her stance on this issue and felt this belief, particularly about Black children who struggle, was a motivating factor for culturally responsive professors. She believed you should be able to identify with your students, be proud of them and never have the mindset that certain groups are not qualified to flourish in an academic setting. Furthermore, she shared another factor that motivates culturally responsive behavior, namely, a desire to help students become more well-rounded by providing exposure to sensitive topics.

...Because we're very comfortable where we sit [in our positions in the academy], it is not always easy or comfortable to bring new perspectives into the lives of students, particularly if they are new... in an effort to be culturally relevant and to help create a more well-rounded population, you have to raise awareness about sensitive issues.

For me that begins with conversations about social justice...and starting to talk about individual and [institutional] level experiences are that are gonna be different.

Experiences that will be steeped in discrimination, racism, sexism, classism, etc.

Kimberly also indicated that other professors can be contributing factors because they can motivate their colleagues to be culturally responsive, but most importantly the decision, and ones' actions, must be intentional and purposeful.

I think colleagues can [motivate a professor] ...if you're critical, you should be thinking about those things and recognizing the importance of being culturally responsive. I think

some of it has to come from within too. You have to be able to see that students need more, that students are not doing well, and you have to believe that you have a role in doing something better and bringing about change... If you don't believe that about yourself or your role, then nothing is going to really convince you to motivate your colleagues.

Ciara addressed the question about her motivation to become culturally responsive. “It was always my desire to be an effective educator who values the most authentic teaching and learning interactions. I’m also compelled by the joy of learning and want everyone to experience each of the nuances of the true learning process.” Her motivation also comes from the fact that she knows she is “constantly a work-in progress on being culturally responsive”. Not just as an educator either, but in every area of her life.

I think I am always a work in progress. Just like I’m telling teachers you need to constantly critique your own thinking, and stereotypes, and belief system. I have to do that myself, and I think...I don’t know if any of us is ever really there when it comes to others, because an incident will happen, and that’ll shake me to my core, and...And I’ve asked myself, “Well Ciara are you [culturally responsive]?”...[My friend] and I call ourselves on this all the time. She’ll say to me, “Now you know Ciara, that was really stereotypical, what you just said...”, “and I’m like, “Girl it wasn’t”. And then when I think about it, I’m like, “Oh, she was right.”

As Ciara continued to talk about the importance of being culturally responsive, she stated that it is one way of affirming other people. She also stated that when a person starts with something that is most familiar to a person, it is one of the most effective ways to teach someone. Ciara even referenced another prominent professor, saying, “We have to be cultural brokers. We have

to have one foot in mainstream culture, and one foot in the other's culture so that way we can help them..." During our interview, she brought up the African American girls' group that she mentors and how culturally responsive practices can transform their negative experiences in school into positive ones if educators would simply implement it. She expressed a real sense of pride and purpose in working with them.

With the girls we work with, we have to start them with what they know in their culture. how else can we help them to know school appropriate behaviors?...[we] help them to bridge that gap between, what's acceptable in their home and community versus what's acceptable at school, and to teach them that most behaviors are situationally specific... there is really nothing wrong in what they are doing, as long as it is the [appropriate] time and place...it's like when you're talking to your girlfriend versus when you're talking to your professor.

Ciara wanted to solidify her girls in their identity and let them know the principles of code switching.

Irina was passionate about her motivation for being culturally responsive. In our dialogue, she made it clear that being culturally responsive was simply a necessity. She stated, "...People say you have to be so courageous to deal with racial, ethnic and cultural differences. No, you don't. You just have to do what needs to be done and do what is right for students." Irina was also very adamant about allowing people to use excuses for not dealing with race.

[Professors] cannot avoid discussing the difficult subject of race. If you stick to the word courageous, then that gives people an out, as far as I'm concerned. If you say, "Well I have to be courageous to deal with people of color, "suppose the people say, "I'm afraid I

don't have that kind of courage," That gives an excuse. That gives you an out. And I'm not willing to give people easy outs anymore.

Another response, Irina gave for being culturally responsive is because, she is trying to build a firm foundation for a different, and hopefully better way for her students and teachers to live and teach. She stated, "we are trying to get rid of the atrocities that have been done to people that I'm advocating for."

Furthermore, her motivation for being culturally responsive is not just being the best educator possible and her desire to work, but remembering that, "Teachers teach themselves; we teach who we are. I think in being culturally responsive, that's who I am [an African American woman professor]." She believed in being culturally responsive, because it was tied into her identity. Irina went even further in deconstructing cultural responsiveness by stating her position on the meaning in simple terms. She emphasized that White teachers, that work with White students today, are simply doing what we consider to be mainstream education and for them, "That is a form of cultural responsiveness." Another example she gave would be:

When you talk about teaching the classics in literature and we know what that means and who those are. Sometimes we say that they are dead White men. They come from a western tradition and that's been taught to White students that have a western tradition, legacy and heritage. That's cultural responsiveness for that particular group of students. That being said, Irina concluded that, "In some ways, culturally responsive teaching is not a mystery. It really is, when all this is said and done, it's common sense." She felt it was easy and necessary to simply teach in a responsive way.

When I asked Felicia, what motivated her to be a culturally responsive professor she responded. But first, she referenced her family again and how she was raised, since birth, to

always be vocal and fearless when it came to injustices. At a young age Felicia knew, “I have to give back. It’s not supposed to be just about me and writing a paper.” Throughout her career she created higher education programs at her institution and served as an advocate and support system for her graduate students. Furthermore, her ultimate motivation for being culturally responsive was to support people of color and to fulfill a commitment she was born into as an African American woman. She said “...there is nothing else that I am supposed to do. You live and you breathe and you walk, then support your community. That’s just a part of that commitment, so I don’t know anything else or to do anything else.”

After Felicia told me the reasons for her motivations to be culturally responsive, she also made it clear that being culturally responsive and responsible is essential in making the world a better place. By this she means, “Everybody would be committed to an anti-racist society.” However, despite her efforts she does not believe this society will occur anytime soon.

During Felicia’s interview, she also pointed out that being culturally responsive is about caring about everyone and that cannot be accomplished with an evil mindset.

If you’re culturally responsive, that means you’re socially just, that means that at your core you’re being beneficence...you are responsible for everybody, you care about everybody. If we all did that, there would be no war, no fighting. We would be peaceful. Felicia stressed that overall, if she wanted to be silent about the problems, she could do that, but simply put, that is not a part of who she is as a Black woman and professor.

Emergence of Theme - Black Pride

The first theme that emerged from this study was Black Pride. It was related to question one and emerged as a dominant motivator for cultural responsiveness. The American Heritage Dictionary, (1982, p.185) defined Black pride as a response or movement that motivates African

Americans to celebrate places where they originated. I define Black pride, as simply being happy to be Black. In other words, appreciating the fact they are African American and finding pure joy in Black families, culture and people. Black Pride appeared in all four of my participants extremely early in their interviews. In fact, three out of four of the Professors referenced their Black pride coming from within their home as a child.

Throughout Kimberly's childhood, she attended predominately Black schools and experienced an African American, woman, as her Principal the four years she attended Catholic school. Kimberly gained a sense of pride in Blackness by observing her principal.

Seeing her, projected this notion of leadership even though we didn't talk about it, but I knew she was in charge of everybody in that school and that meant something to me, especially as I got older.

As Kimberly portrayed the magnitude of seeing a Black principal growing up, I could tell it made a lasting impression, and motivated her to become a culturally responsive educator. Kimberly said "Wow, she was a nun and she was Black and she was the only Black in that convent by the way. And she was the principal...So those are the things that resonated with me."

When she continued on about her childhood, I could tell she was proud of where she came from and her Blackness.

I always knew and was proud that I was Black. I have to be honest; I think I was so immersed in Black culture and Black identity...there was a comfort there and there was not this whole challenge of racism that I experienced once I went to the University of Illinois in Champagne. I think I was able to succeed there and be okay because of how I had been raised and the environment that I had been raised in. Community values,

cultural values, religious values, and most importantly, family values... So, I carried those things with me through college and beyond.

I did not have to ask more than one question before Ciara demonstrated her Black pride with extremely colorful examples and stories. Ciara had a different set of memories as she reflected about herself:

Some of my early memories as I reflect back...I think one of the most important elements that sticks with me today as a professor at a PWI is that of my mom instilling in me both self-esteem and ethnic-esteem before even going to kindergarten.

Ciara shared that every night her mother would read Paul Laurence Dunbar poetry to her in both the dialect and the traditional version to ensure she knew about her culture.

My mom told me that we came from kings and queens...she introduced me to all the African Americans of great accomplishments...I felt really good about both who I was, where I came from, who my people are, and just very proud of the fact that I'm dark brown skinned.

Even when Ciara was in school, she loved sharing pictures and stories with her teachers about who she was, that exemplified Black Pride.

She told us that we were to draw pictures that she wanted to hang in the hallway for our guest to see. So, whenever it is time for me to draw a picture, of course, I would always draw me...And as my mom had taught me, I got my dark brown crayon and colored me in...So when the teacher came...I was waiting for her to say, " Oh, Ciara, that's so beautiful.

Ciara reminisced her significant experiences, such as this, and later, attributed those experiences as one of several reasons why she has Black pride today. Ciara said she never had an identity

crisis about complexion. She could always see the richness in her skin tone. She said “I think that stays with me today, just the fact that she [my mom] helped me to understand what it means to be your individual, unique self.”

Before Irina started graduate school, she worked with secondary students that were responsible for her finding herself as well as her Black pride. When it was time for her to start her doctoral program, she was eager to share with her new advisor that she was moving to the South to start the PhD program and just how delighted she was to be African American... “I said to him, “Yes, I’ll come. I’m coming to Texas and I’m going to be as Black as I want to be, will you guys be able to handle it?” After several months of graduate school Irina became determined that she was going to, “debunk Whiteness” and try to “accelerate and claim the positive of Blackness.” The first way Irina accomplished this was by, “not calling anybody Dr. or Professor” because at the time, “Professor and White were synonymous. Therefore, “I got to move that dominance of Whiteness out of the way to make room for Black pride to surface.”

During Irina’s interview I asked her how her professors felt about her calling them by their first name or creating a new name for them and she exclaimed, “...Remember I was going to be as Black as I wanted to be and if other people couldn’t handle it, that was their problem. I was in my graduate school; I was in my comfortably radical stage of being.

As long as Felicia could remember her family would always discuss race and racism and how to be an activist for herself, her community and especially those who couldn’t speak up for themselves. So, when it comes to racist banter and biased people, Felicia stated, “They know they can’t talk about people of color around me, they better watch it. They can’t talk about any of my friends. They can’t talk about me. The discussion is just muted.” Felicia feels confident in who she is because of the pride and self-worth that was instilled in her at a young age...” since

birth, that's what my parents did [teach Black pride] ...in the neighborhood...and schooling. As a result, she specified, "I am very prideful of who I am and the Diaspora and Black folk in general... I'm happy to be Black. I love it."

Question Two: What are the challenges associated with African American woman professors who are culturally responsive? The following were findings for research question two.

In Kimberly's interview one of the challenges she discussed had to do with her students. Specifically, when it comes to her African American students, she realizes that sometimes they need more support, so she makes herself available. The problem is that her interest in her students results in much more work, because she has been the only African American faculty member (or one of a few faculty members present) to support a number of Black students. She has to remember to maintain her work-life balance to make sure she does not get burned-out or chronic fatigue.

When there is one or just a few of us [African American professors], I have to be concerned about not getting so overly involved, because you can get burned out... I mean, there's so many issues that African American students have on campus...lack of advice, lack of opportunity, and I'm only one person. I have to pace myself and not overdo it.

Kimberly also volunteers in several organizations, like the Black Faculty and Staff Association on campus, in addition to a mentorship program for Black students. Throughout Kimberly's interview she gave several words of advice about challenges that future scholars who aspire to be culturally responsive may experience. A few words of advice that she offered, about challenges are "...sometimes we can try to do so much that we end up not doing anything, so you have to kind of be deliberate about what you're doing."

According to Ciara, being an African American, woman professor can be extremely rewarding and fulfilling, but at times, specifically being a culturally responsive educator, can be labor intensive, because too often you feel alone in the workplace. She also stated that being culturally responsive has become an everyday component in her life, which is on overload:

... it has become automatic now. Whether I'm dealing with a small child, a toddler, whether I'm dealing with my mom, who's 85 years old and in the nursing home, suffering from Alzheimer's. I feel culturally responsive. I don't just use it at work, I use it with relatives. I can meet somebody just in passing in the store, and try to size them up and tell them something about them, but in my conversation, would consider myself at least attempting to be culturally responsive. In the doctor's office in the waiting room. Wherever...It just starts to come naturally.

Ciara said she "can't turn it off," because being culturally responsive is an everyday part of her life.

Ciara also gave an example of the extra research and work she has to do, in order to meet the needs of her students from Saudi Arabia. She stated, "It makes you do a whole lot of extra reading, that's for sure. Like I had to read up on Saudi Arabia. So how can I have a conversation with you if you're a Saudi, and there's so much going on in your country? ... Now, I'm going to CNN news, anytime I see anything about Saudi, I'm reading it so I can come back and say, "Oh yeah, your king did such and such... just trying to understand how their government works..."

Ciara also expressed certain challenges with her White colleagues that may, or may not have the best intentions, but fail to research, other cultures. She passionately stated:

If I'm trying to learn to be culturally responsive toward Hispanic women. Since I'm not Hispanic, I might think I can relate to them on a woman level, but the intersectionality of

it all, I still need to know that I may not get it unless I have a working relationship with someone who is Latina. And that's what bothers me sometimes about my White colleagues in working with African Americans...thinking that they get it. Because they've read, because they may have heard a speaker. They think they get it. And sometimes they never check it out. That's bothersome to me.... Ciara said she often feels alone in the struggle to maintain her cultural responsiveness.

Throughout Irina's journey of being culturally responsive, she mentioned several challenges that could affect in-coming Professors, if they aren't careful with their time management. She stressed that, "being in the academy is hard, it's draining." She also confessed that it took her awhile to get her life in order when it came to time management. "It was difficult for me when I was trying to listen to other people's suggestions of how they did it. And I couldn't find a fit for me. So, now my philosophy is figure out what works for you and then work it." During her interview she also stated that she had to learn what habits worked best for her life and stop fighting against it. She said "What worked for me is becoming a student of myself...that puts me in a better position to do whatever I'm gonna do."

Another critical obstacle that she discussed was going against the grain, when pushing for change with cultural responsiveness. She stressed:

The challenge is, there are so many blockages, so many obstacles you have to overcome. Some of them are attitudinal obstacles, and all kinds of historical distortions, racism, misinformation, no information, isolation, all of those form of things that we use... As a nation we have cultivated habits of being. Those habits of being are counter to some realities. Then you're trying to shift in such a way that you want to develop some new

habits of being that are more in line with human reality, then that puts you at odds with a whole lot of stuff. A lot of people don't like to be the odd one out.

Throughout Felicia's life she has faced many challenges, and her career in academia is not the exception. However, before she could give me a firm answer, she admitted that she questions why she works at a predominately White institution. One of her challenges, being an African American professor at a PWI, is the fact that it is mostly White. Several times she stated that is an ongoing struggle for her and she feels like sometimes she needs to try another career. "All the time I think about walking away from this. I don't know that I'm in the right space, I mean I have those days." Nevertheless, she remembers her calling is greater than her challenge and she also receives ongoing encouragement and motivation from her students. "And I have students who tell me...we need you. They are not trying to hear that I am leaving". Felicia sometimes feels that she can reach more people if she works solely within the community, apart from the institution.

And so, my students' rebuttal is...we need you here. You train the 20 of us and the 20 of us will go out and we'll work with 20-30 people, and those people will work with another 20-30 people. So, I have to remind myself of that, otherwise I feel like I need to go out and you know, feed the masses. So, I struggle with, and think about it all the time. I don't want to be connected with the words PWI all the time. I don't, but I am. So, I stay here because I think students of color and specifically Black students, need to see us. But I struggle with it.

Another challenge that Felicia faced was keeping her stress levels down at work. She stated, "I've spent a lot of time giving up my health, when I stress out about working and deconstructing what it means to be a faculty member." Felicia also said that she has finally mastered work-life

balance but it came at a heavy price. For years she gave the illusion that she had everything together, but what suffered most was the time spent with her children.

I think that I've spent so much time doing this work, that I miss a lot of stuff with my kids, so no, no I don't have a good work life balance. I absolutely don't, or didn't. I think I do now because my kids are grown. They are two years old in my head and I look at them like, "What? Did you turn 24? I thought you were three yesterday." So, I missed a lot of stuff, I'm guilty of that.

When Felicia discussed the time spent away from her children, because she was working, I could hear the regret in her voice. After Felicia discussed her challenges of being an African American woman at a PWI, she mentioned that she remarried and has been married to her husband for 15 years. Throughout her career, he was a monumental figure who helped raise their children.

Emergence of Theme - Me, Myself and I at a PWI

I call the second theme, Me, Myself and I at a PWI. This phrase is similar to being lonely, but a better word for this term may be reserved. Loneliness can be defined as, "solitary, without company, alone or standing apart. But I prefer the definition of being reserved which seems to better define this term, because these professors are not friendless, but strategically choose not to have close relationships or friendships with their White colleagues. Reserved means, "kept or set apart for some particular use or purpose" within academia. All four participants discussed White relationships and being overworked.

When Kimberly was growing up her, "...parents made it very clear without coming out and saying it that there were just certain people that you don't have over [to your home]." She was talking about White people. Even though she has since changed her outlook with a few people, overall, she still keeps her distance.

I can say I have a few friends now, but at that time I was like, “Nope, because it was just part of who I was. It’s just not something that we did. You can be friendly, you can be cordial, you can have a collegial relationship. When we talk about real relationships and somebody that you really confide in, oh, absolutely not.

She went on further to say that she has friendships outside of her job but, “I’ve always kept my personal and professional life separate because I think not everyone can handle that dynamic...I am not real keen on allowing people into that space because if it’s not the right person, they will exploit those things. And since I have these trust issues with different individuals and communities, I’m not going to put myself in a position to be exploited in that way.”

In Ciara’s interview she stated, “If you really take the burden [culturally responsiveness] to heart, it makes you do some extra. You know a whole bunch of extra. Have extra conversations. Do extra reading. It’s all about extra.”

Irina had the same mindset when it came to not befriending White people within academia. She was not standoffish but did not trust blending friendships and her profession.

Sometimes, I don’t think it’s the best thing to do...blending friendship with profession.

That whole notion of don’t do business with your friends. Just because you are in the same profession...well let me put it this way, I prefer to have genuine friendships located someplace else, than to have pretend, pseudo-friendships in the workplace. Friendships require energy and engagement. You have to work at keeping friendships alive. I’d prefer to invest those energies into what I think are real genuine possibilities rather than pseudo. Pseudo, can come and go. A pseudo friend is a person who will grin in your face and stab you in the back. I don’t need that.

The last thing she mentioned when she discussed strategically keeping to herself at her institution was, “My notion is...you have acquaintances, but friendship is very different from an acquaintance, especially collegial acquaintances. Not going to spend a lot of time on a pretend friendship when it’s really not. Now, that does not mean I’m not going to be cordial or necessarily standoffish.”

Felicia cited time away from her family because of her workload. She indicated that if she could do it all over again, she would make certain her children were made more of a priority.

Yeah, now that the world has raised my children. I raised them some and I know people say, “You did the best you could do.” No, I didn’t. The best I could’ve done I would have been a housewife, because it takes a lot of work. I mean writing those papers I had to get up early in the morning like 4 o’clock in the morning and write from 4-6. Then get those folks up to go to school. Then get them out of school and then I was writing again and working. And so, I missed a lot of stuff. I missed like a couple of Halloweens. I’d get here late for birthdays. Now I’m on time for all that, but they are 20 something.

All four participants seemed to feel they did not have enough support and others needed to share the workload of being culturally responsive with an abundance of students.

Question Three: How do African American women professors transform into culturally responsive educators? The following were findings for research question three.

While Kimberly was getting her PhD, she placed significant emphasis on several African American faculty members that worked diligently to ensure that students of color were poured into on multiple levels at her university. It was because of her experiences of being validated, mentored and supported that transformed her into the culturally responsive professor she is today. She had advocates. When working with her African American students, she realized that

sometimes they needed more support, so she made herself available and became a support person for them, particularly, if they were in trouble. She said it was important to be completely transparent.

... I have what I call my come to Jesus meetings with my black students...if we connect on that level...I have to bring them to my office and close the door and say, 'Listen. Here're the things that you need to be thinking about and need to be doing that people may or may not tell you.' I never want to see them doing anything that might be self-destructive in the end.

Despite easy advisement requirements (only meeting twice a semester) she made sure she helped all her students according to their individual needs. For instance, one of her students said, "she requires that we meet at least every other week". Which can be a bit much, but that is what she needed in order to be successful." Without hesitation Kimberly said, "Well, if that's what you need then that's what I'm gonna do." In all of Kimberly's efforts she tried to meet the needs of all her students and take them where they needed to go to thrive. She stated, "I try to do those things and be involved in organizations to increase my visibility so people can at least see a face that looks like theirs."

Furthermore, the beginnings of her transformation also started with a class with whom she connected.

I really think my first year of graduate work made me truly think about how we make our material and our classes, resonate with people in such a way that they can find themselves in it? Because that was the only thing that kept me connected to graduate school. I could find myself in what I was doing. And I could see that connection to macro

to micro. It was a good personal feeling but then on a larger level I could see how we catapult have that connection so we know what direction we're going in.

Part of Kimberly's transformation was also in the fact that even though she's an established professor, she still has a connection with her old professors from graduate school and can call them for advice and counsel, or simply just to catch up.

I've been gone from Illinois for 20 something years. But I will call him [former professor] and no matter when I call him, he's like, "Okay Kimberly, what do you need?" Now that she is no longer the student but the professor, "What it means to me is that I still have to honor their legacy and what they taught me and what they gave me, it's important to me.... even though I'm gone I still feel the support...So when I interact with students...It's just paying it forward.

Kimberly does not regret starting her doctoral career in rocky waters because ultimately, it opened the door to work with "educational giants" who helped transform her into the culturally responsive educator that she is today.

I'm proud to be in the position that I'm in. It's a lot of work and it's a lot of stress because of all the outside stuff and the backlash and the pushback but I think I wouldn't have it any other way. I wouldn't. I really feel like it's my calling and it's my duty. And this is just what I'm supposed to do... I still feel like I have really big shoes to fill.

Kimberly felt she could be to her students, namely a supporter, as a tribute to her mentors.

Ciara had several examples of experiences that helped her transform into the person she is today. But one of her favorite stories, and most "earth shaking" took place in elementary school when she was in the fifth grade and her younger brother was in the first grade.

Throughout her education Ciara was a teacher pleaser but her brothers were the exact opposite

and hated school. She never knew why until she began to observe how they were being treated in comparison to how she was treated. She stated that her baby brother had, "...that cool walk, right, and his teacher had the hardest time with him, because he embodied that macho masculinity even as a first grader."

As she began to tell the story she described how her brother would get a formal suspension. This meant he would be sent to the principal's office and could not go back to his classroom until my mom came to school with him. As time progressed, and the teacher kept telling him to walk correctly over and over again, the correct way. Ciara became bothered by the fact that he wouldn't do what the teacher said, but was even more bothered by the fact that the teacher was making this big deal out of the way he walked in the classroom. Despite being in the fifth grade, Ciara was able to critically examine this incident and the potential negative effects it could have on her and her family.

My thing was, you know, in my fifth-grade vocabulary, why don't you just let him walk in like that so he can learn? You're spending all this time with him out in the hallway, but even more importantly what bothered me is back in the day, you know, because my mom worked for this White family, she didn't have sick leave, she didn't have annual leave, personal leave, so her, having to bring him back to school...was an economic detriment for us as a family...because if you don't work, you don't get paid. So, the whole incident helped me to understand that...why my brothers didn't want to be teacher pleasers...they were treated so very differently.

This would not be the last time Ciara witnessed this treatment from teachers during her adolescence. In fact, in junior high school she began to observe negative treatment to African American males in general. She believed these experiences impacted her focus on African

American boys during her early years as an Assistant professor. She wanted to work toward the improvement of outcomes for them.

When Irina was earning her bachelor's degree, she pointed out that she was extremely ashamed to be Black. In fact, she admits that most of the time, throughout her courses, she was trying to overcompensate for her dark appearance, because she was embarrassed.

So, in many ways, in undergraduate education, I spoke only when I absolutely had to.

Most of the time I was silent, because I was so busy trying to super-correct and make sure that I didn't sound Black, that I didn't look Black. That I was not going to act ugly, because I was already ugly.

Irina confessed that she had to go through a serious transformation to reverse her deficit thinking about herself. In fact, if it was not for her experience teaching high school students, she might not have discovered who she was and what it meant to be a culturally responsive educator. When she talked about her students, she would say, "I would do things the way I thought I was supposed to do it as a Black woman, you know, that hiding out behind this facade, meaning I was super correct and all that kind of stuff." But when her students began to challenge her and her beliefs, she was forced to reexamine herself and her teaching. "My students began to say, "Oh, Miss Irina, you don't believe that. Miss Irina, you not really like that." I think those Black students began to see me, genuinely me, before I was able to see myself."

When Irina reflected back on her time spend with her high school students, she reflected:

In hindsight, someplace deep in my legacy, but I think Black folks, in my family and in my community...were discriminated against in some of the most graphic ways by White... they were third class citizens to Whites in that environment, in public and in private...I think those things were there, but the private kinds of discourse that my family members,

and with other people had when they got together revealed how they dealt with White prejudice and White discrimination...I was exposed to that, and I think it was deeply embedded within me. Whereas publicly the White script, if you will, speaking metaphorically...was very profound as well.

Irina said it was a journey that took several years to end:

It took me through undergraduate school into my first professional role as a high school teacher... living that public script. But I have to believe that the private script is still grounded someplace deeply within me and when the transformation began, it did not take much to release what was already there...and then adding to it as you go. I think that releasing process began with me working with Black students as a high school teacher.

When Irina finished teaching high school, she earned a master's degree and eventually was recruited by a professor, to obtain her PhD at the University of Texas in Austin. When her recruiter asked her if she was coming to Texas, she replied, "Yes, I'll come. I'm coming to Texas and going to be as Black as I want to be, will you guys be able to handle that?" Until this day, she says, "I think that was the signal that I was in the process [of transformation]. From that point on, through her PhD program until now, as a Full Professor, she has learned to, "Move that dominance of Whiteness out of the way to make room for Black pride to surface," and has never looked back. She made it a career goal to support and impact students who looked like her and had similar challenges.

When I asked Felicia about how she transformed as an African American woman professor at a PWI, she was quick to point out that she did not have to transform into who she is today. In fact, she referenced the Nigrescence model and that she did not fit into any of Cross' stages.

That Nigrescence model, it's real cute, but no. From birth my parents were like, let's get to stage five kids. We don't have time for this. I mean they were truth telling. It was nothing to have discussions about race and racism. From childhood I didn't go through those stages. In fact, I keep saying I'm going to look at creating a model of activist's identity development. Because mine looks nothing like that model. There was no time that I didn't know I was Black. There was no time that I was not proud of it. There was no time that someone got away with calling me something or making some crazy remark around me or anybody I knew and I didn't check them. I mean I was checking when I learned to walk. It just didn't happen and even right now when I walk into a space... I put the fear of God in everyone...they know that they cannot say that stuff around me.

After Felicia made it clear that she did not transform into who she is today, because of any unique or life altering experience, she was born to support Black people and her community. She attributes her desire for advocacy activism to her parents.

Even though Felicia says she grew up in a Black nationalist household, she always had friends in her life of all ethnicities. She stated, "I have friends in a lot of different spaces, again a piece of that is who I am." In her interview she went on to mention her daughter who is an athlete, like she was, and explained that both of them embraced everyone growing up. Even when she began to work in the academy, her friendships were just as colorful.

I had a core group of friends, but even through high school I had a core group of friends, but I'd hang with the cheerleaders one day. I may hang out with the basketball group. I always had different folks that were friends, and it's the same way in the academy. And I've had a Black faculty member, in particular, who said, "I just don't understand your friendships with these White girls."

I believe another reason why Felicia believes she has not transformed as an African American woman at a PWI, according to the nigrescence model, is because, as much as she hates racism, it does not keep her from establishing genuine relationships with other ethnicities, particularly, White people.

I have a support group in the school of education that is Black. I have one that is mixed. I have one that is White. I'm friends with colleagues outside of the school of Ed. Outside of here and in other spaces with Blacks, Latinos, everybody. I have a wide array of friend groups but I have people who are my ride or die that I talk to daily. And those people are, two are White, and the others Black.

Felicia discussed her friendships with her White friends, and overall, she befriended them because they are like-minded and caring. However, she also stated that her relationships are successful because they have effective, open and honest communication and have each other's best interest at heart.

After her interview, I began to feel a sense of hope because, unlike other African American women professors, she has experienced White advocacy and friendship at its best. She said, "There are plenty of them that are ride or die. It took a while to create that space though, about 15 years of naughty professor whispering."

Now that Felicia has a core group of colleagues, from all ethnicities, that she can trust. They have similar agendas and mindsets about social justice and racism. Felicia's ultimate goal is to navigate the system by changing and deconstructing the system one day at a time. So far, her efforts and transparent communication have been a success in effectively transforming her work environment.

Emergence of Theme - Resilience

The third theme that emerged was resilience. The word resilient means “springing back, rebounding, returning to the original form or position after being bent, compressed or stretched.” Furthermore, I define this term as, thriving, despite circumstances that come one’s way. Three of the professors gave examples of their resiliency through stories that demonstrated them thriving despite the challenges that their colleagues or institutions brought their way.

Kimberly, gave a scenario of her resiliency when a student complained about feeling threatened in her class because she was discussing race in a multicultural course. Rather than her Department Head considering her perfect track record and student evaluations from the past, he suggested her class be monitored by another professor. Kimberly stated, “You feel like you work all your life, you work hard, you do everything, and the response is, “Well, let’s let somebody come in and make sure you’re doing what you’re supposed to be doing.”

After further discussing the story, she was able to convince her Department Head that she did not need her class to be monitored. Despite her feeling unfairly treated, compared to other professors, she continued to thrive in her profession.

Unlike Kimberly’s moment of resiliency in the classroom, one of Ciara’s moments of resiliency took place with her colleagues.

Our Dean got approval to hire 12 academic positions, and so they put together 12 search committees in my college. I never got an invitation to serve, and did not get the list of committee members...I asked the staff person who was working on the search committee who said I may have missed the email announcement about the committees...upon further questioning, it had never gone out to me.

Ciara highlighted her disappointment when she was not invited to serve and did not see a diverse search committee listed to ensure a diverse group of applicants were chosen for the new positions at her school. As Ciara continued on, she made a statement that when you become a professor you must always be vigilant and stay observant because you never know what unexpected obstacles will come your way. She shared her thoughts about the final committees:

So, I looked at committee number one, White, White, White, White, White, Number two, White, White, White, White. Three, White, White, White, White. Number four, White, White, White, Hispanic, White, White...all the way to the 12th one. Everybody is White except for...an ESL position.

Once she observed the unequitable list that excluded her and every other African American professor, she knew she needed to address the issue. “So, I picked up the phone and said, “I find it very disappointing that we had 12 search committees...and there’s not one African American.” Her response that her colleague gave her was, “Ciara you were the first person I thought of for this super search committee, but we know you’re so busy.”

This was an example of a situation where Ciara had to be resilient because this was an ongoing practice, that demonstrated her administrators did not have a desire to include Black professors in important decision-making changes. She could have quit her job, but instead she persisted. She shared her feelings:

...for many of my White colleagues... and this is another White privilege, nobody makes an assumption for them. They ask them, “would you mind chairing a committee”. They don’t make an assumption that you’re too busy, or we know you have so many irons in the fire. Well, you do too, but you are asked to serve...

Despite all the politics and being overlooked for certain positions, she remains resilient. "... You just can't let that tear away at you. You have to still maintain your uniqueness, you still maintain your self-identity."

Irina stated that in her mind she is "always is a state of readiness to imagine something different, to add another possibility, to wonder..." Furthermore, she displays resilience when she refuses to follow the academic status quo.

A lot of people don't like to be the odd one out. They either don't have the strength to prevail because there's so many people saying, "What's wrong with you? Get in line. Do what you're supposed to do. In other words, do like me. Do like us." ...If you don't have the stamina to prevail, then you'll gradually give up and say, "I want to be a crowd pleaser."

Being a crowd pleaser was never an option for Irina. She was fine being an anomaly and demonstrated resilience as she readily stood alone in her position.

Felicia had an instance where she was overlooked by her colleague but she continued to move forward after addressing the issue.

I remember this one time I was mad... a newspaper had chosen to interview somebody on race...this White guy, who doesn't even engage in work on race ended up representing the School of Education.... when the article was published...he was so proud of himself, and I was like uh-uh (in a negative manner).

Felicia decided to approach her colleague and ask the question "Why did they call you? You don't work in this field...why didn't you give them a list of these people to contact, you know, who to talk to." He became upset, but so was Felicia, because there were qualified colleagues who were qualified to write about race, but were not chosen. She resolved within herself to "let it

go” and she was able to thrive despite her feelings. Fortunately, she had other colleagues that cared about her well-being, which gave her support and energy to continue to persevere against future mishaps.

Emergence of Theme - Advocacy

The theme that emerged based on research question three was advocacy. The dictionary defined advocacy as, “The act of pleading for, supporting or recommending.” I define advocacy as someone that is an influential mentor who actively supports and engages in pursuing an accomplishment and/or success for that individual. Advocacy emerged from all four of my participants when they addressed their students and the importance of support.

In Kimberly’s interview she highlighted the value of being a student advocate and gave details about what she does to help her students be successful, even with limited resources. “I try to be a resource and a sounding board, really for all my students... I take my role very seriously... I try to do the best of my ability to provide them that same level of support as much as I can within whatever limited options that I have.”

At Kimberly’s school, professors assisted students through a mentoring program called the Black faculty and Staff Association. “I volunteer to be a mentor every year just to reach out to those [African American] students...I try to do those things and be involved in organizations to increase my visibility so people can at least see a face that looks like theirs. Since Kimberly knows the significance of students having an advocate, she tried to make herself available and make them more comfortable within the university environment.

When Ciara spoke about her students, she told me the majority of them are from Turkey and Saudi Arabia. According to her, she “...knew very little about Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and the whole cohort is Muslim.” Within our conversation, Ciara displayed signs of being an

advocate when she stated, "... I had to figure out ways to affirm them in their religious beliefs, even if it differed from mine."

Another form of Ciara's advocacy was that she encouraged her students and tried to make all of them feel good about themselves and their backgrounds. She explained, "I just try to figure out ways to affirm their uniqueness's. That's the secret for me...that is, figuring out how to speak so that you're affirming others."

In addition, Ciara demonstrated she is an advocate by taking on the extra weight of being culturally responsive. She stressed that it can be burdensome takes additional work and attention. "If you really take the burden to heart, it makes you do some extra work. You know, a whole bunch of extra. Have extra conversations. Do extra reading. It's all about the extra...that's for sure."

For Ciara, being an advocate is much more than just encouraging her students and reading more, especially if she does not have the same culture as her students. "If I'm trying to learn to be culturally responsive toward Hispanic women. Since I'm not Hispanic, I might think I can relate to them on a woman level...unless I kind of connect what I've gotten from someone who has the experience of being Latina". Whomever Ciara taught or worked with she tried to be of assistance in their time of need and an effective advocate.

When it came to serving as an advocate for her students, Irina made it very clear, they take priority within academia. "You've got to develop different kinds of relationships with students. I can't be distant from my students to be culturally responsive...you have to have a relationship." The more we discussed the importance of advocacy, she shared what it meant to her in further detail. "It's advocacy...If you're going to be culturally responsive, you've got to say, "I will stand for you if and when you need to stand, and I certainly will stand with you..."

But she also made it clear that her advocacy should not be taken lightly. “It doesn’t mean I’m going to endorse everything you do...you have to have ethical standards...that’s what I mean when I say it’s a holistic engagement.”

Throughout Felicia’s career, advocacy is something that she knows all too well. She confirmed, “I know one of the things I have been able to do, is be a role model, a support system for many African American students and students of Color in general...” Even though several African American professors left her institution, she tries her best to fill the void that some of her Black students may feel being enrolled at a PWI, because she knows the importance of being present and active in the academy. “I work with lots of graduate students, lots who struggle being at a PWI ...But I stay here because I think students of color and specifically Black students, need to see us.” At the end of the day she knows that she has, “...to give back. It’s not supposed to be just about me and writing a paper, it’s going to be about the community.”

Felicia reported, that when she gets discouraged, her students remind her of the difference she is making and that they depend on her.

... I’m here to give back, whatever that means... I feel like I was born into a commitment.

There is nothing else that I am supposed to do. You live and you breathe and you walk and then support your community. That’s just a part of that commitment, so I don’t know anything else. I didn’t know to be anything else or do anything else.

Simply put, she is an advocate for her students and supports them because she, “...wants them to be successful”.

Emergence of Theme - Self-Care

The next theme that emerged was Self-Care. The formal definition can be defined as, “care of the self without medical or other professional consultation. I define this theme as, engaging in

relaxing, pleasurable, non-work-related activities to relieve stress, anxiety and the demands of the world.

When Kimberly discussed her job, she stated that sometimes she gets “burnt-out” because of the demands that African American students can have from lack of support.

Where there is not a lot of us, I also have to think about self-care and not getting too overly involved, because there is so many issues that students have on campus, the African American students. And lack of advice, lack of opportunities, and I’m only one person. I have to pace myself and not overdo it.

Irina stated it was important to have work life balance, self-care, and giving yourself at least one day of rest. These were the suggestions she gave for mastering work-life challenges and self-care.

It could be Sunday; it could be a Saturday. But that day you don’t do any work. You don’t do any work for your job. But you do other kinds of things. You take care of yourself. You take care of your social relationships. You take care of your body. You take care of your mind. You do some recreation.

Even though Felicia couldn’t imagine doing any other job, at times, she needed to focus more on self-care and creating space for work life balance. “I’ve spent a lot of time giving up my health. I guess like being stressed out and working at deconstructing what it means to be a faculty member.”

At times, she stated one of the reasons for lack of self-care was because she couldn’t juggle more than a couple tasks at a time. “I’m not good at multitasking. I think that I’ve spent so much time doing this work, I think I missed a lot of stuff...I don’t have a good work life balance. I absolutely don’t, or didn’t.”

Self-Care is related to the tremendous amount of work that goes into being an advocate for high need students. In order to accomplish all that is needed to engage in advocacy, one needs to take care of their health and mental well-being. Self-care emerged as an important factor in maintaining the role of advocacy.

Summary

This chapter explored the motivation, challenges and transformational experiences of culturally responsive African American Women professors at PWI's. This chapter presented participant profiles and miniature biographies. The findings were presented based on three research questions. Themes revealed the drive and impetus behind culturally responsive professors. Chapter 4 provided direct quotes, and actual words used by the participants to produce vivid, thick descriptions of what was revealed in the findings. Five themes emerged from my study and were interpreted and analyzed based on their responses to my research questions. The major themes that emerged from my study were: (a) Black Pride, related to research question one; (b) Me, Myself and I at a PWI related to research question two; (c) Resilience and Advocacy, related to research question three; and Self-Care. Chapter 5 will go into greater discussion of my findings.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND SUMMARY

Introduction

As college students continue to become more diverse, there is an increasing need for professors to be culturally responsive in their teaching practices. Overall, there is a void in the literature on culturally responsive, Black professors and how they became culturally responsive in their profession. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore what motivates African American, women professors to be culturally responsive, the challenges they face and how they transformed into culturally responsive educators.

In Chapter five, I interpreted the participants meanings behind their motivations, their challenges and transformations in becoming culturally responsive. Furthermore, in this chapter I provided insights based on my literature review (Chapter 2) and my personal experiences as it pertains to the motivations, challenges and transformations participants.

Question One: What motivates African American women professors to be culturally responsive?

They Had Black Pride

Based on the findings for research question one, an important discovery was that motivation for becoming culturally responsive was connected Black Pride. The notion of Black Pride was set forth by all the participants in various forms, which was significant, because this theme agrees with the literature about its characteristics as a catalyst for becoming culturally responsive (Canniff, 2008; T. Howard, 2003).

The first participant Kimberly, had a sense of pride in Blackness and understood who she was as an African American woman. For example, in the findings, it was revealed that Kimberly gained a great sense of pride in having a Black principal, who was culturally responsive. Even though she was just an adolescent in school, it was apparent that Kimberly's Black Nun Principal left a lasting impression on her. The impression was so strong, it influenced Kimberly to want to impact the lives of Black children one day. The Black nun was her role-model and demonstrated pride in being Black and culturally responsive during her adolescent years.

Since she was exposed to an African American leader who helped transform her school and the students who attended, Kimberly became motivated to learn how to teach Black children in an effective way. As a result, this experience paved the way for her to become a culturally responsive professor long before she entered the academy. Kimberly believed professors should be able to identify with their student, be proud of them and never have the mindset that certain groups are not qualified to flourish in an academic setting.

Ciara was strategic in engaging in self-reflection and expressed her sense of pride in being Black when she was a child. Although she was young and did not fully understand the "big picture" of what she experienced as a schoolgirl related to race and culture, she knew her mom helped her develop a sense of pride in her personhood and Blackness. Ciara knew that she could always find answers from her mother, who affirmed her and helped her understand who she was as an African American girl. Her mother read books by Black authors to her in the dialect and the traditional version, so she knew about her culture. When I spoke with Ciara, her realization of pride in being Black was monumental and she cited it as a factor that motivated her to want to teach black students.

During my interview with Ciara, she shared how she mentors an African American girls' group and how culturally responsive practices can transform their negative experiences in school into positive experiences that demonstrate pride in their heritage.

When Irina was in graduate school, she taught secondary students, who in time, helped her unlock Black Pride from within herself. Irina did not plan or anticipate it, but she accepted a position as a teacher in a segregated school district that had all Black students. She decided to be very intentional about forming meaningful relationships with her students, and formed powerful bonds with her students that eventually led to her esteem and pride in them. Whenever they had discussions, she allowed them to speak freely about how they really felt about the curriculum as well as personal issues regarding education.

At the time, she felt her students were going to be the only ones learning in the classroom, but unwittingly, she learned Black Pride from them. She credits them with giving her a greater sense of pride in her own Blackness. She seemed to feel indebted to them for helping her to see that being culturally responsive was linked to her identity as an African American. I say this, because she cited her relationship with them as the beginning of her journey toward culturally responsive education. She gave the example of White teachers being culturally responsive to their White students, by teaching mainstream curricula and providing instructional practices that are beneficial to students in the mainstream. She said being culturally responsive was simply meeting the needs of her African American students. Today, their relationship, which was more than 25 years ago, still remains an unforgettable experience.

As far back as Felicia could remember, she was given the charge by her family to speak up and be proud of her heritage and her cultural background. Felicia made it very clear that she is an activist for herself, her community as well as anyone else who can't speak up for themselves.

She talked about her Black pride and attributed her passion and zeal to her parents. Her family engaged in protests and attended meetings to better their community. They discussed why it's so important to fight the injustices that occur to marginalized people. They emphasized love for herself as a Black person and pride in her people. This position was an integral part of who she was and a motivating factor in her journey toward becoming culturally responsive to all of her students in academia.

I, like all of my participants, see the value of Black pride. My story is similar to Ciara's in the sense that my childhood was immersed in the joys and appreciation of simply being "Black and beautiful." My family celebrated Blackness in way that made me love my childhood and upbringing as an African American. I can relate to Felicia in the sense that I was taught from an early age that I had a responsibility to be proud of my heritage and cultural background and to recognize other Black people as contributors to the greatness of our nation. My siblings and I were usually the only Black children in our classrooms, during our schooling experience. Therefore, as I reflect, I think it was necessary for my parents to formulate a positive identity in me, early in my childhood, to maintain a healthy and constructive way of life.

Within the realm of Black Pride and love for humanity, I was also taught that I had a responsibility to uplift the hearts of others and to serve as a good citizen and contributor to society. My parents demonstrated what Black Pride and love for humanity "looked like" before my very eyes. My dad served our country through Homeland Security and my mom was a culturally responsive educator who served students in the K-12 sector of schools and at 6 different institutions in higher education. Like Felicia, I feel compelled through the motivation of my upbringing and love for humanity, to be culturally responsive to students and to demonstrate my own Black Pride and love for humanity.

Question two: What are the challenges associated with African American women professors who are culturally responsive?

Me, Myself and I at a PWI

Based on the findings for research question two, I named the theme and this section, *Me, Myself and I at a PWI*. This name was noted in the literature under various names and terms such as isolation, being lonely (other inflicted or self-inflicted), being invisible, not having a seat at the table, not being recognized or not being valued in the faculty ranks of academia (Robertson, Mitra, & Van Delinder, 2005). This finding was different from the literature in the sense that my participants were set apart, but not lonely. They had their own support system and set of friends. For this reason, I selected the term reserved, instead of lonely. Loneliness can be defined as, “solitary, without company, alone or standing apart, but these professors were not friendless, but strategically choose not to have close relationships or friendships with their White colleagues. Reserved means, “kept or set apart for some particular use or purpose” within academia.

Kimberly, believed that her role of being culturally responsive brought challenges at her institution. She indicated that she felt isolated, alone and uncomfortable with her colleagues, particularly when she wanted support for her African American students and activities that would support their academic growth. She did not feel respected and believed she did not have a “seat at the table” at her institution, because she sought to be culturally responsive to her students.

Kimberly felt these challenges were a part of life in America and the world of the American academy. Kimberly’s childhood, due to segregation, was surrounded by mostly

African American people. Her school was Black as well as her neighborhood and her parents did not invite White people for dinner or social events. Therefore, when she began her career in academia, she always kept a noticeable distance between White people and herself. She did not befriend White people, because she believed, based on her upbringing that most of them could not be trusted. She believed White people played political games within the academy and could exploit her. Kimberly was not afraid to have a professional relationship, but having a genuine friendship was crossing the line into uncomfortable waters. Kimberly noted that she had several extremely close African American friendships and colleagues that she trusted in the academy, but they worked at various other institutions across the nation. It was within these African American relationships that she gained support. They advised, mentored, advocated for and confided in each other. They published together, shared teaching ideas and practices and they even shared resources that would help support their cultural responsiveness as educators.

So, for Kimberly, being invisible, not having a seat at the table, not being recognized or not being valued in the faculty ranks of her institution, was a challenge, but the price you had to pay for being culturally responsive.

Irina also believed that her role as a culturally responsive professor had its challenges. She too felt the need for an African American support system outside of her institution. She did not see the benefit of befriending White colleagues. She believed that real friendship required energy and engagement, therefore she did not want to waste her time on pseudo friendships, in which White colleagues could potentially “smile in your face, then stab you in the back.” Consequently, she was purposeful about having specific collegial acquaintances, while she remained cordial and professional. Her overall goal was to give her best toward being a successful culturally responsive educator.

Unlike my participants, I grew up in a predominantly White neighborhood, and hardly ever saw African Americans, except when I went to church or attended Jack and Jill events (an African American Community organization). That being said, I can relate to these women wanting friends who look like themselves and desiring colleagues who have similar values and experiences. In my K-12 experience, I yearned for other Black classmates, since I was usually the only Black student in my classroom. However, as an adult, I have all racial and cultural groups as friends and colleagues, but still maintain a support system of African Americans. I believe I need this type of support system, because we share experiences that are unique to us as a group. I believe I am a better, healthier and a more confident person because of those relationships. As I enter the academy, I will search for a workplace that embraces culturally responsive pedagogy as a research interest, teaching focus and service component within educational leadership. I am hopeful about finding an environment that will enable me to become a part of the life and vibrancy of the academy, which includes friends and colleagues of many racial groups and cultures.

Question three: How do African American women professors transform into culturally responsive educators?

They Demonstrated Resilience

Based on the findings for the final research question, resilience and advocacy emerged as dominant commonalities among the participants. First, all of the participants were resilient, which emerged as a theme, because despite challenges that sprang forth, they were able to persevere and continue to engage in culturally responsive practices. This finding agreed with the literature and showed that participants had to determine in their minds, they would not give up

and quit their positions in the academy when challenges occurred, because of their cultural responsiveness (Souto & Ray, 2007). Participants had to stay the course and endure hardship.

Kimberly said she had to gain strength from within herself when her Department Head recommended that another professor sit in on her class to see “what she was doing wrong”. A White student had complained that she felt threaten by the topic of multicultural education in Kimberly’s class. She did not have complaints about her classes in the past and her student evaluations were always good. Kimberly felt that her skills and teaching abilities were being questioned. Kimberly felt she could talk to the student and handle the situation herself, but instead, her Department Head wanted her class monitored. She felt that if she were White, or a man, she would not experience this kind of push back from her students and certainly would not have her class monitored. Rather than fight that battle, she had confidence in her teaching and invited scrutiny, which resolved the situation. She determined to push toward her goals and thrive. Today, she still teaches multicultural courses and does not allow students or administrators to alter her passion.

Ciara expressed to her colleagues why she was upset about search committees not being diverse or including her as a committee member. Each time this situation occurred, she was given various reasons, which she called “excuses” not to include professors of color. Ciara said in our interview that she felt overlooked, and lied to about decisions made in her department. But rather than stay upset, she learned to “deal with it.” This scenario continues to a problem at her institution, but she does not let obstacles discourage her from being the “voice of reason” for including people of color on search committees. Ciara did not give up and she is hopeful that one day, circumstances will change.

Irina talked about historical distortions, racism, misinformation, no information and isolation, but came to the conclusion that all of them were obstacles that had to be overcome. She seemed to imply that these obstacles were national in scope and would need to be faced and overcome not only in the academy, but in every area of life.

Felicia has always made it extremely clear, that if she does not agree with something or she is being unfairly treated, she will speak up and address the situation immediately. She has also demonstrated that she does not back down from a fight, which is probably why being resilient comes so naturally to her. Felicia wrote several articles on race and culture and they remain constant companions with her when she teaches her classes. She uses every challenge as a teachable moment, a subject for an article or a topic for a book. She admitted she was exasperated when a White colleague came to her, boasting about a newspaper reporter choosing to interview him about race and culture related issues, even though he was not an expert on the topics. Immediately she asked why he was responded since his area of expertise was inappropriate for the information they wanted. Felicia said she is always in a state of “readiness” and not afraid to ask hard questions. She takes the role of culturally responsive educator seriously and will challenge anyone who takes the ideologies and work lightly. She demonstrated passion and ongoing resilience for promoting and protecting her field of expertise.

I come from a long line of resilient family members. But one person that stands out the most in my mind, is my mother. When my mom was close to my age, she went through the dissertation process, but one major difference was she had seven children. I asked her how she was able to finish. She told me about my dad being tremendously supportive and would take the kids so she could go to the library and write. She also told me about her mentor and passionate advocate who showed her how to write and invited her to her house for writing retreats and one-

on-one sessions. My mother needed and had a lot of support from my grandparents and other family members.

But the most significant insight was when she shared that her exhaustion, fatigue, frustration and sheer desire to quit, were overcome by her devotion to the people who were counting on her to finish. They believed in her, invested in her and had great expectations for her completion and future success. When she thought about them, she could not give up, she could not quit. Therefore, she had to be resilient and look beyond her current state, and focus on her future, which was bigger than herself.

When I observed my culturally responsive mom and witnessed all that she accomplished, I received encouragement. Her legacy and drive have manifested themselves inside of me and pushed me to continue on this path, knowing that I cannot and will not quit because the completion of my academic journey is only the tip of the iceberg. My mother showed me what it means to be resilient and it's because of her that I will continue to persevere no matter what challenges come my way.

They Practiced Advocacy

Secondly, based on the findings for research question three, advocacy emerged as important in the transformation process of becoming culturally responsive. The idea of Advocacy was set forth by all the participants in different variations, which is meaningful, because this theme demonstrated active mentorship, strong commitment and support from each professor to ensure all their students were successful (Pang, 2005).

Kimberly demonstrated that she was an advocate for all her students. She was strategic about having each one come to her office, so she could share with them what they needed to do to be successful in her class and at the university. Kimberly knew some of her students were

headed toward a destructive path, simply because they were not informed or guided by someone who would, kindly, tell them the truth, no matter the situation. This form of advocacy, or “Come to Jesus meeting” was important to Kimberly because she was committed to her students, cared about them and genuinely wanted to see them thrive. Kimberly was a strong advocate for her students because her Black professor exemplified what an advocate does for their students, especially in difficult situations. As a result of her professor’s support, Kimberly stays in contact with him and tries to cultivate the same advocacy for her students today.

Ciara showed that she cared about the success of her students, and was therefore an advocate, when she discussed the troubled high school girls’ group that she mentored every semester throughout the year. Even though she already had a hectic schedule being a professor and a lawyer, she knew those girls needed someone to have a meaningful, constructive relationship with them. In Ciara’s view, being an advocate, is more than meeting with individuals. She invested time with the girls, as well as their parents and illustrated that she believed in them regardless of the negative labels they were given by society. Currently, the same girls are more successful in their classes and are learning to respect other and authority figures, despite the obstacles they encounter.

Irina made it very clear that culturally responsiveness meaning that advocacy is included and non-negotiable. When she teaches her students and advises them, she reminds them of the obligation she has toward their success, not just because she is their professor, but because she cares about them. Irina shared information with them that proved she has their best interest at heart and will go to battle for them, when needed. She demonstrated that she is “with them and for them” even if they are in trouble. For Irina, being an advocate and having that significant

relationship with her students is more than just being their professor. Irina understood that as an advocate, her work with students also included an ethical and moral contract.

Felicia has always had a passion for helping others within her community. When she became a professor, she knew being an advocate was uncompromisable, and another portion of her overall purpose. When she talked about her job, she said that she felt like others were not as deeply committed or invested as they could be, in the lives of her students. At times she was frustrated that other professors were not serious, which served to make Felicia even more aggressive when it comes to supporting her students. It was never about numerous publications or awards for Felicia, rather, she simply wanted to serve as an advocate.

I can identify with Ciara's story, not as the professor, but as the "troubled high schooler". When I was a teenager, I did well in school. However, I was, and still am at times, a strong-willed, stubborn person. During my senior year in high school, I found myself in some unexpected trouble with my parents. Rather than being obedient to my parents, I had broken their trust, stopped talking to them and ran away from home, believing I knew what was best for my future. Several weeks later when I returned home, even more rebellious, I was greeted by my pastor at church. She took me to lunch and talked to me, woman to woman. As the weeks continued, she form a relationship with me and I could tell she cared and had my best interest at heart. As a result, because of her mentorship and advocacy, I was able to mead my broken relationship with my parents and family. Furthermore, she demonstrated what it meant to be committed to someone else's success, and shared helpful advice that transformed my life forever. In fact, when I became an educator, I used some of the same techniques with my students, that she used as an advocate, mentor and supporter of my success. I am forever indebted to her and she still remains an active advocate for me today.

As I reflect, being the only Black person in my classes for so many years helped me become more culturally responsive and sensitive to cultures that experience similar situations. I remember embracing and befriending White students who were the minorities on a Study Abroad trip to Africa. While I was very comfortable in masses of Black people, I could see some of them were nervous and in need of comfort. We talked about the minority/majority adjustment and its impact on people in our Study Abroad class. These students had not experienced this feeling before and did not expect to feel anxious. I realized I had compassion on my White classmates and wanted to help them feel more comfortable, so they could have a positive learning experience. Hopefully, their experience helped them to understand what some Black students feel when they are the only Black person in a mass of White people and they will seek to bring comfort and a reduction of anxiety.

When I taught secondary education and one of my fellow teachers told me her Hispanic student was pregnant. I became defensive of the student as my coworker spoke so poorly about the pregnant girl and said she would never finish high school. At the time, I did not know about cultural responsiveness and I didn't have any children, but I knew this student needed extra support. I told my coworker she needed to be more sympathetic for her student and she should stop talking about her. Later that day, when I saw the pregnant student, I congratulated her and told her to come see me if she ever needed help with her classes. She never came for help, but after she had her baby, she came back to school and would always come by and say hello, showed me pictures of her baby and gave me updates. I never had this student in my class but I could tell my small but genuine concern for her success left a lasting impression on her. Two years later she graduated. I realized that I believed students and wanted the best for them. My desire to advocate for students was the beginning of my transformation into a culturally

responsive educator. Therefore, when I was a teacher in high school, I made culturally responsive pedagogy a priority to ensure that every child received the support, care and advocacy they needed.

They Engaged in Self-Care

Self-Care was mentioned in relation to research question three. The literature has an abundance of information about burn-out and the need for self-care as an enabler to the transformation process (Ooka-Pang, 2017). Burn-out and academic demands of engaging in culturally responsive practices can have an overwhelming effect on the mind and body of African American women.

Kimberly mentioned her African American students needing more attention and support, she also spoke about the need for self-care. Since Kimberly is one of very few African American's in her department, she has had the extra burden on additional responsibilities to ensure her students get everything they need to be successful. Therefore, she made sure she paced herself and did not overwork herself. When she stated that self-care was an essential element, her expression demonstrated that at some point in her career she had experienced a lack of self-care.

Felicia did not hide the fact that she lacked work-life balance in her career, at times. In fact, because she spent so much time doing her job and attending to the demands of being a culturally responsive educator, she neglected her health. Now, she is intentional about creating space for self-care to improve her professional and personal life.

Conclusion

Based on the responses from research question one, I concluded that Black Pride was useful in motivating participants to become culturally responsive professors. My interviews

helped me to draw conclusions about the stages of Nigrescence for each participant, which was related to their identity. Furthermore, I was able to identify specific challenges each participant experienced throughout their careers. They suffered from burn out, stress, being overlooked and racism among other challenges.

Despite the challenges these women encountered, they continued to thrive and remain culturally responsive. Each African American woman professor was resilient and served as advocates for their students, regardless of the circumstances. Advocacy was important because students, particularly their African American students, benefited from culturally responsive professors who assisted them in navigating academia.

Finally, I concluded that Self-Care was important because professors who are culturally responsive work hard and have the potential for burn-out in the PWI workplace. Most Black women professors represent a small population within their institutions, but carry the burden of supporting more students of color than professors in the mainstream. Therefore, Self-Care is crucial and promotes longevity within their careers.

Recommendations

My first recommendation is that advisors and administrators within academia create opportunities to promote Black Pride in their students and faculty. Black Pride is a positive attribute based on the findings of my study.

Advocacy emerged as a way to demonstrate that professors have transformed into culturally responsive educators. Therefore, administrators should look for avenues to support African American professors who serve as advocates for their students.

Another recommendation would be for institutions to hire more African American professors. In doing so, the current professors would not feel as overworked, but would gain

support from colleagues with similar experiences. It would also lighten the load of students who need positive role models and support from African American women professors.

My last recommendation is for institutions to provide opportunities for African American women who are culturally responsive to assist their colleagues in becoming culturally responsive. This would help increase the number of culturally responsive professors at an institution.

Implications for Further Research

I suggest that others replicate my study with additional racial groups, for instance Latinx Americans, Asian Americans or African groups, using my research questions and methodology. The study of different ethnic groups could provide insights about various racial and ethnic professors in academia. This is important because other ethnic groups may be experiencing similar attributes and characteristics as the African American women I interviewed. If so, their stories need to be heard and their issues and concerns need to be addressed for current and future professors.

Another study could include all males. It would be important to determine similarities and differences between men and women.

A researcher could also conduct a study with advisors and administrators at the higher education level. This study would provide insights about the cultural responsiveness of advisors and administrators.

Furthermore, because K-12 is the gateway to higher education. A study of elementary, middle-school and Secondary teachers would shed light on their role related to cultural responsiveness and what it looks like in their classrooms and with their students.

Lastly, this study could be replicated with principals and counselors at the K-12 level. Principals are leaders who set the tone for their school and expectations for their students. It would be important to conduct a study of their cultural responsiveness. The same study could be conducted with secondary counselors, because they play significant roles when they meet with students individually on their school campus.

Summary

This chapter explored the motivation, challenges and transformational experiences of culturally responsive African American Women professors at Predominately White institutions, and how their experiences led them to become culturally responsive. In Chapter One I introduced and defined the term “Culturally Responsive” and highlighted the significant role it plays within academia. Furthermore, I discussed my statement of the problem, purpose of the study and provided a narrative of my personal story. This chapter ended by listing my three research questions: (1) What motivates African American women professors to be culturally responsive? (2) What are the challenges associated with African American women professors who are culturally responsive? and (3) How do African American women professors transform into culturally responsive educators?

Chapter Two displayed the literature review and historical background of African American woman professors. Within this chapter, my theoretical framework was revealed through three frameworks, (1) Critical Race Theory, (2) Nigrescence and (3) Ethic of Care. In Chapter three I developed my methodology and determined that interpretive qualitative design was most appropriate for my study. In chapter four I analyzed my findings through interpretive and thematic analysis. The major themes that emerged were (a) Black Pride (b) Me, Myself and I at a PWI and (c) Resilience and (d) Advocacy and (f) Self-Care. Lastly, in chapter five, I

discussed my findings in relationship to my positionality, my conclusions, recommendations and implications for further research.

Reflections and Personal Contributions

Before I started this study, I thought I knew everything there was to know about being an African American woman in academia, because of my family, background and past. The trials Black women would face in the academic world seemed systemic and repetitive regarding politics and discrimination in the work place. I say this because of what I learned and observed over decades, from my mother and her colleagues. I believed I had observed most experiences from her work life and trials. Furthermore, when I became an adult and observed and heard my sister's stories within academia, it all seemed the same too. However, my mother and my sisters were so passionate about the difficulties they encountered, I did not take the time to look at the entire picture of their journey and what it really meant. Although I knew they were not exaggerating the truth about their injustices, I did not give deep thought or deconstruct the events they were discussing with me or someone else.

As I complete this study, I have realized that my mother, sisters and the four Black women that I interviewed are overcomers. The word overcome can be defined, by Webster's dictionary as, "A person who succeeds in dealing with or gaining control of some problem or difficulty." The problems these women faced such as isolation, discrimination, disrespect, racism and justified frustrations, did not hinder their dedication to pave the way for future scholars, like myself. Simply put, they pushed, fought and endured tribulation at PWI's, so when the time arrived, they would have competent academicians to take their place. They looked forward to a new generation to continue the fight, with the hope the battles would not be the same.

Furthermore, these women were passionate about advocacy, because it would make their students stronger academically and advocacy is morally correct, simply put, the right thing to do. They advocated for their students with the hope that a strong future of academics would be able to break the cycle of barriers in PWI workplaces. They advocated for us with the hope that we would support others with the same dedication that was given and demonstrated to them.

Now, after much thought and deconstruction, I realize that I am adamant about being culturally responsive, because of all that was poured into me as a child and the support, mentoring and advocacy that was given to me as an adult. I am passionate about continuing to fight for social justice and reversing the barriers Black women endure at PWI's. I am the product of an overcomer, who loved and advocated for me. After decades of being poured into, it is my time to push, fight, and endure for the next generation. My hope is that academia will move beyond the current hinderances and work on a better future for our nation. When I enter academia, my goal is to serve as an advocate for all students and to demonstrate care for their well-being. I will do my best to create a positive learning environment that will allow my students to thrive, academically, emotionally and mentally as the next generation of overcomers.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE PROTOCOL

- 1) Tell me about some of your early life experiences as a child.
- 2) Tell me about some of your childhood experiences in school (elementary, secondary, college, graduate school).
- 3) What motivated you to become a professor?
- 4) What does it mean to you to be an African American professor?
- 5) What does it mean to you to be an African American professor at a PWI?
- 6) Why do you consider yourself a culturally responsive professor?
- 7) Why is it important to be culturally responsive?
- 8) What are some of the experiences you that made you realize you needed to become culturally responsive?
- 9) At what point in your career did you become culturally responsive, and did you have to sacrifice or give up anything?
- 10) How would you describe the process of your transformation?
- 11) What or who do you think motivates other professors to transform into culturally responsive educators?
- 12) What components must be in place for someone to become culturally responsive?
- 13) Do you believe your ethnicity influenced your decision to transform? If yes, in what way?
- 14) What does culturally responsive teaching look like in your classroom?
- 15) What does culturally responsive teaching look like in PreK-12 classrooms?

- 16) Were you culturally responsive before or after you earned tenure? Were your reasons strategic? Explain.
- 17) How has being culturally responsive impacted your teaching/curriculum? How has it impacted your life?
- 18) What are the benefits of being culturally responsive?
- 19) What are the challenges of being a culturally responsive professor?
- 20) Are you trying to influence your students to be culturally responsive? How do you do that? What are their reactions?
- 21) Do you look for ways to influence your peers to become culturally responsive? How do you do that?
- 22) In what ways do you influence your supervisors and colleagues to become culturally responsive? How do you go about doing that?
- 23) What messages do you have for future African American women professors who aspire to be culturally responsive educators?