

CAREER MOBILITY OF BLACK AND WHITE UPPER LEVEL  
ADMINISTRATORS IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE  
INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION:  
A CASE STUDY

by

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A DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

Today, more than half a century after *Brown v. Board of Education*, many institutions of higher education, particularly predominantly white institutions (PWIs) are still grappling with issues related to increasing diversity. And while many Institutions of higher education (IHE) now boast large numbers of students from diverse backgrounds, the same cannot be said of the diversity of upper level administrators particularly within PWIs. However, what research has shown is that most IHEs desire and value diversity. However, the means of achieving diversity are many, varied and contested. This study attempted to add to the body of existing literature on diversity within PWIs by drawing upon narratives of Black and White upper level administrators on issues of hiring and career mobility. By contrasting the careers of Black and White upper level administrators within one PWI in the southern United States, this study explored through their narratives what those narratives tell us about the impact of race on the processes of recruiting, hiring, promoting, and retaining upper level administrators within the PWI. NVIVO 7 was used to code and organize the interviews. The interpretation of the findings was framed and viewed through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Specifically, CRT was used to understand ways in which the political category of race impacts the hiring and career mobility of Black upper level administrators compared to their White counterparts within the PWI. The ideas of CRT were used not only in interpreting the findings of this study, but in framing it as well. More specifically, this study examined the effects of race and explored how race is deployed and experienced at the individual, institutional and to some extent, societal levels as evidenced in the narratives of the participants in this study.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents,  
Mrs. Carrie B. McHargh and Mr. Winston M.J. McHargh;  
Daughters Makena Bell and Kendi Pearl  
and Wife,  
Dr. Kagendo Mutua.

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## CHAPTER I:

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Problem

Today many of the large institutions of higher education (IHEs) in the United States are for the most part predominantly white institutions (PWIs). As such many of those IHEs do not have a long history of inclusiveness or of embracing diversity. Indeed, in the Southern part of the country, the majority of those institutions were formerly designated by law as “Whites only” institutions thereby making it illegal for persons of non-White heritage to attend those institutions (Bond, 1969). Today, more than half a century after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), many of those IHEs are still grappling with issues related to diversity that the desegregation mandate engendered. And while many IHEs now boast large numbers of students from diverse backgrounds, the same cannot be said of the diversity of upper level administrators within predominantly white institutions (Bronstein, Rothblum, & Solomon, 1993). In providing the background to the problem, this chapter will answer the following questions: 1) what are some benefits of diversity; 2) is there a legal definition of diversity; 3) how is diversity configured among upper level administrators within higher education; and 4) are there differences in how Black and White upper level administrators get to those positions? In this chapter, I will briefly explore these questions and describe how they will frame the purpose and significance of this study. Finally, this chapter will conclude with the scope of the study, definition of terms and a statement of the limitations and delimitations of the study.

## Benefits of Diversity

While many would be quick to agree that diversity in institutions of higher learning is highly desirable, few would actually provide evidence of the positive effects of diversity on institutions in a way that links diversity with positive or improved educational outcomes in an empirically verifiable way (Alger, 1998). According to Alger (1998), "The unfinished homework in the affirmative action debate concerns the development of an articulated vision - supported by a strong evidentiary basis - of the educational benefits of racial diversity in higher education" (p. 74). Furthermore, the term diversity and its implementation is used extensively and perhaps loosely, to the extent that some people have argued that as a construct, diversity carries very little meaning and is merely a "window dressing" (Brayboy, 2003, p.74). In their paper titled *Diversity and Higher Education: Theory and Impact on Educational Outcome*, Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin (2002) assigned three distinct definitions to the term diversity. First, there is what they refer to as structural diversity. According to Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Peterson, and Allen, (1999), cited in Gurin et al. (2002), structural diversity is simply the representation of diverse groups numerically, thereby referring to nothing more than a head count of individuals from diverse backgrounds within a particular institution. While this may seem to be a very simplistic and superficial way of representing diversity within an institution, one can argue that for institutions to arrive at more complex levels of diversity, there is need for a solid base of structural diversity. Indeed one of the most frequently cited benefits of diversity, namely fostering intergroup understanding, is predicated upon structural diversity. Individuals can learn and internalize the multicultural ethos that diversity engenders in a context where there is representation of diverse groups that facilitates recognition of the compelling interest that diversity serves.

The second definition of diversity that Gurin et al. (2002) offered is informal interactional diversity. Informal interactional diversity takes structural diversity to a more complex level whereby the interest is not simply in numbers of individuals from diverse backgrounds represented in an institution or the numbers of diverse cultures represented in an institution, but rather the emphasis is on the frequency and the quality of intergroup interaction which they argue form the crux of meaningful diversity experiences within institutions of higher learning. Classroom diversity is the third definition of diversity that Gurin et al. (2002) advanced. According to these scholars, classroom diversity includes both content and experiential knowledge of diversity. In its third formulation, diversity is taught, learned and experienced by students within the college classroom. Gurin et al. (2002) have argued racial and ethnic diversity impacts institutions when students are involved in interactional activities with others from diverse backgrounds and also when diverse knowledge forms are a part of the curriculum that is taught in the college classroom. In essence, structural diversity, while important, is not sufficient to bring about the benefits of diversity to an institution. In this same vein, institutions reap maximal benefits of diversity when diversity is part of institutional practice.

While these scholars focus on diversity at the student body level, one can argue that if diversity were achieved at the higher levels of administration within IHEs, then the answer to the question as to whether or not diversity is a desirable goal for an institution to pursue vis-à-vis its student body would be apparent. It is interesting to note that one half century since *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), IHEs are still debating the merits and/or demerits of using whatever corrective means that might be necessary to achieve the diversity of the student body as epitomized by recent related litigation *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003). In *Gratz v. Bollinger* class-action suit, the petitioners (Jennifer Gratz and Patrick Hamacher) both Caucasian and Michigan

residents, alleged that the University of Michigan's use of racial preferences in undergraduate admissions by use of a point system violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 43 U.S.C.§1981. The Supreme Court ruled 6-3 in favor of the petitioners that the university's point system was too mechanistic and therefore unconstitutional. While much of the literature on diversity in IHEs focuses mainly on students, the underlying focus is on embracing a multicultural ethos within institutions by assuring that individuals from underrepresented communities in those institutions are meaningfully included at all levels of institution ranging from students, faculty, staff and administration. Additionally, it is about assuring that those from the dominant culture do not drown the voices of diverse individuals. Therefore, diversity, at any level, is not just about a head count; it is about processes, practices and outcomes.

#### Overview of Legal Foundations for Diversity

Although Affirmative Action as a federally mandated program has a fairly brief history, its historical underpinnings are much longer. The issues undergirding its historical precedence are rife with images of discrimination based upon race, gender, religion, color, and national origin, sexual orientation and disability. While it is argued that the Constitution of the United States and subsequent amendments explicitly affirmed equality of all, citizens of the United States did not all enjoy equal protections under the law, or equal opportunities in employment, promotion, or training (Malcolm, 2007). Thus, the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 mandating non-discriminatory practices was a much-needed piece of legislation in the effort to address and re-dress institutionalized inequalities on the basis of race within federal programs and public institutions. Cast against the legal backdrop of Affirmative Action and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (1868), by contrasting the careers of upper level

administrators within one university in the southern United States, this study details the narratives of the participants who are Black and White upper level administrators in the PWI and what they tell us about the processes of promoting, recruiting, hiring, and retaining upper level administrative positions within the PWI, thereby allowing us a broader view into whether inequalities exist and how such inequalities have been redressed if at all. Within this study, the participants' narratives captured their academic preparation, professional experiences; the impact on their career mobility of socio-political trends related to hiring within IHEs, and types and scope of current and previously held positions. The analyses of these narratives identify patterns in the career mobility of Black and White upper level administrators within a PWI.

The civil rights legislation that originated in the 1960s led to the enactment of policy mandates aimed at the creation of fair treatment of some U.S. citizens previously excluded from access to educational programs and employment opportunities (Brown, 1999). Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964) conferred authority upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accommodations, and to establish the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964) prohibits discrimination in hiring or promotion based on sex, race, color, religion, and national origin in entities receiving federal financial assistance (Civil Rights Act, 1964). With the passage of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (1967), these rights were extended to persons over forty years of age within the protected group as such persons could otherwise be discriminated against due to their age. In 1973, the Rehabilitation Act was passed prohibiting discrimination against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities. Indeed, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 came to be known as the Civil Rights Act for individuals with disabilities because its language very much mirrored that of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Nearly three decades later,



the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (1990) was passed. Title I of ADA extended protection to individuals with disabilities against discrimination in employment within the private sector as well as in programs that receive federal funding. Initially, in the Rehabilitation Act (1973), this protection was limited to the hiring of individuals with disabilities in federal government agencies.

In 1965 President Lyndon Johnson issued the Executive Order 11246 (1965), which prohibited contractors who perform over \$10,000 a year in government business from discriminating in employment decisions. Such contractors and subcontractors were required to develop a written affirmative action program (AAP) for each of their establishments. The initial aim of the AAP was to help contractors identify potential problems in the utilization and participation of under-represented groups in the contractors' workforce. Within the Executive Order 11246 (1965), there was an expectation that efforts at outreach, recruitment and training would be implemented to help members of protected groups compete for jobs on equal footing with other applicants and employees. To ensure compliance, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) was charged with monitoring the compliance with Executive Order 11246 (1965). The expectation outlined in the Executive Order 11246 (1965) was to ensure equal opportunity for traditionally underrepresented groups. Affirmative action was never meant to establish quotas or force employers to hire unqualified persons, but rather to assure that all applicants have the opportunity to compete equitably with other qualified individuals.

Following the civil rights mandates of the 1960s, Title IX of the Education Amendments (1972) was passed. Title IX prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex. It prohibited discrimination in educational programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance with few exceptions. For instance, certain programs including, fraternities, sororities, and volunteer

youth service organizations, such as Boy Scouts, were exempt from this mandate. The Civil Rights Act Amendments (1991) further strengthened the existing federal civil rights laws. A major addition in the 1991 legislation was that it provided for damages in cases of intentional employment discrimination. It also clarified provisions for redressing discriminatory actions. In 1991, Congress found that additional remedies were needed to deter unlawful harassment and intentional discrimination in the workplace. In a case involving workers at a packaging plant who argued that they were dismissed based upon company practices of nepotism and preferential hiring practices that favored White workers, the U.S. Supreme Court (the Court) refused to grant damages to the plaintiffs (*Wards Cove Packing Company v. Antonio*, 1989). The Court's decision not to award the plaintiffs damages set precedence about how such cases should be decided. The Court ruled that the burden of proof was to be on the plaintiffs seeking relief. This case was instrumental in Congress's decision to pass the Civil Rights Act Amendments of 1991.

The role of affirmative action in higher education, then, can be viewed as one of increasing the participation of underrepresented populations. The Supreme Court ruling on the landmark case *Regents of the University of California V. Bakke*, (1978) allowed colleges and universities to administer carefully designed admissions programs that to some extent considered race and ethnicity to foster diversity of their student body. The parameters set forth by *Bakke* and subsequent lower court decisions have been utilized by institutions of higher education to pursue the values inherent in those rulings to create a racially and ethnically diverse academic community. With one exception, *Bakke* provided the legal footing for race conscious decisions in efforts to diversify the student body in colleges and universities across the country (*Hopwood*, 1996). In 1996, however, the Fifth Circuit Court ruled that race could not be used as a factor in deciding admission in the University of Texas Law School (*Hopwood*, 1996). The defendant

institution appealed the decision in Hopwood but the Court denied certiorari. Therefore, in states under the jurisdiction of the Fifth Circuit, Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi, race could not be legally used as a factor to diversify student bodies until the Grutter v. Bollinger (2003) decision. Similarly, the 2003 University of Michigan reverse discrimination case (Gratz v. Bollinger, 2003) aligned with previous court rulings that IHEs could not use race as the sole factor to diversify the student body. While these cases dealt with affirmative action programs specifically targeted to student admission, it is likely that these court decisions will have negative consequences on diversity at all levels of public IHEs and especially in PWIs. If indeed this were to be the case, then it would likely be reflected in the numbers of Black upper level administrators in the PWI from which participants for this study will be drawn. Negative consequences of current diversity trends in IHEs across the country following the rulings on recent affirmative action lawsuits may further be manifested not only in decreased diversity of upper level administrators but also in the ability and/or potential for advancement for those already in positions considered upper level administration. In his study describing and analyzing the trends of representation of African Americans in executive-level positions at IHEs in the years 1993 and 1999, Jackson (2004) raised a provocative question about the future of increasing the representation of Blacks at the executive-level positions in IHEs in view of the severe disparity (70% gap) in favor of Whites for executive level positions over Blacks in an era when affirmative action policies were intact. Jackson (2004) asked, "what will occur in the present era when institutions are less likely to use affirmative action policies for fear of litigation" (p.17).

#### Diversity Among Administrators in PWIs

Various attributes of diversity among administrators of institutions of higher education (IHE) have been studied from different perspectives including female administrators (Mosley,

1980; Sagaria, 1988), Chicanos (de la Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1988), and Black males (Jackson, 2003). Studies have shown that within colleges and universities across the country, administrators expect to change their careers over time as a means of increasing their status, gaining authority, and growing their income (Sagaria & Moore, 1983). Such career changes may result from a promotion, organizational restructuring to meet personnel needs, and, in some cases, from changing institutions altogether. According to these researchers, career mobility of university administrators has also indicated that career changes are a means by which institutions meet the important responsibility of assuring equal employment opportunity and affirmative action. Further, research has shown that groups whose status in the institution is constrained by their race, gender, or age are likely to experience significantly less career upward mobility (Sagaria, 1988). Elsewhere, sexual orientation and disability have been established as factors that pose constraints to access to employment and/or promotion. However, in the current study, the focus is on race as the potentially constraining factor in career mobility.

In the past three decades in the United States, interest in diversity has increased in education, private industry, and governmental agencies (Johnson & Wiley 1998). While some scholars argue that diversity initiatives within many institutions are no more than lip service paid to building truly diverse communities, Glazer-Raymo (1999) argued that institutions that seek and embrace diversity reap invaluable benefits. According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, one of the roles of higher education is to provide

national leadership on the issue of diversity... and [furthermore, institutions of higher learning have to carry out their] responsibilities in a diverse democracy and American pluralism, diversity, and justice-seeking [should be] elements of a quality liberal education for all students. (para. 1, <http://www.aacu.org/issues/diversity>)

On one hand, many benefits have been linked with increased diversity in higher educational contexts (Smith, 1989); on the other, Jackson (2004) has suggested that achieving

diversity in college campuses across the United States, particularly predominantly white institutions, may not be an easy task to accomplish. While as a socio-political construct diversity generally entails recognizing and affirming the differences that constitute the individual uniqueness along the dimensions of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, disabilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies, the focus in this study is on race. In conducting the literature review for this study, many of the studies found focused primarily on diversity among students and fewer focused on the diversity of faculty and administrators. However, the recent devolution of Affirmative Action practices through the elimination of race-based admission preferences at public IHEs in the United States today raises critical questions about whether or not racial diversity in the student body, is still a compelling interest for public IHEs (Gratz v. Bollinger, 2003). Even though recent litigation of reverse discrimination cases (e.g., The University of Michigan Case, Gratz v. Bollinger) has dismantled affirmative action programs that specifically targeted student admission into PWIs, the court's decision has implications for diversity at all levels of public IHEs and especially in PWIs.

Research (Jackson, 2004) focusing on diversity of administrators in public PWIs indicate that the shortfalls in the hiring of administrators of diverse backgrounds within PWIs is attributable to more than a paucity of qualified candidates of color for positions in upper level administration. Jackson (2004) has suggested that there are several other difficulties inherent in achieving diversity among administrators in PWIs. The difficulties include lack of sound policies guiding hiring, and overt and subtle discriminatory practices meted out against applicants of color by search committees through the search process (Smith, Turner, Osei-Kofi, & Richards, 2004). Further, studies have suggested that the few available qualified diverse candidates are often lured and recruited by institutions that boast clout and status and are therefore able and

willing to present hiring packages that are extremely attractive and competitive to those candidates. This results in few and often less qualified candidates in the market as potential hires (Mooney, 1989; White, 1992; Yale, 1990). Yet other studies, while conceding the existence of fewer qualified candidates of color in any applicant pool for the majority of administrative and even faculty positions within IHEs, argue that covert and overt discriminatory practices are really at the crux of the scarcity of candidates of color in applicant pools for upper level administrative and faculty positions in PWIs (Bronstein, Rothblum, & Solomon, 1993; Collins, 1990; Cross, 1994; Turner & Myers, 1997). When viewed against the larger backdrop of the dismantlement of diversity-related initiatives in IHEs across the country, the gravity of these documented challenges to hiring administrators of diverse backgrounds is significantly amplified.

#### Statement of the Problem

The challenges of increasing administrator diversity in PWIs as well as in other IHEs across the country are many and complex as evidenced by the literature cited above. Astin, Antonio, Cress, and Astin, (1997) have suggested that strategies for overcoming those challenges are equally plentiful but often contested. However, as stated, research (e.g., Jackson, 2004; Mooney, 1989; White, 1992; Yale, 1990) has suggested that there are several significant difficulties in achieving diversity among administrators in PWIs even without factoring in the current climate of the degeneration of affirmative action by legislation, dictum, and the courts. Literature (Smith, 1989) asserts the invaluable benefits of embracing diversity at all levels of the institution and further studies (Gurin et al., 2002; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005) also attribute great benefits to diversity. While several studies have been carried out that have documented numerous challenges to hiring diverse personnel in PWIs, very few studies (McLaughlin & Riesman, 1985) have actually examined the hiring process of administrators in PWIs from the

standpoint of the candidate; such as successful candidates who accepted an offer, or candidates who withdrew from the process, or who turned down an offer (Reid & Rogers, 1981; Sagaria, 1986) or both successful and unsuccessful candidates (de la Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1988; Sagaria, 2002; WoodBrooks, 1991). While these few studies have shed light on important issues pertaining to the hiring of persons of diverse backgrounds for administrative positions in PWIs, only one study the researcher found (McLaughlin & Riesman, 1985) focused exclusively on the selection of upper level administrators within PWIs from the standpoint of the candidates themselves. Collectively, however, the findings from these studies inform us that biases exist on basis of race and gender. According to de la Luz Reyes and Halcon (1988), racial biases manifest themselves as “typecasting, practices of tokenism, limiting minority hiring, devaluing minority research, and hairsplitting” (p. 680) where selection decisions are based upon arbitrary hairline criteria that favor a White candidate. Another critical source of the biases faced by diverse persons as they try to advance as administrators in IHEs is gleaned from the research on career movement of administrators that clearly shows that these same factors of race, gender and age do indeed hinder the upward career movement of administrators who bear these attributes (e.g., Sagaria, 1988).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to extend the growing body of research on careers of upper level administrators in PWIs. By contrasting the career mobility of both Black and White upper level administrators within one PWI in the southern United States, this study examines through the narratives of participants issues of hiring and selection, career movement, and career change and how these issues constitute themselves around race. By drawing upon both Black and White upper level administrators, this study more fully describes how factors related to the challenges

of hiring Black administrators and career movement of administrators in general as identified in previous studies play out in the careers of the participants. The goal was to holistically understand why a half a century after desegregation of PWIs, the numbers of Black administrators continues to lag in comparison to the relative progress made in PWIs to increase the numbers of faculty and students of color (El-Khawas, 1990). More specifically, the purpose of this study was to examine the effects of race on the careers of Black and White upper level administrators' in a predominantly white university in the southern United States. The goal of the study then was to explore the idea that the political category of race is deployed and experienced at the societal, institutional and individual levels and it impacts differently the careers of Black and White administrators in PWIs.

By drawing upon and contrasting the narratives of Black and White upper level administrators in a PWI regarding their careers and their ascent to their current positions, this study brought together critical factors identified in previous research to explain the scarcity of people of color in upper level administration including their preparation, qualifications, their numbers, interview/selection process, institutional hiring policies, gender and race issues. In previous studies, (e.g., de la Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1988; Reid & Rogers, 1981; Sagaria, 2002) those factors have been studied in isolation; within this study, all those factors were brought to bear in tracing the career of each individual participant. As stated previously, this study focused exclusively on race as a factor that has been found in previous research to constrain career mobility by focusing on Black and White upper level administrators in one PWI in southern United States. This study was guided by the following two research questions:



1. What differences exist in the hiring process of Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of selected Black and White upper level administrators within a PWI?
2. What differences exist in the career mobility of Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of selected Black and White upper level administrators within a PWI?

### Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The overarching interest of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the examination of race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT offers a trenchant critique of liberalism – especially law. CRT posits that racism is embedded in the very fabric of American life. One tenet of CRT asserts that "formal" conceptions of equality, expressed in rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board, can remedy only the most blatant forms of discrimination . . . that do stand out and attract our attention" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7). Color-blind rules in IHEs that treat all persons as though they have equal access to power and privilege are those that are often deployed when it comes to determining who is hired, fired, or promoted. The presumption that all qualified candidates will be treated equally because there is an equal employment statement in policy manuals is challenged under this thinking. Critical race theorists (Robinson, 2004; West, 1993) argue that there are societal, institutional and even individual forms of racism that exist that are deployed against persons of color who are, for instance, attempting to ascend the social ladder and that such acts of racism comprise everyday experiences of persons of color. Delgado called these acts *microaggressions*—the insidious everyday acts of racism that are meted out against people of color and to which members of the dominant culture may be oblivious. Within this study, these issues will be examined from the

narratives of Black and White upper level administrators in PWIs drawing upon their own experiences along their career paths that took them to their current positions. In CRT, narratives are critical because they serve as a counterpoint to the dominant narratives of colorblind policy and law. Bell's (1980) principle of interest convergence is also important in the analysis and understanding of those narratives. According to Bell, the “principle of ‘interest convergence’ provides: The interest for Blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of Whites” (p. 523).

The career mobility of Black and White upper level administrators in PWIs within this study were examined from the standpoint of CRT. Focusing on a number of important varied factors related to the participants’ ascent to upper level administrative positions including, academic preparation, qualifications, relevant work experiences, and search and interview/appointment processes, The researcher invoked CRT in order to account for differences in career mobility of Black and White upper level administrators in the selected IHE. Specifically, CRT was used to understand ways in which the political category of race impacts career mobility for African American upper level administrators compared to their White counterparts in a predominantly white institution. Additionally, CRT was used to interrogate the deployment of color-blind hiring policies as articulated in equal employment policies that claim not to discriminate against otherwise qualified persons based upon race, gender, religion, or national origin. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) critiqued color-blind policies as being effective only in dismantling the most blatant forms of discrimination, but otherwise being ineffective in dislodging the racism that constitutes everyday experiences of persons of color. Therefore, CRT was employed in this study in order to more adequately understand and account for differences that may exist in the way Black and White upper level administrators construct their ascent into

those positions and their perception of their potential for further ascent and the role they see race playing into those issues. Therefore, the ideas of CRT were used not only in interpreting the findings of this study, but in framing it as well.

Also, the ideas of Critical Whiteness Studies (Roediger, 1999; Scheurich & Young, 1997; Sleeter, 1993) were used to account for possible differences between and within the narratives of White and Black administrators' vis-à-vis race and racism in hiring and/or promotion within upper level administrative positions within PWIs. Scheurich, a Critical White Studies scholar, draws several distinctions between how people of color and Whites define racism (1993). According to Scheurich (1993), to persons of color, racism is a social group experience, which W.E.B. Du Bois referred to as the "double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others [Whites]" p.3. On the other hand, Scheurich (1993) argues that to Whites, racism is an individual act. "Among Whites, the idea that each person is largely the source or origin of herself or himself, that is, individualism is considered a natural facet of life" (p. 6). Thus, within this logic, among Whites, the results or consequences that a person experiences are directly linked to his/her actions. Within this logic, Whites would argue that promotion or demotion, or being passed over would not be linked to overt or covert racist acts that defines who should be promoted or demoted, but rather would be understood to be linked to the actions of the individual, such as not being adequately prepared for the position, etc. This idea is linked to the concept of pulling oneself up by one's own bootstraps. Further critical race theorists argue that though no one person bears a unitary essential identity, even the identities that are created when positionalities intersect are socialized in different ways that allows for unequal access to power and resources (hooks, 1991; Ogbu, 1983; Spivak, 1988).

As a Critical Whiteness Studies scholar, Scheurich (1993) argued that the longer one group is dominant, the more effectively

the styles of thinking, acting, speaking, and behaving of the dominant group... become the socially correct or privileged ways of thinking, acting, speaking, and behaving . . . The ways of the dominant group become universalized as measures of merit, hiring criteria, grading standards, predictors of success, correct grammar, appropriate behavior, and so forth, all of which are said to be distributed as differences in individual effort, ability, or intelligence. Membership in a social group and group-related, inequitable distribution of resources and power thus disappear under the guise of individualism. (p. 7)

Though CRT and Whiteness studies are discussed separately, this is not meant to suggest that they operate in a mutually exclusive way in their theoretical framing of this study. Rather CRT and Whiteness studies are merely opposite sides of the same coin. While on one hand critical race theory explores the oppression that is meted out against those who are assigned to the racialized political category of Black (though not exclusively) on the other side, Whiteness studies explore how Whiteness as a political category engenders racialized privilege. Cast against the backdrop of this theoretical framework, the arguments made by Sagaria (2002) regarding the filters used to eliminate candidates interviewing for administrative positions are supported. Likewise, within this study, the contrasting patterns of career ascent into upper levels of administration within the PWI by Black and White administrators will be considered against these theoretical frameworks in order understand/theorize the extent to which the theoretical arguments made here are supported or not in actual practice.

#### Importance of the Study

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the effects of race on the careers of Black and White upper level administrators in a predominantly white university in the southern United States. Therefore, the overarching issue of importance that this inquiry will illuminate is the efforts of a selected university to remediate discriminatory practices against racial minorities

as it relates to the hiring and promotion of African Americans for upper level administrative positions. More specifically, by examining the career mobility of upper level administrators in a predominantly white university, this study will shed light on differences in the career mobility of individuals of differing racial backgrounds. Participants of this study will comprise individuals of African American and European American descent occupying a variety of upper level administrative positions in the selected university. This study will consider ways in which the career mobility of Black and White upper level administrators might differ in terms of the role of intra-university promotion or external hire/changing institutions. Within this study, race, as a factor, is hypothesized to play significantly into who gets hired and/or promoted into upper level administrative positions within the PWI. This study will therefore explore the role of race in the process of hiring and/promotion into upper administrative positions of Black and White individuals within one university in the southern United States.

#### Scope of the Study

This study will trace the career mobility of African American and European American upper level administrators in a selected predominantly white institution. Further, it will focus exclusively on race and its relation to the patterns of career mobility of the participants and how race may limit the career advancement of African Americans into upper level administrative positions within a PWI. These delimitations constrained by the selection of participants, setting and demographics will likely have a limiting impact on the generalizability of the findings of this study.

#### Definition of Terms

Upper Level Administrators. In this study, upper level administrators are individuals who hold positions within IHEs that fall under the EEO-1 level as defined by the U.S. Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission 1996. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was an agency created in 1964 under the Civil Rights Act (1964). According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) classification system, EEO-1 positions within a company or an institution generally refer to positions held by officials and managers whose jobs require administrative and/or managerial skills necessary for setting and executing broad policies and direct individual departments or special phases of a firm's operation. Typically, the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (1938) relative to wage and overtime provisions do not apply to such EEO-1 positions (<http://www.doi.gov/hrm/pmanager/classfaq.html>).

Within institutions of higher learning, individuals in EEO-1 positions might include those whose primary responsibilities entail the management of a department or subdivision. Such positions require the performance of work directly related to management of policies or general business operations of the department or subdivision.

(<http://www.doi.gov/hrm/pmanager/classfaq.html>). Within such positions, the incumbent is typically expected to exercise independent judgment and discretion. Additionally, such positions typically require incumbents to direct the work of others. Included in the EEO-1 position are Presidents, Vice Presidents, Deans and Directors.

According to the U.S. Department of Interior, the need to classify positions is premised upon the need for fair and consistent treatment of employees in levels of responsibility and in pay. Individual positions are classified and the results of the classification--the determination of title, series, and grade--become the legal basis for paying an employee in that position. This became the "law of the land" in Chapter 51 of Title 5 U.S.C., as amended (The Classification Act of 1949). A critical element of the classification of positions is the Position Description (PD). The PD becomes a written record of the primary duties and responsibilities that come with

that position and the criteria against which employee performance may be evaluated

(<http://www.doi.gov/hrm/pmanager/classfaq.html>).

Black and White administrators. In this study, these terms are used to refer to individuals of African American and European American descent, respectively. In this study, these terms are also used interchangeably.

Critical race theory. In this study, the definition of CRT is derived from the works of Bell (1980) and Delgado and Stefanić (2001) in which they assert that racism is experienced as a normal everyday experience in society. Moreover they argue that the racism is often unrecognizable because it is embedded in the legal and political structures.

Whiteness. In this study, the understanding of the term Whiteness is derived from Harris's (1993) definition that simultaneously accords it the meaning of "identity, status, and property" (p. 1725). According to Harris (1993), "Whiteness . . . is simultaneously an act of self-identity and of personhood...and as property in the intrinsic, public and legal realms . . . The law's construction of Whiteness defined and affirmed critical aspects of identity (who is White); of privilege (what benefits accrue from that status); and, of property (what legal entitlements arise from that status)" (p. 1725).

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). In this study, PWIs will be the designation given to institutions of higher education where the majority of the student body is of European descent. Specifically, the institution of focus in this study during Jim Crow was previously designated as a "Whites only" institution where Black students' attendance was therefore prohibited by law.

Color blind/ Race-neutral. This study adopts the views on color blindness advanced by CRT scholars. The dominant discourses position colorblindness as an ideal. However, CRT

critiques this appeal to a rhetoric that makes no reference to race because by so doing, it denies Black people agency by taking away their power to name their own reality, which includes naming racism. According to Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, and Thomas (1995), “the appeal to colorblindness can thus be said to serve as part of an ideological strategy by which the current Court obscures its active role in sustaining hierarchies of racial power” (p. xxiii). Pointing out to the dangers of color blindness, these scholars assert that “it allows us to ignore the racial construction of Whiteness and reinforces its privileged and oppressive position. Thus, Whiteness remains the normative standard and Blackness remains different, other, and marginal.” While research mainly refers to color-blind, litigation has used the term race-neutral. In this dissertation, the two terms have the same meaning.

Interest convergence. In this study, the definition adopted for “interest convergence” is the one given by Bell (1980). According to Bell, the 'principle of “interest convergence” provides: The interest for Blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of Whites' (p.523).

Narrative research. In this study, narrative research refers to narrative inquiry in the process of gathering information for the purpose of research through storytelling. The researcher then writes a narrative of the experience. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) noted that “Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world” (p.2). In other words, people's lives consist of stories.

Whiteness as property. In this study, the meaning of Whiteness as property is derived from Harris’s (1993) conception in which she delineated four property functions of Whiteness:



(1) rights of disposition; (2) rights to use and enjoyment; (3) reputation and status property; and (4) the absolute right to exclude.

Structural Racism. In this study, structural racism is used synonymously with institutional racism, which refers to failure, by institutions, such as a university or a corporation to provide customary service to certain individuals due to their race, nationality, ethnicity, and cultural background.

Structural Diversity. In this study, the meaning of structural diversity will be consistent with the definition offered in Gurin et al. (2002); structural diversity is simply the representation of diverse groups numerically, thereby referring to nothing more than a head count of individuals from diverse backgrounds within a particular institution.

#### Delimitations and Limitations

This study focuses exclusively on Black and White administrators in EEO-1 positions drawn from one predominantly white university located in southern United States. Additionally, the analysis focuses exclusively on race and its relation to the careers of the participants and how race may impact the career advancement of African Americans into upper level administrative positions within a PWI. These delimitations narrow the scope of this study and pose some foreseeable limitations for the study as a whole. First, by focusing exclusively on race as a factor that may inhibit the career mobility of upper level administrators in the PWI, it ignores the experiences of other upper level administrators of whose culturally defined status (e.g. age, gender, and disability) may impede career mobility and advancement in similar ways to that of their African American counterparts. Secondly, by focusing on EEO-1 administrators in one university this further narrows the participant pool. However, the narrow scope of the study notwithstanding, the findings will nonetheless be useful in shedding light on a topic that has not

been extensively studied. Today, most current studies have focused on the hiring experiences of candidates of color and specifically African American candidates into faculty positions (Busenberg & Smith, 1997). However, considerably less research exists on African American administrators with PWIs, with few studies examining administrators performing faculty roles, e.g., Deans of colleges. Therefore, the importance of this study still stands despite the foreseen limitations.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Overview of Chapter

In this chapter, the literature review for this study is provided. In order to more adequately trace the career mobility of upper level administrators in predominantly white institutions of higher education, a comprehensive review of current literature on the topic is provided in this chapter. For purposes of framing the study more broadly, first and briefly, literature on the historical and legal context of desegregation in higher education is provided. This is important in laying a foundational framework and backdrop against which to view the careers of upper level administrators in predominantly white institutions of higher education and how those individuals got to occupy particular positions. This is followed by a review of literature on the issues of achieving racial equity among administrators in PWIs. Specifically, the researcher searched various electronic databases such as Education Full Text, Academic Universe, JSTOR, and LexisNexis Academic drawing primarily from peer-reviewed journal articles published in higher education and related journals. Additionally, an exhaustive literature search was conducted in LegalTrac database for legal sources that inform the legal aspects of this study. It is believed that studying the career mobility of upper level administrators may provide some insight into the factors that might explain the paucity of upper level Black administrators in PWIs. The theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory is provided in this chapter as well. Since much of the research in this area has identified many challenges to hiring upper level administrators of color in PWIs, this study may offer critical insights into possible strategies that

have been effective in attracting, recruiting and retaining qualified upper level Black administrators within the PWI as evidenced by the narratives of upper level administrators who will be interviewed in this study.

## Historical and Legal Background of Desegregation in Higher Education

### *Brief Historical Background on Education in the Southern States*

According to O'Brien (1999), in order to grasp fully the discriminatory effects of segregation, one must place desegregation in its historical context. The history of desegregation of educational institutions in the South in the United States is rife with practices that officially sanctioned and maintained the separation of races in all spheres of life, including education. In many states in the South prior to the Civil War, African Americans received no formal education (O'Brien, 1999). Indeed, in many of those states, such as Alabama and Georgia, it was illegal to teach slaves to read or write (Joiner, Bonner, Shearouse & Smith, 1979). According to Joiner et al. (1979), in the pre-Civil War South, the lack of education was not only the experience of African Americans in the South, but also that of poor Whites. If poor White children attended school at all, it was in inadequate, poor schools while on the other hand, children from rich White families attended private academies. The rule of enforced State-sanctioned illiteracy was widely observed (Bond, 1969), although it has been suggested that some slave owners taught slaves to read and write for the former's economic benefit (Holmes, 1970). Thus, after Civil War, on one hand, African Americans—former slaves—who had long been denied education, seeing education as means for economic and social mobility, embraced it with great enthusiasm while on the other hand, the White public resisted and gave little support for education of Blacks at public expense (Anderson, 1988; Weinberg, 1977). However, despite the enthusiasm with which some former slaves embraced education, there were real limits to how far they could

pursue this impulse. Prior to the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1868, former slaves (albeit newly emancipated—in 1865), did not have rights to American citizenship. As such they did not have any legal basis upon which to lay claim to a good education. The ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States (including former slaves and their descendants). Through the Fourteenth Amendment, all United States citizens were granted a right to equal protection under the law.

#### *Overview of Legal Issues Affecting Desegregation in Higher Education*

The impetus for desegregation of IHEs is rooted in the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution in which all citizens are entitled to equal protection under the law. However, the interpretation of “equal protection” has not been as clear cut or definitive as it may seem. When applied to education of races, the equal protection clause has evolved over time, heavily influenced by the prevailing political climate. In this section on legal issues, three legal aspects will be reviewed as they relate to desegregation of institutions of higher education. First, significant pre-Brown v. Board of Education (1954) litigation that challenged and/or changed the interpretation of the equality clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) in regards to the application of separate but equal in education will be reviewed briefly, including how it led up to the dismantling of the doctrine in the 1954 ruling of Brown. Second, the Civil Rights legislation mandated the federal government to oversee the dismantling of dual system of higher education in a number of states that practiced de jure segregation will be reviewed. Third, litigation that charged entities with the violation of the Equality Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by perpetuating a dual system of higher education will then be reviewed. Together, these legal issues demonstrate

ways in which the interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution in regard to education has been influenced by prevailing social-political views on race in America and at the same time demonstrate the legal foundations of diversity in higher education as a compelling interest of the institutions of higher education.

### *Early Litigation Challenging Separate But Equal Doctrine*

Time and time again, politics has mediated the interpretation and implementation of the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) to the Constitution in which all citizens are entitled to equal protection under the law. The landmark case that stamped racial segregation as an acceptable practice on the American public psyche particularly in the South but also in some institutions in the North was *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). The enormous influence of this landmark case, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), was its legitimization of racial segregation through the deployment of the “separate but equal” doctrine. Filed in 1892 in Louisiana, the plaintiff, Homer Adolph Plessy who was racially categorized as Black under Louisiana law though he was seven-eighths White and only one-eighth Black, alleged that being arrested for sitting in the “Whites only” car in the East Louisiana Railroad car violated his constitutional rights under the Thirteenth (1865) and Fourteenth Amendments (1869) to the Constitution. The Thirteenth Amendment prohibits slavery or involuntary servitude. Dissatisfied with the rulings of the Louisiana lower court and the Louisiana Supreme Court, Plessy took his case to the Supreme Court of the United States, which in 1896 upheld the rulings of the State Courts thereby institutionalizing segregation in public accommodations, transportation, and ultimately education. The Supreme Court ruling written by Justice Brown stated,

We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff's argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it. (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896)

This ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* not only institutionalized Jim Crowism but the separate but equal doctrine became the legal foundation upon which early decisions on cases that challenged the doctrine were framed. For instance, in *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), the University of Texas, a White institution, was compelled to admit an African-American law student since no comparable school existed for Black students, similar decisions in both *Sipuel v. Board of Regents* (1948) and *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938) where the state was compelled to admit qualified African American candidate into the only publicly-funded law school. In *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education* (1950), the courts ruled that complete racial segregation in classrooms, libraries, and cafeterias of enrolled Black graduate students was unconstitutional. These cases were based on compelled admission by courts since the separate but equal doctrine presented African American students no educational alternatives or inferior educational choices due to the White-only access to higher education, thereby rendering their education blatantly unequal. Court rulings from several suits following *Plessy v. Ferguson* but prior to 1954 were guided by these interpretations of separate but equal doctrine. In *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), innate, qualitative factors constituting the higher caliber of the program including alumni networks and reputation of the school, and other qualities of the school that were less readily quantifiable were presented as proof of the superiority of the school in comparison to the African-American law school that Texas had established to serve its Black residents as a way to escape from serving African American students at the established White school.

One legal commentator (Kujovich, 1987, cited in Dugan, 1993) has suggested that the ruling of the court in *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) implied that racially segregated graduate or professional programs were inherently unequal, although the court refused to strike the separate

but equal doctrine. It was not until *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) that the court ruled that the separate but equal doctrine was in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. While the ruling of *Brown* was more readily enforceable within the elementary and secondary levels of public education where attendance is compulsory, its application to desegregation of higher educational institutions proved more challenging. In fact, studies (see, e.g., Dugan, 1993; Fienberg, 1993) have suggested that one of the biggest deterrents in litigation related to desegregation of higher education has been this elective nature of higher education whereby, unlike elementary or secondary schools, higher education is elective and it is neither free nor compulsory. Feinberg (1993) stated that this “voluntary nature of higher education has posed unique barriers in school desegregation since remedial measures traditionally imposed in primary and secondary schools, such as busing, zoning, and quotas, [are] inappropriate” (p. 2). However, challenges notwithstanding, in *Florida ex rel. Hawkins v. Board of Control of Florida* (1956), the Court’s ruling upheld the rule of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), thereby effectively applying the desegregation requirement of the *Brown* ruling to higher education institutions. However, no action was taken to impose the desegregation mandate of *Brown* to many of the former de jure segregation states. For instance, in Mississippi, no such action was taken until 1962 when the court ordered the admission of James Meredith into the University of Mississippi (*Meredith v. Fair*, 1962). According to Brown (1999), in a similar vein, the University of Alabama was ordered by the Supreme Court to admit Autherine Lucy commencing on February 3, 1956, though only to suspend her and later expel her “for her own safety.”

In recent years, CRT scholars (e.g., Anderson, 2007; Bell, 1980) have critiqued and questioned the extent to which *Brown v. Board of Education* really created equality for Black children in schools. Bell (1980) argued that true equal protection against racial discrimination



under the law for Blacks “will require the surrender of racism-granted privileges for Whites” (p. 523), an idea that many Whites cannot simply envision. More recently, Anderson's (2007) critique demonstrates that today, more than half a century after *Brown v. Board of Education*, Black children's poor performance in school is continually blamed on pathological weaknesses and failures inherent in the African American culture. Anderson takes issue not only with the resegregation of public schools, facilitated especially by charter schools and private schools that offer ‘school choice,’ but also extends his examination on the factors responsible for the decline in the performance of Black and other students of color in schools in America. He examines the troubling tendency “to blame the persistence of unequal educational performance on culture of Africans” (p. 360). He asserts this tendency to blame the victim contributes to prevailing unfounded assumptions about the inferiority of African American intellect. His argument moves and extends Bell’s ideas on how equality among races could be achieved. Anderson appears to suggest that Bell’s argument that equality between Whites and Blacks would be possible if Whites relinquished some of their racism-granted privileges. At the same time, acknowledging this may not be enough to lead to racial equality as long as an assumption on the inherent inferiority of Blacks remains unchallenged.

#### *Impact of Legislation on Desegregation of Higher Education*

Though in *Florida ex rel. Hawkins v. Board of Control of Florida* (1956) the court’s ruling extended the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) to institutions of higher education, the “courts remained silent on officially mandating the dismantlement of the dual collegiate structures” (Brown, 1999, p. xvi). Only the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 brought about the pressure to dismantle the dual system of higher education. Specifically, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states,

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance, (P.L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241)

While the Civil Rights Act of 1964 did not expressly address higher education in the mandate, the regulations for its administrative implementation declared that “in administering a program regarding which the recipient has previously discriminated . . . the recipient must take affirmative action to overcome the effects of prior discrimination” (34 C.F.R. 100.3 [6][i], cited in Brown, 1999). This regulation therefore gave the federal government the impetus for its oversight of public higher education desegregation.

#### *Post-Civil Rights Act Litigation: Adams States Litigation*

Title VI notwithstanding, nineteen states continued to operate a dual system of higher education (Brown, 1999). Specifically, those states were Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Between 1969 and the mid-70s, the Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) issued notices to ten of the states that operated dual systems of higher education that they were not in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964). A suit initially filed against the ten states in 1970 supplemented this notice. Originally it was filed as a class action suit by plaintiff Kenneth Adams who was a Black student from Mississippi on behalf of other similarly situated college students and taxpayers (Brown, 1999) in nine other southern and border states. The plaintiffs were joined by the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund in bringing the suit against Elliot Richardson who was then secretary of HEW. The suit came to be known simply as Adams v. Richardson (1973). Initially, it was against the ten states to which HEW had issued notice of

noncompliance with Title VI, but later Adams included all nineteen states that were identified as practicing dual systems of higher education. In the suit, the plaintiffs charged that those states operated higher education systems that were segregated and discriminatory. The Adams litigation died in 1990 when a ruling in a lawsuit, *Women’s Equity League v. Cavazos* (1990), was issued stating that plaintiffs lacked a private right of action against a federal agency. While the case was dismissed, the Court affirmed the right of the plaintiffs to sue and states were left with the responsibility of enforcing compliance to the enforcement of Title VI.

Stemming from the Adams litigation, private plaintiff lawsuits were filed in Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Louisiana, four of the original nineteen states named in the Adams lawsuits. More specifically, those lawsuits were *United States v. Fordice* (1992); *Knight v. Alabama*, 1991/1995; *United States v. Louisiana*, 1981; and *Geier v. Alexander* (1984) in Tennessee. In the following section, these post-Adams states litigation will be discussed with particular attention paid to the landmark case that has been referred to as the “Brown v. Board” for higher education, specifically *United States v. Fordice* (1992) as it set the legal precedent for discrimination cases in higher education.

*Higher education desegregation in Tennessee (Geier v. Alexander, 1984).* In May of 1968, Rita Sanders (later Rita Sanders Geier) filed a class action suit, *Sanders v. Ellington* (1968), on behalf of all Black and White Tennesseans; Black and public high school students and parents within the state; students, staff, and faculty at the historically Black Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial University seeking a court injunction against the identifiably White University of Tennessee’s proposed expansion to open a branch in Nashville called Nashville Center. They charged that the opening the branch campus in Nashville would permanently make Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial University (later known as Tennessee State University) a

Black institution thereby perpetuating a dual system of higher education. In addition, the plaintiffs charged that the state's funding formula perpetuated segregation in violation of Title VI and the Equal Protection Clause. In 1974 the parties filed a motion to merge the UT Nashville Center and Tennessee State with the resulting campus named Tennessee State University. The motion was granted and the two universities merged "tailoring the 'gravity' of the remedy to the 'gravity' of the constitutional violations to be corrected" (Fienberg, 1993, p. 7).

The merging of a predominantly Black and a predominantly white institution in *Geier v. Alexander* (1984) did not end the litigation or dissolve the discussions over how higher education desegregation was to be effected in Tennessee in order to be in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and satisfy the Equality Clause of the Constitution. In the stipulation of the settlement between the plaintiffs and the defendants (*Geier v. Alexander*, 593 F. Supp.1263 [1984], cited in Brown, 1999), measures were outlined to end the dual system of higher education in Tennessee while at the same time maximizing and improving the educational opportunities for African American Tennesseans. The measures called for increase in the presence of Black faculty, staff, administration and students at Tennessee's White institutions and White faculty, staff, administration and students at Tennessee's Black institutions (Stipulation Settlement, 1984, cited in Brown, 1999). Further, a goal was set for a fifty percent increase in White undergraduate enrollment, faculty and administration at Tennessee State University. The language of the settlement did not address equalizing enrollment in other higher education institutions in the State, but rather left it to individual schools to set and pursue their own goals of desegregation. Additionally, a Desegregation Monitoring Committee was established to provide oversight and the implementation of the settlement.

Some have argued that in *Geier v. Alexander* (1984) the court settled for a remedy that was administratively efficient that elevated racial balancing as its primary issue of focus but left unanswered important questions of educational policy, particularly as they related to Tennessee's other predominantly white and predominantly black institutions (Brown, 1999; Fienberg, 1993). The case also brought the idea of institutional mergers as a way to resolve desegregation questions and introduced the concept of a court appointed monitoring committee. In 2001 the Parties entered into Geier Consent Decree and in 2006, the suit was dismissed with the federal judge agreeing that the state has satisfied all requirements.

*Higher education desegregation in Mississippi (United States v. Fordice, 1992)*. O'Brien (1999) has argued that "desegregation remedies focused on the racial identifiability of institutions have ignored the real discriminatory effects of de jure segregation" (p. 3). Dugan (1993) argued that the Brown ruling was followed by action of states to implement race-neutral policies alone which in *United States v. Fordice* (1992). The court ruled "that Mississippi had failed to discharge its obligation to eliminate, to the extent consistent with sound educational principles, all remnants of policies traceable to the former dual university system still exhibiting discriminatory effects" (p. 3). Further, Dugan (1993) contends that in *United States v. Fordice* (1992) for the first time, the Court squarely grappled with the standards courts should apply in cases involving public higher education desegregation cases. In fact, other legal scholars (e.g., Morris, Allen, Maurrasse & Gilbert, 1995) have referred to it as the *Brown v. Board of higher education* in that the ruling overturned the 'separate and unequal' treatment of African Americans in higher education.

Initially filed in 1975, *United States v. Fordice* has been identified under various designations such as *Ayers v. Fordice* (Mitchell, 2002) and *Ayers v. Allain* (Morris et al., 1995).

United States v. Fordice (1992) was a class action suit against the Governor of Mississippi, The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning of the State of Mississippi, the Commissioner of Higher Education and several other officials, and the five historically White universities of the State of Mississippi that was filed by the plaintiff Jake Ayers alleging continued segregation in the higher education system with Blacks being racially discriminated against in the public system of higher education in violation of the Constitution of the United States. While its designations changed over the course of the over twenty-five-year period of litigation, the issue has remained the same: equal opportunity for African Americans in higher education in Mississippi.

The de jure segregated system of higher education in Mississippi was well entrenched in history (Dugan, 1993). De jure segregation means segregation of people on basis of race as required by law, such as requiring White and Black people to attend racially segregated schools. Beginning in 1848 with the launch of University of Mississippi, Mississippi initiated the process of establishing five exclusively White universities. Four exclusively White institutions were launched during the period spanning 1880 and 1925.

Mississippi launched Mississippi State University, Mississippi University for Women, Delta State University, and University of Southern Mississippi. On the other hand, soon after Civil War and with federal dollars, Alcorn State University was established in 1871 as an institution for higher learning for Blacks. According to Dugan (1993), for the first fifty years of its establishment, Alcorn State functioned as a primary and secondary school. Mississippi then established two more historically Black institutions (HBIs), namely Mississippi Valley State and Jackson State. None of these HBIs offered comprehensive education programs. Alcorn was primarily agricultural, Jackson State trained teachers for segregated public schools, and

Mississippi Valley focused on teacher and vocational training (Dugan, 1993). This de jure segregated system was maintained and Mississippi did not admit a Black student in its White institutions until 1962 when it admitted James Meredith to the University of Mississippi by court order (*Meredith v. Fair*, 1962).

Rendering its ruling in *United States v. Fordice* (1992), the court established a new standard against which States were to be judged on whether or not they have dismantled the previous de jure segregated systems. According to the court opinion in *United States v. Fordice* (1992), cited in Mitchell (2002):

A State does not discharge its constitutional obligations until it eradicates policies and practices traceable to its prior de jure dual system that continues to foster segregation. Continuing policies and practices, the Court went on to say, which originated from the prior dual system that continue to have segregative effects and do not have “sound educational justification” violate the Equal Protection Clause. (p. 3)

In its decision, the court found four critical areas in the Mississippi system of higher education where traces of the de jure segregated system were clearly found (Mitchell, 2002). First, admission policies were founded with a discriminatory purpose and they had current discriminatory effects on Black applicants. Second, unnecessary duplication of programs in the White and Black institutions perpetuated the separate but equal doctrine of the de jure segregated system. Third, Mississippi enacted a system of classification of its institutions of higher education to continue segregation and limit student choice. And finally, the fact that there were eight public universities with duplicated programs was traceable to the de jure segregated system.

*Higher education desegregation in Alabama (Knight v. Alabama, 1991/1995)*. The defiant action by Governor George Wallace of standing at the door of Foster Auditorium on the campus of the University of Alabama on June 11, 1963, to obstruct the access of two Black

students, Vivian Malone and James Hood, was a gesture that signified and captured the essence of racial segregation in higher education. Although the particulars of the Alabama case are unique the “same issues and legal challenges are evident across the south and in other states where historically Black colleges and universities exist” (Morris et al., 1995, p. 59) such as Mississippi, Tennessee, and Louisiana.

In 1968, five years after George Wallace’s standing at the school house door to block desegregation at the University of Alabama, the Alabama State Teachers Association (ASTA) comprised of Black teachers filed a suit against the Alabama Public School and College Authority to block the State of Alabama from building a degree granting branch campus of Auburn University in Montgomery (*Alabama State Teachers Association v. Alabama Public School and College Authority*, 1968). The plaintiffs argued that the move to allow an identifiably White institution to open a branch there would thwart the desegregation efforts of Alabama State College, a predominantly black institution in Montgomery. The plaintiffs complained that the role of the new institution would be to service White students who did not want to attend Alabama State.

Surprisingly, the court ruled against the plaintiffs on two grounds. First, the court rested its decision on the fundamental differences between primary, secondary and higher education. The court’s argument was that, unlike the other levels of public education where attendance is free and mandatory and where the school boards determine which schools students attend, higher education is not compulsory and the branch would offer choice and provides for unmet educational needs and not unnecessarily duplicate courses. The second ground for refusal to grant the plaintiffs demands was doubt over “judicial competence to make sweeping educational policy decisions for colleges and universities” (Fienberg, 1993. p. 5). The court believed that



Auburn would in no way perpetuate segregation by building a branch campus in Montgomery since Auburn was already complying with a court order to desegregate by admitting qualifying Black students and this was a good faith effort to implement race-neutral policies to enhance student's freedom of choice and therefore was sufficient to fulfill the legal requirements of Title VI and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Of the sixteen state public institutions of higher education supported by the state of Alabama, two are classified as traditionally Black institutions, namely Alabama State University in Montgomery and Alabama A & M University in Huntsville, both founded in 1873. There were also two state-supported research universities namely, the University of Alabama that was founded in 1831 and Auburn University, founded in 1872. The remaining fourteen institutions and branch campuses include the following: 1) University of North Alabama founded in 1873; 2) Jacksonville State University founded in 1883; 3) The University of West Alabama founded in 1883; 4) Troy State University (with campuses in Montgomery and Dothan) founded in 1887; 5) University of Montevallo founded in 1893; 6) University of Alabama at Birmingham founded in 1940 (now a research university); 7) University of Alabama at Huntsville founded in 1950 (currently a research university); 8) University of South Alabama founded in 1963; 9) Auburn University at Montgomery founded in 1969; and 10) Athens State University founded in 1975.

According to Walden (1988), in 1981, six years after the establishment of Athens State, Fob James, then Governor of Alabama and various university presidents were issued letters from the U.S. Department of Education that said that they were in violation of Title VI and the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution as vestiges of segregation still existed in the state higher education system. About two years later a suit was filed, *United States v. Alabama* (1983) where the defendants were named as follows: the State of Alabama, the Alabama Commission for

Higher Education, public school and college authority, and ten historically White institutions.

The Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeal disqualified a ruling in favor of the plaintiffs rendered by Judge Clemons in 1987.

At about the same time, a group comprised of Black plaintiffs led by John F. Knight, Jr. filed a suit against the State of Alabama (Knight v. Alabama, 1991) claiming that the proximity of Auburn and Troy State campuses in Montgomery impeded Alabama State University's efforts to dismantle the dual system of higher education in that they encouraged White students to attend the traditional White institutions, siphoned resources from Alabama State University, and duplicated programs. The plaintiffs wanted to see fundamental changes instituted in the Alabama system of higher education. The plaintiffs' described the limited missions at the state's only two Black schools as a vestige of segregation that was designed to keep Blacks subordinate. These limited missions were intended to keep the two universities from rising to competitive status with Auburn or Alabama. Second, the Black plaintiffs were powerless in the PWIs "because of their lack of significant representation on boards, in the administration, and on faculties of these institutions" (Morris et al., 1995, p. 19). Additionally, the plaintiffs argued that the curricula in PWIs supported segregation in that the culture and history of African Americans was largely ignored. In 1991, the court's ruling found no vestiges of segregation in any of the areas claimed, but did find vestiges in some other important areas including, funding for traditionally Black institutions, employment of faculty and administrators, and the admission policies at some of the PWIs.

Following the ruling and the standards stipulated in *United States v. Fordice* (1992) for decisions in cases involving higher education desegregation, the Knight case was retried in 1994-1995. Based upon the Fordice standards, the:

Court finds that although historically Black institutions play an important role in higher education . . . Alabama State University and Alabama A&M University, the leadership of each of those institutions must take responsible actions in areas in which they have been deficient in the past . . . The administration, board of trustees, faculty, staff and student body of the universities must provide an atmosphere of openness and welcomeness to other race students which has not been a consistent practice in the past. (Knight v. Alabama Civil Action, 278 cited in Morris et al., 1995, p. 21)

The remedial decree resulting from the Knight ruling of 1995 included providing remedial relief for the two historically Black institutions to speed up their efforts to remove the vestiges of segregation, establishment of a unitary land grant extension system at Alabama State and Auburn-Montgomery and setting up an oversight committee to monitor statewide collegiate desegregation efforts. The Knight-Sims 1991 and 1995 Remedial Decrees have been terminated and the affected universities were found to have satisfied the legal burden of the decree by eliminating vestiges of segregation to the degree that is practical and in concert with sound educational practices. The institutions affirmed their commitment to operate in constitutional and non-discriminatory fashion. ([http://knightsims.com/settlement\\_agreements.php](http://knightsims.com/settlement_agreements.php); [http://knightsims.com/post\\_settlement\\_reports.php](http://knightsims.com/post_settlement_reports.php)). Further, the court ruled in 2006 that the Settlement Agreements met the requirements of Fordice and were in the best interest of the class and the parties [[http://knightsims.com/pdf/06\\_12\\_14/Final\\_judgment\\_12-12-06.pdf](http://knightsims.com/pdf/06_12_14/Final_judgment_12-12-06.pdf)].

*Higher education desegregation in Louisiana (United States v. Louisiana, 1981)*. In Louisiana, a lawsuit aimed at the segregated system of postsecondary education was submitted to the federal court's eastern district of Louisiana. In 1981, the case United States v. Louisiana was filed to force Louisiana to establish a common system of higher education. Of interest was whether or not the existence of predominantly white and predominantly black institutions only miles from each other and offering almost duplicate programs was a remnant of de jure segregation. The ruling of 1981 brought a consent decree that a unitary system of higher

education be achieved in Louisiana within a reasonable timeline. The 1981 decree was to impact five areas that would erase vestiges of segregation: 1) student admission and recruitment; 2) attrition of students of “other races;” 3) problems associated with program duplication; 4) understanding the role of HBCUs and enhancing it; and 5) substantial steps to create an equitable racial balance of faculty, staff, and governing boards of the university system.

By 1988, another suit, *United States v. Louisiana* was filed due to the fact that despite the state adopting race-neutral mission statements and admission policies, four and ten of the Louisiana colleges and universities remained racially identifiable as Black or White, respectively. Additionally the court was interested in the effect of the three distinct governing boards on Louisiana’s quest to desegregate its institutions of higher education. In 1989, *United States v. Louisiana*, the state was ordered to 1) eliminate current governing system of postsecondary education and establish a unitary system for all postsecondary institutions; 2) reclassify all universities in Louisiana into a tri-level system—flagship, intermediate, and undergraduate); 3) establish a comprehensive community college system whose role would be one of remediation of students aspiring to pursue university education; and 4) elimination of program duplication. The settlement agreement reached by the courts and approved by the institutions provided monies for capital improvements (per the original consent agreement of 1981); merged the law school at Southern University, an HBCU with that at Louisiana State and came up with admission standards that would assure the admission of Black applicants; streamlining of the admission policies by each institution to nurture and encourage students to attend other-race institutions; and the establishment of a much needed community college in Baton Rouge to target remedial students and those wishing to pursue vocational training (Arceneaux, 1995).

Collectively, the rulings in the desegregation cases in Alabama (*Knight v. Alabama*, 1991/1995), Louisiana (*United States v. Louisiana*, 1981), Mississippi (*United States v. Fordice*, 1992), and Tennessee (*Geier v. Alexander*, 1984) as well as the more recent affirmative action Michigan cases, specifically *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), in different ways affirmed the importance of diversity in education. Indeed, articulating the majority opinion in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), Justice Sandra Day O'Connor stated that in the context of higher education, "an important function of the democratic process is that the institutions and programs responsible for preparing our future leaders reflect the diversity and talent on our nation" (cited in Morfin, Perze, Parker, Lynn, & Arrona, 2006, p. 250).

In this study, a CRT perspective was taken in analyzing the patterns of career mobility of upper level administrators within a PWIs and the extent to which those careers have been charted by the corrective actions taken by IHEs as mandated by the rulings of those landmark cases. This study will focus on the careers of upper level administrators within a predominantly white IHE that was previously designated as a "whites only" institution. More specifically, this study examines the effects of race on the careers of Black and White upper level administrators' in a PWI in the southern United States. From a critical race theory perspective, the goal of the study then was to describe how the political category of race is deployed and experienced at the societal, institutional and individual levels and how it impacts differently the careers of Black and White administrators in the PWI.

### Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has several tenets. This section first provides a broad overview of CRT and follows that with a closer examination of each of the tenets and their practical application in research in general, with the relevant tenets' application to the current

research explored. According to critical race scholars (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), CRT encompasses several tenets. First, CRT holds that racism is an everyday experience of most people of color in the U.S. The second tenet holds that the social arrangement that ranks Whites over all people of color serves both a psychic and a material purpose for Whites thereby making its dismantling not particularly appealing to large portions of the society. This latter thesis is also called material determinism or interest convergence (Bell, 1980). Additionally, this second tenet encompasses an additional thesis that holds that color-blind policies only address the most blatant forms of racism, but since racism is an everyday experience of people of color, such policies do nothing to dismantle the insidious forms of racism that constitute its pervasiveness. The third tenet of CRT holds that race is socially constructed and has no bearing to biology or other purportedly fixed criteria of objectively assigning people to races. Rather, society constructs race and uses the category or retires a category as the need arises. Connected with this is the idea of how different minority groups are racialized at different points in time depending upon prevailing socio-political zeitgeist. Intersectionality and anti-essentialism are themes within the social construction tenet. Anti-essentialism dismantles the idea of a fixed or static knowable individual or racial identity as people's identities intersect at various points (e.g., of gender, race, disability, or political affiliation). This, therefore, means that people's identities and allegiances can be fluid. Within this logic, an individual has multiple identities and allegiances that are sometimes contradictory. Finally, the "unique voice of color" which appears to contradict the anti-essentialist thesis comprises a final tenet of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 9). This tenet posits that there are certain issues that minorities are uniquely suited to speak about and that is why narratives are critical.

### *Racism as Ordinary*

This tenet of CRT asserts that racism is an everyday experience of most people of color in the U.S. rather than racist acts being the exception to the rule, rather, they are experienced with regularity by persons of color in the United States. These everyday acts of racism, referred to as microaggressions (Davis, 2000), are subtle and hard to prove by the person to whom they are meted out against, and often unconscious on the perpetrator's part. According to Davis (2000), the racism engendered in acts of microaggression is born of a long history of subjugation of Blacks that is subconsciously absorbed which breeds and nurtures “anti-Black attitudes [that] persist in a climate of denial” (p. 144). Within this logic then, microaggression may not be readily perceived as such by many Whites but are apt to be read that way by persons of color against whom such acts are directed. Microaggressions, while requiring tireless expenditure of energy and vigilance to monitor, usually escape the radar of colorblind policies that purport to treat all people equally.

By and large, public institutions adopt colorblind policies ostensibly to create ‘equality’ of races. Gotanda (2000) offers a critique of colorblind constitutionalism that is seen as both “a means and an end to American society” (p. 268). Gotanda pointed to the dangers of colorblindness that mask the social, political and economic advantages availed to Whites over non-White Americans. In a similar vein Crenshaw et al. (1995) argued that “. . . the appeal to colorblindness can thus be said to serve as part of an ideological strategy by which the current Court obscures its active role in sustaining hierarchies of racial power” (p. xxiii). This appeal to colorblindness undergirds policies and practices within higher education that variously fall under the purview of diversity/multicultural programs and teaching tolerance. According to Gotanda (2000), while ostensibly diversity appears to be a desirable goal, in its current formulation, it has

limits that are predicated upon its articulation and maintenance of current racial arrangement.

Gotanda's critique is based upon:

The assumption that it is possible to identify racial classifications of Black and White, to consider them apart from their social setting, and then to make those same racial categories the basis for positive social practice is unfounded. Without a clear social commitment to rethink the nature of racial categories and abolish their underlying structure of subordination, the politics of diversity will remain incomplete. (p. 271)

Thus in its current formulation, diversity as a color-blind practice within public institutions “does not challenge existing racial practice but, rather, seeks to accommodate present racial divisions by casting them in a positive light” (p. 271).

### *Interest Convergence*

Bell (2000) draws from the court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* to explain interest convergence. According to Bell, interest convergence is evidenced by

consideration of the decision's value to Whites, not simply those concerned about the immorality of racial inequality, but also those Whites in policymaking position able to see the economic and political advances at home and abroad that would follow the abandonment of segregation. (p. 23)

While this view carries some apparent cynicism, Bell illustrated his meaning by drawing upon compelling historical realities (including the sense of disenfranchisement and outrage of Black soldiers who fought side by side with Whites in the second world war only to come home to the reality of segregation; fear of the expansion of the communism in Third World countries) to demonstrate that convergence of Whites’ interest in the court’s decision to desegregate schools.

In the two reverse discrimination Michigan cases, applying the logic of interest convergence, one would argue that the “losses” incurred by Whites in college admission through the preference of Black applicants is not in the interest of Whites, hence the lawsuit. Elsewhere Bell (2000) argued that in order for equity to be achieved, the status quo, which overwhelming favors Whites cannot be sustained, but rather it would have to be dismantled. However, there is no interest



convergence in dismantling a way of being that is skewed to favor Whites. The Michigan case illustrates Bell's point that in order for equity to exist in a real color-blind society, White supremacy will have to be dismantled. In this study, the lens of interest view convergence will be utilized to view disparities between White and Black administrators in upper level administration in the selected IHE.

Lopez (2000) argued that as socially constructed, the construct of race is given meaning within the contested spaces of social, political and personal interactions and that race does not mark "distinct branches of humankind" (p.165). Rather, Lopez argued that:

Races are categories of difference which exist only in society: They are produced by myriad conflicting social forces; they overlap and inform other social categories; they are fluid rather than static and fixed; and they make sense only in relationship to other racial categories, having no meaningful independent existence (p.171).

This idea that race is socially constructed is an important one in this study. In order to make meaningful sense of career patterns of Black upper level administrators in the context of a historically racially-relevant context of a formerly segregated IHE, it is therefore necessary to juxtapose those careers to those of their White counterparts. The patterns are meaningful only when placed side by side, in line with Lopez's that on its own, the category of race is meaningless unless it is viewed in relationship to other racial categories. Related to this idea is another tenet of CRT that focuses on intersectionality and anti-essentialism. This tenet debunks the idea that race is a fixed trait that is immutable, objective and therefore, unchangeable (Gotanda, 2000). As socially constructed, ideas of race and the meanings assigned to race are socially and politically malleable and can be changed to serve specific purposes.

Another important tenet of CRT that was deployed in conducting and analyzing the data in this study was the idea of "unique voice of color." This tenet posits that there are certain matters that are best conveyed by Black people themselves. Connected to this is role of

storytelling or counterstorying (Delgado, 2000). Delgado argued that storytelling is the key to dismantling “Ideology-the received wisdom- [that] makes current social arrangements seem fair and natural” (p. 61) thereby bestowing peace upon the oppressor by allowing him to think and believe that there is nothing inherently oppressive about their behavior. It was expected that in this study, the narratives of upper level administrators (whether Black or White) would inevitably include stories that reveal personal, social and moral realities that are socially constructed, but presented as inevitable, natural and/or determinate. Delgado argued that social reality is constructed. Therefore in this study, Delgado/s logic was applied both conducting the interviews as well as in interpreting the findings by examining and trying to understand how events are given meaning through the narratives that re/construct those events. This logic was applied to see how members of different racial classifications narrate their own ascent into their positions in the IHE examine the “reality-creating potential of [their] stories and the normative implications of adopting one story rather than another” (p. 62). Also, it is expected that their narratives would reveal the stock stories that are used to rationalize the “naturalness” of a given situation. Also it is expected that the narratives of the Black participants would reveal the counterstories that challenge status quo and disturb complacency.

When the laws on desegregation are viewed against the CRT framework the initial assumptions and meanings begin to unravel and one realizes then that legal actions that initially appears altruistic begin to unravel. For instance, the Brown ruling no longer can be viewed as merely an act that recognized the inherent wrongs of segregation, but can more aptly be viewed as an illustration of interest convergence. Within that framework, then desegregation cannot be confused with fostering equality. Interest convergence explains the motivation concede to desegregation. Delgado argues that stories that are circulated about Black in regard to the

inferiority of their culture, psyche, their intellect, etc., weave a web of perception that conspire to keep them in roles that stifle their desires to be advance higher. Thus the persistence of inequality (e.g., in hiring, promotion, etc.) despite desegregation is hatched in the stories told about Black people that, though quite often racist and stereotyped, persist without being challenged or countered. Thus, according to Delgado (2000), it is essential for Black people to tell their own stories themselves for a liberatory purpose that challenges population conceptions about them. In this study, those stories will be constituted in the narratives of upper level administrators about their experiences.

#### Issues in Achieving Racial Equity among Upper Level Administrators in PWIs

This section of the literature review focuses on issues related to racial equity among upper level administrators in predominantly white institutions. It seems highly instructive and prudent for one to view the issues raised in this section against the legal and historical backdrop described in the preceding sections. The history of higher education desegregation is one that cannot be ignored when one is conducting an inquiry such as this one. The presence of persons of other races in predominantly white institutions has a relatively short history. In fact, in a number of universities in the South, courts continue to receive annual reports on universities efforts to desegregate. Indeed, in a number of universities in the South, courts continue to monitor desegregation settlement agreements between plaintiffs and institutions (Knight v. Alabama settlement agreements, 2006). In this section, the issues related to racial equity among upper level administrators include the scarcity of qualified candidates of color, search committee issues, and value-laden screening techniques impacting diversity of administrators in PWIs are reviewed.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2001), the majority of upper level administrative positions in institutions of higher education in the United States are held by White men, constituting 47%, followed by White women who account for 38%, Black women accounting for 5% similar to other minority groups including Native Americans, Pacific Highlanders, Hispanics and Asian Americans. Black men accounted for 4% of the 151,000 upper level administrators within institutions of higher education. This data does not report on the types of the institutions (i.e., whether they are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) or PWIs). While the numbers of persons of color holding upper level administrative positions in institutions of higher education provide a good index of gains made within the past several decades since the desegregation of PWIs, research (Glazer-Raymo, 1999) suggests that these gains have slowed recently.

Studies have found that institutional hiring practices aimed at achieving racial and gender equity have been monitored more closely recently (Johnson & Wiley, 1998; Jackson, 2004). If the proportion of women and minorities hired are below the expected total, this may be viewed as evidence of adverse discrimination. Expected totals are predicated upon size of institution, and the general number of potential diverse candidates in the job market pool estimated from numbers graduating with relevant terminal degrees in particular disciplinary areas. Johnson and Wiley (1998) recommended a completely blind selection process – a process that involves neither discrimination against minorities nor any form of favoritism. While such an ideal is desirable, Johnson and Wiley (1998) also explained the impossibility of succeeding at such an undertaking. According to Johnson and Wiley (1998), to obtain convincing evidence that a department is either hiring from an inappropriate applicant pool or actively discriminating against minority applicants solely by observing the results of the hiring process would require

impractically long observation times (100 or more years). The rarer the minority group in the selection pool the longer observation time necessary to determine if indeed bias is present. Clearly, it is difficult to objectively document discriminatory practices in the selection process given the impractically long time needed to achieve valid documentation.

Studies on career change or administrative mobility of IHE administrators have examined the consequences on particular groups of administrators including women and minorities of the hiring and promotion activities of IHEs (e.g., Sagaria, 1988). Further, studies within this strand have also tended to focus on the effect of hiring and promotion actions of institutions on a group of interest, such as women (Frances & Mensel, 1981; Sagaria, 1988) while others have examined the effect of personal characteristics including gender, race and age on career advancement (Harlan & Weiss, 1980; Rosenfield, 1980; Sagaria & Moore, 1983), and administrative advancement (Rickard, 1985). According to a study examining the status of faculty of color in higher education, despite years of Affirmative Action policies, there is a continued pattern of underrepresentation (Astin et al., 1997). More recent studies on career mobility have focused on issues peripheral to but related to mobility. For example, a study by León & Nevarez (2007) identified models of increasing the diversity of top-level leadership with IHEs. On the other hand, Dowdall (2007) has provided strategies for search committees to get accurate information on candidates when conducting telephone interviews so as to be able to sift good information from destructive information that may have no bearing to the current position that the candidate is seeking. Finally, a study by Perna, Gerald, Baum and Milem (2007) examined the perception of 'status' of Black faculty and administrators in IHEs in the South as a way to explain the low numbers of them occupying positions in upper level administrative of IHEs in the South. Research has attributed the underrepresentation of persons of color in PWIs to two factors:

search committees' issues and the scarcity of qualified candidates of color. These are briefly reviewed below.

### *Search Committee Issues*

An element that has been reinforced in a number of studies relating to hiring of diverse persons is the search committee (Jackson, 2006; Sagaria, 2002; Malcolm, 2007). Scholars in this area have emphasized the critical role played by search committees in the hiring of diverse persons. For instance, Smith et al. (2004) posed several questions that might enable departments and universities to reach their goal of achieving a diverse faculty. Those questions included the following: 1) what exactly was the role of the search committee in the process in contrast to other institutional personnel; 2) did the search committee make the final decision; and 3) What are differences in successful search processes by departments within the same institution. These scholars observed that within many PWIs, senior faculties are White. And that too often, people of color are overlooked because they are not part of the primary networks of senior faculty and administrators. They argue that it is imperative in today's world to provide students with faculty that mirror, at least in some degree, the ethnic diversity reflected in the larger society. In essence, they advocate for the infusion of new blood that is essential to the future vigor and robustness of academic life (Jackson, 2006; Sagaria, 2002; Malcolm, 2007).

### *Scarcity of Qualified Candidates of Color*

Studies (e.g., Busenberg & Smith, 1997; Schuster, 1995; Trower & Chait, 2002) were also found that perpetuated two predominant views regarding availability of faculty of color in candidate pools: first, that qualified faculty of color are few and highly sought after by institutions and second, that there were "bidding wars" for them so that they can pick and choose the institution of their choice. Trower and Chait (2002) found that there are few faculty members

from diverse backgrounds even in fields, which typically have more scholars of color, such as education and psychology. Others argue that because of pipeline issues and because of the continued limits in the labor market for faculty (Busenberg & Smith, 1997; Schuster, 1995), many assume that there is a “bidding war” in which faculty of color are sought after over “traditional” White male faculty (Mooney, 1989; White, 1992; Yale, 1990). In contrast, many faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and administrators of color denied that the typical hiring experience of minority scholars has been one of bidding wars (Bronstein et al., 1993; Collins, 1990; Cross, 1994; de la Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1991; Turner and Myers, 1997; Wilson, 1987, 1995).

Specifically in studies focusing on administrators, some scholars have attributed the paucity of administrators of color in PWIs to lip service and lack of a true commitment to the idea of hiring an upper-level administrators of color. According to Harvey (1999),

the paucity of senior level administrative and faculty representatives from these groups [African Americans and Hispanics]...[are due to the fact that] many institutions simply pay lip service to the cause [of diversity] while they do nothing to modify the climate or the patterns of behavior that cause this situation to occur. (p. 153)

In his volume *Grass Roots and Glass Ceilings*, Harvey (1999) chronicled of the lives of eight upper level administrators of color in PWIs and documents the life histories and their ascent to those positions. A recurring theme present in their narratives is the experience of racism in a variety of formulations from insubordination to a newspaper reference to a Black president of a large PWI as a “possum” (Harvey, 1999).

*Value-Laden Screening Techniques Impacting Diversity of Administrators in PWIs*

According to Phelps and Taber (1996), there are several reasons for the lack of diversity in institutions of higher education: they include weak or indifferent recruitment practices, lack of commitment to diversity, lack of training programs, and institutional racism. Harvey (1999)

speculated that lip service is often paid to the idea of diversity in many institutions and that no structural changes are made to the organization to create conditions conducive to diversity.

On the one hand, campuses held the view that because of limits in the pipeline, faculty of color who seek posts are in great demand and are able to pick and choose academic posts. In this context, “ordinary” institutions believe they are not comparably “rich” enough, located “well” enough (Harvey & Scott-Jones, 1985) or “prestigious” enough (El-Khawas, 1990) to attract the few candidates who are in such high demand.

According to Sagaria (2002), candidates of color are subjected to a system of discriminative filtering that undermines their potential and credibility as candidates for positions in PWIs. Drawing from interviews of search process participants, Sagaria’s (2002) study described a model for filtering candidates applying for upper level administrative positions in a PWI. The model described by Sagaria exposed processes used by search committees in PWIs that reproduce hegemony, whereby certain candidates are privileged over others. In the study, Sagaria reconstructed administrative search processes by interviewing individuals who vied for candidacy for upper level administrative positions at Ohio State University in 1989 and 1990. The candidates were male and female, Black and White. Additionally, included in the study were the accounts of search committee chairs. By intermixing races and gender, Sagaria’s study allowed for the examination of ways in which the intersection of race and gender played into the decisions about the unsuitability or the suitability of particular candidates for particular positions.

According to Smith (1987, cited in Sagaria, 2002),

. . . multiple perspectives are presented as interpretations of a particular group’s experiences derived from group participants. They are not a common point of view or a uniform gender or race experience. What is common, however, are the patterns of social relations that have accompanied their exclusions or subordination or inclusion or advantaged position which are present in a collective experience but not mediated by



multiple factors related to an individual's particular role, characteristics and social political formulations. (p. 680)

Sagaria (2002) interviewed thirty-two participants who included eleven search committee chairs, all of whom were White (nine males and two females), and fifteen successful candidates who included three White men, four White women, four Black women and four Black men. Also, she interviewed five unsuccessful candidates of whom two were White males, two White females and one Black woman. The study resulted in the identification of four filters that are used to include or exclude candidates. First is what she calls the "normative filter." The "normative filter" was applied to all candidates evenly across the board. The "normative filter" was a paper screening which involved a review of credentials and qualifications to establish that candidates met minimum criteria for the position. Additionally, chairs at this point of the screening/filtering not to exclude any one minority group, specifically gender and race as minority categories, put efforts forth.

The second filter is what Sagaria (2002) called the "valuative filter" which often evolved in the context of the search. There was no set criteria, so the standards were by and large "vague, value-laden, class-, culture-, and ideologically-based" (p. 84). The "valuative filter" was most evidently applied during the candidates' on-campus visit. According to Sagaria, while the "normative filter" continued to be important, the institution's or the committee's commitment to diversity became questionable owing to the increasing importance given to criteria that were personally defined. Those personally-defined criteria encompassed three elements, namely, the search committee's familiarity with the candidate, their perception of the candidate's ability to fit into the institution, program, or position, and the committee's perception of the candidate's overall image. Sagaria further asserted that the privileging of personal criteria and the privileging of information from known sources, e.g., letters of recommendation from individuals known by

the committee or by the chair might indeed recreate the hegemony of the White male particularly when it was brought to bear on Black male and female and White female candidates whose professional networks were radically different from that of White males who tend to be the majority committee members in upper level administrative searches.

Given the primacy of these “soft” criteria and their undetectable nature since they are mainly nuanced, they can be used to reinforce dominance and consequently subordination in a much more enduring way than other overt forms of exclusion. Nowhere else were these “soft” criteria more self-evident than in what Sagaria (2002) called the “personal filter.” In this filter, candidates, more so White women, Black women and Black men were asked questions, or inquiries were made into their lives regarding personal matters. It appears that the underlying criteria that candidates had to conform to was a compulsory racialized heteronormativity, whereby candidates who are White and straight males are preferred over qualified candidates who may bear other characteristics such as being of a minority race, female or gay. This closer scrutiny endured by these candidates reflects embedded racism and sexism. It appears that diversity was desirable only to the extent that it was controlled and did not challenge the status quo of the institution and of the unit.

A final filter was only used to sift Black women and Black men. Sagaria (2002) called this the “debasement filter,” which constitutes a form of racism. Debasement had four dimensions. First, it manifested as doubt by the chair and committee that the Black man or woman seriously wanted the position. Secondly, there was a perception of the candidate’s invisibility, and thirdly a devaluing of the candidate’s experiences and competencies was exhibited and fourth, there was an essentializing of “Blackness” as being the only issue that would interest Black people. Finally, Sagaria raised another criterion that sometimes emerges in

some searches that she calls the “superstar” or the “world class scholar” or a role model. This criterion is a bonus one that always works in favor of the candidate. Once the bonus criteria surfaces, it masks all other filters and indeed, according to Sagaria, search chairs expressed a certain pride and clout for being able to nab a “superstar” candidate for the university.

In another study, the experience of being accepted in the majority society was an ongoing issue for all African American administrators in predominantly white institutions (Rolle, Davies, & Banning, 2000). While the challenges that Black administrators face in PWIs are many and varied, the ones most often cited include the challenge to change what the majority society thinks about African Americans’ leadership and as one participant stated in the study, the need to constantly prove that he was a bright person and indeed could provide leadership for the institution. Race appeared as a significant aspect of their administrative experience, and was manifested in four sub-themes, namely: race as an issue of the first person, race as a part of the ongoing administrative experience, race in relation to perceptions of roles on campus, and the struggle race produces in negotiating the White campus environment. Indeed these are recurring themes that also appear in the work of Patitu and Hinton (2003) and Mosley (1980).

Other relevant studies focused on issues regarding African American women administrators. Patitu and Hinton (2003) focused on issues related to meeting the needs of African American women administrators and faculty. They also found that this population is part of the revolving door in institutions of higher education. Two of the needs they identified were mentorship of Black women in the academy and clear rules regarding expectations (e.g., for tenure). Additionally, they found that some of the respondents believed they were held to higher expectations and that there were too many unwritten rules. Other issues included a lack of commitment to affirmative action by institutions and a general chilly climate particularly for

those working in PWIs. The issues raised here are reminiscent of those that Sagaria (2002) described in the hiring process. That these women make it into the academy only later to undergo further filtering that ultimately excludes them speaks to the bigger issue of institutional commitment to diversity. Patitu and Hinton's (2003) overarching recommendation to PWIs for the retention of diverse faculty and administrators was to make structural changes, such as systems of mentorship whereby there would be ongoing embedded structures of support in place.

Mosley (1980) investigated the status of Black women administrators vis-à-vis their numbers, characteristics, status, participation in decisions in their respective institutions, and their opinions about key issues in higher education institutions. The issues the author discusses are somewhat similar to those in Patitu and Hinton's (2003) study. Black female administrators, particularly in PWIs felt alienated, isolated and often were the token Blacks in the institution's leadership. Mosley asserts that there has been a lot of affirmative action, but few affirmative action results for Blacks in the PWIs. The Black administrators in the Mosley study felt disconnected even from organizations on campus that ostensibly served women. Also many of those women felt that they had no say in administrative policies in their institutions. The recommendation Mosley makes is for institutional change to be truly inclusive calling on government agencies to conduct more monitoring of institutional compliance with affirmative action in hiring, promotion and retention. Having seen the nuanced ways in which affirmative action is blatantly ignored in Sagaria's (2002) study, one has to wonder about the effectiveness of the recommendations Mosley submits.

Overall the studies reviewed here agree on the importance of the goal of fostering diversity within IHEs but find that the means for doing so are not without contestation and suspicion by and from those on opposite sides of the issue. While this study is set within an IHE

and investigated issues of diversity, most of the current research and court rulings around which this study was built does not necessarily address diversity of upper level administrators in IHEs. However, the same arguments for diversity of student and/or faculty within PWIs are at play here. Using a CRT perspective, this study brings together the official narratives of institutions as articulated in policies and position statements on institutional diversity and the narratives of upper level administrators in PWIs regarding their career mobility to understand any counter-stories that may emerge that will shed light on specific actions and strategies that those IHEs are using or not using to develop a critical mass of diverse upper level administrators.

In this chapter, the various landmark desegregation cases in Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana were discussed and the extent to which rulings of those cases dismantled the Jim Crowism that was instituted in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Additionally, more recent cases that have challenged affirmative action in IHEs in California and Michigan were also cited in this chapter in the light of this proposed study. Chapter III presents the research methodology that was employed in this study.

CHAPTER III:  
RESEARCH METHODS

Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the research methods that were utilized to answer the research questions. Specifically, this chapter includes a description of the qualitative methods and provides a rationale for why those methods were selected over others that were considered but not selected to demonstrate why the selected method is the most suitable to answer the research questions posed in the study. The chapter also describes the researcher's role in the research process, data sources, data collection and verification methods as well as the participants and setting. Additionally, the chapter includes the data analysis methods on how the data was interpreted. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations as they relate to data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

*Qualitative Methods*

This study utilized a narrative case study method (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003) to examine career mobility of upper level administrators in one predominantly white institution located in southern United States. The interest of this study was to understand and describe the careers mobility patterns of Black and White individuals in upper level administrative positions within the selected IHE. Within many professional fields, there is specific training that culminates in a particular position. For instance, in order for someone to become a professor in a Research institution, one has to have earned a doctorate in a particular field and promotion through the ranks of assistant to associate to full professor is typically delineated and criteria for promotion

are usually relatively well understood by all. However, movement into upper level administration within IHEs is not a simple linear sequential path. Therefore, to gain a better understanding of the career trajectory of upper level administrators, a case study research approach is selected. The case study research approach is a particularly suitable one as the aim of such research is to understand and describe things as they are not to manipulate any aspects of the study (Merriam, 1998).

According to Yin (2003), “the case study method is preferred in examining contemporary events, when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated” (p. 7), such as in this study where none of the critical variables of this study can be manipulated. The findings in this study are presented in a narrative format with the individual narratives of the participants constituting the unfolding plot where the participants and the institution are the joint actors and the career paths are the actions. For these reasons, the narrative case study method was chosen over other methods (e.g., the survey method) based upon its relative strength in allowing for a deeper understanding of the issues being studied and their consequences on a general issue or problem (Merriam, 1998). In this case, the narrative case study allows for a deeper understanding of patterns of career mobility of upper level administrators in a PWI and likely allows for a clearer understanding of general larger issue of institutional diversity.

The fact that the case study approach relies on a single case as a source of data has been the object of criticism as being unable to produce results that can be generalized. However, the definition of a case study demonstrates that such a characterization of case studies is clearly not only simplistic but erroneous as well. Merriam (1998) stated that case study research is engaged in generating hypotheses not hypothesis testing. The critique that case studies do not yield results that can be generalized to larger populations is premised upon the idea that the intent of the study

is to test hypotheses and therefore findings are to be generalized to populations from which a representative sample is drawn. However, according to Merriam (1998), in the case study approach, “researchers are interested in insight, discovery and interpretation not hypothesis testing . . . [and the aim is] . . . to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (p. 10) within a bounded system (Smith, 1978). Although case studies in education have been found to be useful not only in describing, but in interpreting phenomena, Lincoln and Guba (1985) cautioned that “case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the readers to erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs . . . [by seducing them into thinking that case studies are full accounts of the phenomena rather than merely] . . . a slice of life” (p. 377). Within this study, the boundaries of the bounded system, or case, were set around upper level administrators within a southern university. The participants bore commonalities on a number of levels including the fact they were upper level administrators all drawn from the same IHE.

As stated in Chapter I, specifically this study was guided by the following two research questions:

1. What differences exist in the hiring process of Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of selected Black and White upper level administrators within a PWI; and
2. What differences exist in the career mobility of Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of selected Black and White upper level administrators within a PWI?



## Data Sources

### *Participants and Settings*

To examine career mobility of upper level administrators in the selected PWI, 20 upper-level administrators were interviewed in one PWI in the southern United States. Participants were drawn from different departments and units across the selected university. The researcher intentionally did not include EEO-I administrators from the health care component of the campus although one participant formerly worked in the medical school. Since all the participants were from one university, they qualified to be treated as a case study.

The participants were purposefully selected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to capture critical variables identified in previous research (e.g., Mosley, 1980; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Sagaria, 2002) as important in hiring, selection, appointment, and/or promotion of persons into upper level administrative positions in IHEs. The participants were selected from a pool of upper-level administrators holding EEO-1 positions in the target institution per the definition provided in the definition of terms in Chapter I of this study.

Specifically, to help in identifying potential participants, initially, key contacts comprising diversity and/or human resources officers were contacted at the selected institution and requested to assist in identifying potential participants comprising individuals of EEO-1 rank from the target institution. The initial participant identification process involving identifying all the different departments and/or units in the selected university was deemed necessary in order to assure diversity and in order to capture the critical elements that were identified in previous studies as important in the hiring decisions in IHEs. Although the institution had a medical school, participants were not drawn from that unit. This initial preparatory step was important in order to assure that there was diversity among the participants. A pool of potential participants

was purposively selected. In order to have a diverse pool of potential participants comprising Black and White upper level administrators, the other important factors that were identified in previous studies that were considered included gender and age. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) participant selection that has been purposively conducted “increases the scope or range of data exposed . . . as well as the likelihood that the full arrange of multiple realities will be uncovered: because purposive sampling . . . takes account of local conditions, local mutual shapings, and local values (for possible transferability)” (p. 40). The critical discriminative factor that was considered in all data analysis was the race of the participants. As discussed in earlier sections, while previous research has cited other factors, including gender and disability, as having an impact in the hiring and/or promotion and retention within institutions of higher education, this study was interested in how race plays into decisions that institutions make regarding hiring and retention of upper level administrators. While university presidents were classified as EEO-1 officers, for purposes of this study, they were not included in the pool of potential participants based upon the fact the recruitment and hiring of university presidents typically conforms to procedures that are significantly different from searches for most of the other EEO-1 positions. See Table 1.

Table 1

Study Participant Demographics

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Eight Directors or Executive Directors

Six Assistant or Associate Vice Presidents

Two Vice Presidents

Four Other Executive/Administrative

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The pool of potential participants was then contacted by telephone and/or email. They were invited to participate and of those who agreed to participate, arrangements were made to meet for review and sign consents, followed thereafter by the interviews. The location of the meetings was selected to maximize the ease and convenience for the participants. Interviews mainly took place in the participants' offices except one participant who wanted to be interviewed off-campus at a local coffee house.

The setting of the study was the selected PWI in the southern United States. The institution has a well-documented history of practicing de facto segregation and has only recently been released from court-ordered Title VI remedies. In this sense, then, findings of this study could highly insightful insofar as demonstrating the effectiveness of compliance and implementation of Title VI remedies in the higher educational institution. A depiction of the racial composition of key constituents at the institution is summarized below in Table 2.

Table 2

Racial Composition of Institution of Key Constituents

	Black		White		Other		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Executive/ Administrative*	31	12.3	217	86.1	4	1.6	252
Other Professional (full-time)	524	18.5	1,754	61.8	560	19.8	2,838
9/10 month Faculty	82	4.9	1,231	74.3	344	20.7	1,657
11/12 month Faculty	23	6.2	29	78.6	56	15.2	370
Enrolled students	3,527	0.9	10,804	64.0	2,543	15	16,874
Bachelor's Degree Awarded	488	25.3	1,231	3.8	208	10.7	1,927

\*Includes all EEO-1 positions at the institution

## Data Collection

### *Interview Procedures*

Indepth interviews (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) using open-ended questions were conducted with a purposively-selected sample of participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) comprising upper-level administrators drawn from a university in the southern United States. A total of 20 participants were interviewed. After initial contact was made via email and/or telephone inviting the selected pool of potential participants to take part in the study, arrangements were made to meet individually with the ones who express an interest to participate in the study. Informed consent forms were reviewed and signed, and each participant was asked to participate in one 40-60 minute interview. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. A venue, convenient to the participant, was selected to meet and conduct the interview. Prior to beginning the interview, each participant was given the opportunity to review the research procedures and asked to sign the informed consent form prior to being interviewed. The interview itself followed once the procedures have been established, questions answered, and a signed informed consent secured. Member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were conducted with the participants after the interview transcriptions were completed whereby individual transcripts were returned to each participant as an opportunity to correct factual errors or volunteer additional information.

### *Instrumentation*

An interview protocol comprising open-ended in-depth questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) or questions that provide a “grand tour” (Spradley, 1980) of the participants’ career mobility was used. Grand tour questions are the questions that allow the phenomena to emerge in its multiple and varied formations, thereby revealing its many and varied elements. Questions

covered a variety of topics that trace and map the patterns of career mobility for each participant, including retracing the path that led the participant to their current positions; their educational background; their qualifications for the positions and credentials needed for the positions; their professional experience; the nature of their current and previous positions. Other questions focused on the methods by which they were hired, selected and/or appointed to administrative positions; length of time in those positions; climate issues; perceived prospects for their advancement, suggestions about what can be improved in the job search process, and what elements of the career preparedness were particularly successful based upon their own experiences (see appendix A interview protocol). In conducting the interviews, the underlying theoretical framework of CRT was used to inform how the research questions were asked in order to allow participants to weave their own stories (Delgado, 1990; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) that “uncover or decipher the social-structural and cultural significance of race” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 49) in their careers as Black and White upper-level administrators in PWIs. In this study, therefore, narrative was both a research method as well as data. Critical race theorists (e.g., Delgado, 1989) argue that a connection exists between form and substance in CRT research; therefore, those CRT theorists advocate for the use of narrative as a way to name one’s own reality.

Consequently, entrenched in CRT is the theme of using narrative to name one’s own reality. According to Delgado (1989), there are three reasons for naming one’s own reality. First, much of reality is a social construction; as such reality is seen and filtered through the eyes of the beholder. Second, storytelling is cathartic; giving an opportunity to members of outgroups a means of psychic self-preservation. Thirdly, the exchange of stories allows the narrator and the listener to overcome their own ethnocentrism and dysconscious conviction (King, 1991) of the

correctness of their own point of view (Delgado, 1989). According to King, dysconsciousness is “an uncritical habit of the mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given . . . a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges” (p.135). According to King, dysconsciousness is not that absence of consciousness, but “an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race as compared to, for example, critical consciousness (p.135).

## Data Analysis

### *Conceptual Framework*

Data analysis attempted to uncover how race mediates and overlies career mobility of Black and White upper level administrators in the selected PWI. More specifically, the analysis examined the effects of race on the careers of Black and White upper-level administrators in a PWI in the southern United States. Applying a critical race theory perspective, the study then explored the idea that the political category of race is deployed and experienced at the individual, institutional and societal levels and therefore impacts differently the careers of Black and White administrators in PWIs. The situated narratives of the participants in this study allowed for an analysis that examined how the raced experience of Black administrators gives their narratives a common structure that frames and creates their stories. The emphasis on race in this study was important. Scholars (e.g., Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997) have asserted that as an analytical category, race is still highly undertheorized, in contrast, for instance, to gender or class in the understanding inequity. Yet, gender alone, class alone, or gender and class together, do not adequately account for the variance in inequities experienced by persons of color. Therefore, the emphasis on race in this study was an intentional one. However, even having said that, the framework of intersectionality (Crenshaw et al., 1995) in CRT dictates that the experiences of

individuals who are simultaneously located within more than one group (e.g., race and gender) that are subjected to subordination by society cannot be essentialized or minimized by attributing their experiences merely to one of the categories (e.g., to race). For this reason, in this study, narratives of female upper-level administrators' were further viewed through the intersectional frame of both gender and race. On the other hand, the narratives of White participants were placed within the framework of CRT (Crenshaw et al., 1995) and Critical White Studies exemplified as Whiteness as property (Harris, 1993).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued that

the ability to define, possess, and own property has been a central feature of the power in America . . . thus, [though] we talk about the importance of the individual, individual rights, and civil rights . . . social benefits accrue largely to property owners. (p. 52)

Further, Ladson-Billings and Tate assert that education is a form of property, an intellectual property and property ownership is racialized. Within this logic, an underlying question that this dissertation grappled with was which participants, based upon their narratives/stories, have access to the fruits that accrue from having a high level of education or educational training/preparation (e.g., promotion, career advancement, etc) to high level positions within PWIs that are commensurate with one's education, training and/or experience. This perspective was taken along with the ideas of Harris (1993) on Whiteness as property to examine ways in which the narratives of White participants espouse and/or illustrate or negate the "property functions of Whiteness."

#### *Data Analysis and Interpretation*

The qualitative data analysis and retrieval program NVIVO 7 was used to systematically code the data and for later retrieval for analysis and interpretation. Using the open coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), themes were extracted from the interview data and organized along

meaningful categories. Open coding allowed for identifying, naming, categorizing, and describing phenomena. The final themes were created by the researcher but each participant's narrative was interpreted as the individual's authentic and valid narration of their own experience and hence the coding process was an attempt to re-encrypt meanings from the participant's narrative. This means that in the coding, meanings assigned to codes were not based upon previously developed categories but rather the meanings emerged inductively from the data itself. Narratives were contrasted along racial lines and within the context of the institution's relevant policies as stated in the documents that were reviewed. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), inductive data analysis "is more likely to describe fully the setting...make decisions about transferability to other settings easier; ... identify the mutually shaping influences that interact; and because values can be an explicit part of the analytic structure" (p. 41).

#### *Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations*

Data trustworthiness was established in a variety of ways. First, trustworthiness was established through member checks (as described in the Interview Procedures section of the Data Collection section of this chapter). Additionally, to establish credibility of the data, the researcher established a foundational understanding of the context by reviewing documents, policies, and establishing a good understanding of the context in order to be able to place the data interpretation within the context of the study. Thirdly, the researcher promised to maintain anonymity of the participants to increase the likelihood of more open information sharing. Finally, to triangulate the data from participants, statistical data from publically available sources in the institution's website was collected on numbers of Black and White upper level administrators, and other key constituencies at the institution.



### *Researcher Positionality*

Over a twenty-year period, I have worked in three comprehensive state universities that are also predominantly white institutions. I have held various administrative positions within student affairs and, more recently, academic affairs. In addition, I have been involved in Black Faculty and Staff Associations within those institutions and held various leadership positions within the organizations. As such, I have had the opportunity to be involved in discussions about institutional diversity both as a participant and in some ways a beneficiary of diversity initiatives within those IHEs. These experiences have afforded me unique insights into the need for diversity, as well as the efforts by institutions to embrace and or not embrace diversity of its student, faculty, staff and administrative bodies. Thus, as someone studying this issue, I was in many ways enmeshed in them. Yet, my perspective is simultaneously etic and emic (Harris, 1976). As a Black person working in PWI, I was in many ways, a part of the phenomenon that I studied thereby bringing to bare an emic perspective on the issues. As an insider, I am aware of and have experienced firsthand the everyday microaggressions of racism as well as blatant forms of racism either meted out against people or myself that I have known. Therefore, this placed me squarely in the midst of the issues that I have studied. However, on the other hand, there are certain issues about the study to which I was etic. For instance, my unfamiliarity with the institution in which I conducted the study allowed me to look at the participants' narrative with a fresh pair of eyes. Additionally, my unfamiliarity, while a potential threat to the successful recruitment of the participants, lended my study an emic perspective as well. Thus, I had to be conscious of the questions I chose to ask and how I interpreted the findings in order to avoid biases but let the data speak for itself.

My interest in studying this issue stemmed from the numerous years in higher education both as a student and through the various professional administrative positions that I have held. At the center of my interest is the fact that administrative positions in higher education, except those in disciplinary areas that deanships with professional colleges where an educational background in a field within the discipline is required and expected, in general, other positions such as VPs, graduate school deans, etc. do not have to hold a credential that is related to the profession. Therefore, my interest in tracing career mobility was in making an attempt to understand how the strategies, resources, and personal traits that were related to persons in specific upper-level administrative positions might differ along racial racially, gender, age, and ability lines. This information is important in adding to the body of empirical studies that might be useful to institutions that are attempting to diversify their upper level administrators. Recently, many PWIs in the south have been emerging from litigation that required actions be taken by institutions to increase diversity at the student, faculty, and executive levels. However, much of the current research focuses on diversity on students and faculty. Therefore, little is known about those issues at the higher echelons of leadership in IHEs. It is hoped that this study yielded findings that begin to fill this void in educational research by providing empirical outcomes.

One of the expected challenges in completing this study was establishing rapport and building trust with the participants. Spradley (1979) stated that problem is not merely in those that I have identified above, but in the researcher's "failure to locate a good informant" (p. 46). Spradley has identified five critical requirements for finding a good informant/participant. These include enculturation, current involvement, unfamiliar cultural scene, adequate time and non-analytic. Using these criteria, in recruiting, selecting and inviting potential participants, I looked

at the degree of their enculturation based upon how long they have been in upper level leadership positions. Spradley stated that a highly-enculturalized participant is one who is so well practiced in his/her role that he/she can speak about it automatically, with little conscious scripting (like, ‘this is how it is’) as opposed to one who is brand new in the role that he/she has not experienced the hirings and firings/retirings of upper leadership.

The second point that Spradley made is the need to select someone who is currently involved. Interviewing a former upper level administrator would not be desirable because he/she may distort the account significantly. The next critical consideration that Spradley makes is the need to study the unfamiliar cultural scene. Because of my extensive knowledge of higher education and being enmeshed in it as a staff member, these issues could have brought up the problems that Spradley noted. Those include when conducting research in a familiar scene, the participants are also gathering information about me as the researcher. If my participants believed that I am asking “dumb questions” (p. 50), they could have suspected my motives of conducting the research that I was in some way testing them; therefore, they could have been more guarded in their responses or filtered their responses through using of “stock scripts” of the institution. Overcoming this challenge hinged on my interview prowess and my ability to build rapport even with participants whose motivation for not opening up may be based on other factors such as race, than the degree of my familiarity life as a EEO-I administrator. For these interviewees, I waited to interview them last in order to draw upon the wisdom gained in interviewing the preceding participants. Spradley also spoke of the important need to allow adequate time. Estimating the amount of time it took to complete the interview can be problematical for qualitative researchers. Spradley suggested using “tandem informants” (p. 52) who are participants who are suggested by the original participant. Such a tandem participant

may be nominated on basis of having more time or more expertise or both. With tandem participants, Spradley has suggested picking up where the original one left off. Finally, Spradley suggested that a researcher selects informants/participants who are nonanalytic (i.e., those who just tell their story and desist from dissecting it and helping the researcher make meaning of it). Rather, he has suggested the need for constant analysis by the researcher “of the utterances, taking them apart to find the tacit relationships and patterns” (p. 53).

Establishing, building, and maintaining rapport was critical in data collection. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) offered excellent ideas on research rapport. Besides practicing and enacting attributes of being non-judgmental, friendliness, possessing good listening skills and having a high tolerance for ambiguity, they also suggest being more open and sometimes “revealing more of yourself and of your research thoughts” (p. 97) as reassurance of the participants who might be suspicious of the reasons for conducting the study. It entailed dissociating with certain research relationships that may be deemed “undesirable” by the participants. This means dissociating with groups or individuals who are perceived as politically, socially or culturally threatening to the participants for the sake of collecting rich data.

## CHAPTER IV:

### FINDINGS

Drawing upon the narratives of selected upper-level administrators in a predominantly white institution of higher education in southern United States, this study contrasted career mobility patterns of Black and White upper level administrators by examining their narratives on their careers and their ascent to their current positions. This study brought together critical factors identified in previous research to explain the scarcity of people of color in upper level administration including their preparation, qualifications, their numbers, interview/selection process, institutional hiring policies, gender and race issues which in previous studies have been mostly studied as separate strands. The findings of this study are presented in this chapter. While the primary focus of this study was to understand the role of race in career mobility patterns of Black and White upper level administrators in one PWI in southern United States, other factors such as gender comparison with race are presented. Two research questions guided this study:

1. What differences exist in the process of hiring of Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of selected Black and White upper level administrators within a PWI; and
2. What differences exist in the career mobility of Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of selected Black and White upper level administrators within a PWI?

Participants were asked seven descriptive questions intended to elicit responses that address their demographic composition. Additionally an interview protocol comprising a total of eleven open-

ended questions was presented to each participant. The interview protocol is located in Appendix A of this dissertation. Table 3 presents the demographics of the participants. All participants in this study were assigned a pseudonym that was consistently used throughout the dissertation.

Organizationally, this chapter presents the results by research by question.

Table 3.

Demographics of Participants

Name	Gender	Race	Hire Type	How
Fiesta	Female	Black	Internal-connection	Interim/Tapped
Kelly	Female	Black	External- not connected	Full Search
Leslie	Female	Black	Internal-connection	Tapped
Y Tu	Female	Black	Internal-connection	Tapped
Dick	Male	Black	Internal-connection	Tapped
Eric	Male	Black	Internal-connection	Internal Search
Garrison	Male	Black	Internal-connection	Tapped
Manny	Male	Black	External- not connected	Full Search/Agency
Mister	Male	Black	Internal-connection	Tapped
Bell	Female	White	Internal-connection	Tapped
Jill	Female	White	Internal-connection	Interim/Tapped
Nancy	Female	White	External-connected	Full Search
Pearl	Female	White	External-connected	Full Search
Tracy	Female	White	Internal-connection	Tapped
Binder	Male	White	Internal-connection	Tapped

Name	Gender	Race	Hire Type	How
Bredemeier	Male	White	Internal-connection	Interim/Tapped
Fenner	Male	White	Internal-connection	Interim/Tapped
Fraterly	Male	White	Internal-connection	Full Search
Jack	Male	White	Internal-connection	Interim/Tapped
Scott	Male	White	Internal-connection	Tapped

As described in more depth and detail in Chapter III, axial coding was utilized to arrive at themes related to the two research questions. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), axial coding is an intermediary set of coding procedures “whereby data are put back in new ways after open coding by making connections between categories. This is done using a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, actions/interactional strategies, and consequences” (p. 96). Using the NVIVO 7 qualitative data management system in this study, open codes were developed as free nodes and tree nodes. All through the coding process, free nodes were continually examined and merged together on basis of duplication and similarities/commonalities between them. Thus combined, they became the tree nodes that helped to explained the main concerns of the participants, the set of conditions and contexts from the concerns, the strategies that participants used to manage those concerns; and consequences of those strategies. After careful analysis of the free and tree nodes, the researcher used the data to create the themes that linked to the two research questions.

More specifically, the themes explained the concerns of the participants related to hiring and mobility, Research Question One and Research Question Two respectively, the set of conditions and contexts that produced or sustained those concerns for participants, the strategies

that participants used to manage those concerns and the consequences of the particular strategies that they employed.

The first research question sought to understand the differences that existed in the process of hiring Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of Black and White upper level administrators within a selected PWI in southern United States. In answering this question, first similarities among the narratives of Black and White administrators are presented. This is followed by the presentation of the themes related to the hiring of Black and White upper level administrators in the selected PWI that emerged from the participants' narratives. While the analysis focused mainly on differences that were attributable to race, attention was paid to differences related to factors identified in previous research, including education, gender and age. Furthermore, the analysis of the data is attentive to the tenets of CRT as the theoretical framework that undergirds the interpretation of the findings.

#### Process of Hiring Upper Level Administrators

Research Question One sought to understand the differences that existed in the process of hiring Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of selected Black and White upper level administrators within a selected PWI in a southern United States. In this question, participants' narratives were examined for themes that spoke to how they got into their current positions that included descriptions about their positions, the hiring and/or search process, and search committee issues. The analysis also included questions about the steps they took or that the institution took to get them into the positions they currently occupied. Surprisingly, of the twenty participants in this study, eighteen had been appointed into their current positions as internal or allied candidates. Kelly and Manny,



a Black female and male participant, respectively, were the only two participants in this study who got into the positions without any connection to the position or to individuals connected to positions beyond the information contained in publically-posted advertisements. Despite this apparent homogeneity in the hiring process pertaining to the majority of the participants, differences were noted in the meanings and attributions that participants made of the criteria used in the process of hiring upper level administrators. For instance some participants saw the role of the search committee as a rubber-stamping one. On the other hand, some participants viewed credentials as pivotal to their hiring while others saw them merely as necessary hoops, but otherwise irrelevant to promotion. These differences are presented in the differences section of this question.

Three overarching themes that related to hiring process emerged from the participants' narratives. The first theme was named "Filled even before they come open . . .," or inside/fore-knowledge of positions leading to interim appointments. "It was sort of a staged," or being tapped for a position, was the name given to the second theme. The third theme was titled "Appointment into New Positions Resulting from Consolidation and/or Restructuring." While effort is made to separate each of these themes in this section, it is important to mention that these themes were not mutually exclusive. Rather, there appeared to be a strong synergy between the various factors that propelled the participants into their current positions. For instance, restructuring was associated with interim appointments and having Inside/fore-knowledge of positions was associated with being tapped for a Position.

#### *Similarities in Themes Related to the Hiring Process*

Five participants, both Black and White, indicated that the positions that they currently occupied started off as interim positions. By and large, being offered an interim position was

associated with being in a position to have an inside awareness of what the position called for and what the person hired for the position would ostensibly need to accomplish. Therefore, having such information that transcended the job description (when one came up) allowed the persons to be able to better "market" themselves to the search committee or to the relevant hiring/appointing person(s). The direct supervisor or the particular division's appointing authority typically made interim appointments. Regardless of the means used to secure the position permanently, the individual initially appointed into the interim position ended up occupying it permanently. Indeed in instances where an external search process was involved to find a candidate to take the position permanently, among White male participants whose interim positions were advertised, there was a certain level of skepticism about the sincerity of the external search. Fenner, a White male participant, articulated this skepticism most clearly:

. . . we go through these extensive nationwide searches and go through a lot of effort and wind up hiring someone here . . . You have a tendency to see a lot of interims, interims gain work experience and in their jobs and then wind up filling the jobs, "Well, we got to give you the job, because you've been in it for three years."

*"Filled even before they come open. . ."* or

#### *Inside/fore-knowledge of Positions Leading to Interim Appointments*

Eleven participants described their ascent into their current positions as being positively impacted by having inside and sometimes fore-knowledge about the position and knowing about it before being posted. Inside knowledge is defined as being in a position of having access to inside information about a position (e.g., access to members of search committee or being in a position to bend the ears of the people or person who can appoint or influence who is hired for a position). On the other hand, fore-knowledge simply means knowing about a position even before it becomes publically available. Within this theme, participants' narratives revealed that they got into their current positions mostly by being at the right place at the right time or

knowing the right people. Those narratives revealed that the conditions and circumstances that resulted into their ascending into positions were often associated with having inside information about a particular position which led to their being appointed to take the position, at times on an interim basis. Additionally, having inside information about a position allowed the individuals to express interest in the position, in some cases, before the position was ever advertised thereby filling the position even before it came open.

Specifically, of the six White males in this study, four of them spoke of having known about the position before it became available and of how having that knowledge benefitted them. For instance, Binder, a White male, spoke not only of knowing about the position before it was advertised, but actually about knowing what the critical issues the position was expected to address. He described it as the following:

Well, I became aware of it, the lady that had this position retired and as I remember the position was posted and it went through the usual affirmative action, EEOC type of process and I was actually in the position to know about the job and know how critical it was for the position to be filled by somebody who was going to tackle some very tough problems and ... so there was just all these problems that I was aware of, so I guess (pause) what I did was, having knowing all these issues, and being enthusiastic, I was able to sell myself, maybe a little better than the other people who were applying for the job (pause) and I was fortunate to get it so at any rate, I guess I sold the right people.

Similarly, Bredemeier, another White male, also spoke of knowing about a position before it was advertised at a time that he was already occupying it as an interim. An external search was established and in the end, he wound up with the position.

Well like I said, she was retiring, since I was already working with a quite a bit with a good bit, they asked me to step in as interim, and then they opened up a national search, brought in a search firm, set up a search committee that included people from all over campus, there were probably 20, 25 members on the search committee... brought in a number of candidates, I decided I wanted to apply for the position and I went through the same process as all of the candidates that were brought in by the search firm , I went through multiple interviews. It felt like a six month interview process basically because when you're in an interim position you feel like that everything that you do, everyday, is

part of the interview process (pause) you know, and so I stepped in as interim June and they made the decision in November.

This process of being placed into an interim position and then ultimately being offered the position permanently was also the experience of Jack and Fenner, two other White male participants.

*“It was sort of a staged” or Being Tapped for a Position*

Although White males in this study benefitted the most often by filling positions for which they had inside or fore-knowledge, they were not the only ones whose ascension to their current positions resulted from being on the inside in some fashion. White females also benefitted from being tapped or pre qualified for positions in some way. All five White women in this study reported having benefitted from knowing about a position before it became open or knowing someone who was in position to tap them for the job. For instance, Jill, a White female participant, described in her narrative how she was asked to her current position by a VP with whom she had worked previously. Her position resulted from a targeted appointment. In her narrative, she stated,

They put in an interim person as a VP I had worked for before who had asked me if I would come . . . and so, I spent a year as interim and then [laughs] got appointed (pause) so it’s not quite the normal recruiting process.

Tracy, another White female participant, also got into her position in a somewhat similar manner as those described above. She had served on a committee that was charged with responsibility to create and determine the role of the office that she ended up heading. After discussing and therefore scripting the role of the office, she decided to apply for the position. In the interview, this is what she stated,

There was a committee that was formulated to discuss, What is the role of the [name omitted] Office? As I participated on that particular committee the more they talked, the more I saw this as something that I felt like this was something I was prepared for ... I

was interviewed by [name deleted] and I know he conversed with his supervisors and to my knowledge, my name came forth. So *it was sort of staged*, this particular office, you need to understand, began with us.

*Appointment into New Positions Resulting from Consolidation and/or Restructuring*

Consolidation involved taking existing positions, merging them into one and adding new dimensions to the newly consolidated position. Restructuring involved changing a department or unit and adding a position that did not previously exist. In Fenner's case, some unit restructuring had taken place that resulted in the elimination of some positions. He was placed in a newly created position that was comprised of jobs that he had previously performed. This is what he stated:

Actually the position that I'm in was due to restructuring and elimination of a director's position so I guess if you meant director of payroll, the director of budget left two years ago for a new position, and we eliminated a director's position, so I took on budget director of payroll there (pause) the previous director was retiring and I was the associate director...for that position, and so, while it was an internal search, I obviously felt I was the most qualified so you know, I think that some of that happens when you're (pause) the bringing the outside, the internal vs. external applicant pools.

The narratives of two Black participants, Fiesta and Dick, Black female and male, also showed that restructuring and being put into interim positions was not unique to White upper level administrators. For instance, Dick stated that his position was a created one that did not exist prior to the restructuring. This is what he had to say:

Well, actually, it was a new position. We got a new president and the new president set diversity as a priority and [word omitted] created this position at the vice president level to send the message that [word omitted] was serious about diversity.

Dick's position was a diversity-related position that was created to make a point about how seriously the new president was taking issues of diversity. On the other hand, Fiesta got into her position as an interim. When the position came open, she was the next in line for the position after the departure of her immediate superior. In her narrative, she states that "Unlike the hires, I

was in an executive director position before the chief [title omitted] officer left, I came into this interim . . .”

*Differences in the Themes Related to the Hiring Process*

The defining elements of the racial variations of the themes related to the search process were not on whether or not more Whites compared to Blacks benefitted from the fortuitous conditions and processes that led to their appointment to positions, but rather the differences lay in the types of positions from which Blacks benefitted compared to their White counterparts as well as the meanings they made of who got into what positions. As stated previously, of the 20 participants in this study, only two (Manny and Kelly: a Black male and Black female, respectively) had come into their positions as external candidates with no inside information about the positions they were seeking before that which was publically advertised. Consequently, the distinctions in the narratives lay less in whether they were insiders versus outsiders, but more in the nature of positions that they occupied and the distribution of those positions across members of White and Black racial designations. Additionally, the differences were also noted in the meanings and attributions that members of the different racial backgrounds made to the processes that propelled particular individuals to higher positions within the upper level administrative echelons within the IHE.

As stated, another difference in the narratives lay in the meanings that participants assigned to the question of whether or not they viewed the institution as fair in its endeavor to bring about diversity and their perceptions of fairness of the search process. The narratives of individuals who had ascended into their positions by having inside information about the position, by and large, revealed that they saw nothing wrong with this means of filling upper

level administrative positions even while admitting that it may limit access for other potentially qualified candidates. Binder aptly captured this binary view in his narrative:

. . . work with a lot of public institutions and I've seen that there tends to be the tendency to bring folk in with you, you know, bring your circle with you so anyway, I'm not sure what to say about that other than it happens. Does it violate something or the spirit of affirmative action, or EEOC, I don't know maybe if it doesn't violate it, it's right up on the edge of it, okay (pause) but it works.

From this statement, while Binder saw a potential for turning these hiring practices into exclusionary ventures thereby limiting access for qualified persons who may not be in the circles, he nonetheless was willing to accept it. He thought it works and therefore sanctioned it. On his part, Bredemeier, a White male participant, saw the process of bringing in external candidates, not as based on a genuine desire to interview and consider them for the position, but rather to use them as a validating process. He stated it this way in his narrative:

I think in this type of position, where it's EEO I, that's not the case, that there's always a search and there's always the need to, if nothing else validate that the person you're evaluating internally reaches the same standard as what you're looking for externally.

Other differences in views expressed by the participants included *Irregularities in Searches and Appointments, Credentials as Justification for Qualification for Position, and Searches and the quest for diversity*. As previously stated, another source of difference in the narratives of Black and White participants in this study, on the question of hiring process spoke to the attributions and meanings that participants made of the importance of specific selection criteria (e.g., educational background, personality, experience and skills).

*Irregularities in Searches and Appointments: Personal Qualities  
and "the Connection that had [the candidate] in the Game for This Job"*

Irregularities in searches and appointments were defined as the failure by the institution or unit to have an open search or the tendency to deviate from the process of an open search.

The irregularities ranged from hiring people in positions for which they were not qualified on the basis of having the “right” personality or personal traits, to arbitrarily making an offer to a candidate who had not yet applied for the position, all the way to filling positions before they were even advertised. Within this theme, the narratives revealed that qualification for positions included criteria that were nebulous, thereby making an individual's appointment into a position questionable. In such instances, the criteria for the individual's suitability for a particular position was often not based on any quantifiable criteria such as can be gleaned from a job application or individual's credentials, but other vague criteria surfaced as important.

Speaking about his immediate supervisor, a VP of a unit at the target IHE, Scott, a White male participant, aptly captured this illusive condition for employment. Scott's immediate superior, a vice president for [position omitted], though having no real relevant educational background or “professional experience, was put in as an interim and hired as the person.” Previously, he was an associate provost and according to Scott “*that was the connection that had him in the game for this job.*” The case of Scott's superior, who was an engineer by trade, was only redeemed by the fact that he had a pleasant personality although he knew nothing about his job. According to Scott,

the VP says, ‘I need to go to this meeting so I can learn how to do my job,’ and he'll take me with him, because I know the people and he knows that I know how to do work. He's very honest about his learning curve . . .

Speaking on a similar issue, Mister, a Black male participant, spoke of race as the connection that could propel a minority into upper level administration. His logic was that sometimes a minority was selected for particular high-visibility position in upper level administration to posture the institution as espousing particular values or supporting a particular



position. So race becomes the connection that has the minority candidate in the game for a particular position. For instance, according to Mister,

...sometimes you have a desire to have a minority candidate in the first place and because of that desire, and I've seen this at other institutions, particularly in the student affairs realm...one of the easiest routes to get a minority person in upper administration as far as president is either in diverse and equity or student affairs and so you'll see some VP's of student affairs who are African American and they're looking for or a Hispanic they're looking for someone in particular. . . that's not to say they will not hire someone who is non-minority, but you go into it saying, "Well, it would be great to diversify our population."

Narratives that fell within this theme shared a common distrust of searches or even appointments. That one could not completely trust the process because of underlying nuances that could simultaneously propel a not-so-qualified person to the helm while at the same time potentially discounting those who are the most qualified. Processes that rewarded the added unspoken value afforded to insiders proved problematic to the participants who raised these issues in their narratives. For instance, Scott spoke of being passed over for promotion in favor of someone who had "connection" to the game despite his years of service in that particular division.

Further, racial differences were evident within this theme expressed as a sense of cynicism. Mister was cynical towards the conditions under which a minority could become a VP. Compared to Scott, who in his narrative believed that he was qualified for the VP position except for his lack of a terminal degree, Mister's narrative suggested that despite having the right credentials and experience, minority candidates had limited positions that they were slotted into.

Scott was completely convinced that the only thing that stood between him and vice-presidency was a terminal degree. However, he believed that he was already fully qualified, and a terminal degree was only for credibility. However, that was not the case for the Black participants. Kelly, a Black female participant, echoed Mister's belief that a minority candidate

did not have a fair chance at getting into a non-stereotypical position in IHEs. After racking her brains trying to name an upper level minority administrator, she stated:

... to date, there are at least six maybe more administrators, I'll talk about my particular institution, at my particular institution, vice president levels. There's one vice president, I'm not even sure, before the former head of HR, who was an African American woman, achieved the status as chief human resource officer that designation was assistant VP, maybe it still is but it was my impression that it wasn't (pause) there is just a dearth, I don't know of any African-American deans . It's just an absolute dearth and the, right now, in terms of the president's cabinet, I think there is only one African American, of course, he holds the position of diversity, vice president for diversity.

The two Black participants whose narratives brought up this issue (Mister and Kelly) were in accord in their conviction that a minority candidate would likely be slotted into a certain predictable positions that were minority or diversity related or where they served as a showcase for a value that the institution wished to espouse or to bolster and image that the IHE wanted to showcase. Binder, a White male participant, speaking about fairness in filling positions spoke candidly of the limited chances for advancement for minorities in academia, particularly in the South. He stated,

Well, you know outside of the law (pause) I mean, probably in the deep south, change would not have occurred without strong federal laws, you know without strong federal (pause) I would say, maybe it is an intervention and I've talked to my Black colleagues, my African American colleagues about this , you know really, when you're really poor, poor don't care if you're White, Black, gender, or whatever, but growing up in the deep south when I talked to my female African American colleagues that are my age and I have several that I teach with and it was probably easier for me, as a matter of fact it was easier for me being a White male and in the deep south and probably of any part of this country being a White male . . .

Binder went on to observe that the federal legislative intervention by itself may not be sufficient to erase the entrenched values that undergird the idea of academia, which may well explain the marginalities that the academy creates around Blacks and other minorities. He had this to say:

. . . and if you think about the European model that our higher education system was, kind of tailored from and the fact that most of our institutions were for the gentry, which

were White people and were males who were going into the ministry or who were from rich families who wanted them educated so they could take over the family businesses ...

Binder's narrative suggests that the history of exclusion runs too deep in the system to be adequately undone by federal mandates alone. Further, his narrative infers that the racial history that defines the South further complicates and thickens the layers of exclusionary ideas upon which the academy was built and therefore the policies and practices which are enacted.

Another difference was named *Credentials as Justification for Qualification for Position*: “. . . it was more of a degree box-checking.” In no other theme were racial differences on the positions as starkly self-evident as they were in this theme. Black and White participants constructed and assigned meanings that were diametrically opposed to each other on the importance of possessing appropriate credentials. For different, yet converging reasons, the four White participants (Fenner, Scott, Binder and Jill) who brought up credentials in their narratives displayed a tinge of disdain on the ability of credential to land anyone one a desired job. On the other hand, the Black participants (Leslie and Mister) staunchly attributed their ascent to having progressively prepared themselves for the next level by earning the right credential. Despite the participants’ differing views on the value of credentials, all the participants who spoke on this theme saw the credential as a credible justification for holding a particular position. The absence of which could have the adverse effect of limiting or impeding access to desired and/or deserved position. Regardless of whether or not the person believed in the value of a specific credential, all the participants involved agreed that credentials provided credible justification for being in particular positions.

The views of Fenner and Binder, two White male participants, and Jill, a White female participant, on credentials were the most telling about how the Whites viewed credentials compared to Blacks. Both Fenner and Binder appeared to see no value in credentials other than

simply functioning as justification that protected their right to hold particular positions and thereby providing credibility. Hence Binder's pursuit of higher education was not spurred by a need to prepare him for the next step, but rather it was to give him credibility in the position he was moving into. In a sense, this means that he was already qualified for the position long before he got the doctorate. This is how he put it in his narrative:

[I] was asked to come out here and work with the graduate curriculum and the faculty credentialing system and work on the undergraduate catalog (pause) and at that time I was told that I would have *more credibility* with the faculty and with administration if I had went ahead and finished the Ph.D.

Likewise, Fenner too spoke of his credentials in a manner that suggested that he did not see any real use of credentials beyond assuring that he had checks in all the right boxes. Specifically, Fenner viewed having to go back to school to earn an additional degree as an unnecessary hurdle. In other words, he was always already qualified for the position. Here is an excerpt from his narrative:

probably the biggest hurdle career-wise that I faced was being in a financial affairs area and pursuing an accounting and making (pause) having to go back to school to get the accounting degree even after I got my Masters just to make sure that I had all the right check boxes checked when applying for positions because so many of the job titles at the time required degrees in accounting so it was more of a degree box-checking.

On a slightly different yet converging note, Jill, a White female participant, needed to get particular credentials as justification for the job she wanted. Like Fenner and Binder, Jill gave more weight to the variety of experiences she had in various positions to advancing her up the administrative ladder. Though expressed differently from Binder and Fenner, she too saw no value to the credentials she had earned in college. This is how she stated it:

. . . my college had nothing to do with my interest in being in management, Got an undergraduate degree in chemistry, minored in math, graduate degree in higher education, and then I went back and got, took classes in accounting and computing to be able to do the kinds of things I do.

From a slightly different perspective Scott, a White male participant, did not have a terminal degree. His narrative revealed his conviction that he was passed over for promotion because he did not have a doctorate although he felt that he was highly qualified for the vice-presidency. Indeed, he felt even more qualified than the person who got the position. In interview, he narrated how when a VP position had come open in his division, he felt that he was the most deserving and the most qualified though he lacked a terminal degree—a fact that was confirmed by the provost and the a VP who talked to him about why he was not selected.

Well, obviously, my good friend of mine that's the president of a university, the last time this vice president for student affairs position came up, which was only a couple of years ago, so I just have a new boss...people talked to me, the provost and another vice president talked to me about serving as an interim. I wasn't selected to serve as an interim that was discussed with me. There's no doubt that not having a terminal degree impacted all of those decisions.

There was wistfulness in Scott about not having a terminal degree and how his lack of the credential had adversely impacted his career. "...you know, there are many people who start the conversation, Dr. [interviewee's name], and they assume that I have a terminal degree, and are there times that I regret that, yes . . ." From his narrative, it was clear that what he regretted was the adverse impact his lack of credential had on the trajectory of his career. However, like the other White male participants who addressed this issue, he did not necessary see the credential as adding anything to him more than simply giving him the needed justification to pursue certain positions where his credibility would be questioned if he did not have the requisite credential.

The narratives of Mister, Leslie, Manny and Dick evidences an unwavering faith in the power of education (and therefore, credentials) to help propel them to the next level that was espoused by Black participants. The narrative of Leslie, a Black female participant, revealed her belief that the efforts she had put forth to acquire all the credentials as being critical to enabling her reach desired future positions.

Well I started off in business, my major was marketing. I received a BBA in marketing at [institution omitted] and from there, I went to [institution omitted] to get my MBA. I simply prepared myself in terms of the courses I took so I simply prepared myself academically in terms of getting my degree, getting my advanced degree and later on getting my CPA so it was just a preparation of that (pause) realizing that I would need that to continue to climb the ladder.

Nowhere in Leslie's narrative is there an expression of a lack of faith in her credentials. She attributed her being in her position to having the “right” preparation by way of holding the right credentials. On her part, Y Tu also named specific classes that ultimately led her to her career:

Really the human resources classes that I took made me interested, or got me interested in human resources as a profession as a career . . . Labor relations and the employment law classes, the business law classes, those classes were the ones that peaked my interest in human resources.

On a very similar note, Mister, a Black male participant, too, credited credentials to propelling him for the next level while Manny attributed his ability to apply for positions in higher education to his credentials. In fact, he felt that his having the credential opened more doors although by his own admission, he did not think the credential was necessarily related to the actual work that he was doing. This is how he stated it:

I would probably say that actually going to, getting my Master's degree in grad school (pause) really prepared me from an educational perspective to apply for those higher-level positions, not that you necessarily needed a Master's degree but it opened more doors if you had a Masters degree as employers were looking at applications, comparing apples to apples, so with experience and education it sort of propelled me to that upper-level position that I think most institutions of higher education were looking for experience and education were the two proponents and so I haven't looked back since then.

From Leslie's narrative, there was a sense not just of the centrality of educational credentials but one of having pulled herself up by the bootstraps. She spoke with a certain self-righteousness of having worked three jobs at one time while in school and earning her credentials at the same time. This is an excerpt from her narrative:

Clearly, I did my undergraduate work at [higher education institution omitted], and I have a MBA that I got from [higher education institution omitted] . . . and in the time that I was in, as an undergraduate, I worked my way through school at least two jobs the whole time that I was in undergraduate at one point, I had three jobs . . .

The views on credentials that were evidenced in the narratives of the White participants stood in stark contrast to those expressed by Black participants. Black participants, without exception, placed a great value to the credentials they had earned as preparing them for their careers. On the other hand, White participants were more likely to speak about experiences that they had along the way as being related to their access to desired positions. To the Whites, credentials were secondary to their qualifications, so credentials were no more than for giving them credibility in their positions.

On her part, Kelly (a Black female participant), was the odd one out. She never romanticized her position nor saw her education as leading her to any discernible destination. Rather, she saw her position at the IHE as being no more preferable or desirable than working within any other agency where she was able to utilize her skills. She spoke of having taken the position because she needed a job.

Sure (pause) 1998 well, right after law school, because I had a young daughter, I had a daughter in law school. My husband and I and so maybe a month into my second year, I realized I was pregnant. In the summer between my third year, I had my daughter . . . she was just over 1 when I graduated and took the bar, so options became very limited. I needed a job.

### *Searches and the Quest for Diversity*

The role of the search committee in the recruitment and hiring process came up in narratives of all the participants either in regard to their own hiring process or just as a general practice. Racial differences were noted on the faith that participants had about the role of search committees in assuring diversity. On one hand, Dick, a Black participant believed that his race was a factor that could hinder his advancement, but with the same breath he believed in the

fairness of search committees. This is how he stated it:

I think the process by which people are appointed, especially administrative positions probably limits some of these things because you have a committee that is interviewing people, a committee takes the recommendations and gives them to whomever is appointing the person. So you eliminate some *fixing* of people getting into positions.

On his part, Binder, a White male participant, while acknowledging the value of a diverse faculty, was nonetheless cautious about the bringing new hires in from other places because of the amount of time it would take for an outsider to be acclimated to the institutional culture. In his narrative he stated:

and so one thing about bringing new people is that they have new ideas and they have a different way of doing things but it takes time, first of all for that person, if they will, to appreciate the culture and every institution has its own culture . . .

Similarly, Jill, a White female, sounded the same cautious tune regarding outside hires extolling the benefits of internal hires:

An internal hire brings you someone who understands the institution, that has a history so that they don't have to go back and figure out all the politics or in many cases, they know the reasons why things are done the way they are and they don't (pause) you don't have to start from scratch explaining to them. An external hire brings a different perspective (pause) potential, uh looking at things different way, potential for new ideas, But then, you have to go back and redo a lot of the same stuff over again because they don't understand the history to know what works and what doesn't work on campus. So there are good and bad points of both.

All the Black participants expressed doubts about the fairness of search committees but converged with their White peers that their IHE was one of the more diverse in the region in general, but not so with upper level administration. Black participants, while agreeing with their White colleagues that the search process was complicated, nonetheless argued that diversity was a function of the search committee and the search process (e.g., Kelly). Their narratives revealed that search committees, even when run well, were not as simplistic as one would be apt to think. Participants agreed that the diversity is made possible only by the commitment of the leadership.



In Dick's words:

. . . to have a good diverse work force there has to be a commitment from the leadership and without that commitment you are not going to have it. You can get a diverse pool and people will still not pick a diverse workforce from the pool. It comes from the leadership. I don't care how you say it, it comes from the leadership, in my opinion. It will trickle down, if the leadership shows interest in diversity and the leadership has a diverse workforce, and if the dean's office has a diverse workforce, then the chair, it's sort of a trickle down thing but you can't tell me I want you to have a diverse workforce when I don't have one myself. By example, I guess you have to lead by example.

In a similar manner, Kelly's statement below supports and extends Dick's views:

I think the institutions do a great deal below higher administration to ensure that there is diversity. I think the problem is at the top.

Bredemeier, a White male participant, speaking about assuring a diverse workforce asserted the institution has to take extraordinary measures. He said,

well, I think that you have to ensure diversity (pause) because the pool is not always that large . . . "We really would like for you to do that" (pause) I think it takes more than a cold email coming across your desk, it takes networking at conferences, and other places where folks get together and really putting some effort to search for that candidate to be sure that you got good African-American or Hispanic candidates applying for.

Bell, a White female participant, thought the institution does all it needed to do because

we have a department (pause) cultural diversity, that is what they do and they have educated the staff and the faculty on cultural diversity issues and items, things like that . . . I mean, that's a very obvious item that's being done to ensure diversity.

This view that diversity was assured across the board because employees are educated on

diversity was brought to question by Leslie, a Black female participant:

Well, in terms of fairness, I guess you can look around and say the people who are there now is one [sign], but you can also probably use that very same example to say why aren't there more? So that's kind of like a double-edged sword, you got some who are there, which I think indicates some fairness but I don't think you have enough and , I quite frankly, do believe that a lot of that happens because when a position comes open, sometimes it's already filled before it's even posted because they know who they want, they know who they're comfortable with, and so that's just the way it is and you know as minorities we a lot of times come later to the game. I think once we are more into these positions then I think we have an opportunity to speak up for one another when these positions become available but you know, race still plays a factor it does, it does.

## Career Mobility of Upper Level Administrators

Research question two sought to understand the differences that exist in the career mobility of Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of selected Black and White upper level administrators within a PWI. Participants were asked to reflect upon the trajectory that took them to their current positions both in terms of facilitators and hindrances to getting to where they wanted to be. From their narratives, a number of overarching themes emerged that related to both propelling them forward to holding them back. *Four* overarching themes emerged from their narratives. Those themes were named: careers by default, benefits of being an insider; importance of being connected; and family as hindrance.

### *Careers by Default or “I just sort of fell into it”*

Within this theme, participants expressed in various ways how their start in higher education was not a conscious choice. Rather, participants revealed that they ended up in higher education through various events that made a career in higher education happen by default. Additionally, several narratives demonstrated commonality among the participants in the way they entered and moved around positions in higher education. On the other hand, race differences were noted in how certain participants ended up in upper level administration. In this section, the narratives that were similar in the way that participants wound up and moved around in positions in higher education are presented first.

*Similarities in narratives of careers by default.* Under this theme, participants revealed that they had entered into the careers or moved from one career to another or position to another by default. Bell, a White female, in her statement captured the essence of this theme. She stated,

when I got out of college my goal was not to be higher-ed (pause) *I just sort of fell into it*, stayed in the hospital finance department, and my first three years or four years, I would've said I wouldn't be here for 19 years but then, things just kind of shook out and it became a good opportunity for me to stay there.

Another White female participant, Tracy, stated, "It pursued me. I didn't pursue it." She proceeded to say this:

From that particular standpoint, I attended some meetings at NSF and they offered me the opportunity to apply for an [name omitted] grants which is something [name deleted] had. And it just went on from there and [higher education institution deleted] said hey, "we need for you to do this full time." So through the, [state omitted] Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, I was called upon to help with the [name of office deleted] and I love every minute of it, it is wonderful.

In a very similar manner, Binder, a White male, reflecting on his beginnings in higher education, recalled that the reason he got into it had more to do with access to employee funding to pursue and continue his education than a conscious choice to get into higher education administration. He stated, "there was the employee's assistance program, so I got into education, working in higher education, I guess to some degree, *just by default*." However, this default route that got him into higher education administration was not without regret. Later into the interview, he thoughtfully revealed his regrets at allowing the default route to propel him along:

. . . came back up here and came to work for school of (name delete) and then from there I went to the provost office as associate provost for administration and finance, so all my career had been largely (pause) I have seen a lot of different aspects of academic health centers because in academic—I mean, [higher education institution omitted] is an academic health center like [higher education institution omitted], and there were times when I wish I had done maybe the faculty route and had gone through tenure but that's just not the way it worked out for me. If I had one regret, that would be it that I didn't go ahead early on and go ahead and join a faculty and maybe go that route but I don't think that I would have been, I would have gotten maybe to the same place slightly differently but I think writing and gaining tenure would have been a fun process.

Fenner, another White male participant, also got into higher educational administration by default. However, the difference between him and the others was that he did not have an end (i.e., upper level administrative position) in mind when he started. He just worked his way up the

ranks and that progressively led to the upper level administrative post that he currently holds. In the interview, he stated

I don't think that I set out with a plan to reach the position. I started right out of college in an introductory clerical level position. I don't think again that it was a decision, a conscious decision or an experience because I did my college along with my progression at [higher education institution omitted] I had my undergraduate degree, got a job went back, got a Master's, continued to grow at [higher education institution omitted], went back, got an accounting degree continued to grow, went back, got my, required hours to sit for the CPA exam and continued to grow and then I earned (pause) went back to school and just stayed at [higher education institution omitted] and just progressed, so I don't think there was ever a plan of reaching a position.

Jack was another White male participant who got into higher education administration unintentionally. He knew what he wanted to do though ending up in higher education administration was not a clearly defined target from the very beginning. Rather, his taking the position at the institution where he had been for over three decades was a something that he took because he thought that "it would give me an opportunity me to get my foot in the door." In the interview, he stated

The answer to that is probably too many [years at IHE]. As I tell many people, I came here for a year in 1975 so that makes it what (pause) 34 years now, "Yeah well it's for a year or two (pause) it would give me an opportunity me to get my foot in the door."

Even among participants who got into higher education by default, there were some differences noted along race and gender lines. For Dick, a Black male participant, while a career in higher educational administration happened by default, his actually getting into upper level administration was spurred by being tapped for the position by a White "benefactor." Dick's narrative of tapping by a White patron was a thread that tied all the higher-education-by-default narratives of the Black participants in this study. In Dick's case, his decision to get into higher education in the first place was one of escaping what he had actually trained for. In the interview, he stated:

I decided to get into higher education as an alternative to becoming a lawyer. So higher education was really my second choice. My academic preparation was a Ph.D. in Mathematics at the [name of institution omitted]. I really had no interest in upper level administration. I had more of an interest in being a faculty member and reaching the top rank as a faculty member, the person who impacted my getting into administration was a fellow named [name omitted] who was a provost and assistant provost here at the time. He was an engineer and he had moved into higher education. He and I played racquetball together. I think my discussions with him probably impacted my moving into higher administration.

Eric was another Black male participant who also got into higher education by default, but at the nudging of a White colleague at the firm where he was working at the time. Eric stated

. . . and to be honest, I had not given a lot of consideration to working in higher ed. Another member of the firm told me about this opportunity and he thought it would be a great opportunity and thought I should investigate it. I was in undergraduate school at [higher education institution omitted] pursuing a degree in engineering, was in the honors program and we would have these forums once a week where they would invite different speakers to come and talk so [name omitted] who was a general counsel out at Marshall Space Flight Center to talk[ed] to us one day an engineer and she was also a lawyer so she peeked my interest because I always liked, I was interested in both, but honest never considered you can do both so she peeked my interest.

Garrison was yet another Black male participant who got into upper level administration by default. However, what was different about his advent into higher education administration was his motivation for doing so. In the interview he indicated that his motivation for contemplating higher education administration was spurred by potential financial gains that accrue from it.

While he did not act on it, he later acted upon his interest after being tapped by a White colleague. He stated the following:

I did not think about being an administrator until I was here and then I started thinking about, at one point, I thought, well, you know, administrators make this amount of money and regular faculty couldn't make this amount of money, Our former dean was going through some things political things related with his job and he decided he needed to have an assistant dean for urban affairs and he selected me, he told me about it on my birthday, he said, "How would you like to be assistant dean for urban affairs?" So he actually gave me my start you know, I always thank him for it when I do see him because I don't think I had thought about it as much as before, and you know.

A common thread that tied all the narratives of getting into higher education by default of participants, whether Black or White, was the idea of created positions. Dick's position as VP was a position that was created by the president of the IHE. Similarly, a White male participant, Bredemeier, stated that two of his positions were the result of restructuring that resulted in the creation of his positions. He stated that

. . . when we had a new dean come in, we restructured some things, and actually created a position that put me in charge of recruiting and advising students, and that was probably the single biggest event that changed my path was when he asked me to be in charge of both recruiting and advising the students of the school.

He then continued to speak of yet another position he held later that was also created. He said

Well, the position I had before this was a position that was created under the provost, specifically to come in and implement a new information system, a student information system.

The most unusual story of getting into upper level administration by default, and perhaps the most nonchalant, came from Fiesta, a Black female participant. She did not view through rose-tinted glasses her being in her position. It was simply another industry where she was doing what she does. In the interview, she stated:

I really didn't pursue a career in higher education. I ended up in this industry and the function I serve, I've worked in higher-ed, I've worked in education, I mean, in healthcare, I've worked in telecommunications, I've worked in engineering and construction, I've worked in lots of different industries so I didn't pursue higher-education, it just happens to be the industry in which I do what I do right now. Ok, I'll speak to the...I was in an executive director position before the chief H.R. officer left, I came into this interim.

Expressing close to a similar view, Kelly, another Black female participant, expressed that being in upper level higher education administration was by default only because she did not have other choices. She got into it because it was the only option that was available to her at the time.

This is evident in her narrative:

Well, I don't know if I ever considered it as a career path because I'm not even sure that I recognize it as an option or even had enough information about it. Again, I don't know if I necessarily had any preparation, because I never knew that I would be doing what I'm doing now

*Differences in narratives of careers by default.* In contrast, the narratives of Leslie and Mister, Black, female and male respectively, revealed their unwavering belief that their ascent was largely attributable to their systematic preparation. However, while Leslie, like the other Black participants had a benefactor/mentor who facilitated her getting into higher education, she attributed her mobility to preparation although she admitted that she ended up in higher education by default in the sense that it was where she was offered a job.

I was in banking prior to coming to higher ed as an assistant branch manager with [Bank name omitted], I decided to go back and get a degree in accounting and talking with the chairperson for accounting at [higher education institution omitted], at the time, she suggested that I just get a concentration if I wanted to sit for the CPA exam so I did go back, I did get my concentration in accounting, so it wasn't a definite decision that I'm gonna go into higher ed (pause) so I simply prepared myself academically in terms of getting my degree, getting my advanced degree and later on getting my CPA, so it was just a preparation of that realizing that I would need that to continue to climb the ladder

On his part, Mister, too had an advisor who told him how to get into higher education administration. However, he, like Leslie, attributed his career mobility to preparing for the next level.

Got into higher education by being involved as a student undergrad and was involved in different student organizations found out from my advisor how to go into higher education administration. I felt like all along I've had this knowledge base of where I wanted to go and what I wanted to do (pause) "Ok, well I'm not sure how to get from this point to the next point" so I've been fairly successful in being able to do that and even passing that on to other staff members who were looking to advance themselves as well

Mister's and Leslie's views about the importance of education were mirrored by Jill, a White female participant who, though she got into her position by default, felt compelled to diversify and increase her knowledge base in order to be adequately prepared for the next level.

In the interview she stated that

I worked when I was in college. I had thought I would go to medical school, and decided I didn't want to do that. Higher ed was what I knew, so I stayed in higher ed and obstacles did you say? I was the budget director for the institution which gave me an overall view of how the institution worked and financial operation of the campus and then I was an assistant VP working for the provost doing a variety of things related to how the academic side worked. So that helped me both of those did. Ok There, my college had nothing to do with my interest in being in management. [I] Got an undergraduate degree in chemistry, minored in math, graduate degree in higher ed, and then I went back and got, took classes in accounting and computing to be able to do the kinds of things I do.

Binder, a White male participant, debunked unwavering faith in education and earning the right credentials for the next step up the administrative ladder. Though he too got into higher education administration by default, he only believed that getting a terminal degree was just to give him credibility, not so much that the degree prepared him to hold the position. This was in stark contrast to Mister's and Leslie's narratives from which one gleans the fact that they believed their education led them to the careers. Recall what Binder revealed in his narrative that was highlighter earlier:

. . . was asked to come out here and work with the graduate curriculum and the faculty credentialing system and work on the undergraduate catalog . . . and at that time I was told that I would have *more credibility* with the faculty and with administration if I had went ahead and finished the Ph.D.

Yet another aspect of the variability of the narratives of careers by default lay in the perception of why people helped in the advancement of another's career. Fiesta, a Black female participant, was almost cynical in her narrative of how and why people had helped her along the way. She stated that following:

you know, there are lots of people who gave me opportunities that didn't have to, I recognize that. Some of them gave me opportunities because I was willing to do the work and they didn't wanna do the work, I recognized that and I took that as an opportunity to see what I can do to learn. There were some people who gave me opportunities because they didn't want me to have another opportunity, so I took those opportunities to see what I could do to learn



*Benefits of Being an Insider---" I knew the guy that had this job"*

A second theme that emerged on the question of career mobility of Black and White administrators was named *benefits of being an insider*. Being an insider meant several things from knowing about a position even before it was advertised, knowing the person who held the position before the person announced their intent to retire or leave the position, being a known entity, being tipped about an opening that was coming up or straight out being invited to apply for a position. This theme manifested itself in narratives of several of the participants.

In the narrative of Bell, a White female participant, this theme manifested itself in its starkest formation. Like several others who spoke of this phenomenon, Bell knew the person who held the job before her and so was well aware of the position coming open even before it became open. Other variants to the theme included getting to speak informally about the position to those who would make the decision about the position and getting a sense of their suitability for the position before submitting an application. The following excerpt illustrates the benefits that Bell reaped from being on the inside.

*I knew the guy that had this job before me, [name omitted], I had worked with him some on different things. I just sort of knew him through the years (pause) somebody called me, that knew me and said I think they've posted [name omitted]'s job and I called, since I knew [name omitted], and talked to him directly about it. I told him I understand that there's a lot of bureaucracy in terms of applying and doing internal transfers within the university and I said, "Is this something that I would be qualified for and you would be interested in talking to me?" And he was like, "Yeah, most definitely" so I had that personal interaction with him before I went through the trouble of getting on I think they call it . . . \*whispers to self\* and then I interviewed with our personnel representative [name omitted] and then he just that was this is more of what the job is, this is the qualifications and that sort of thing.*

Binder, a White male participant, brought up issues that related to this theme in his narrative as well. However, there was a slight variation in this theme. In his case, the inside connection that he spoke of was to do with knowing what a specific job required because he was on the inside

and therefore was able to speak specifically to how his qualifications met that specific need. This is what he said in the interview:

I was actually in the position to know about the job and know how critical it was for the position to be filled by somebody who was going to tackle some very tough problems, because we didn't even have QEP, a Quality Enhancement Plan, what I did was, having knowing all these issues, and being enthusiastic, I was able to sell myself, maybe a little better than the other people who were applying for the job (pause) I can think of each person I've worked for, the deans or the chairmen of medicine at [higher education institution omitted], these people have been encouraging and you know, in their own small way, have helped me see other opportunities and have helped me along the way, and I knew that I had to do the Ph.D. to have credibility, so at any rate, I guess I sold the right people.

Dick, a Black male participant, recounted in his narrative about how he got into higher education administration as a result of the president creating a new position in diversity and expanding the staff who reported to that position. He was clearly a beneficiary of being an inside candidate in his current and past positions. In his narrative, he stated

I think when you hire someone in an EEO1 position, internal people have big advantage to external people because they are familiar with the environment and they know the work environment, they know the institution.

Fraterly, a White male participant, speaking to being an insider, was blatant about using his position as an insider to get to "the next challenge." In his narrative, he spoke about how he knew about the position and how he went about letting those who would be making recommendations about hiring that he was interested in the position and generally networking with those who mattered to assure that they knew of his interest in the position. This is what he stated in his narrative:

I became aware of this position in Feb. 2006, when I was a member of the faculty senate and heard at a meeting that this position was coming open, that [name omitted] who had just been hired as graduate dean was looking for an associate dean who would help improve the service of the graduate school for students and faculty in the (pause) "you know I'm ready for the next challenge" and that's a tough thing to say (pause) but I mean, with chair search committees, there's a lot of networking that goes on.

*Differences in narratives of insider benefits.* The findings of this study revealed that the differences in the narratives of the benefits of being an insider lay not in whether or not more Whites over Blacks benefitted from being insiders. Both groups did equally. Rather, the difference lay in the attributions that Black participants made of why they got selected, tapped or encouraged to apply for a position or why they were ultimately offered the position. Almost equal numbers of Black participants and Whites benefitted from their insider status in getting a position or positions. However, Black participants stated that “they” the committee was more “comfortable” with him/her (Black candidate). The referent “they” was made recurrently throughout this study by majority of the participants to refer variously to the search committee, the hiring office, the university administrators, and where Black participants were concerned, “they” meant Whites. For instance, Garrison, a Black male participant, speaking of how he was offered an administrative position, stated that he thought he got the offer because “they” were comfortable with him.

I just all of a sudden I got to talk to the dean and he said, “I thought about this, and I would like to offer you the position” and you know, it did catch me by surprise because I was thinking, “Okay, I thought you were gonna do this national search” and I don’t know if *they* just decided these other people that want to come in, he was gonna be more comfortable in having somebody who was familiar with the campus or it may have very well been here’s an opportunity for me as a dean to make a statement that I can have an African-American chair on this side of campus.

Leslie, another Black participant, spoke of people being comfortable and what it meant.

Before I became director of equipment accounting and [name omitted] was very instrumental in me becoming the director of equipment accounting. So it’s just, I think a matter of people knowing you and knowing what kind of work that you do and that *they* feel comfortable (pause) you know, giving you responsibility or greater responsibility so based on him, talking with me about the job of equipment accounting.

In this quote, Leslie sounded as if the fact that she perceived people as being comfortable with her and therefore entrusting her with more and more responsibility was some kind of

achievement that everyone should aspire for. She, like Garrison, negates or disregards her own experience and knowledge as a contributing factor to why she may have been offered the positions. However, further into the interview, she appears to critique the idea of people being comfortable with someone before they are offered a position. In the following excerpt, she expresses some cynicism about a system where positions are filled before they even become available but says nothing about the potential dangers that process portends in fostering exclusion and insularity.

I (pause) quite frankly, do believe that a lot of that happens because when a position comes open, sometimes it's already filled before it's even posted because *they* know who *they* want (pause) *they* know who *they are* comfortable with and so that's just the way it is

Despite Leslie's momentary critique of needing to be comfortable with someone before they are offered a position, one gets the sense that Black participants who had benefitted from being insiders were in a sense almost bragging that they were found "fit" to be considered comfortable and therefore offered the positions. While Whites were likely to speak about how their previous positions had prepared them for the current one, the Black participants said virtually nothing about their qualifications for the positions. Fiesta was the exception. She prided herself in getting the right experiences and skills in preparation for the next position. She stated, ". . . so I want to make sure that I get the right skill mix . . ."

Through my analysis of the narratives of Black and White participants on this theme of benefits of being an insider. The researcher was struck by the ways in which each of the groups used the pronoun "they" for the Black participants, there was not specificity in the referent. It was almost as if they (Black participants) expected me to understand exactly to whom they were referring. This is the phenomenon relates to the idea of fictive kinship identified by Dr. S. Fordham (Fordham, 1996). Several of the Black participants referred to the unspecified "they" in

a different way than the White participants did. For instance, Mister, a Black participant, talked extensively about “they.” This is what he had to say about search committees:

I feel that in some aspects, it all depends on the position the unfortunate thing about it being a Black professional on the university campus there are a lot of committees where I feel are being asked to be on a committee because we need a level of diversity. Do *they* appreciate my background and what I got [to offer], yes. At some point along the way, *they* may look and say, “Well and *they* look around the table and notice that ”We’re very White around this table we need to try and who can we get?” And so, yeah, I end up being the person who is selected and so in some instances, some of these positions may not be looking for me, I may apply for a position because it works, based on what I think I can bring to the table, but *they* may not be looking for me . . .

(Continuing)

. . . I really think that there are certain positions at a certain level that I probably wouldn’t get a fair shot at because you know, as you get to a higher level, almost seem to be predestined (pause) so, sometimes there is no agenda, but sometimes there is an agenda . . . *they* know who the candidate is, *they* go in a particular direction (pause) you know, searches with, a search may be held where there’s a thought process of where they want to go, or who *they* wanna bring in.

White participants, instead of talking about whether or not “they” were comfortable with them (the candidate), spoke of “fit.” The way those participants used fit implied a two-way interaction where the candidate was actively determining whether “they” were a fit for the candidate to work with similarly “they” were actively seeking to determine whether the candidate was a fit for “they.” So there was mutuality in it. These participants did not express the same kind of helplessness—that they were entirely at the mercy of the search committee (or whatever else “they” stood for) in determining if the candidate was acceptable. However, in the instances and use by Black participants, there was almost a sense of helplessness—the Black candidate was entirely at the mercy of “they” and it was as if “they” were acceptable by default and did not need to be examined or critiqued much less be analyzed by the candidate in terms of “they” fitness to employ the Black candidate. Several participants spoke of “fit.” Speaking of “fit,” Pearl, a White female participant, had this to say:

I think I was invited back, two of us were invited back to meet with the staff and talk with them about our vision and just to kind of (pause) what the *fit* was there . . . them to get more of an idea of who I am, what my style is and well as vice versa just to kind of see there and then from there, I got the offer.

From this excerpt, it is clear that Pearl was not the only one being interviewed so were the staff (the one's interviewing her). She was checking them out as much they were her. Another participant, Fraterly, a White male, articulated the fitness test even more blatantly in the following excerpt: "I would never say that, or I would never assume that I was the best qualified for any position because you don't know how you *fit* so if you, let's think about it two ways." The same type of idea is expressed by Nancy, a White participant, about waiting first to assure that there was a "fit" with her new job before putting up her business for sale. Again, the same kind of equality in the power relations existed between "they," who are offering the job, and the individual who is applying or interviewing for the job. Nancy states it this way:

I had a very successful business actually, I kept both companies for the first two years that I stayed here. I had to make sure that this was a good *fit* for me umm and then when I put the first company up for sale it sold in seven days so it a very buyable business and the second company was a partnership so I merely sold my rights to the other partner.

Another White male participant, Jack, spoke on this issue of fit, relating it to trust and being a known entity. In fact Jack's view was that one can be fit even if they were being measured against someone (unknown, but without the trust factor) who had better credentials for the job.

. . . the *trust* factor, I think an internal candidate would, hopefully have earned by the fact a number of people or I would know the individual and perhaps have worked with the individual with programs or activities before (pause) and sometimes people view that as the easy way out, I don't necessarily think that's the case, but I think the fact of *trust* being such an important element in a, good working relationship (pause) I think that would probably be the one asset that would be there as a strength or whatever of an internal candidate (pause) maybe it's—sure you can label it as proven track record, and I guess that's an element as well, an external can put on their resume, and even when you call people, unless you truly know of individuals but even then, are they telling you, not the truth, but telling you everything.

Additionally another factor about the narratives of White participants was their reference to “they,” for which there was a definite referent. That referent was the search committee, the administrators, the University, etc. The attribution of “they” was clearly different from the Black participants whom “they” was left as an unspecific referent from which I inferred to mean Whites. For instance, in the following excerpt, Fraterly, a White man participant, speaks about why “they” might choose to hire him or not.

I think that a hiring decision is always, is always complicated by perceptions of the people making the decision about what *they* believe *they* need in the position (pause) I would never assume that I was the best qualified for any position because you don't know how you *fit* so if you, let's think about it two ways. I was an external candidate you know, for the reasons we talked about it could be that my ideas and my way of doing things might in my view be appropriate, but in the view of the people doing the interview, doing the hiring, *they* may see that as, as a clash with their existing culture and see that as a negative because *they* might feel that my approach might not be successful in their situation because in part it's people's perceptions about how you-re going to---how--*they're* gonna—*they're* hiring someone who's go, *they're* not gonna hire someone who's not gonna be a success that would—that would be silly so *they're* trying to, from their point of view, *they're* trying to make a judgment about . . . *they* wanna find-*they're* always looking for the person that could move their agenda forward (pause) and *they're* the only ones who know their agenda really.

#### *Importance of Being Connected*

Narratives that constituted this theme centered on the issue of being well-connected at the work-site or at the institution. All the narratives, without exclusion, linked being connected with being an insider. That in order to advance in upper level administration, one has to be connected with the right people and in order to do that, one then invariably has to be an insider. These narratives also give an insight about external candidates who might have the requisite requirements for specific positions or even exceed them, but not have the kind of inside connectivity that would make them suitable contenders for particular positions. Therefore, these narratives without exception underscored the importance of work and social connections as the central factor in assuring one's ability to move up the ladder.

*Similarities in narratives of the importance of being connected.* One of the major similarities shared by the participants in this sub-theme had to do with the fact their positions were the result of restructuring, creation, or expansion of an office or area. Dick, a Black male participant, reflected on how he came into the positions he occupied over time.

Previously, I was the associate provost for diversity and that position certainly prepared me to become a vice president because particularly, I am doing pretty much the same thing across campus where as I was once doing it in a school (pause) . We got a new president and the new president set diversity as a priority and [word omitted] created this position at the vice president level to send the message that [word omitted] was serious about diversity. So this position was created and it reports directly to [word omitted]. I think when you hire someone in an EEO1 position, internal people have big advantage to external people because they are familiar with the environment and they know the work environment, they know the institution.

From this excerpt, it is evident that Dick benefitted from being put in a created position and acknowledges the advantages of being an insider over being an outsider when seeking EEO1 positions. Like many of the narratives under this theme, Dick, extols the benefits of being a known entity. Fenner, a White male participant, who spoke of holding a position that was the result of restructuring and also where he had specific insider advantage going into the interview.

. . . so I've always had good bosses, probably the biggest thing that's helped my career was back in 2000, I agreed to go on a project to build the new financial and HR accounting systems. I actually went on that project for four years so after I came back, I came back as director of payroll because that was the system that I built (pause) I obviously felt I was the most qualified. You know, I think that some of that happens when you are. bringing the outside—the internal vs. external applicant pools.

In the narrative of Garrison, a Black male participant, he clearly benefitted as an insider in at least two of his appointments that he speaks about in the following excerpts. He admits to being surprised that he was appointed, almost as though he did not think he deserved it. Contrasted with his White counterparts, none of them expressed any remorse or reservations related to whether or not they were qualified or deserved the job.



Perhaps Leslie, a Black female participant, captured the essence of this theme in her narrative. When she stated that

a lot depends on who you know, it really does that's just it. A lot depends on who you know, so when it comes to getting a position in upper levels of higher education administration and I know that happens here at [higher education institution omitted]. I've seen it happen in my twenty years and I think it happens in every corporation or company.

Like other narratives in this theme, Leslie's narrated similar experiences of benefitting from restructuring and having a network of inside supporters who helped her land several of her positions, though she admitted to having no previous higher education experience.

And the person I mentioned before [[name omitted] was very instrumental in me getting into the accounting part of it and once I was there, the director of general accounting, the position I have right now, he was responsible for promoting or basically creating a couple of assistant directorships here in general accounting and I received one of them and there was someone else who also received another, he did some restructuring and as a result of that restructuring, I became the assistant director of general accounting and there was also someone else who became that as well . . . and I was in that position for a while before I became director of equipment accounting and [name omitted] was very instrumental in me becoming the director of equipment accounting. So (pause) it's just, I think a matter of people knowing you and knowing what kind of work that you do and that they feel comfortable.

Nancy's story echoed others' in this theme.

I had been in private enterprise as a business owner for 16 years but had been very active with [higher education institution omitted] in a voluntary capacity, specifically with the alumni society board, and so having been working closely, when I decided to make a career change there was a natural pattern for me to look to the university for a career opportunity. Well, my degree is actually in sociology, which is the study of people . . . so I think that that obviously helped me in working with alumni, since it is work, the work of alumni is relationships with people.

Similarly, Y Tu, a Black female participant, brought up issues similar to all the others within this theme.

I established a relationship with a number of individuals within HR because of the nature of the work that I did outside of HR, I had a lot of contact with people who currently sat in HR so they knew my background, they knew my work, they knew my work ethic, so if there was a position that became available, they would let me know about it and I was

actually recommended by an individual that was the Director of Employment and Comp at the time an administrator in the Dept. of Pediatrics and that's how I got that position.

*Differences in narratives of the importance of being connected.* Two issues were identified that marked the difference in the theme of being connected. The first of these was *earmarking*. The differences noted on this issue had nothing to do with one's race, but rather with how participants constructed what being connected meant and what it resulted into. Earmarking meant a particular position was marked and offered to a specific known individual. A variation of earmarking occurred when an administrator offered positions to particular individuals who embraced the same values as he or she did. Such individuals typically were not interviewed but were simply brought in to fill the positions. Further, such individuals did not have to have any insider connections beyond the administrator who brought them in. The second difference noted in this theme of the importance of being connected emerged from the Black participants. The counter-issues that were identified within this sub-theme were named *being outside the network*. In this section, earmarking is presented first.

Binder, a White male participant, offered a view of earmarking of positions. He spoke about the need for upper level administrators to be surrounded by people who know them and can hit the ground running, people who understand the culture of the organization. Then he spoke of people within his own life that have been instrumental in making him see the available opportunities that he may not have been aware of without the network.

I work with the [state omitted] general studies commission so I work with a lot of public institutions and I've seen that these people have been encouraging and you know, in their own small way, have helped me see other opportunities and have helped me along the way.

Pearl, a White female participant, spoke to earmarking even more bluntly. Speaking about positions she had filled, she specifically mentioned one that she filled with someone whom she knew from her past corporate work.

Based upon, well there are strengths based upon the position, I just filled a position--well I filled two positions since I've been here and one of them was an external candidate and the other was an internal candidate and the external candidate, I knew her from corporate and she is just gun-ho and wonderful and the skill sets that she's brought based upon that position were great and the energy that she brings to everybody.

On the other hand Tracy, another White female participant, was earmarked for her position through her work-related meetings at the IHE. While her connections with the IHE happened while she worked for a different external agency, she developed relationships with people in the IHE who then earmarked a position specifically for her. Recall her statement about how she assumed the position "It pursued me. I didn't pursue it." Eric, a Black male participant, and a beneficiary of inside connections, reflected on the importance of putting people in leadership positions who fulfill the mission of the department, while on one hand appearing to think that education and qualifications are important, he at the same time stated that other "soft" qualifications that include personality perhaps superseded education.

You should seek out people that are going to be excellent, people that are going to maximize each of those particular positions and excellence to me is combination of qualifications and persona and attitude and drive .You can have the most beautiful resume in the world and match up with what we need in the position to a tee, but you don't have the appropriate drive or appropriate personality or the appropriate zest, the appropriate attitude towards investing in people.

The second difference in the theme of importance of being connected was named *being outside the network*. This difference was only noted among the narratives of five of the nine Black participants. In his narrative, Garrison, a Black male participant, stated that

the unfair part is when it's ever based on who you know or you're in the network because it and I think that's for any African American, or Hispanic or Asian or minority candidate in any position, if you're not part of that network, then you may not get that

fair shot. So you hope that when people look for positions that they are willing to expand their search beyond the network, you know, yes I would consider someone who doesn't look like me yes, I would consider someone who's been a chair or an administrator at a HBCU sometimes I don't think, we're at a smaller institution, yeah, sometimes I don't think that people value that. I think they just look at, "Well, I gotta bring in somebody who comes from the same size university."

Kelly, a Black female participant had the following to say:

I think one of the main obstacles is just [a] lack of information and knowing that it was even possible for an African Americans. At the time when they hired me, which was in 2000, there had never been an African-American [to work in] The [word omitted] Office, it used to be that each of the individual campuses had their own individual [name omitted] office, and it became a [word omitted] something like '78, and from that time to 2000, there was no African American, so that is a huge barrier, in of itself, the fact that you never seen anyone else do it.

She also suggested that the lack of information may be responsible, at least in part, to the paucity of African Americans holding cabinet level positions at the institution. This relates to her critique of the only Black on the President's cabinet occupied the position of VP for Diversity.

Another Black female participant, Leslie, expressed what might perhaps be the most blatant indictment of exclusions that are created by reliance on connections to fill positions. Leslie observes positions and its recounted here to drive home the point that positions are filled even before they become open. This implies that people within the circle either earmark positions or recruit/hire those within the circle. She stated,

I don't think you have enough and I (pause) quite frankly, do believe that a lot of that happens because when a position comes open, sometimes it's already filled before it's even posted because they know who they want, they know who they're comfortable with and so that's just the way it is and you know as minorities we a lot of times come later to the game (pause) you know, race still plays a factor it does, it does.

Similarly, Y Tu, another Black female participant wondered if her predecessor's position ever got advertised. She stated, "I did not know that my predecessor had announced retirement." Mister, a Black participant, though himself a beneficiary of insider status, was critical of insider connections that often exclude those without insider knowledge. He stated that

a search may be held where there's a thought process of where they want to go, or who they wanna bring in and sometimes it relates to whether or not there was a consultant who came in or someone knows someone as well and, you know, I see that. Someone was selected for that position (pause) it would be (pause) something that I would think would (pause) yeah, you know (pause) if someone was selected for a position (pause) I wouldn't be surprised (pause) although I'm very confident when I go into certain things, and feel that, "Yeah, ok, I know what I'm bringing to the table" but it's not as if I'm gonna look and be like, "No I can't believe this, I'm 'a take this to HR" (pause) you know, it's not that deep.

*Family as hindrance.* This was the final theme in that was identified in the question of differences in career mobility of Black and White upper level administrators in the selected PWI. Since mobility was impacted both positively and negatively, family was viewed as having a negative impact on career mobility. The participants who spoke about the issue of family in their narratives all suggested that having a family, particularly little children, was a hindrance to career mobility. This theme cut across race and gender.

Bredemeier, a White male participant, spoke of having to make the difficult choice of going back to graduate school when he had one child and another on the way.

When I first graduated from university with an engineering degree though, I decided wanted to pursue family first so I left, and worked for 3 years for a company, and um . . . had a child, so the biggest obstacles were trying to give up what was a comfortable, secure life to come back and work on a masters and doctoral degree and, uh we also had another child along the way so financially and uh juggling those expectations of being a parent, those were the biggest burdens actually. And then, I was the first person in my family to pursue something beyond a bachelor's degree, and I don't know that my family really understood why anybody would want this much education. You know [laugh], "You can get a job, why would do you need to keep going to school?" was kind of the attitude. Although they were supportive, they didn't just quite get it.

Bredemeier's narrative revealed that he saw having a family causing him to be unsure of his next career move. The uncertainty sprung, not from his ability to provide actual child care, but his ability to fend for his family financially, materially. Additionally, he had to contend with having to convince other family members of the wisdom of getting even more degrees. Other participants, specifically Binder who was first generation college graduate in his family, also

brought this point forward, spoke about having to explain family why yet another degree was necessary.

Mister, a Black male participant, expressed a similar perspective to Bredemeier's relative to his inability to provide for his family while he was pursuing higher education. He stated poignantly that he felt emasculated:

After working the corporate sector for a bit, the obstacles I had were going back to school with a family in tow and those were things that made things a little more difficult, feeling like you need to be the head of the household and somewhat emasculated to a degree because of the fact you cannot financially support your family except through loans and a lot of Black people, and a lot of people period don't wanna necessarily try to do loans if they don't have to.

In a similar vein, Jack, a White male participant, also spoke of having to turn down an offer that he wanted in Chicago because he felt that he could not move due to the age of his children. He stated that

I interviewed for a number of jobs and always ended up coming second back in those days, and didn't quite fit or work out one job offer I had was in Chicago, but at that time, given the age of my children and so on, I felt that moving to Chicago from [state omitted] and the weather change, plus the culture change, and everything, would be a bit much so I turned it down.

Leslie, a Black female participant's views were not different either. She spoke of having children as an obstacle to her career climbing:

I was hired here at [higher education institution omitted] so it wasn't a definite decision that I'm gonna go into higher ed because that's not what it was for, I guess my greatest obstacle was and it really wasn't an obstacle but having children tends to take your focus off career-climbing so you're not as eager to take on other jobs that may be so challenging because you know you got other responsibilities that would maybe not allow you to give your 100% there, so I would say, probably just having kids.

Pearl, a White female participant, also raised the issue of family as a hindrance to her career mobility and having to make choices and considerations that were driven by the needs of her

young family. In the interview she stated that she “had two children at that point and didn’t need to go back and forth to Nashville (pause) so I got out of higher education for awhile.”

There did not seem to be a good balance concerning where family quite fit. Though Bredemeier had reflected on what it was like to have a family when he was starting off, later he further reflected on his choice to have a family early in comparison to some of his colleagues who had children late. She stated,

Yea, having children you know, I looked a lot at my peers and they waited until after they finished that terminal degree before they even start families. You know, I am 51 and I look around at a lot of the people that are my age, that went through the same process, have kids that are still in junior high and high school and I just had my first two grandchildren last year because I went ahead and did this simultaneously so doing this simultaneously was the biggest burden that I had to overcome.

Scott, a White male participant who had waited to start a family, sounded a bit wistful in his having to be second in command because the age of his children did not allow him to make the type of commitment that a higher position would called for. This is what he stated in the interview:

[I] got married late, I started a family late, and I know what a vice president does at a university, sort of a mid-level, which what I call [higher education institution omitted] a mid-sized university and larger. I’ve got a great friend who is a president, and I know what he does. My life and where I’m at with my family and my children doesn’t fit well with either of those. I’m a great second in command, and I know that, and it also sort of fits my personality pretty well.

The final narrative in this theme came from Kelly, a Black female participant. Kelly’s narrative perhaps summed up everyone’s from any side. She narrated how she has just graduated law school and had a young child who was born during her third year of law school. From her narrative, it is evident that having a young child seriously limited her options as evidenced by her statements in the following excerpts of her narrative:

1998 (pause) well, right after law school, I had a daughter in law school, my husband and I (pause) and so maybe a month into my second year, I realized I was pregnant. In the

summer between my third year, I had my daughter she was about just over 1 when I graduated and took the bar, so options became very limited. I needed a job that had insurance benefits, very good ones so I knew I wasn't going to be working for a large firm but that pretty much took any private practice out of the question so at the time, the only job I could find that had insurance and a decent wage, although it was terrible, it was what I had to do (pause) legal services.

### Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented. Specifically, three major themes related to the hiring process of black and White administrators in PWIs were presented. Those themes included the following: 1) *Filled even before they come open* or Inside/fore-knowledge of Positions Leading to Interim Appointments and 2) *It was sort of a staged* or Being Tapped for a Position. The third theme was titled *appointment into new positions resulting from consolidation and/or restructuring*. Similarities and differences were noted in the hiring of Black and White administrators in PWIs. Similarly, on the question of differences in career mobility of Black and White upper level administrators in PWIs, three major themes were found. Specifically, those themes included the following: 1) *Careers by Default* or *I just sort of fell into it*; 2) *Benefits of Being an Insider* or *I knew the guy that had this job*; and 3) *Importance of Being Connected*. Likewise, similarities and differences were found in the career mobility of Black and White upper level administrators in PWIs. In Chapter V, these themes are interpreted in the light of previous studies from the theoretical framework of CRT and critical whiteness studies. Specifically, the themes that emerged in the two research questions are interpreted and discussed as manifestation of white privilege (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; McIntosh, 1988), color-blindness and racial neutrality (Gotanda, 1991), ordinariness of racism, whiteness as property (Harris, 1993), and interest convergence (Bell, 1980). Additionally, Chapter V explores the implications of this study for policy and practice, offers suggestions for the direction of future



studies and concludes with some final thoughts reflecting on the process of conducting this study.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter V presents in-depth discussion of the findings, conclusions, and implications for policy and practice and offers suggestions of directions for future research. In terms of organization, this chapter begins with a restatement of the problem and the research questions. Next, a brief overview of the research methods is provided. This is followed by an in-depth discussion of the findings. The discussion is presented by research question ending with conclusions drawn from the findings, implications for policy and practice and suggestions for directions of future research.

Although research has shown that achieving diversity within IHEs is often a goal that is highly desired by many institutions, studies have also shown that achieving it is a challenging endeavor (Alger, 1998; Glazer-Raymo, 1999). In particular, while studies have shown that IHEs have achieved relative success in increasing diversity among students (Bronstein, Rothblum, & Solomon, 1993) and to some extent, faculty (Turner & Myers, 1997; Trower & Chait, 2002), when it comes to upper level administration, there is a paucity of research that focuses on evidence-based strategies that institutions use to assure diversity of upper level administration, particularly PWIs. Therefore, in an attempt to add to the limited body of research that focuses on diversity among upper level administrators in PWIs, this study focused on the similarities and differences attributable to race based upon narratives of upper level administrators on issues related to hiring and career mobility in a selected PWI in the southern U.S. This study employed a critical race theoretical (CRT) perspective in framing the questions as well as in conducting the

interpretation of the findings. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the effects of race on the careers of Black and White upper level administrators in a predominantly white university in the southern United States. This study theorized that the political category of race impacts differently the careers of Black and White upper level administrators in predominantly white institutions in terms of both the hiring processing processes and career mobility.

Specifically, this study focused on two research questions:

1. What differences exist in the hiring process of Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of selected Black and White upper level administrators within a PWI; and
2. What differences exist in the career mobility of Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of selected Black and White upper level administrators within a PWI?

Detailed discussions and interpretations of the findings related to these two research questions are presented in following sections of this chapter. The analysis of the findings related to the two research questions is organized along particular CRT tenets and Critical Whiteness Studies to illuminate ways in which race mediated the process of hiring and career mobility of Black and White upper level administrators in a selected PWI in southern United States. The chapter concludes with implications for policy and practice and suggested directions of future research.

#### Research Question One

The first research question stated “What differences exist in the hiring process of Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of selected Black and White upper level administrators within a PWI?” This research question sought to understand what, if any, differences existed in the processes utilized in the

hiring of White upper level administrators compared to their Black counterparts in a selected PWI in the southern United States. The interview protocol included questions that tapped into issues identified in previous research as being important to the process of hiring including search committee issues, how the position was advertised, the interview process, as well as descriptions of the position itself. There were three themes that emerged in this study that related to the process of hiring upper level administrators in the selected PWI. Those themes were labeled (a) *Filled even before they come open... or Inside/fore-knowledge of positions*; (b) *It was sort of a staged* or Being Tapped for a Position; and (c) Appointment into New Positions Resulting from Consolidation and/or Restructuring to interim appointments. Additionally, this study also found that the hiring of Black and White upper level administrators in this IHE differed on three other factors. Those factors were named: *Irregularities in Searches and Appointments*; *Credentials as Justification for Qualification for Position*; and *Searches and the Quest for Diversity*. The discussion of findings related to this first research question engages Critical Whiteness Studies and CRT. Specifically, this analysis first draws upon the Critical Whiteness Studies concept of White privilege to analyze the ways in which the privilege that Whiteness proffered assured access to upper level administrative positions to persons on basis of belonging to the dominant group, at times though they were otherwise unqualified. Additionally, the concepts of color-blindness and racial neutrality, the ordinariness of racism, the myth of meritocracy, Whiteness as property and interest convergence are tenets of CRT that are utilized as a framework to explore in this first question.

#### *White Privilege*

This concept of White privilege was used to analyze and tie together the first two themes: *Filled even before they come open...or Inside/fore-knowledge of positions*; and *It was sort of a*

*staged* or Being Tapped for a Position. Overall both White and Black participants benefited from inside information about the positions. However, when one examines each theme individually, one sees some racial differences not merely in the fact that all Whites participants, compared to seven out of the nine Blacks benefited from having some form of inside information. On the first theme, all six of the White men who participated in this study had access to inside information that benefitted them in the hiring process. Specifically, four of them had access to critical information about the positions in a way that they practically filled the position before it ever become publicly available. In the second theme, all five White women were tapped for the positions they occupied. Their appointment to those positions did not result exclusively from their qualifications alone, but of knowing or being connected to the right people. This ability to climb up the administrative ladder with and/or without requisite qualifications might be explained as White privilege. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) defined White privilege as “the myriad of social advantages, benefits, and courtesies that come with being a member of the dominant race” (p. 78). Similarly, in her classic 1988 anti-racist article *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, Peggy McIntosh used terms like unearned entitlement, unearned advantage, and conferred dominance to extrapolate on the construct of White privilege. McIntosh argued that those advantages and benefits are often unquestioned and invisible to the recipients. Indeed, in this study, while some White participants like Binder and Scott were critical of hiring practices that precluded certain individuals who may not have the opportunity to be considered if exclusionary practices were utilized in the hiring process, appeared oblivious of how their own racial positionality accorded them a different kind of privilege. More specifically, those same individuals did not see themselves as participatory in or benefitting from exclusionary hiring practices or minimally, they did not see themselves as colluding with

hegemonic hiring practices that served to simultaneously guarantee access for some and exclusion for others. To utilize McIntosh's knapsack analogy to scrutinize the themes is to unpack the layers that constitute White privilege in the hiring of upper level administrators in the PWI. The different layers of privilege worked in two diametrically opposed, yet mutually beneficial ways. First, White privilege enabled Whites access to positions within the upper levels of administration by layering upon them (Whites) with privileges ranging from being tapped for positions, or being placed in positions on interim bases which resulted in permanent appointments, to being provided critical information about a specific position of interest, to having access to persons in position to make hiring decisions. Concurrently, by virtue of many White individuals being in positions to make appointing decisions, Whites use of White privilege guaranteed that change, in the hiring of Black persons into upper level positions within the IHE, was neither sweeping nor immediate, but slow and incremental thereby only minimally disrupting the status quo (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

#### *Color-Blindness and Racial Neutrality*

The third theme emerged from narratives of participants who indicated that restructuring and/or reorganization led to their position in upper level administration on a permanent or interim basis. As the previous case, more Whites than Blacks benefitted from this. Of the total number of five interim positions, Whites were appointed to four of them. Therefore, as in the previous instance, Blacks benefitted but only incrementally so. The fact that Blacks did appear to benefit even from these inequitable hiring practices was used as justification and proof of colorblind hiring practices. In CRT scholarship, Gotanda (1991) argued that as a liberal discourse, colorblindness functions to justify ignoring and dismantling race-based policies that are designed to redress societal inequity. Further, Gotanda argued that colorblind practices

ignore race and the inequity and inopportunity that are historical artifacts of racism that cannot easily be remedied by merely ignoring race. Extrapolating on colorblindness, DeCuir and Dixson (2004) noted that

Under the notion of incremental change, gains for marginalized groups must come at a slow pace that is palatable for those in power. In this discourse, equality, rather than equity is sought, in seeking equality rather than equity, the processes, structures and ideologies that justify inequity are not addressed and dismantled. Remedies based on equality assume that citizens have the same opportunities and experiences. (p. 29)

In this study, differences were also found in the types of positions held by Blacks versus those held by Whites. Specifically in this study, compared to Blacks, Whites had held every type of upper-level administrative position across the institution from cabinet level positions to academic affairs and student affairs. On the other hand, though there were Blacks in upper-level administration within a variety of divisions of the IHE including at the cabinet level, the majority of those positions dealt with diversity-related issues or they were perceived as diversity positions in human resources, facilities, and public safety. In particular, of the nine Black participants in this study, seven held positions that were diversity-related with two of those positions having been specifically created at the institution as part of a consent decree resulting from a lawsuit filed by Black plaintiffs regarding institutionalized racism in PWIs in the state.

The slotting of Blacks in specific positions, and the perceptions that they are only interested in positions that have to do with diversity, has also been explored in previous research. Sagaria (2002) described filters that search committees utilized to rule out candidates of color and thereby reproduce hegemony. In this study, while by all appearance Black participants occupied upper-level administrative positions in a number of divisions of the IHE, they were almost always in positions that dealt with diversity-related matters. This finding offers credible evidence that race and the experiences that are based on race, which color-blind policies ignore,

are not equal. Thus, the experiences that Black people have (e.g., in hiring and promotion) are mediated by race and racism, which create inequality. Since color-blind policies only focus on remedying inequality, then the inequities that are inlaid in the socio-political structures that are often evidenced in institutional practices are left unchallenged. To address those inlaid inequities would require an acknowledgement that the playing field is not equal. However, since most institutions buy into the idea of color-blind hiring practices, then the institutionalized exclusions are left intact. Institutions may be reluctant to consider race for several reasons including the decisions in the Gratz V. Bollinger (2003) and Grutter v. Bollinger (2003) decisions. Additionally, several of the state desegregation lawsuits have been settled and in perverse way further the lifting of the court oversight handicaps the IHE's ability to pursue or sustain programs to increase administrative diversity.

#### *Ordinariness of Racism*

One of the three factors along which differences emerged among Black and White participants related to the search itself. The factor was named as follows: 1) *Irregularities in Searches*; and 2) *Appointments*. Irregularities in searches were associated with a distrust of the search process. Some participants (e.g., Kelly, Mister and Scott) expressed a distrust of the search process. Indeed, Kelly and Mister (both of whom were Black) expressed more than just skepticism; they expressed cynicism towards the search process. They did not believe that the process could ever be fair. Their cynicism is juxtaposed with Dick's complete faith in the system and its fairness. Dick held an executive level position that dealt with diversity. Explaining his complete faith in the process, CRT would argue that Dick was one of the Blacks who, by virtue of his position, had gained access to "Whiteness as property" (Harris, 1993). Consequently, he colluded with and supported systems that limited access for others. Paradoxically, part of his



narrative included the fact that he saw race as the biggest hindrance to reaching his desired professional goals. Applying CRT logic, one can argue that as a part of the higher echelons of leadership at this PWI, Dick was completely enmeshed in the system to even see the contradictions he engendered in his own statements. However, Dick was not alone in the contradictions he expressed about race. A number of other Black participants also saw race as contradictory as evidenced in the comments not only of Dick, but of Mister, Y Tu and Kelly as well. They saw race as a factor that could hurt them in the search process and yet, at the same time, they viewed race as being an advantage when seeking positions that were diversity-oriented. The difference though, between their views and those of Dick, was that they were very much aware and acknowledged the insurmountable barrier that race created for them, and the limits of relying on race to benefit them given that diversity positions in a PWI were few and far between. They felt that being Black could be an asset at the rare times when a position was an earmarked diversity one that needed a person of color. Only in those rare occasions would being a Black person potentially benefit them.

For Black participants, race was always present, mediating the meanings they made of their experiences as employees of the PWI. For instance, Leslie asserted that race matters when it comes to hiring and promotion. Similarly, Mister stated that positions in the higher levels of leadership at the IHE were predestined and therefore, he saw no likelihood of ever advancing up the administrative ladder as a Black man. Black participants saw their race as having an adverse effect on their upward mobility on the administrative ladder (e.g., Eric and Kelly) or saw being Black as a factor that would adversely impact their career aspirations (e.g., Dick and Mister). Black participants (e.g., Fiesta, Kelly, and Y Tu) brought up the fact that the IHE was recently under court order to increase Black faculty and Blacks in upper level administrative positions.

These various narratives of race spoke to the fact that the Black participants did not see the system as color-blind.

In contrast, to their White counterparts, race was a non-issue. In none of the narratives of the White participants did the issue of race arise as a critical factor that had any bearing to whether they were hired for a position or not. They only spoke of race as it related to non-White persons. For instance, three of the six White male participants (e.g., Binder, Fenner, and Fraterly) spoke of the potential for race as a factor that may limit the opportunities or prospects of persons of color. In their narrative, Binder and Fenner went to lengths about potential exclusions of persons either because they did not have the right connections, or they did not have the right personality traits. Although this open admission to potentially racially-biased hiring tendencies may have been spurred by a sense of fictive kinship (Fordham, 1996) that was shared with the researcher as a fellow northerner, the limits of their liberal positions became self-evident in their inability to see race as more than an intellectual issue. From the way they engaged race, it was evident they felt that as individuals they were exempt from racism, hence their ability to dispense with researcher-researched roles and become just “a yankee from the North” (e.g., Fraterly). CRT (Delgado & Stenfancic, 2001) offers a critique of liberalism which views racism as an individual act thereby fails to see racism as present, endemic, and systemic. Furthermore, critics of whiteness studies (Karenga, 1999) noted that one of its major shortcomings is its tendency to intellectualize race issues and thereby conveniently sidestepping the moral and ethical issues that race engenders. In this case, Binder and Fenner were able to intellectualize the potential dangers of racially-based exclusions yet at the same time fail to see the institutional practice as exclusionary. Interesting though, the narratives of all five White female participants brought up the fact that they were convinced that the system was color-blind. Indeed they all mostly

commended the institution's efforts to be racially neutral in its hiring practices. For instance, Nancy, who held a senior level position at the IHE, spoke at length about how well the institution trained its employees in diversity by offering a four-hour class in diversity. At the end of the four-hour training, employees were certified in diversity.

White male participants in this study had either been systematically promoted up the ranks or had made leaps from lower levels of administration or from faculty positions and were promoted or appointed to positions in very senior positions, in some instances, with no discernible experience or knowledge. Critical race theorists have long argued that race does matter. Lopez (1994) stated that as a social fabrication, racial categories are created to serve a social function in interactions among people rather than function as absolute natural categories. Therefore, those socially constructed categories are produced and maintained in a relational manner against one another thereby positioning one race in relative superiority to the other. In the context of hiring and promotion, members of one race are positioned in relative advantage over others, thereby creating inequality in the proportional representation of one race over another.

#### *Whiteness as Property*

The second factor along which Black and White participants differed was in their perception of the role of education in securing a desired position. This factor was named *Credentials as Justification for Qualification for Position*. In particular, Black candidates actually thought education made a difference, and that having a terminal degree made them that much more desirable and marketable. Indeed, a number of Black participants talked about the steps that they took to prepare themselves for the next level. For instance, Leslie made grand pronouncements about how meticulously she had prepared herself by assuring that she earned

the right credentials. Blacks believed that education was the passport for propelling themselves up to the next level. In contrast, the White participants who spoke of education saw it as a necessary formality that they had to endure. There was a belief among the White participants of being already qualified so education was just hoop jumping in order to have justification for credibility. This notion of being already qualified, in particular for the White men, is indicative of Whiteness as property. Harris (1995) has distinguished Whiteness as property that functions on three levels: the right of possession, the right to use, and the right to dispose. Leslie's education accorded her the right to possess, in much the same as Dick's position in upper echelons afforded him the right to enjoy. For the White male participants who raised the issue of education in this study, whiteness as property came full circle: they possessed, used and disposed. For instance, education was merely for credibility (e.g., Binder) or a mundane formality (box-checking [Fenner]) that had little bearing to their qualification for their positions. Scott, for instance, felt qualified already for a position that he failed to get because he did not have the right boxes checked.

In contrast, Blacks went to great lengths to advance their education fully believing that the increased levels of education made them that much more marketable. Their narratives highlighted the myth of meritocracy (McNamee & Miller, 2004). Within a system of meritocracy organizations appoint individuals for roles and responsibilities based upon those individuals' demonstrated abilities and superior cognitive functioning. However, it has been argued that this is a myth because for instance in this study, by and large, people did not get into these positions because they were any better than others, but rather because they were connected or they knew the right people. For instance, the White women who were tapped for positions did not have as much education as did some of the Black participants. One White woman who was tapped and

appointed into a senior level position had no prior professional experience at any IHE and holds a master's degree that is only tangentially related to running her office. However, she had property rights of Whiteness and which far superseded credentials.

### *Interest Convergence*

The CRT concept of interest convergence (Bell, 1980) was used in the analysis of how the IHE pursued diversity. This factor was named *Searches and the Quest for Diversity*. A surprising finding of this study was that the majority of the participants, both Black and White, got into the positions they occupied when the study was conducted by having some fore-knowledge of the positions. Whether they came into that knowledge because they were already occupying the positions on interim-basis or they knew someone who was connected to the position, the commonality was that they had information about the position before they pursued it. As stated elsewhere, only two participants (e.g., Kelly and Manny) had been hired from the outside without being privy to any more information about the positions than was publicly advertised. Kelly and Manny were a Black female and Black male, respectively.

This finding was not only interesting, but it also has consequences for IHEs. For PWIs especially, those consequences have potential adverse effects relative to achieving diversity or achieving what Perna, Gerald, Baum and Milem (2006) referred to as equity status. Perna et al. (2006) defined equity “as the representation of a particular group among individuals with a particular outcome, relative to the representation of that group among the reference population” (p. 199). While their calculation of equity is relatively conservative, it nonetheless serves as a good measure that provides an objective index of the extent to which IHEs at the levels of students, faculty, and/or administration. On the positive side of the consequences, if an IHE hires from within its ranks, this significantly reduces the learning curve for the individual who takes

up a new position as an insider. Such an individual likely already knows and/or is already attuned to the culture of the institution thereby reducing the amount of learning about the institution that he/she would have to learn in order to be able to function optimally in the position and hit the ground running. On the other hand, someone who is new to the institution would have a relatively steeper learning curve in which much more time is spent that may not be directly related to fulfilling the essential functions of the position but as essential to the individual in order to learn the ins and outs not only of the job but of the institution as well. These two factors may well explain the relative insularity of this institution where majority of hires, at any rate based upon this study, were internal. Tempting as internal hires might be, the danger for IHEs, particularly PWIs, of restricting the majority of their hires to internal candidates may result in the institution becoming more and more insular with no new and/or fresh ideas coming from the outside. Therefore, old ideas are circulated even with new faces on the helm because they were socialized in the same institution. Consequently, it could also mean that there if the institutions were not diverse to begin with, they would remain so.

In PWIs, there is a greater likelihood of such institutions remaining relatively less diverse if deliberate and explicit efforts are not made to recruit and bring in candidates who represent desired elements of diversity. Indeed, in this study, both viewpoints regarding internal versus external hires were expressed. For instance, Nancy, Dick, Manny, and Jack supported the idea of internal hires. On the other hand, Fraterly, Jill, and Y Tu believed that when institutions keep cycling internal people in new positions, no fresh ideas are admitted into the institution and that could be a major loss for the institution. Additionally, Scott, Mister, and Eric argued that institutions do not achieve diversity merely by sitting tight and hoping that diverse candidates will apply just because an advertisement for a position has been posted. Rather, Bredemeier

believed that in order to reach out to potential candidates who may otherwise not be reached or attracted to such institutions simply by that institution posting an advertisement, such an institution must engage in more deliberate steps to attract a diverse pool of applicants.

In his narrative, Binder broached this very issue, but from a slightly different perspective. He observed that when a new high-level administrator comes into a new position, by and large, the tendency is to bring in his/her own people with them rather than conducting open searches. Binder expressed that while he thought that it “violated something of the spirit of affirmative action or equal employment opportunity,” he did not condemn it as wrong; “and I’m not saying that’s wrong.” Nonetheless, he thought the practice had the distinct potential to keep deserving people out of the positions. To understand the ambivalence he expressed on this subject, one needs to turn to the CRT’s tenet of interest convergence (Bell, 1980). The basic premise in Bell’s argument is that concessions, such as increasing numbers of Black hires upper level administration in a PWI, come only if they converge with the self-interests of elite Whites. Therefore, in this case, the desire for diversity is exemplified by the strategic diversification of leadership through a sprinkling of Black administrators in positions that visibly serve the PWI by projecting an image of embracing diversity.

Binder’s ambivalence regarding such hegemonic hiring practices offers a good illustration of interest convergence. He ostensibly desires to see a more diverse PWI, but at the same time does not want to condemn practices that, if dismantled, would disrupt the normal way of doing things at the IHE. In other words, if hiring practices that are predicated on White privilege were dismantled, then it would likely reduce future opportunities for a few Whites at the IHE. Sleeter (1993) described this strategy employed by Binder as an avoidance strategy rooted in White privilege. According to Sleeter, deploying such an avoidance strategy affords

Whites the ability to transmute “many issues that are rooted in racism into depoliticized questions” (p. 14). For instance, Binder asked rhetorically, “does [the tendency to bring in one’s own circle into upper level administration] violate something or the spirit of affirmative action, or EEOC?” This question is not a rhetorical one. Only someone in a privileged position would pose it as though it does not have a definite answer. Rhetoricizing such a question turns this issue of denial of access (a real issue which has real consequences) into an intellectual discourse that fails to acknowledge the power differential between members of the dominant race and those of the minority cultures. Critiquing Whiteness scholarship, Karenga (1999) noted that when Whiteness is studied as a concept that is separate from White domination, it diminishes “the necessary moral and social distinction between oppressor and oppressed, and thus moves away from the central issue of White domination” (p. 1). Writing about the role of CRT, Ladson-Billings (2009) noted that CRT does not sit well with the mainstream because “it is less concerned with public approval than practical analysis and pragmatic responses to inequity...[and it]...recognizes the validity of storytelling and the voices of the oppressed” (p.347).

#### Research Question Two

The second research question asked “What differences exist in the career mobility of Black upper level administrators compared to White upper level administrators in PWIs based upon the narratives of selected Black and White upper level administrators within a PWI?” The purpose of this question was to understand the trajectory into upper level administration of the participants and to contrast them along racial lines. Their narratives were examined for both factors that facilitated and those that hindered their mobility. The four themes emerged that were 1) named careers by default; 2) benefits of being an insider; 3) importance of being connected;



and 4) family as hindrance. While effort is made to present the discussion of the findings by theme, it is important to note that many of the themes are interconnected in addition to being related to themes discussed in question one. As such, in order to remove redundancies, only the themes that represent novel ideas are discussed here.

*No Clear Path: You Get There when You Get There*

Based upon the narratives of both Black and White participants in this study, the path leading to a career in upper level administration of IHE was unclear and unspecific. You get there when you get there. This is in part due to the fact that there many individuals who got into higher education administration by default. Consequently, there was not a clear path concerning where one moves to next or how one moves up to the next level unlike in faculty positions where the ascent is clear and linear: assistant professor to associate professor to full professor. Pursuing full professorship is sometimes more clear and linear with expectations well known to all and path well understood. However, careers in higher education administration do not have a similarly predictable route. For instance, in this study, none of the administrators spoke of having deliberately started off in IHE leadership. Rather, various circumstances led them into it. With the path so unclear and destination unknown, it becomes easy to get stuck or to not make much progress up the ladder.

This point directly leads to second theme: *benefits of being an insider*. There were a myriad of benefits to being an insider. People with insider information were more likely to be placed in interim positions or to benefit from restructuring. Clearly, this had implications for those outside of the inner circle and implications for diversity. This study is in stark contrast with the idea of bidding wars that was brought up in previous studies. Previous studies (Busenberg & Smith, 1997; Trower & Chait, 2002) suggested that there were such few diverse candidates that

institutions are fighting over only a few qualified. Rather, what the study found was that institutions tend to hire within their own ranks: that they promote internally and hire known quantities in most instances. By that practice, therefore, they reify hegemony and reinstate inequity by maintaining unequal power relations. If there were few Black people in certain positions, it continues to be that way because they are hiring and cycling the people with whom they are comfortable. Several people talked about people having particular skill sets that resulted in privileging other things that were not part of the job description. This has implications for a candidate who is not perceived as not possessing those desirable characteristics.

This point directly leads to third theme named *benefits of being connected*. As was found in this study, those who were connected to the right people reaped benefits. Whites had more connections to people who were able to provide the kind of role guidance that would allow them to move up the administrative ladder. This point was brought up variously by Binder whose narrative raised the issue individuals from diverse backgrounds may not have the type of access that would allow them similar opportunities to be appointed or hired for certain positions in the institution. Such guidance and mentorship was critical since there was no roadmap that one could follow to know how to navigate the maze of hiring all the way to promotion. Within this study, Whites had many such connections. Therefore, they were able to move from position to position with increased ease and relative speed. For instance, Scott's Boss was rapidly promoted from faculty position to a cabinet level position although, my Scott's admission, he knew nothing of the issues related to the division for which he was in charge. These tie to the CRT notion of Whiteness as property. However, it is not just about White people. It is also about Black people. For instance, Dick earned some property rights of Whiteness in his cabinet level position. Now that he has some property rights by having this position, he buys into the system that limits

people's access. Yet despite his buy in and talking about his absolute confidence in search processes, he spoke of race being the biggest hindrance to his ascent. Whiteness as property also functioned by privileging White women. All the White women in this study were tapped for those positions. What was interesting was that Black administrators tapped them as well (e.g., Dick and Eric). White privilege under-theorizes why both Black and White administrators tapped White women. To theorize why Blacks tapped White women for positions for which those White women were not always qualified for could be done by examined from the perspective of internalized oppression (Guillaumin, 1995). The idea that a White person may be better suited than a Black one for a position even if the latter's qualifications for the position as inferior to the former's. Therefore, the appointing Black person has come to believe that qualified Black person is inferior to a not-so-qualified White one may be an indication of internalized oppression.

Whiteness as property also functioned to exclude through what Sagaria referred to as filtering. In this study filtering turned out to be true. Sagaria (1998) talked about how Black candidates are viewed as being interested in only particular types of positions and not others. In this case, Black candidates were given the opportunities for advancement, but nonetheless, they were slotted for positions on diversity. So while indeed the institution had made strides in terms of diversity, Black people had fewer opportunities for advancement. Black candidates had the perception that there was an inside circle and they were on the margins of that circle. Their opportunities for advancement were much fewer compared to their White counterparts. That Black candidates could not be put in just any interim position; it had to be one that was suitable for a Black person. This strategic allocation of Black people in their "appropriate" diversity slots was a manifestation of the CRT notion of interest convergence. Through adjudication, the IHE was forced to diversify and its way of doing so was by creating diversity administrative positions

that met the self-interest of the PWI by assuring its compliance with the consent decree, and simultaneously assuring that the changes do not disrupt the self-interest of the Whites in leadership positions at the IHE. The final theme in this question was named *family as hindrance*. The fact that there is a prevailing perception in academia that having a family somehow diminishes the productivity of the individual and adversely impacts women in the academy disproportionately. Why should systems support the idea that if one has a family that that somehow diminishes their ability to be productive for the institution? Why is it so undesirable to support having families in the academy? Whites in this study identified family as a hindrance but for Black women, they also mentioned race as a limiting factor. CRT speaks to intersectionality in which one's identity has multiple layers. For instance, being a woman in an upper level administration is challenging in and of itself, but when that is layered with race and with motherhood, then the individual is meted with several layers of exclusions. This notion of intersectionality works to challenge essentializing discourses that reduce one to one tiny aspect of their identity.

In this study, these intersections of identity were evidenced in the kind of fictive kinship (Fordham, 1996) that they forged with the researcher. The idea that “we” Black people were in this together and need to look out for each other underlies the notion of fictive kinship. All through the interviews, the pronoun “they” was used. Black people used it without qualifying their referent to refer to Whites. They expected that the researcher would automatically understand their referent. On the one hand, Whites used “they” to refer to specific entities, such as the search committee, the administrators, etc. Interestingly, Dick used “they” in a similar fashion as did the Whites. His kinship with them was not racially-based, but was based in class. Young (2009) argued that class is the modality along which race is lived. At Dick's level,

identity is defined more along the lines of class than race. On the other hand, three of the White male participants forged a fictive kinship (Fordham, 1996) with the researcher as fellow outsiders: describing themselves as “transplant from Illinois” (Fraterly), “a yankee from the North” (Binder), and a graduate of the College of Wooster [author had two brothers that attended the institution]. Fictive kinships worked in the same way: they created a bond based on a shared identity that positions “us” as outside the margins and thus creating a bond that unites us in our struggle.

### Implications for Policy and Practice

#### *Importance of Diversity*

In this study, almost everyone talked about the importance of diversity on the campus: diversity across the board. Astin, Antonio, Cress, and Astin, (1997) explored this ideal delineating its benefits. The issue here is not that there is any disagreement on the principle of the value of diversity, but rather, that the problem lies in the fact that it is only given lip service at the PWI. Even if there were superstar diverse candidates out there, this institution was not making any extraordinary efforts to recruit or attract them because its tendency was to hire its own. While is it not wrong in itself, what makes it problematic is the risks it runs of reifying hegemonic arrangements already pre-existing within these institutions which are reproduced over and over again. Such reproduction of hegemony has implications for policy.

Lack of open recruitment is another issue that is critical in hiring at this PWI with regard to diversity. While on the surface administrators change at this PWI, they are cycled around the organization/institution and their ideas are cycled with them thereby recycling “old ideas.” This practice closes out “outsiders.” In this study, there was a perception that a highly qualified external candidate is deficient of the informal understanding of the campus culture (not written in

the job description, but expected, observed and demanded) and no matter how long the person was at the institution, they are marked as outsiders (e.g., the Yankee from the North and the Illinois transplant). The institution should develop a sound recruitment policy to improve the IHE's chances of increasing the diversity among upper level administrators at the institution.

Despite the irregularities in searches and appointments, the majority of the participants saw nothing wrong with process. If an appreciation of diversity is viewed as something that one can master in four hours of training (e.g., Nancy), then its minimization speaks to the real value that the institution assigned it. This has implications for how seriously the institution seeks out diverse candidates or if the institution believes that by having diverse people at strategically visible places, it has achieved its job, then very little will change. While this institution may be said to have engaged in acts of diversifying the administrators (e.g., through the creation of Mister's cabinet level position), such positive strides are masked or minimized by a practice that requires administrators to take a four-hour workshop that ostensibly adequately prepares them to function and foster a diverse campus community.

In this study, search committees were used as window dressing and a rubber stamping process to validate the choices made. Even though candidates were brought in from the outside, after the choice had already been made, the process was merely to assure that the person already preselected measured up to national standards. This study showed that people with insider information were more likely to be placed in interim positions or to benefit from restructuring, so what does it mean for those outside the inside circle? The implication for diversity is that there continues to be a disproportionate representation of Whites in administrative positions. Such a practice risks perpetuating cronyism and excluding those outside the circle through acts of doing favors for friends and according them special treatment and preference, especially White men.

As today's gentry, they represented racial gentry who boasted race as unalienable pedigree of entitlement.

### Recommendations for Future Research

The study was conducted in one PWI in the southern region of the United States. To be able to argue the representativeness of the findings, it will be necessary to conduct it in other PWIs, and not just in the South. Another area that I would recommend for further inquiry is to examine the hiring practices at institutions that exclusively use search firms and headhunters to fill these EEO-1 administrative positions to see if perceptions are consistent with the findings in this study. In this study, the issue of undesirability of outsiders as suitable candidates for positions was a recurring theme. It would be interesting to investigate the differences in a candidates' pool if those candidates were there the result of a search firm versus emerging from recruitment by members of the institution who might be invested in perpetuating familiarity. A third area of inquiry is to investigate this idea of slotting Blacks into diversity positions or into positions that are perceived as diversity safe positions. The inquiry would be an attempt to replicate this study or to inquire to the extent to which this practice is evidenced in institutions elsewhere. In this study, Blacks, even in upper level administration mainly occupied positions that were oriented or which they described as dealing with diversity issues.

A final recommendation is for a large-scale study that is quantitative in nature that explores the same research questions utilizing an instrument that is developed to tap into the findings of the current study. Such a study would be able to more broadly contrast the issues related to the hiring and career mobility of upper level administrators in a variety of IHEs and in a much broader geographic region and different types of institutions including HBCUs.

Additionally, the results of such a study would not only allow for a much larger sample size, but also would likely allow for the generalizability of findings.

### Final Thoughts

In looking back on the completed study, I am struck by how much messier conducting a qualitative study is and how much the researcher is at the mercy of the participants. One of the critical issues that is brought up by qualitative research scholars is the issue of entry and building rapport. The quality and quantity of data that is collected in a study like this one, which relied primarily on interviewing, is entirely dependent on two factors. First, it is dependent upon the researcher's ability to invite and recruit participants who are willing to participate. Second, it is dependent upon the rapport that is developed and established between the researcher and the participant, holding constant the participants' honesty and willingness to self-disclose and researcher's good interviewing skills. I was pleasantly surprised at how willing many of the participants were to answer my questions, but with the same breath, I was surprised at those participants who conceded to participate, but clearly uncomfortable, if not unwilling, at being interviewed. This experience highlighted the centrality of establishing rapport and possessing good interviewing skills in order to be able to draw out the relatively reserved participants thereby making them comfortable during the interview. However, even as I offer these reflections, I am acutely aware of the limitations and constraints of time for many potential participants. As a researcher doing this kind of a study, one has to be cognizant of the factors (e.g., time) that come to bear upon a participant, therefore design a study that takes seriously such issues.

An unexpected limitation that I encountered in conducting the study was recruiting participants. I had a number of key contacts at the institution that I had expected to facilitate my



participant recruitment (per the IRB), but I realized that I was not able to rely solely on those contacts. Rather, by first identifying EEO-1 positions in the institution and purposively sampling from them (by gender and race), I had better luck contacting them directly and requesting their participation. The unexpected but fortuitous result of having to rely less on my contacts is that I was able to invite and recruit participants with whom I was unfamiliar, thereby limiting bias on my part. A final reflection is that if I had to do this again, I would employ a mixed method approach by incorporating a quantitative element such as a survey in order to get a broader picture of answers to the research questions.

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## APPENDIX

## Appendix A

### Interview Protocol

#### Descriptive questions

1. What is your position and Equal Opportunity Employment (EEO) Status?
2. Number of years working in higher education? How many of those years have been in upper level administrative positions?
3. What is your race?
4. What is your gender?
5. What is your age?
6. When did you earn your terminal degree?
7. Were you appointed to your position after a competitive national or international search?
8. Are you the first person to occupy your current position? If not, was the person that occupied the position before you of the same race?
9. Do you have tenure in your current position or an academic department?

#### Open-ended Questions

1. How did you decide to pursue a career in higher education? Tell me about your greatest obstacles and/or support to reaching your current position.
2. Tell me about your academic preparation for your current position. What were the experiences in college (undergraduate or graduate) that most affected your interest in upper level administration?
3. Were there events that had a strong impact on your career movement in higher education? What about people who impacted your career mobility?
4. Tell me about your previous administrative positions. How did they prepare you for your current position?
5. Describe the search and selection process for your current position beginning with how you became aware of the position to the actual interview itself?

6. Tell me about a time when you were unsure of your next career move? What steps did you take to prepare yourself for the desired outcome?
7. Describe your ideal situation in which you are being asked to create a new division at the university. What would be key considerations for staffing such a division?
8. Contrast or state the differences between internal vs. external hires? Particularly those colleagues in EEO I positions.
9. Do you believe that you have an equal opportunity in relation to other candidates for future positions that you may pursue? How would you react, feel or behave if a person was appointed to your current position for reasons other than merit or qualifications?
10. What are the extraordinary mechanisms that can be employed by universities to insure a diverse workforce at the administrative professional level and above?
11. Give examples that support your perception of the fairness or lack thereof in filling administrative positions throughout the employment search process for EEO-I positions at your institution.