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2017

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**Flying Solo: The Experiences of African American Development Officers at Predominately
White Institutions**

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**Flying Solo: The Experiences of African American Development Officers at Predominately
White Institutions**

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2017

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my great-grandmother, Carrie Jean Heaven. Granny, I took your words to heart and “got my lesson in.” I love you and miss you. I hope that your legacy of love, kindness, and generosity lives on for future generations.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I have to thank God for unwavering guidance, grace, and provision. I could not have made it this far if it had not been for God sustaining me and giving me a beautiful “village” of people to support me. I am eternally grateful for and indebted to the love of God. Without God I am nothing, and I hope all my work brings God glory.

I want to thank my phenomenal dissertation committee: Dr. Gregory Vincent, Dr. Edwin Sharpe, Dr. Richard Reddick, Dr. Charles Lu, and Dr. Robiaun Charles. I do not have enough pages to express how much I appreciate you all, so I will just sum it up. Dr. Vincent, you have provided me with support, mentorship, and opportunity. Your advocacy and support has been influential in my growth as a professional and a scholar. I am grateful for all you have imparted into my life. Thank you for believing in me and bringing me into your family. Dr. Sharpe, thank you for your unwavering support and encouragement. Your positive feedback and reflective sessions have always raised my spirits and reminded me of my potential. Your spirit is so warm, and I am grateful for you. Dr. Reddick, thank you for guiding me through both the Master’s and Doctoral programs. You have helped me to solve crises and make deadlines! You have seen my growth and development since my start here at UT, and I am grateful for your support, feedback, and humor. Dr. Lu, thank you for being my brother and friend. You have provided me with friendship and brotherhood that have helped me grow and thrive. Additionally, you were there to answer my urgent (and sometimes simple) questions about the dissertation; you always responded. I appreciate the brother you are and all you have poured into my life. Dr. Charles, thank you so much for your mentorship and support. You helped me to find a dissertation topic that I feel was created just for me. I am so grateful to have had you as a supervisor and to have you as a mentor.

I would be remiss if I neglected to thank the faculty and staff of the Department of Educational Administration, namely: Dr. Victor Saenz, Dr. Terrance Green, Dr. Beth Bukoski, and Hortensia Palomares. Hortensia thank you for all of your help navigating this journey. Additionally, Dr. Martha Ovando, thank you for “getting us to San Antonio!” Your support and academic feedback helped me to reach my goal.

To my family, I am forever grateful for your love and support. I want to thank my parents for providing me with love. Thank you for imparting the value of a strong work ethic and a sense of humility; I would not be who I am today without those values. To my siblings, one of my greatest joys is being a big brother; I love you all. To my grandparents, thank you all for your love, support, and belief in my ability. I appreciate all the encouraging calls, messages, and hugs. No one celebrates you like your grandparents do. To my aunts, uncles, godmothers, godfathers, and community, thank you all for your support. I love you all so much.

I cannot forget to thank the groups of people who have been my friends turned family. To Dr. Veronica Pecero (Dom), thank you for being one of my best friends and dissertation coach! This process would have been so much more daunting if I did not have you here coaching me along the way. Thank you for your friendship, pep talks, and transcriptions! You are great. To AJ Newton-Anderson, Dr. Dallawrence Dean (Cynthia), Katelyn (Memo), Lady Diane, Dr. Carmen Mercedes, Dr. Langston Clark, Tracie Lowe, Carmen (Steven) Serrata, and Dr. Tiffany Tillis-Lewis, Stephen Smith, Tepera (Andrea) Holman, Devin Walker, Marcus Johnson, Gilbert Cutkelvin, Dr. Ashley Stone, and Brandon Crooms; thank you all for your support and friendship - it means the world to me.

Thank you to my mentors, allies, and colleagues: Dr. Leonard Moore, Dr. Darren Kelly, Dr. Aileen Bumphus, Dr. Ge Chen, Helen Wormington, Heidi Johnson, Joanna Pope, Jason

Molin and so many more....I greatly appreciate you all. To the DDCE development office, I appreciate your camaraderie and encouragement. Gregory Perrin and Tamaria Kai Perry, thank you for your mentorship, encouragement, and sponsorship. You both have been wonderful supervisors to me.

To Cierra Campbell and the crew: Cierra, thank you for being my first friend in Austin. I never would have imagined that you would become my sister and adopt me into a new family here in Texas. Because of you, I am in a family with your soon to be husband, your brother, your parents, and your best friend! Cierra, Jay, Buzz, Parent Campbells, and Shauntae, I am glad God saw fit to give me you all.

To my Stillman family, thank you all! I have to specifically thank Ms. Currie and Dr. Chinula for their support. Ms. Currie, thank you for checking up on me and being such a constant friend. Dr. Chinula, thank you for helping to get me to this point. Thank you for calling to make sure that I had not dropped out, and for praying for me and always giving me advice. Thank you for pouring so much into my life.

To Jasmine M. Harding, thank you for all of your love and support. You made sure I had a back-up laptop, listened to my dissertation venting sessions, and believed in me in moments when I did not fully believe in myself. I am grateful for your thoughtfulness and support as I pressed towards the mark of the dissertation. Thank you!

If I forgot to include you, please charge it to my head and not to my heart. I am grateful for every single person who has invested in me, and supported me along this journey. Your contribution will not be forgotten.

Flying Solo: The Experiences of African American Development Officers at Predominately
White Institutions

by

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

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Abstract

As higher education student, faculty, staff, and alumni populations continue to diversify, the development field's diversity needs to diversify as well (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). Moreover, with higher education institutions receiving decreasing levels of financial allocations from both state and national governments, these institutions need to rely more on their development and fundraising operations. Van Dick (2001) suggests that when people can identify with their organization, they tend to invest more resources and have a longer tenure supporting the organization. At 11%, minorities are underrepresented in higher education advancement (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). Thus, there is a need to explore the experiences of African American development professionals in higher education and how they navigate Predominately White Institutions (PWIs).

This study focused on the experiences of African American development officers who were frontline gift officers. It explored how they conceptualized their roles, how they navigated their professional responsibilities, and how they described the influence of their race on the work. The study employed an Afrocentric paradigm (Afrocentricity) as the theoretical

framework. This study enhanced the literature by filling the gap related to African American development officers. Additionally, institutions might be able to transfer the information presented into strategies that promote the retention and recruitment of African American development officers and African American administrators as a whole.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In today's economical context, institutions now have to generate more revenue as allocations from the state governments decrease (Chandler & Thomson, 2007). According to a 2012 report issued by the American Council on Education (ACE), state funding for higher education was down by 40.2% in 2011 as compared to 1980. This gap in funding has to be reconciled through fundraising in order for institutions to maintain quality educational opportunities. Universities have fundraised since the 1920s, and designated organizational units for higher education fundraising have existed since the 1940s; in recent years, the financial constraints have made them even more valuable (Ryan, 2006). As a result, institutions of higher education need advancement units that specialize in fundraising, business relations, and alumni/constituent relations work. Within these units, advancement professionals oftentimes known as gift officers, manage endowments, solicit major gifts, facilitate annual giving, develop and cultivate relationships, managing foundation grants and contracts, as well as other tasks. The gaps in funding left by educational divestment are mediated by the efforts of advancement officers; however, creating and maintaining advancement offices requires resources, so the officers have to be effective and efficient in order for the outcomes to outweigh the costs (Ryan & Palmer, 2005).

As stated above, advancement offices are key to the success of institutions of higher learning in the wake of economic instability. However, it is not simply enough to have advancement offices. In order to increase effectiveness, there must be professionals who mirror the institutional diversity, participating in the advancement efforts. This leads to the observation that the demographics of higher education students are shifting, yet advancement offices remain stagnant in their diversity levels.

The Council for the Support and Advancement of Education (CASE), acknowledged in 2013 that only 11% of their registered members belonged to racial minority groups (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). In a study that surveyed fundraising professionals at 61 of the member institutions of the Association of American Universities (AAU), it was found that they averaged about 17% minorities on their staff (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). Of that 17%, only a few of those were frontline gift officers who directly interacted with donors and solicited them for financial support (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). This is far from being representative of the student demographics and alumni base of most research institutions. Thus, there is a need for research to explore why there is a lack of diverse frontline gift officers, and what types of experiences the diverse frontline gift officers have at PWIs.

To contextualize and provide the basis for the study, this chapter will present a statement of the problem. Then, it will give the purpose of the study and list the research questions. Next, it will present the methodology, the delimitations/limitations of the study, and the assumptions of the study. Finally, it will close with a synopsis of the chapter and provide a segway into chapter two.

Problem Statement

Having an increased level of diversity in the field of higher education advancement is arguably necessary to enhance the identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship strategies of diverse alumni populations (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). Since advancement is the field that encompasses fundraising and development in higher education, it should diversify as the student and alumni populations change. According to an article by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), being cultivated and solicited by diverse fundraising/development professionals is comforting for some alumni of color. Some alums feel a deeper connection and sense of trust with people that they perceive have a shared racial identity

as themselves. Having a diverse development staff is not only beneficial to the process of relationship building with prospective or current donors, but it also increases their connection to the organization and their tenure supporting/investing in the organization. As Kao, Gibson, & Kim (2011) stated, “When a person’s self-concept contains the same attributes as those in the perceived organizational identity, this cognitive connection is defined as organizational identification” (p. 169). Additionally, Van Dick (2001) states that when people can identify with their organization, they tend to invest more resources and have a longer tenure supporting the organization. A diverse development staff also communicates that the institution is committed to diverse communities both within the institution and outside. Institutions have to demonstrate that they are not solely concerned about garnering the financial support of diverse audiences, but that they are committed to exemplifying diversity as a value.

Hiring and retaining diverse advancement professionals improves the relationship building process with diverse constituents and it helps to communicate the institutions’ understanding of cultural significance and relevance (Sargeant, 2001). People desire to see their race, culture, and other identities respected and seen as significant, so it is pivotal that they get a chance to see and interact with professionals who embody their identities. In addition, Gasman and Bowman’s (2013) research supports the point that diverse populations prefer being cultivated by people of similar ethnic backgrounds. A true commitment to diversity should result in the diversification of the profession; this diversification will result in improved organizational climate for both staff members and donors alike.

The challenge is not solely that the profession is monolithic; it is that the diversity necessary to promote education and growth is not present within the field; meaning, there is not an adequate space for the creation of innovative practices that are inclusive. Having people of

color within the profession might lead to greater strategies to garner the support of diverse alums and donors. The students attending Predominately-White Institutions are becoming increasingly diverse, and without diverse advancement professionals, the institutions may not be able to capitalize on giving capacity of growing communities of diverse alumni. The African American community for example, is estimated to have over 1.1 trillion dollars of buying power (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). Traditionally, people have speculated that African Americans do not give because they do not have the capacity, but in reality, they do not give because they are not asked to give (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). If advancement officers feel empowered and compelled to ask diverse communities for support because they too are diverse, then the fundraising dollars will increase due to the newfound support of underrepresented communities. In addition, having diverse advancement staffs communicates the climate of inclusivity and progress within the institutions.

While there is relevant literature on the retention of diverse faculty and admission of students at PWIs (Holmes, 2004; Jackson, 2002; Perna, Gerald, Baum, & Milem, 2007), there is a dearth of research specifically focused on advancement professionals of color and the philanthropic trends of people of color. Additionally, a significant amount of the literature is on the experiences of African Americans in student affairs roles (Holmes, 2004; Jackson & Flowers, 2003; Watson, 2001) or diversity related positions (Rolle, Davies, & Banning, 2000), but they are not inclusive of development professions in higher education. The articles that examine development professionals do not take into account the racial background of the participants, nor do they look exclusively at the experiences of people of color within the profession.

Research on general topics concerning development officers is available. For instance, there is research about donor behaviors and ethical problems in fundraising (Brittingham &

Pezzullo, 1989). Research is also available on the characteristics necessary to obtain employment and be successful as a development professional. Miller and Seagren (1992) conducted a content analysis study to discover the professional characteristics that organizations look for when hiring development professionals. Worth and Asp (1994) expanded the literature by categorizing development officers into four types: the salesperson, the catalyst, the manager, and the leader. Furthermore, Ryan (2006) conducted a quantitative study exploring the behavioral characteristics of development officers. However, none of these studies addresses the racial identity of development officers or the experiences of minority development officers at PWIs. Due to the demand for fundraisers of color, there is a need for additional research examining advancement professionals of color and their experiences within the field (Bowman, 2010). This research is essential as institutions continue in an era of collegiate diversification.

Purpose of the Study

It is imperative to have diverse educational advancement professionals at PWIs. As of 2010, only about 11% of the approximately 30,000 registered fundraisers were people of color (Bowman, 2010). With increasing diversity in higher education, having 11% of development staffs being minorities is far from being reflective of the overall landscape of higher education. Therefore, this study adds to the literature specifically concerning the experiences of African American development professionals who are frontline gift officers at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the research study:

1. How do African American development professionals describe their experiences working at a PWI?

2. How do African American development professionals navigate their professional responsibilities within the context of a PWI?
3. How do African American development professionals describe the influence of their racial identity on their work?

Brief Overview of the Methodology

This qualitative study is a phenomenological study meant to be revelatory in nature. The study focused on participants from member institutions of the Association of American Universities (AAU). Overall, the study was created using a constructivist epistemology. The knowledge rendered in this study did not come from a universal truth but it came from the participants' interactions with the world (Crotty, 1998). The participants have constructed their meaning/truth based on their experiences before and during their tenure in the field of development. Interviews were the primary research method used in this study to reveal the experiences and ideas of the study participants.

The theoretical framework for this study was Organizational Theory from an Afrocentric Perspective. The framework challenges the western notions of organizational theory and focuses on tenets of African {American} culture.

According to Schiele (1990) the tenets are:

1. Human beings are conceived collectively.
2. Human beings are spiritual.
3. Human beings are good.
4. The affective approach to knowledge is epistemologically valid.
5. Much of human behavior is nonrational.
6. The axiology or highest value lies in interpersonal relations. (p. 147)

The framework was used to analyze the data by providing guidance in terms of coding themes. It was a relevant framework as the participants identified as African American and worked within a profession that focused on mission driven work largely based on relationships.

To choose the participants for the study, the researcher used purposive selection sampling since the research is attempting to garner the experiences of African American development officers (Maxwell, 2013). The participants were required to meet the following two criteria: 1) identify as African American and 2) work in development positions as frontline gift officers at a member institution of the AAU for at least six months, or was previously employed as a frontline gift officer at a member institution of the AAU for at least 6 months. The prospective participants were contacted through email and then by phone to confirm their participation in the study. Then, snowball sampling was used to find additional development officers. Due to the limited number of African American development officers on predominately-white campuses, the participants had to connect me with other development officers that the researcher did not originally identify.

Due to the constructivist nature of this study, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions so that they could create meaning as they saw fit (Creswell, 2012). Eleven African American development officers were interviewed for an hour each. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Additionally, the resumes of those development officers were analyzed and used to build participant profiles.

Definition of Terms

1. Advancement or Development Office: The unit or department within the university that handles “friend-raising”, fundraising, constituent relations, stewardship, alumni relations, annual giving, capital giving, and major gifts. It should be noted that for the purpose of

this study, the terms advancement and development are used interchangeably since there is no consensus within higher education.

2. Cultivation: The process of building relationships with donors; the relationships typically end with solicitations for funding.
3. Development Officer: A person who works within the field of advancement/development.
4. Donor-centric: An approach to development work that is centered around the donor experience.
5. Frontline Gift Officer: A person who works directly with donors, building relationships and soliciting them for financial support.
6. Philanthropy: A gift made to a specific cause or program by a person or organization.
7. Supporting Development Officer: A person who does not work directly with donors, but that supports the frontline gift officers through donor research, gift processing, etc.

Delimitations & Limitations

This study included African American development officers specifically at public institutions within the Association of American Universities (AAU). It does not include faculty members, staff members, or student participants. The study also did not solely focus on one type of frontline gift officer; this allowed the researcher to get a more comprehensive portrait of the experience on the selected campuses. Further, the study only focused on the experiences of the development officers, and did not evaluate those experiences.

The limitations of this study are rooted in the boundaries of qualitative research. Since this is a qualitative study, it cannot be generalized for all African American development officers as the study seeks to provide depth not breadth. Moreover, the experiences rendered in the study

only reflect the participants of the study and not all other development officers on the selected campus or any given campus. Therefore, transferability is up to the consumers of the research.

Assumptions

Creswell (2013) states that, “Qualitative research begins with assumptions” (p. 44). The first assumption is that African American development officers will have different experiences from Caucasian development officers. Next, it was assumed that the racial identity of African American development officers influence their experiences at PWIs. Thirdly, it assumes that development officers view their work in terms of experiences, successes, and challenges. The last assumption is that development officers at any given level have experiences that benefit or enrich this study.

As a current development professional, the researcher brings a shared professional and personal identity with the participants to the research. He has acknowledged his own biases and assumptions; moreover, he has taken precautions to ensure that they were not interjected into the research. Additionally, he has to maintain that his experiences may not be the same experiences as the participants of this study.

Significance of the Study

From an academic standpoint, this study might contribute to the literature on advancement/development within the higher education context. It may also generate conversations around the experiences of African Americans and other minorities in higher education advancement, and be a catalyst for future work within the field. This study can be used to complement future studies that seek to understand the experiences of these African American development professionals. Additionally, the skillset required to be a development officer is essential for the future of higher education; thus, this study will provide information about officers who possess the skillset necessary to move institutions forward financially. It can also be

used for the creation of protocols that assist in recruiting African American development officers, supporting them, and enhancing their experiences at PWIs.

Summary

In today's higher education context, it is important to better understand advancement/development professionals as institutions depend more heavily on them than in previous eras. This chapter provided the context for the study and the problem statement. It gave the purpose of the study, the research questions, and a brief overview of the methodology. It has provided a list of key terms and their definitions, the limitations/delimitations of the study, the significance of the study, and the assumptions of the study.

The next chapter will provide a review of the literature on African American administrators in higher education, the history and current context of advancement within higher education, and the value of having a diverse organization. It will also examine the theoretical framework that was used for this study.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter will present a review of the literature that is pertinent to a study exploring the experiences of African American development officers at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). In this review of literature, African American and Black are used synonymously. The review begins with an introduction about the early interactions of African Americans at higher education institutions. Then it addresses the climate transition that occurred between *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). These cases are particularly important because they established the context for which African Americans were introduced into PWIs. In order to understand the current state of African American administrators at PWIs, it is essential to have an understanding of the historical context. Further, it provides an overview of how the Civil Rights Act and affirmative action increased African Americans hiring and enrollment at PWIs. Next, this chapter will review research on African American administrators in higher education, the origins of higher education advancement, and the research on development officers. This literature review is rooted in research on African American administrators since African American development officers are classified as administrators in the literature. Finally, the literature review concludes with an overview of the Afrocentric paradigm that is the theoretical framework used to analyze the study.

Introduction of African Americans to Predominately White Institutions

Higher education has been historically marked by the dominance of White Anglo traditions such as the exclusion of African Americans from PWIs and the lack of African American representation in the curriculum and job force during the early years at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Spring, 2005). Even though higher education sought to create productive citizens and increase socioeconomic opportunity, it was juxtaposed by its blatantly racial discriminatory policies and practices (Wilder, 2013).

As stated by Wilder (2013),

The first five colleges in the British American colonies—Harvard (established 1636), William and Mary (1693), Yale (1701), Codrington (1745) in Barbados, and New Jersey (1746) – were instruments of Christian expansionism, weapons for the conquest of indigenous people, and major beneficiaries of the African slave trade and slavery. (p.17)

Racism and discriminatory practices were not only used by colleges of the first five British American colonies, but also by colleges across the country. These institutions endeavored to maintain hierarchy, and to sequester minorities to second-class citizenship status (Spring, 2005).

The Origin and Role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Though White society did not consider Black people as first-class citizens, Black people relentlessly pursued education and intellectual stimulation during the years following the American Civil War (Allen & Jewel, 2002). This desire for education, social awareness, and political leadership led to the rise of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). African Americans, many of whom were former slaves, envisioned education as a way to erase the stain of slavery and establish themselves as free and equal citizens in society (Anderson, 1988).

In order to secure an educational future for themselves, African Americans needed the help of non-Blacks who were sympathetic to their desire for liberation. The missionaries, religious leaders, and secular leaders who supported the abolition of slavery, viewed the education of African Americans as the “second phase” of the “social uplift”. Although the White supporters of the education of Blacks had good intentions, they still viewed their efforts as helping the unfortunate and uncivilized people become educated. This motivated them to travel to areas of the south in order to teach and establish institutions to educate Black folks. Though

Blacks utilized these training and “normal” schools set up by White missionaries, there was innate tension about the nature of these institutions. Allen and Jewel (2002) state:

The continued drive for group advancement and community empowerment by African Americans in this period necessitated the development of institutions that would produce a highly educated, politically astute generation of leaders, capable of representing Black interests within the White power structure while remaining independent from it. (p. 243)

However, Blacks realized that the racist South, along with their lack of financial and social capital, hindered their progress of establishing their own independent institutions; thus, they had to accept the assistance of their White allies (Allen, Hunt, & Gilbert, 1997). Allen and Jewel (2002) reiterate this point by saying:

Their southern conservatives’ resurgent power after the demise of Radical Reconstruction, coupled with a lack of funds and insufficient numbers of qualified teachers, made Black independent support of institutions of higher learning next to impossible. To this end, Blacks accepted the assistance of White missionary groups, embracing the normal schools and colleges they had established and benefiting from the high level of training offered. However, the persistent conflict between Black desires for empowerment and White desires for assimilation and social control shaped these institutions in the years that followed. (p. 244)

The majority of HBCUs remained under the control of White religious groups well into the 1920s when there was an outcry by alumni and supporters for more African American representation in the faculty and staff (Allen & Jewel, 2002). The unsatisfied alums and students resorted to protests and eventually, they were successful at achieving their goals of changing the faculty and staff demographic composition, the curriculum, and some of the governing policies

of the campus. Moreover, these institutions learned to rely on the Black community to support them since they were critically underfunded (Anderson, 1988). Nevertheless, these institutions served as beacons of hope and hubs of Black intellect during the days of segregation. African American students, administrators, and faculty members had the opportunity to thrive in these spaces when all other spaces excluded them. In the days preceding and immediately following *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), HBCUs served as the facilities of educational salvation.

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896).

African Americans were not only affected by the dominance of a racist culture, but also through legal precedents. In a landmark case, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), Homer Plessy argued that his 13th and 14th amendment rights had been violated as he was arrested for sitting in the White-only section of a train and refusing to exit the area when confronted by authorities. Plessy considered himself 1/8 Black, and 7/8 White, thus felt it was permissible for him to sit in the White only section (Tushnet, 2008). Even though this case did not directly deal with higher education, it had stark consequences for blacks desiring to attend PWIs. The courts decided against Plessy, affirming that segregation was permissible as long as separate facilities that were “equal” or comparable were provided for Blacks. Thus, the *separate but equal* doctrine was born.

The courts stated in an opinion by Justice Brown:

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. (p. 551)

The ruling reiterated the social power of Whites and further relegated African Americans into a position of submission and restricted opportunity. The *Plessy* decision had particularly

visible repercussions on higher education. African Americans were not allowed to attend the same institutions as Whites thus, African American administrators and faculty members were often barred from being employed at these White institutions (Fleming, Gill, & Swinton, 1978; Preer, 1982). This limited African Americans to working at and/or attending private and public Historically Black Colleges and Universities. For nearly 50 years, *Plessy (1896)* set an oppressive precedent that limited the access and equity of non-White people across the United States (Fleming, Gill, & Swinton, 1978).

Brown v. Board of Education (1954).

The *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling legally released African Americans from the implications of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruling. *Brown* (1954) was a class action suit in which the plaintiffs alleged that the Topeka, Kansas segregated school system, as promoted by the Board of Education, denied African American children equal educational opportunities as the Caucasian children (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). It should be noted that *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947) is considered the precursory case that helped to build the argument that ultimately led to the *Brown* (1954) ruling. The argument for *Mendez* (1947) was that segregated facilities were not equal due to the quality of the facilities as well as the psychological damage that segregation posed to Mexican Americans. *Brown* (1954) illustrated that the schools designated for African American children provided inadequate services, facilities, accommodations, and less qualified teachers (Kluger, 1977).

The court ruled, with Chief Justice Warren writing the opinion:

We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws

guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. This disposition makes unnecessary any discussion whether such segregation also violates the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. (p. 495)

Brown (1954) was designed to create systemic change. The case concerned k-12 schools, but the legal implications also applied to the higher education context. Consequently, African Americans began applying to historically all-White higher educational institutions. Although the ruling made segregation illegal, the implementation of integration encountered resistance and occurred slowly. Equal opportunity and equal protection were not afforded to many Blacks in the South because it “required the surrender of racism-granted privileges for Whites,” (Bell, 1980, p. 523), which is something that many Whites would not venture to do. This resistance caused integration measures to remain stagnant in some instances. In time, society began to react to the resistance and created momentum for civil rights measures and affirmative action.

The Civil Rights Acts and Affirmative Action

In reaction to integration mandates, a strategy of “massive resistance” was launched. This movement was at times violent and culminated with institutions closing their doors rather than allowing Black students to attend (Andrews, 1997; Payne, 2004). Most notably, in 1963, Governor George Wallace of Alabama participated in the “Stand in the Schoolhouse Door.” He and others attempted to thwart the enrollment of two Black students by physically obstructing access to Foster Auditorium on the campus of the University of Alabama (Payne, 2004). After a showdown with the attorney general and the National Guard, Wallace reluctantly allowed the Black students to enter and register for classes. The government was compelled to react to these violent and illegal acts of resistance; they enacted the Civil Rights Acts of 1964. These Acts sought to secure and protect public accommodations, employment opportunity, and educational access for non-Whites (Green, 1999).

Another governmental measure designed to increase access and opportunity for oppressed populations was the executive order that implemented affirmative action. President John F. Kennedy, with Executive Order 10925, initiated affirmative action in 1961. President Lyndon B. Johnson later expanded affirmative action with Executive Order 11246. Affirmative action required all entities that received government contracts worth \$50,000 or more, or had at least 50 employees, to halt discrimination based on creed, race, sex, and national origin (Aguirre & Martinez, 2003). Furthermore, institutions of higher education were required, as federal contractors, to construct affirmative action programs that ensured underrepresented minorities and women had the opportunity to be educated and contribute to a diverse workforce (Fleming, Gill, & Swinton, 1978).

Although affirmative action was intended to be a mechanism that ensured equal participatory opportunities for underrepresented people, studies showed that White women have benefitted the most as compared to other populations (Hamilton, 1992; National Women's Law Center, 2000). One study revealed that some institutions of higher education had minority-hiring quotas, and after those were met, they would discourage minority applications (Wilson, 1995). Some institutions took deliberate steps that included removing marketing ads from minority publications in order to curb the number of minority applications they received. Employers used quotas to limit the number of minorities they had in their organization, while those who did not endorse affirmative action challenged quotas altogether.

In 1976, the Supreme Court released a decision for *The Regents of the University v. Bakke* (1976), which would change the landscape for affirmative action. *Bakke* opposed the use of affirmative action in higher education; it sought to eliminate its use in financial aid, admissions, and hiring procedures. The courts ruled that the use of racial quotas was

impermissible, but that race could be evaluated alongside other factors. *Bakke* is said to have had a “chilling effect” on higher education in that institutions slowed their diversification efforts in an attempt to prevent lawsuits by White people alleging reverse discrimination (Wilson, 1989). This, along with President Ronald Reagan’s politics, slowed the diversification of many higher education institutions.

President Reagan’s administration hindered measures to increase equity and access by implementing more than 2 billion dollars of budget cuts to higher education financial aid (Washington & Harvey, 1989). These budget cuts specifically limited the accessibility of higher education for impoverished non-White youth (Anderson & Stewart, 2007). The other effects of Reagan’s political tenure included a decrease in African Americans entering higher education, which in turn, affected the number of African Americans entering the academic, medical, and legal workforce (Anderson & Stewart, 2007).

Although affirmative action has been challenged in the legal system, it has, in part, remained. Landmark cases such as *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), *Gutter v. Bollinger* (2003), *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003), and now *Fisher v. The University of Texas at Austin* (2016), have all challenged affirmative action and its implementation. The latest case, *Fisher v. The University of Texas at Austin* (2016), affirmative action was supported and upheld. The Supreme Court ruled:

But still, it remains an enduring challenge to our Nation’s education system to reconcile the pursuit of diversity with the constitutional promise of equal treatment and dignity.

In striking this sensitive balance, public universities, like the States themselves, can serve as “laboratories for experimentation.” The University of Texas at Austin has a special opportunity to learn and to teach. The University now has at its disposal valuable data

about the manner in which different approaches to admissions may foster diversity or instead dilute it. The University must continue to use this data to scrutinize the fairness of its admissions program; to assess whether changing demographics have undermined the need for a race-conscious policy; and to identify the effects, both positive and negative, of the affirmative-action measures it deems necessary. (p. 8)

Affirmative action has helped institutions make progress towards diversification on the student, faculty, and staff levels. Though faculty and staff at PWIs have diversified, certain climate and institutional challenges continue to be present (Holmes, 1999; Moses, 1997).

History of Research on African American Higher Education Administrators

Even though affirmative action had an impact on access and opportunity within higher education, there is still more work to be done in terms of diversifying the populations of higher education students, faculty, and staff. In order to diversify faculty and staff populations, researchers have examined the obstacles that they face within the predominately-White context. One issue that African American administrators face is lack of retention. Research has shown that African American administrators tend to have shorter tenures than their Caucasian counterparts (Holmes, 2004).

Davis (1994) stated,

retention of African American administrators in PWIs is short-lived owing to the personal harassment and indignity people of color experience in the discharge of normal duties . . . there are things they don't teach you . . . in a predominantly White institution, management, or leadership development schools. (p. 61)

Moreover, researchers have noted that some African American administrators are exiting the field due to isolation, unrealistic job expectations, lack of career advancement opportunities, lack

of mentorship, and poor campus climates (Burgess, 1997; Gregory, 1995; Holmes, 1999; Moses, 1997; Phelps, 1995; Watson, 2001).

There were also notable compensation issues noted in the research. Some administrators vocalized that there was not an adequate system in place to handle rank and promotion issues (Jackson, 2001). Jackson found that African American administrators often faced cultural taxation where they worked long hours and were not compensated for the hours outside of the traditional workweek; these long hours oftentimes made for poor work environments and job outlooks (Jackson, 2001). Moreover, this allowed them to be recruited away by other institutions or entities outside of higher education due to more robust compensation packages.

Aside from working conditions and compensation issues, African American administrators also have to deal with racism and discrimination. Cox (1993) found that barriers are created for African Americans who work in organizations with White people who have behavioral biases and prejudices towards specific racial and ethnic groups. These biases cause employers to create systems of preferential treatment towards White employees, as well as policies that favor White culture and values (Guillory, 2001). An example of this phenomenon is when promotion decisions are decided based on “who likes you” and who coexists best with the dominant White figures within the organization instead of the decisions being made on competence and merit (Cox, 1993).

In addition to discriminatory beliefs that African Americans have to navigate, Harper and Hurtado (2007) discovered that the racial climate on the campus also affects African American administrators on predominately-White campuses. They also observed that African American administrators feel themselves placed in uncomfortable positions when the racial climate on campus becomes tense. Despite their connectedness to the issues, African American

administrators may remain publicly silent fearing repercussions over their advocacy for racial climate improvements; however, they will work privately with students and support other professionals (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Unwelcoming campuses and job dissatisfaction have a significant impact on the number of African American administrators at PWIs. Another reason for low numbers of Black administrators is the insufficient pipeline from college to academic career. Turner and Miles (2000) found that the low number of African Americans graduating with doctorates in education has an effect on the higher education leadership pipeline. Some institutions have attempted to assuage the issue by creating leadership initiatives to foster and create more opportunities for African American administrators. For instance, Roach and Brown's (2001) study focused on increasing the number of African Americans in the PWI presidential pipeline. They asserted that African American administrators at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) may be excluded from the presidential search pools even though they have developed the same skillset as their peers who work at PWIs. One interviewee in the study stated: "Unfortunately, the impression I get is that trustees at majority White institutions do not look favorably upon Black administrators that come from HBCUs" (p.18). The participants of Roach and Brown's study did not have a conclusive answer on why PWIs do not readily recruit administrators who have built their careers at HBCUs.

Racial diversity has increased in universities since the days of *Plessy*; however, there is still progress to be made in ensuring that faculty, staff, and students of color feel embraced and supported on predominately-White campuses. The field of advancement is not exempt from the diversity woes. Before the literature concerning development officers can be reviewed, a holistic picture of the higher education development field must be provided.

Research on Advancement Issues in Higher Education

Higher education administrators, known as advancement professionals or development officers, lead advancement operations. These administrators focus on fundraising, alumni relations, constituent relations, and stewardship (Ryan, 2006). Advancement operations have existed at private institutions since the early 1900s; however, public institutions did not adopt advancement offices until the 1940's (Durand, 2002; Ryan, 2006). Although institutions have received philanthropic support since colonial times, Charles Sumner Ward is oftentimes credited as professionalizing fundraising at institutions of higher learning. He was hired in 1914 by the University of Pittsburgh to assist in raising 3 million dollars. Prior to being hired by the University of Pittsburgh, Ward was employed by the YMCA, where he and some colleagues facilitated the first documented capital campaign (Worth, 1993). The strategies they employed during the YMCA's capital campaign are widely considered the model for current fundraisers (Wagner, 2005; Worth, 2002).

Another revolutionary moment in the field of development occurred in 1958 during the Greenbrier meeting. It was at this meeting in which representatives from American Alumni Council and the American College Public Relations Association created a report supported unified organizational approaches to fundraising. The association suggested that a central person who would report to the institution's president and be a member of the leadership team lead alumni relations, constituent relations, and all fundraising activities (Kinnison & Ferrin 1989; Smith, 1986; Worth 2002). The Greenbrier report created a framework which many institutions have adopted (Hall, 1993; Kelly, 1998; Pray, 1981). In addition, the Greenbrier meeting led to the merger of the American Alumni Council and the American College Public Relations Association; the merger of the organizations formed the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). This organization serves as a resource for advancement officers in

education. The Greenbrier report provides context for the current function of institutional advancement in higher education.

Functions of Institutional Advancement

Institutional advancement encompasses all of the activities conducted by the institution with the intention of engaging constituencies and securing funding for the support of all aspects of higher education (Rowland, 1986). The areas within the institutional advancement portfolio include public relations, marketing, communications (external & internal), fundraising, government relations, alumni relations, etc. (Worth, 2002).

Mueller (1986) states that,

The function of institutional advancement in American institutions of higher education is to enable each individual college or university to do well in a competitive environment and to assist the whole sector of higher education to compete effectively for available resources. In a nation that contains such an enormous variety of institutions, each college and university needs to develop and pursue its own distinct strategy for the acquisition of resources. It does so within a society where no effective national policy governs the matter and in which the public policies of the different states, regions, or localities vary significantly. It is primarily the individual institution, rather than the government, that is responsible for its own well-being and even survival. (pp. 2-3)

Mueller's statement establishes the viability of advancement offices within higher education.

In addition to the function of institutional advancement, it is also necessary to mention the goals of institutional advancement.

Figure 1: Adapted from “The Managerial Practices of Chief Advancement Officers that Promote or Inhibit Fundraising in Higher Education” by Lynne Murray, 2007.

Goals for Advancement:	
1.	To develop understanding and support for the institution from all its publics.
2.	To interpret the institution to all its constituencies.
3.	To build a sense of community and trust among the faculty, students, and non-teaching professionals.
4.	To attract top-level faculty and students.
5.	To make a major effort through all channels of communication to explain what a college or university is how it functions; what contributions it makes; what its services are; how it sometimes disturbs; and what is necessary to make it a quality institution.
6.	To explain again and again, in many different ways, what a college or university means to a community (educationally, culturally, financially, socially, etc.).
7.	To give all segments of the academic community an opportunity to become involved in the broader community, to get to know members of the community, to help build a closer relationship between the institution and the community.
8.	To make the publics of the immediate area, as well as state-wide, feel at home and welcome on the campus of the institution.
9.	To maintain year-round liaison with federal, state, county, and municipal executives, elected officials, and agencies.
10.	To implement a broad-based program of information which provides for the print and electronic media, the type of material they want, in the form they want it, and when they want it.
11.	To develop publications that give a true image of the institution, accurately reflecting its quality, status, programs, activities, physical plant, faculty, and students.
12.	To develop a diversified alumni program geared to today's total alumni body which has as its primary goal the deep involvement of the alumni in their institution.
13.	To develop an aggressive, well-organized fund-raising program which will produce for a college or university both restricted and unrestricted private funds which are truly the “margin of greatness” for the institution.
14.	To utilize a program of special events to advance the best educational concerns for the institution.
Rowland, 1983, 1986, 1989	

Now that the function and goals of institutional advancement have been listed, it is time to narrow the scope and focus specifically on development officers within higher education.

Research on Development Professionals

Due to financial constraints and decreasing governmental support, institutions of higher education have to depend more heavily on the development operations (Chandler & Thomson, 2007). Both frontline giving officers who interact directly with donors and supporting development officers who conduct research and provide administrative support, are valuable to

higher education. In terms of development officers, research examines the characteristics of development officers and the skills necessary to be successful in the field (Miller & Seagren, 1992; Ryan, 2006). Miller and Seagren (1992) conducted a content analysis study to identify the professional characteristics that organizations look for when hiring fundraising professionals; the study focused specifically on those characteristics that should be included in training for fundraisers. They analyzed 307 publications randomly selected from the National Society of Fund Raising Executives (NSFRE) employment opportunities postings. They found that employers looked for competence in fundraising abilities above all other criteria. Secondary findings were that employers looked for experience within the philanthropic community and that formal education was not a top concern for employers.

Worth and Asp (1994) provided a literature review that described the four roles of development officers: the salesperson, the catalyst, the manager, and the leader. The study asserted that defining the roles of development officers provides a solid context for understanding the function of development officers. Further, Ryan (2006) conducted a quantitative study exploring how important each of the four roles is in the work of development officers. One hundred twenty-nine development professionals were randomly selected from designed institutions of higher learning. This study's methodology lacked descriptive variables other than gender. None of these studies evaluated the racial identity of development officers or the experiences of minority development officers at PWIs. All of these studied development officers as a body versus evaluating the experiences of development officers with specific identities. Moreover, the studies lacked demographic information and a comprehensive methodology. A single study found that the advancement profession is composed of only 11% of people of color (Bowman, 2010). Gasman and Bowman (2013) surveyed 61 member institutions

of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and found that the schools surveyed had an average of 17% fundraisers of color. The study revealed that a small percentage of that 17% were actually frontline fundraisers; that is only a small percentage of the 17% work directly with donors and alumni soliciting gifts. Due to the demand for fundraisers in higher education and the unique experiences of administrators of color in comparison to their white counterparts, there needs to be more research examining advancement professionals of color and their experiences within the field (Bowman, 2010).

Higher education development and fundraising work, though it has existed for decades, are two of the least researched areas of higher education. Although institutions are relying more on fundraising operations, there is little research on the topic. Drezner (2011) articulates this point by saying:

Voluntary support of American higher education has been part of the American ethos since the founding of the colonial colleges. Although philanthropy and fundraising are part of the American postsecondary education history and essential to most colleges and universities in their ability to offer the level of education, services and research that we have all become accustomed to, they are two of the least studied aspects of higher education. (p. 28)

Revisiting the Literature Gap

In analyzing the literature, there is no study to date that examines development officers of color. However, there is relevant literature on the retention of diverse faculty and staff at PWIs (Holmes, 2004; Jackson, 2003; Perna, Gerald, Baum, & Milem, 2007). This literature on African American administrators, faculty, and staff members may shed light on experiences that African American development officers encounter since they are all operating with similar identities in the same environment. Holmes (2004) investigated the experiences of 15 African Americans

presidents at both public and private institutions of higher education. The study focused on how their race influenced their experiences. They found that the presidents felt like race was not the primary factor when it came to how they did their jobs. In Jackson's (2003) study, a panel of experts was interviewed in order to examine their experiences of working at a PWI. The study also generated strategies for retaining African American student affairs professionals. Perna, Gerald, Baum, and Milem (2007) performed a statistical analysis utilizing data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The study found that strides have been made in the equitable representation of minorities in higher education; however, racial inequalities still exist in the faculty and staff ranks.

There is a dearth of research on advancement professionals of color and the giving patterns of people of color. In addition, a significant amount of the literature focuses on the experiences of African Americans in student affairs positions (Holmes, 2004; Jackson & Flowers, 2003; Watson, 2001) or diversity related positions (Rolle, Davies, & Banning, 2000), but not development roles. The articles that examine development professionals do not take into account the racial background of the participants, nor do they look exclusively at the experiences of people of color within the profession.

Although there is a lack of literature on all minority development professionals, this study will specifically explore the experiences of African American development professionals who are frontline gift officers. The focus is due to the researcher's desire to learn more about this group, but also due to the historical tensions between African Americans and PWIs. The experiences of the first African American graduates of PWIs were oftentimes traumatic and disconcerting. Thus, development offices have to build bridges and provide reconciliatory experiences for those African Americans in order to bring them to a place where they can

support the institution. This is beneficial for the institutions not just for credibility purposes, but also because those early graduates now have financial capacity and can make substantial contributions to institutions of higher education. The goal is to provide positive experiences that ensure these alums will now support the progression of their respective institutions. A major impediment to them supporting their institutions is the lack of trust and community. Having African American members on development teams helps to establish a sense of community and trust with the African American alumni. Since many African Americans have a distrust for mainstream organizations due to the egregious wrongs they faced in the past, having people with who they share a common identity is a valuable step in establishing the rapport necessary to secure philanthropic gifts (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). Recruiting African American development officers communicates cultural progress, provides a sense of community for donors, and creates an office conducive of innovation.

Conceptual Framework

Since the dissertation explores the experiences of African American development officers at PWIs, it was pertinent to identify a framework that would guide the study of their experiences. I chose the Afrocentric Paradigm for this study's theoretical framework because it is based on elements of African culture that still apply to African American ethos (Schiele, 1990). The theory posits that African Americans, to different degrees, have maintained certain cultural aspects that have roots in Africa (Ashante, 1980). These cultural aspects materialize in the lives of African Americans and can be used to analyze their experiences, and interactions. The Afrocentric paradigm provides a cultural framework to design, collect, and analyze data as opposed to traditional mainstream theories.

A critique of mainstream organizational theories is that, "these theories are circumscribable and biased and omit different conceptualizations of human beings and society

found in other cultures” (Schiele, 1990, p.145). Historically, mainstream theories have ignored the worldview and experiences of African people (Akbar, 1984; Ashante, 1980; Carruthers, 1989). In order to give voice to African traditions and beliefs within a given context and to validate the experiences of African or African American people, the Afrocentric perspective is utilized. This theory is fitting since my study explores the experiences of African American development officers in a predominately-White space. Though this study may seem critical in nature, it is solely focusing on how the participants view their experiences versus evaluating the systemic issues at PWIs. This focus on the participant experiences makes the Afrocentric paradigm a fit for the study since the paradigm focuses on cultivating a mentality of victory versus obsessing over systemic oppression (Mazama, 2001). This perspective provides me with an alternative theoretical foundation that will allow the study to yield more rich findings than utilizing only mainstream theories or paradigms.

Structurally, the Afrocentric perspective is based on tenets that “reflect its collective, rhythmic, nonmaterial or spiritual, and affective character” (Schiele, 1990, p. 146).

According to Schiele (1990), the tenets of the Afrocentric Perspective are:

1. Human beings are conceived collectively.
2. Human beings are spiritual.
3. Human beings are good.
4. The affective approach to knowledge is epistemological.
5. Much of human behavior is nonrational.
6. The axiology or highest value lies in interpersonal relationships. (p. 147)

This theory is fitting for the study because it provides a framework that is not situated in western ideology. As Ashante (1990) illustrated, Afrocentricity is:

A frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person. It centers on placing people of African origin in control of their lives and attitudes about the world. This means that we examine every aspect of the dislocation of African people: culture, economics, psychology, health and religion. As an intellectual theory, Afrocentricity is the study of the ideas and events from the standpoint of Africans as the key players rather than victims. This theory becomes, by virtue of an authentic relationship to the centrality of our own reality, a fundamentally empirical project - it is Africa asserting itself intellectually and psychologically, breaking the bonds of Western domination in the mind as an analogue for breaking those bonds in every other field. (p. 172)

This paradigm allows for the experiences of the African American participants to be examined outside of the context of Anglo-dominance and mainstream culture. It focuses on the cultural values of people of African descent. Moreover, this perspective emphasizes relationships and interactions versus some mainstream theories (Akbar, 1984). It asserts that Africans/African Americans operate using a collective rather than an individual orientation (Hunt, 1974). Afrocentricity relies on the concept, “I am because we are and because we are, I am” (Mbiti, 1970, p.141).

Another cultural value that the Afrocentric paradigm espouses is community. Relationships provide an anchor for support and a catalyst for productivity according to the Afrocentric paradigm (Sherr, 2006). This paradigm puts the highest value on people, whether it be organizational members or clients who receive the organization’s services (Schele, 1990). This theoretical perspective guides the study because one of the assumptions is that development officers of color rely on community support and vision. The researcher observed, during his time

in development, that African American development officers depend on their colleagues for support. They also put the vision of the office or team before their own opinions and preferences; their needs are viewed in harmony with the needs and desires of other team members (Sherr, 2006). Due to the donor and team centered nature of development work, the communal perspective allows for the robust examination of the experiences of African American development professionals. Development work, specifically higher education fundraising, is about building constituency using the mission of the institution and connecting those constituents with philanthropic opportunities for which they are passionate.

Inherent in Afrocentricity are several assumptions that will benefit this research study. Researchers who align with Afrocentricity believe that the researcher, the research, and the positioning or place of the study cannot be separated (Asante, 1990). Place is particularly important in Afrocentric research as it is not about location, but about the research being situated in a way that allows the meaning to not be obscured by Eurocentric ideas and interpretations (Reviere, 2001). In addition, Afrocentric research must also be situated within the five research perspectives (canons): Ukweli, Kujitoo, Utulivu, Ujamaa, and Uhaki (Reviere, 2001).

Ukweli is the principle that the researcher should be grounded in the community being researched. Having the research grounded in the community helps to maintain the authenticity of the research, which verify the research claims made (Collins, 1990). This research study will be grounded in the community, as African American members of the profession who are not taking part in the study will provide guidance on the research design. Kujitoo, the second canon, focuses on a de-emphasizing the objectivity of research (Asante, 1990). Afrocentricity asserts that objectivity forces a methodology that may not be sensitive to how knowledge is constructed and reality is perceived in the studied population. This research study aligns with Kujitoo because it

will be approached from a constructivist epistemology; it will allow the research participants to tell their stories and allow the knowledge to be constructed in that way (Asante, 1990; Reviere, 2001). The third canon is Utulivu, which is the concept that justice must be a part of the research framework. Further, the research must promote the reconciliatory or harmonious interaction between the studied population and others (Asante, 1990). Since the research study might be used to create strategies for the support of African American administrators, it seeks to promote harmony between the studied population and Predominately White Institutions. The last two canons are Ujamaa and Uhaki. Ujamaa represents the need for community interests and wellbeing to be at the center of the research. Uhaki is the canon that seeks to place the welfare of the participants as a priority within the study (Asante, 1990; Reviere, 2001). Both of these canons will be considered and incorporated into the dissertation study; the wellbeing of the participants and the population study will be a priority. Outside of the inherent assumptions that make this conceptual framework a fit for the study, Afrocentricity has been used by fields similar to educational administration.

The Afrocentric paradigm has been used to guide other areas of study as well as generate recommendations for social sciences and educational studies (Byrdsong, Mitchell, & Yamatani, 2013; Pittman, 2003; Sherr, 2006). Byrdsong, Mitchell, and Yamatani (2013) examined a grassroots social service organization that practiced elements of Afrocentricity. The Community Empowerment Association was created in order as a part of strategic efforts to lower the violence rates in Pittsburgh (Byrdsong, Mitchell, & Yamatani, 2013). Over time, the CEA grew into a multi-system organization that was more readily received by African American clients due to its inclusion of African values and traditions. In a sample of 288 youth, the program increased school attendance by 83.2% and overall student grades by 66.4%.

Byrdsong, Mitchell, and Yamatani emphasized,

As a culturally sensitive organization, the CEA understands the need to make available Afrocentric programs and services to individuals by encouraging optimal thinking and transformation, advocating for political, economic, and social justice, building on and being driven by the community's strengths, developing "authentic" trusting human services relationships, and fostering mutually beneficial outcomes to the individual, family, community, and society. (p. 934)

Their study illustrated how the Afrocentric paradigm could be successfully integrated into human services work.

Pittman (2003) conducted a qualitative study to see if the Afrocentric paradigm was relevant to physical activity programs. Fourteen women were interviewed for this study and asked questions that related to the connection between culture and physical activity. Four themes that are components of the Afrocentric paradigm were identified: "Physical activity programming should be (a) family based, (b) community based, (c) dance and exercise based, and (d) educational" (p. 631). The findings of the study support the inclusion of Afrocentric principles into physical education and fitness curriculum.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a review of the literature related to my study of African American development officers at PWIs. It provided the historical context for which the dissertation will be rooted, and it gave an overview of the current literature relevant to the study of African American development officers. The literature review spanned from the introduction of African Americans into higher education to the court cases that changed the landscape of higher education, and the current challenges that African American staff, faculty, and administrators face on predominately White campuses. In addition, it introduced the Afrocentric paradigm as

the theoretical framework . The Afrocentric paradigm allows the community to be involved in the research in order to collect the most authentic data possible. This conceptual framework has assumptions and research implications that will benefit this research study.

This is a pertinent topic in need of further investigation as evidenced in the literature and the gaps in the literature. African American administrators have had an arduous road to get to this place in history, and as the population continues to diversify, it is important that diverse administrators are recruited and retained. Diversity in terms of faculty, staff, and students is a compelling interest as illustrated in court cases and the research conducted on institutional diversity; therefore, it is valuable to look at this understudied group of people. It is evident from the literature and the gaps in the literature that this is a pertinent topic in need of further investigation. This research will give voice to development officers of color and increase the dialogue around the topic.

Chapter 3 will give a detailed account of the research design and methodology used to explore the topic. The areas that chapter 3 will explore include the research design and methodology, a description of the sample population, the data collection strategy and instrument, as well as the data analysis procedures.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As explained in chapter 1, it is important to explore the experiences of African American development officers in order to enhance the conversation around their recruitment and retention. Since people of color make up approximately 11 percent of the total advancement force, it is far from being reflective of the overall landscape of higher education (Bowman, 2010). This study sought to explore the experiences of African American development professionals who were frontline officers at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) of higher education. In order to address the purpose, the following questions were asked:

1. How do African American development professionals describe their experiences working at a PWI?
2. How do African American development professionals navigate their professional responsibilities within the context of a PWI?
3. How do African American development professionals describe the influence of their racial identity on their work?

Chapter 3 will present the design and methodology used to explore the experiences of African American development officers at PWIs. It will include the research method and design, a description of the population and sample, the data collection instruments and procedures, and the data analysis procedures. This chapter concludes with a timeline for the research process and a synopsis of the chapter. The next section will explain the research method and design.

Research Method and Design

Since qualitative research gives voice to the population and phenomenon being studied, it was fitting for this dissertation. The constructivist epistemology allowed the study to be rooted in the belief that there is no single reality, but that each individual within the context of a given situation creates his/her own reality/truth (Crotty, 1998). The knowledge rendered in this study

does not come from a universal truth, but it comes from the participants' interactions with the world (Crotty, 1998). For instance, in this study, participants constructed their meaning/truth based on their experiences before and during their tenure in the field of development; this truth was simply excavated during the research process.

Qualitative research is conducted utilizing interviews, participant observation, document analysis, and focus groups (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, a qualitative research paradigm was selected because it yields rich and descriptive data, can be quickly learned, and it can be used to explore a variety of different types of experiences and topics. Some of the limitations of qualitative research include the lack of generalizability of the data, the length of time necessary to collect and analyze data, and external and internal validity issues. Since the data cannot be generalized, it will be left for the consumers to determine the transferability. He used peer review for research validation. Specific steps were taken to mitigate the limitations of the methodology.

This qualitative study approached the work from a phenomenological perspective as it enables the researcher to capture the participants' lived experiences of a specific phenomenon (Guido, Chavez, & Lincoln, 2010). The research focused on describing the similarities between how the participants experienced and understood being African American development officers at PWIs. In addition, phenomenology was fitting for the study since the study sought to understand the experiences of African American development officers, a group, versus the experiences solely of an individual (Creswell, 2013). In short, the participants' perceptions and understanding of their experiences helped to understand the phenomena of being an African American development officer at a PWI.

There are two types of phenomenological approaches: hermeneutical phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology. This study utilizes hermeneutical phenomenology because it

allows the researcher to focus on the interpretation of the “texts of life” versus just the description of the phenomenon. Moreover, unlike transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutical phenomenology does not include bracketing, which is the process that requires the researcher to evaluate his/her perspectives on the phenomenon, and then be intentional about eliminating the perspectives from the study. Completing a hermeneutical phenomenology requires the researcher to: 1) Identify a phenomenon that interests them and is an “abiding concern”; 2) Investigate the lived experiences versus the conceptualization of the experiences, and reflect on essential themes that contribute to the essence of the phenomenon; 3) Write a description of the phenomenon and then continue to hone it by rewriting; 4) Then interpret the meanings of the lived experiences; 5) Throughout the process, the researcher must maintain an orientation to the phenomenon while balancing the individual parts of the research as well as the findings a whole (Creswell, 2013).

Description of the Population & Sample

This study focuses on the experiences of African American development officers across member institutions of the Association of American Universities. Development officers typically fall under the advancement department and are considered administrative staff members. For the purpose of this study, development officers are administrators employed in a development or fundraising capacity within the university. This study, however, will look specifically at African American development officers who are frontline gift officers.

To choose the participants, the researcher used purposive selection since he was trying to garner the experiences specifically of African American development officers (Maxwell, 2013). Purposive selection occurs when the researcher selects participants based on certain characteristics (Patton, 1990). With the assistance of his supervisor, Mr. Gregory Perrin, the researcher was able to outreach to members of Council of Advancement and the Support of Education (CASE) (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) who helped him identify potential

participants. The researcher sent out an email to the prospective participants asking for their participation. After the initial response to that email, the researcher then took further measures to ensure an adequate sample. The researcher used snowball sampling to find additional development officers. Since there is a small population of African American development officers who are frontline gift officers, using snowball sampling helped to round out the sample. Snowball sampling consists of the researcher seeking out participants to recommend more participants for the study (Gall, 1996). The eleven participants came from institutions within the Association of American Universities. From there, the researcher accepted participants in the order that they responded. To assure confidentiality, the name of the research universities and the participants were not revealed in this study.

The criteria to participate in this study included: 1) Identify as African American or Black, 2) work in the capacity of a front-line gift officer within one of the units or departments for at least 6 months or have previously worked as front-line gift officer for at least 6 months, and 3) work at or have worked at one of the member institutions of the Association of American Universities.

After the participants confirmed their participation via email, the researcher initiated contact to establish whether the participant would participate in an in-person interview or an interview over the phone. Then the participant set up an interview date and time. The researcher informed the participants that there were a couple of forms for them to complete prior to the interview.

Before proceeding, the participants were required to read an informed consent form to provide protection to them and to comply with IRB requirements (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The consent form provided information about the study, how the study would be used, and how the

participants' confidentiality would be secured. The researcher acted appropriately to ensure the anonymity of the participants. One of the measures used to maintain anonymity was the use of pseudonyms in place of the participants' names. Furthermore, the location of the study, the names of people mentioned during the interviews, and specific events were redacted in order to ensure the confidentiality of the study participants.

Description of Institutional Sites

The participants were chosen from among the member institutions of the Association of American Universities. The institutions were from the South, East, Midwest, and the Northeast.

Data Collection Instruments & Protocol

Data sources included interviews and resume and/or curriculum vita analysis. This section will evaluate those instruments and the role of the researcher.

Interview protocol.

An interview protocol was developed to ensure an effective interviewing strategy. Using interviews as a research conduit led to multiple perspectives and descriptive data (Perl & Noldon, 2000). The interview questions were created in consultation with a leading development officer at a liberal arts institution and a faculty member at The University of Texas at Austin. Faculty members and students within the Program of Higher Education Leadership at The University of Texas at Austin vetted the interview questions. After the interview questions were vetted and approved by the researcher's advisor, they were ready to be used in the research study. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher made an introduction and discussed the purpose and aim of the research study. Then, the researcher began to ask questions pertinent to the research study. Each participant was interviewed once and the interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Document analysis

The researcher requested the participants submit their resumes or curriculum vitas. This allowed the researcher to have additional insight into the participants' backgrounds, career trajectories, and educational experiences. The resumes and/or vitas provided information about the length of time the participants have been in the profession, positions previously held by the participants, and the participant's academic preparation. Additionally, the researcher used the internet to look up the demographics of the respective offices that the participants worked in. This gave additional background context and helped to triangulate some of the data gathered during the interview. It gave further context for moving forward with the research (Creswell, 2013).

Role of the Researcher.

One of the pertinent components of conducting research is recognizing the personal biases that the researcher might have, and evaluating how the researcher will minimize the effects of those biases on the study (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher evaluated his relationship with the participants and how that relationship might have influenced the study. In order to mitigate this limitation, the researcher expressed to the participants that their responses should be authentic. In addition, he maintained a level of professionalism to assure the participants were open and honest.

Relationship to the topic.

The researcher has worked in the field of higher education development for the past two years. He became interested in diversity within higher education advancement after many engaging conversations about the topic with his former supervisor. She exposed him to development professionals from around the city and he noticed the lack of representation for

people of color, specifically African Americans. From there, he further investigated the topic and realized he wanted to conduct research in the area.

Since the inception of this research idea, the researcher has spoken candidly with development professionals of color about their experiences within the field. The researcher also conducted a pilot study for his Qualitative Research course. During the pilot study, he was able to further refine his questions and construct a framework for his research.

Given his positionality as an African American male in the field of higher education development, the researcher was careful not to project his own bias and experiences onto the research participants. Additionally, the researcher received his undergraduate degrees from a Historically Black College and his graduate degrees from a PWI. The diversity in his educational pursuits allowed him to connect with people who attended both institution types. His ability to connect with others, his teachable spirit, and his charisma allowed him to build rapport with the participants quickly. It was also important for the researcher to consider his relationship with participants.

Relationship to the participants.

Some of the participants in the study were colleagues of the researcher. Being a part of the same profession and having the same racial identity of the participants gave the researcher “insider” status. Due to this “insider” status, the participants seemed more open and vulnerable; they used profanity and showed some of their personal identities. The researcher also had a sense of shared experiences with the participants as he worked in the field of advancement and experienced similar situations.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher submitted an application to The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for approval of human subjects research in order to begin the study and initiate

contact with potential participants. The application was submitted via a portal through <https://research.utexas.edu/ors/>.

Informed consent form.

After the study participants agreed to be a part of the study, the researcher immediately sent the Informed Consent Form. The Informed Consent Form allowed the researcher to document that he informed the participants of the details of the study, and that they consented to participate.

Resumes/curriculum vitae.

After the participants read the Informed Consent Form, the first phase of the research commenced. During the first phase, the participants submitted their resume/curriculum vitae so that the researcher could have more contextual information about them.

Interviews.

The second phase of data collection was the interviewing process. The researcher moved quickly to set up interviews with his participants; since they were development officers, they sometimes traveled for work, which made scheduling interviews more difficult. The main source of data collection for this research study was the interviews. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions so that the participants could create meaning as they saw fit (Creswell, 2012). Having a semi-structured approach allowed the researcher to ask clarifying questions when necessary (Berg, 2004). The participants selected the dates, times, and locations of their interviews. When possible, the interviews were conducted in person, as Gillham (2000) emphasized the power of face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviews allow the researcher to note facial expressions, mannerisms, and non-verbal gestures; this all contributes to the rich description of the research. All of the interviews were captured using a voice recorder. The researcher used hand written field notes to capture those

non-verbal cues, insights he might have received, and follow-up questions he had. Upon completing the interviews, the participants gave final remarks related to the study, and they were thanked for their time and participation.

Data Analysis Procedures

After all the interviews were conducted, considerations were made for data analysis process. Creswell (2013) recommends analyzing by: 1) organizing the data, 2) reading and memoing, 3) describing the data into codes and themes, 4) classifying the data into codes and themes, 5) interpreting the data, and 6) representing the data visually. The only step that occurs after each interview is reading and memoing; the other steps occur after all the data is collected.

Validation.

In order to validate the data, the researcher used: 1) rich, thick descriptions, 2) member checking, and 3) peer review/debriefing (Creswell, 2013). First, the researcher thoroughly described the setting and research participants in order to allow research consumers to formulate opinions about transferability (Merriam, 1988). Then he sent the transcripts of the interviews to the participants to review for correctness and completeness; the researcher also used this time to ask any clarifying questions. He used member checking to ensure that the interview accurately represented what the participant sought to communicate (Gall, et al., 1996). Then, a peer within the field of development reviewed the data analysis to ensure that it was honest; the peer also asked difficult questions about the research collection, data interpretation, and overall data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Coding Process.

Once the interviews had been conducted, these were transcribed by a third party transcription service. After the verbatim transcriptions were received, the researcher read them several times and began to organize them according to themes. The transcripts were analyzed

using two forms of coding: Open Coding and Coding based on the conceptual framework of Afrocentric Perspective according to Schiele (1990).

The open coding process occurred first. Bogdan and Biklen (2007):

Developing a coding system involves several steps: You search through your data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics your data cover, and then you write down words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns. These words and phrases were coding categories. They were a means of sorting the descriptive data you have collected so that the material bearing on a given topic can be physically separated from other data. (p.171)

The interviews were coded using Dedoose. After the initial themes had been identified and sorted, then the second round of data analysis began. During the second round of coding, the theoretical framework informed the codes generated during this phase.

Technology use.

Over the course of the research, technological tools were used to enhance the process. Firstly, the interviews were recorded using voice recorders, and then they were changed to sound files on the computer in order to be sent to the transcription service. Then the data was coded using Dedoose software, and all of the materials were saved on UTBox for security purposes.

Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter provided information about the research design and methodology utilized in this study. This was a qualitative study that used a phenomenological perspective to explore the participant experiences. The research design consisted of 11 participants from member institutions of the Association of American Universities. Purposive sampling and snowballing techniques were both utilized in order to secure the sample size of up to twenty participants. The participants were selected based on their racial identity, job title, tenure in field, and their

employment at a member institution of the American Association for Universities. The researcher collected Informed Consent Forms and resumes/curriculum vitas. A third party company transcribed interviews, and the data analyzed using both open coding and coding based on the conceptual framework. Prominent themes in the interviews were synthesized into findings and then supported using quotes. Rich and thick data, member checking, and peer review/debriefing was used to validate the research. The next chapter will discuss the results of the research study.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Chapter four will present the findings and data analysis from this research study. The study was qualitative in nature, and focused on the 11 participants who submitted their resumes/curriculum vitae for analysis and participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews were coded using Dedoose software to identify emergent themes through In Vivo and Theoretical coding strategies. Then, findings were created utilizing the themes that emerged in the data.

As previously stated, it is important to capture the experiences of African American frontline gift officers at PWIs because they are lacking in higher education, and the changing landscape of higher education requires more of them in order to garner and fully maximize the support of increasingly diverse alumni. Furthermore, African American frontline gift officers contribute to the critical mass of diversity needed to produce inclusive and revolutionary practices, as well as being the cornerstone of reconciliatory efforts between PWIs and Black alumni who had unsatisfactory experiences at their alma maters. Therefore, the focus of this study is to explore the experiences of African American frontline gift officers at PWIs, specifically AAU member institutions. The study was framed utilizing three primary research questions:

1. How do African American development professionals describe their experiences working at a PWI?
2. How do African American development professionals navigate their professional responsibilities within the context of a PWI?
3. How do African American development professionals describe the influence of their racial identity on their work?

This chapter consists of four sections: the execution of the study, the descriptive information regarding the participants and their respective institutions, the findings and data analysis, and then the summary of the chapter. The findings and data analysis will be organized thematically by research question, with the In vivo coding findings preceding the findings based on the theoretical framework.

Execution of the Research Study

This research study utilized a phenomenological approach to explore this topic in order to capture participants' lived experiences. It was guided by semi-structured interviews along with resume/curriculum vitae analysis. In order to participate in the study, participants had to: 1) Identify as African American or Black, 2) work in the capacity of a front-line gift officer within one of the units or departments for at least 6 months or have previously worked as front-line gift officer for at least 6 months, and 3) work at or have worked at one of the member institutions of the Association of American Universities. In order to recruit a sample of 11 participants, the researcher used purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. To collect the data, the researcher interviewed each of the 11 participants utilizing a semi-structured interview protocol. The interviews were transcribed and coded using Dedoose software. The coding scheme included a round of open coding, and a round of theoretical coding based on the Afrocentric Perspective. Themes that were identified using Dedoose, were then used to create findings that were supported by participant quotes. The quotes ensured that the participants' voices would be heard throughout this chapter and the research study.

This component of the chapter provided a synopsis of the execution of the research study. The next section of the chapter will provide some descriptive information regarding the participants and their respective "home" institutions.

Descriptive Information of the Participants

The participants' names and the names of the institutions that they represented were altered in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The participants were assigned pseudonyms and their institutions were labeled by the institution type and by the region that the institution is located in.

Table 1

Table 4.1: Participant Profiles				
Name	Institution Type	Region	Position	Gender
Julissa	Private	South	Assistant Director of Development	Female
Chris	Public	Northeast	Development Officer	Male
Purpose	Public	West	Director of Development	Female
Charles	Public	Midwest	Director of Development	Male
Mary	Public	South	Associate Director	Female
Richard	Public	South	Associate Dean of Development	Male
Vick	Public	West	Associate Director	Male
Melissa	Public	West	Senior Director of Development	Female
Montana	Cultural Center (No longer in Higher Education)	Northeast	Senior Director of Major Gifts	Female
Felicia	Public	South	Assistant Dean for Development	Female
Tiffany	Public	South	Director of Development	Female

Eleven African American frontline gift officers agreed to participate in this research study. At the time of the study, ten of the participants were employed at five different AAU institutions across the nation, and one participant was employed by a cultural center located on

the Northeast coast (formerly employed at an AAU institution). The participants' ages ranged from late twenties to early fifties, with experiences spanning the level of gift officer to associate dean of development. Educationally, four (36%) of the participants possessed Master's degrees, two (18%) possessed Juris Doctorate degrees, and the remaining five (45%) solely possessed Bachelor degrees. The sample consisted of seven (64%) women, and four (34%) men.

Julissa is an assistant director of development at a private AAU institution in the South. She is primarily responsible for cultivating and soliciting gifts from foundations and individuals associated with foundations. She has been in her current role for approximately three years. Prior to her current position, she served as a coordinator with the development office for two years. She holds a B.A. in Leadership Studies and a Master of Divinity.

Chris is a development officer for a specific unit at a public AAU institution in the Northeast. He is primarily responsible for identifying, cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding a portfolio of diverse major gift prospects capable of giving \$50,000 or more. He has been in his current position for approximately two years. Previously Chris served as the Associate Director for Leadership gifts at his current institution. In his immediate past role, he served as a major gift fundraiser for the central office of his institution. Chris holds a B.A. in Sociology.

Purpose is a director of development for leadership gifts at a public AAU institution in the West. She is primarily responsible for identifying, cultivating and soliciting diverse alumni and other constituencies with giving capacity of \$100,000 or more. The programs that she fundraises for focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. She has been in her current position for approximately two years. Prior to her current position, Purpose served as a director of donor relations at her same institution. Her responsibilities included the development and execution of

the university stewardship plan, the implementation of recognition and fund reporting programs. Purpose holds a B.A. in Political Science.

Charles is a director of development for major gifts at a public AAU institution in the Midwest. He is primarily responsible for identifying, cultivating, and soliciting donors for the university sports programs. He has a regional focus that includes three states. Additionally, he also develops relationships with former coaches and players nationwide. He has been in his current position for seven years. Previously, he served as an assistant director for development at his same institution. In this role, he was responsible for fundraising for an academic school at the university. His primary focus was on engaging alums throughout the state. Charles holds a B.A. in Communications.

Mary is an associate director for alumni relations at a public AAU institution in the South. She is primarily responsible for engaging alumni through events and volunteer opportunities. Additionally, she works closely with and coordinates various councils and boards in her college. She has been in her current position for approximately two years. Prior to this position, she worked as a consultant working with nonprofits on sustainability and growth issues. Her consulting reach extended to community relations, signature events, strategic planning, volunteer management, and fundraising. Mary holds a B.A. in Sociology.

Richard is an associate dean for development at a public AAU institution in the South. He is primarily responsible for managing a team of fundraisers and supporting development professionals. Additionally, he is a member of the leadership team for his unit and operates as a liaison between the development team and the unit's dean. Richard also manages a portfolio of major gift prospects that includes individuals, corporations, and foundations. He has served in this position for approximately two years. Prior to his current position, he worked as a chief

development officer for another unit on his campus. As the chief development officer, he cultivated and solicited annual, leadership, and planned gifts for a variety of programs across his unit. He also led advancement efforts including communications, events, and constituent relations. Richard holds a B.A. in Theatre and a M.F.A.

Vick is an associate director for leadership gifts at a public AAU institution in the West. He is primarily responsible for identifying, cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding donors with giving capacity of \$50,000 or more. He fundraises for various units and colleges within his institution. He has been in his current position for approximately two years. Prior to this position, Vick was a director of development for major gifts to intercollegiate athletics. He managed a portfolio of donors with giving capacity of \$100,000 or above. Vick holds a B.A. in Kinesiology and a M.A. in Sport Performance.

Melissa is a senior director of development at a public AAU institution in the West. She is primarily responsible for managing a team of fundraisers. Additionally, she creates and implements development and communications strategies for her designated region. Melissa also has some major gift fundraising responsibilities. She has served in her current position for approximately three years. Prior to this position, Melissa worked as a major gift officer for the business school at another AAU institution. She managed a portfolio of two hundred donors and university stakeholders. Melissa holds a B.S. in Business Management.

Montana is a senior director of major gifts for a historic cultural center in the Northeast. She is primarily responsible for identifying, cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding donors with giving capacity of \$25,000 or more. She is also responsible for securing in-kind donations for the cultural center. In addition to her fundraising duties, she writes communication pieces designed to promote philanthropy. She has worked for the cultural center for approximately eight years.

Prior to her current position, Montana worked for four years as a director of major gifts at a public AAU institution in the Midwest. She managed two hundred donor prospects with giving capacities of \$100,000 or above. Montana holds a B.S. in Political Science and a Juris Doctorate.

Felicia is an assistant dean for development at a public AAU institution in the South. She is primarily responsible for managing the operations of the development office within her unit, as well as overseeing donor relations and advancement efforts. Felicia also manages a portfolio of major gift prospects that includes individuals, corporations, and foundations. She has held this position for approximately a year. Prior to her current position, she served as the secretary of a regional college in the South. In this capacity she was the chief liaison between the Office of the President and the Board of Trustees. She also operated as the senior project manager for the institution and led university-wide committees. Felicia holds a B.A. in English, and a Juris Doctorate.

Tiffany is a director of development at a public AAU institution in the South. She is primarily responsible for identifying, cultivating, and soliciting donors (individuals, corporation, foundations). Tiffany also coordinates the creation of promotional materials for select programs within her unit. Additionally, she assists in coordinating fundraising and stewardship events. She has held this position for approximately two years. Prior to her current position, Tiffany worked as the director of fiscal services for a k-12 school system. In this position, she oversaw financial and accounting processes, supported strategic planning by conducting financial forecasting, and collaborated with the development team to optimize the fundraising campaign. Tiffany holds a B.A. in Sociology and a M.B.A.

Institutional profiles.

Of the institutions represented in the study, nine (82%) of the them were public, one (9%) of them was a private, and one (9%) of the institutions was not an institution of higher education.

Five (83%) of the six institutions were located in urban areas; One (17%) of the institutions was located in a suburban area. For the institutions of higher education, four (80%) of them were large institutions with more than 20,000 students, and one (20%) of them is a small institution with less than 15,000 students. One participant was employed at a cultural center, but she was formerly employed at a large institution in an urban area. The institutions were located in four main regions of the United States as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Northeast Public. This institution was a large, public, research institution located in a suburban area of the Northeast. The institution was a designated sea-grant and space grant institution. It had 15 schools and colleges that confer bachelors, masters, professional, and doctoral degrees. More than 14,500 staff and administrators were employed at the institution, as well as over 2,400 faculty members. The student body was composed of over 16,000 undergraduates, and over 8,000 graduate students. 57.4% of the student body was diverse. 54.5% of the student body was male, and 45.5% of the student body was female.

Midwest Public. This institution was a large, public, research institution located in an urban area of the Midwest. The institution was designated as a land-grant, sea-grant, and space-grant institution. It had 18 schools and colleges that confer bachelors, masters, professional, and doctoral degrees. More than 25,037 staff and administrators were employed at the institution, as well as over 4,237 faculty members. The student body was composed of over 45,000 undergraduates, and over 10,000 graduate students. 18.89% of the student population was diverse. 50% of the student body was male, and 50% of the student body was female.

Southern Private. This institution was a mid-sized, private, research institution located in an urban area of the South. The institution had a religious affiliation but was not a religious

institution. It had 11 schools and colleges that confer bachelors, masters, professional, and doctoral degrees. More than 11,900 administrators, faculty, and staff members were employed by the institution. The student body was composed of 7,500 undergraduates, and over 7,100 graduate students. 59.6% of the student body was diverse. 56% of the student body was female, and 44% of the student body was male.

Southern Public. This institution was a large, public research institution located in an urban area of the South. The institution was a flagship state university, and a space-grant institution. It had 18 schools and colleges that confer bachelors, masters, professional, and doctoral degrees. More than 21,000 administrators, faculty, and staff members were employed by the institution; over 3,000 of those were faculty members. The student body was composed of over 39,000 undergraduates and 11,000 graduate students. 55% of the student body was diverse. 51% of the student body was male, and 49% of the student body was female.

Western Public. This institution was a large, public research institution located in an urban area of the West. The institution was a flagship state university, and a land-grant institution. It had 14 schools and colleges that confer bachelors, masters, professional, and doctoral degrees. More than 20,000 administrators, faculty, and staff members were employed by the institution' over 2,100 of those were faculty members. The student body was composed of over 27,000 undergraduates, and 10,000 graduate students. Over 50% of the was student body was diverse. Additionally, 52% of the student body was female, and 48% of the student body was male.

This section included descriptive information regarding the study participants and their home institutions. The next section provides information about the coding procedure. Then, the findings for each theme and the prominent themes will be presented.

Findings and Themes Based on Coding Procedure

This section displays the coding procedure and then presents the findings and prominent themes for each research question.

Overview of open coding procedure.

After the verbatim transcriptions were received, the researcher read them several times and began to organize them according to themes. The transcripts were analyzed using two forms of coding: Open Coding and Coding based on the conceptual framework of Afrocentric Perspective according to Schiele (1990).

The open coding process occurred first. Bogdan and Biklen (2007):

Developing a coding system involves several steps: You search through your data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics your data cover, and then you write down words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns. These words and phrases were coding categories. They were a means of sorting the descriptive data you have collected so that the material bearing on a given topic can be physically separated from other data. (p.171)

The interviews were coded using Dedoose. After the initial themes had been identified and sorted, then the second round of data analysis began. During the second round of coding, the theoretical framework informed the codes generated during this phase.

Overview of the conceptual framework based coding.

This phase of coding focused on identifying themes that correlated with the Afrocentric perspective. Whenever themes that represented tenets of the framework were discovered in the data, they were coded and then evaluated.

Table 2

Table 4.2: Findings related to the Research Questions		
Research Question 1: How do African American development professionals describe their experiences working at a PWI?	Research Question 2: How do African American development professionals navigate their professional responsibilities within the context of a PWI?	Research Question 3: How do African American development professionals describe the influence of their racial identity on their work?
Finding # 1: African American frontline gift officers were connectors of people and catalysts of engagement/re-engagement	Finding # 4: Relationships were key to navigating their professional lives	Finding # 11: Race and gender were salient for African American women development officers
Finding # 2: PWIs can be isolating space	Finding # 5: Connect to the mission in order to persist	Finding # 12: Race as an asset
Finding # 3: Racism/prejudice exists in more covert form	Finding # 6: Invest in themselves	Finding # 13: Race as a liability
	Finding # 7: Advocate for themselves and others	
	Finding # 8: Pick your battles	
	Finding # 9: Awareness of perception	
	Finding # 10: Code-switching	

Data Analysis for Research Question #1

The first research question explored the experiences of African American frontline gift officers at PWIs. During the interviews, three findings were identified. Dedoose was used to synthesize the themes and findings and organize quotes to support those findings. The findings for the first research question were: 1) African American frontline gift officers view their roles as connectors of people and catalysts for engagement/re-engagement; 2) Predominately White

institutions can be isolating spaces for African American frontline gift officers; and 3) Racism and prejudice exist in more covert forms.

The participants of the study generally enjoyed their work as frontline gift officers and they overwhelmingly found purpose and fulfillment in their work. This is not to say they did not encounter issues, but they saw the value of their work as being worth any obstacles that they faced. They viewed themselves as valuable connectors necessary to help secure financial support for higher education. Additionally, they focused on their role as a catalyst for engaging/re-engaging alumni and potential donors, specifically disenfranchised people of color. Nevertheless, the participants expressed that PWIs can be isolating spaces, and that racism/prejudice exists in more covert forms. In spite of their challenges, the participants saw the value of being at PWIs to advocate for each other, to reconstruct the narrative around black professionals, to indirectly and directly support students, and to contribute to diversity that could alter the way their peers think and conduct fundraising activities.

Finding #1: connectors of people and catalysts for engagement/re-engagement. This finding is particularly important in establishing how the participants viewed their roles and positions within their specific institution of higher education. Their experiences in the context of their PWIs were influenced by how they perceived their role. Although some of them expressed that they were charged with marketing their program to potential supporters, they overwhelmingly viewed themselves as connectors. The participants saw themselves as being tasked to connect people to their passions. Their work was about helping prospective donors to identify their passions, and engage with their passions on a financial level. One of the participants, Mary, was a development officer at a public institution in the South, illustrated how she served as a connector for people.

What I like and enjoy about being a development officer is building relationships, and taking the time to really get to know our donors, what they're passionate about, and being able to offer them the opportunity to engage with something that we're already doing that they're passionate about. And that's kind of the entry way into philanthropy. So we don't go to them and say, "Hey we have a building, please give us money." We actually connect them to what they are interested in. That is the entryway to get people into giving at leadership, major, and principle gift levels.

Mary emphasized that development work was about identifying the donor's passion and then connecting them to efforts that the university is making within that area. Regardless of the donor's capacity, Mary believed that making that connection is fundamental to cultivating and soliciting gifts at every level. If alumni or potential donors can connect to the organizations, they will be able to envision themselves investing in the organization.

Tiffany, who was a frontline gift officer at a public institution in the South, also saw herself as a connector. However, she was more thorough in explaining how people gave because of their belief in the mission, leader, etc. Tiffany stated,

My job as a frontline gift officer is to help people align their interests with our programs. And not just their interests as far as their time, but really their financial resources, whether that be through a cash gift, considering a planned gift, or if they have recommendations for other individuals that might be ideal to give a cash gift. In every aspect of frontline fundraising you have to constantly be looking for those points of connection {between the donors and the program}. And sometimes there is a thought that people only make gifts in order to receive tax deductions, but that's not true; people give because of passion, because they can connect to the cause or program. People make gifts because they believe. They believe in the program, they believe in the leader, they believe in the vision. You're asking someone to give you their hard earned resources so you have to really understand what motivates the donor and then you have to know and understand the program well enough that as they ask questions you can answer them, and continue to assure them that they're making a good investment.

Tiffany explained that it is necessary for frontline gift officers to be able to excavate what potential donors are passionate about and what they believe in. She felt as if her role was to connect the prospective donors to a cause or program for which they have a connection. In essence, she revealed that frontline gift officers have to be intuitive and knowledgeable. Tiffany revealed that once the potential donor sees the value of the organization and starts to believe in

the mission, they will be willing to invest in the organization. She says, "People make gifts because they believe." So, frontline gift officers have to cultivate that sense of belief in potential donors. They have to illuminate why a donor should believe in the organization. Their job is complex as it involves identifying motives, connecting motives with a specific cause or program, and then communicating that connection to potential donors.

In addition to being connectors, several of the participants viewed themselves as being catalysts for the engagement/re-engagement of alumni and other potential donors. They emphasized that donors of color needed to be engaged by people to which they could relate and also "speak their language". Chris, who was a frontline gift officer at a public institution in the Northeast, said,

I think especially when you look at what donors look like today, I think the landscape of donors is changing. If we continue to rely on White men to be the sole source of where donations are going to come from, then universities are doing themselves a disservice. Everyday there are more and more people of color who are coming into wealth, whether or not they are Black, they are Asian, they're Hispanic, no matter what, I think that if we don't have individuals who look and who people can identify with then that will be a problem for higher education institutions. I think they will do themselves a disservice because the language is different. I think it is important that we have diverse gift officers to engage our donors and speak their language.

With changing demographics, Chris saw the need for institutions to have frontline gift officers of color in order to engage and speak the language of donors. If the differences in cultures, customs, personalities, races, etc. are ignored, then institutions will miss receiving support from a significant number of donors who are now moving into wealth. A top priority for frontline gift officers should be for them to understand the cultural values of different constituencies; having a diverse fundraising staff will help to promote this understanding.

Chris continued to say that trust is a key issue when it comes to establishing relationships with donors. He believed that it is important for the donors to be able to trust you in order to feel

compelled to make a gift; this trust he spoke of comes more immediately when the gift officer is able to relate and speak the same language as the donor. He felt as if this phenomenon was not limited to African American donors, but that it applied to donors as a whole.

I look at my own institution, we recently hired this woman who is Asian to be a development officer in our college of engineering. I know for a fact, she's extremely qualified, she's very capable, but it also works out for the institution because the college of engineering has a lot of alumni who are Asian, and she's going to be able to have conversations with these individuals that I can't have as a Black man, and that white individuals would not be able to have either. They're going to connect her with her. There's going to be a trust factor with her that they're going to have initially. Like I can build that trust factor with them, but because of who she is and how she looks, and how she identifies, she'll get there much faster than I would.

According to a few participants, this trust that Chris identified seems particularly important for alumni of color who had disparaging experiences at their alma mater. Purpose, who was a development officer at a public institution in the West, illustrated that trust is important in terms of having candid, expressive conversations with alumni of color. She said,

The demographic shift in this state alone projects that diversity has to be a priority from development perspective, because 20 years from now our alumni are going to look very different. You're going to have a large population of alumni of color. And I do think that having front line fundraisers who can reflect that kind of diversity can ease the relationship building. In some ways it is much more natural for development officers of color to initiate conversations with alumni of color. Again, one of the things that excited me about this position is that I would be able to go out and focus on alumni of color and have really authentic conversations about the challenges that those alumni might have felt while they were students here on this campus. So I think we have to diversify our fundraising staff for sure, especially here. Our demographic shift kind of demands that. When I came here, I first started meeting with African American alumni, the conversations I was able to have, I think are very different than the conversations that a White development officer would be able to have. I think that there is oftentimes a certain level of trust that opens the door to very candid conversations. So it's not uncommon for me to begin a conversation with an alum that I just met, and the conversation begins with, let me tell you all about the challenges I had at here. It's very candid, and they need to get that off their chest because we're going to build relationships with these folks. They have to have that healing space. I'm not sure there's that same comfort with white development officers- I think it creates the opportunity to have development officers of color. I think having diverse development officers increases opportunities to have a different kind of conversation with alumni.

Purpose explained that the comfort level of alumni of color increases when development officers of color engage them. Being able to engage with someone who understands and shares aspects of your identity seems to allow alumni of color to be open, vulnerable, and expressive. Those conversations lead to improved relationships between the alumni and the institution, as well as the healing of alumni who suffered marginalization and mistreatment during their collegiate tenure. Additionally, this passage alludes to African American frontline gift officers being agents who aid in the healing of a community that has historically suffered at their respective PWIs. They are not just fundraisers but development officers are agents who aid in healing and building bridges between alumni of color and their institutions.

Another participant, Vick, talked about how some alumni have to be engaged and cultivated differently due to their experiences as students on their respective campuses. Vick stated:

When it comes to interacting and engaging with African American alums, we have to go about it in a different manner. I think the same core principles apply as you're working with a White alum or a Black alum, but I think the experiences that Black alums have had here are completely different than the experiences their White peers had. So I think there's a wall to climb and resistance that you have to kind of get over. I think also you can't apologize for the past experience, right? But what you can do is show some of the things, the plans that are on the horizon and things that we're doing currently that support African American students better, so they can feel a little bit more comfortable and kind of get them interested in getting involved again. I think it's more of a process of reconciliation. You have to nurture the Black alums and provide them with the right experience. Then hopefully you will be able to bring them back into the fold. They're feeling good, they're reengaged, they're thriving, and then they're giving back as well. So, that's where I kind of see the success of bridging the gap, bringing alums back to campus to give philanthropically, of course, but also you have the reconnection and then to have them also pay it forward to the students that are currently {at their alma mater}.

In the same vein as some of the other participants, Vick explained how the experiences of alumni of color can be vastly different from their White counterparts; thus, it will take different approaches in order to facilitate the reconciliation of alumni of color to the institution, and garner

their financial support. Like Purpose, he viewed African American frontline gift officers as agents of reconciliation to the African American community. Vick alluded to the reconciliation being beneficial for the institution as well as to the student body. Students of color will directly benefit from alumni of colors being incorporated back into the campus community; this benefit can come through funding and mentorship.

Finding # 2: PWIs can be isolating spaces. Many of the participants spoke about how PWIs can be isolating spaces for African American development professionals. They expressed that oftentimes they were physically the only African American in meetings, how some of their colleagues did not understand their experiences and perspectives, and how the cities around their respective institutions exacerbated the loneliness they faced at their institutions.

Vick mentioned that being the only African American development officer in a space can be disconcerting because sometimes having others with the same racial identity provides a sense of support, as there are some shared experiences and perspectives. His thoughts were:

And so I would say that because of my past experiences, and also being an African American, I think I bring a different perspective and also kind of way of doing things. So at times it is challenging in terms of being in a room and you don't see a lot of representation, you feel like you are alone.

Richard, who was an associate dean of development at a public institution in the South, talked about how being one of the few African American development officers is isolating and irritating. He stated:

Until I had this position, I have never in 20 years, I have never been in a meeting with more than 2 senior management people around the management table, depending on the organization, African American, no more than two. And never another African American fundraiser. I have never been on a team with another African American fundraiser until I accepted this position. So I am used to and I'm forced, just to just push the envelope, to be in meetings where I'm the only one. And honestly that is - it gets old. It's annoying. And I think about why would I say it's annoying? It just is, you know? I don't think I need a reason for it to be annoying. It just is.

Richard bluntly stated that being isolated is annoying. He also alluded to the fact that being the only African American at the table forces him to have to push the envelope and be the diverse perspective. He felt responsible, to a degree, for articulating the ideas and values of African Americans. Due to his positionality as an African American male, he has to overcome his annoyance in order to challenge the status quo and advocate for himself and others.

Julissa, who was a development officer at a private institution in the South, spoke of how being the only African American development officer caused her to have to connect to others in different ways.

But here, I will say when I first came here and I got promoted into this position, we had these monthly meetings where all of us development officers, even if you were in central development officers or if you were like the major gift officer of a particular school or unit, all of us got together in this room. At the time, it might have been 60 of us, and I walked into the room and I was the only African American. So it was about 2 ½ years ago. And this city itself, is at least 65-70% African American. The university itself, the student body, had at least 40% African American, and to walk into a place like that and sit down at a table and look and see nobody that looks like you – and so for me, I had to change my mind about some things. I felt alone and so I had to begin to strategize and really think about if I can't connect on race, you know, and that common thread with that, then I have to find other ways to connect.

Julissa emphasized finding other avenues, aside from race, to connect with her colleagues. Being the only African American in the room forced her to have to “change her mind about some things” in order to thrive in the space. Her isolation forced her to find various ways to connect outside of race. As Julissa did, Tiffany also attempted to connect, but her isolation greatly affected her morale.

Tiffany, who earlier in her interview spoke about connecting with her colleagues, was met with isolating experiences that lowered her moral. She encountered questions and statements that unearthed her colleagues' ignorance concerning issues pertaining to her culture. She said,

When I was at my previous job, I was on a team with all white women, well one of them was part Latina but she didn't really identify that way. So, all White women were from

Texas, so it's not just all White women, even not all White women from the South. It's all White women from Texas. And I just had a very different way of looking at things, and usually it was just kind of funny sort of things, you know, little things that I didn't know. I had no idea what road hard and put up wet meant, or anything like that. But every so often, you know, you do have these run-ins to do with race that leave a very bad taste in your mouth, but you still have to work with this person. And you can't let it get you down. So, case in point, right after the Trayvon Martin shooting, I was pretty distraught. I was pregnant at the time with a boy. I was going to be a mother of a Black son, right? And so it was pretty emotional for me. It was really hard for me to process, and you try as much as possible to lobotomize yourself in the office so you can just go into work mode and not necessarily be thinking about all these things, it was a very tense time in the country. And for me personally even trying to contextualize, you know, the decisions that I'm making for my family with what's going on in the headlines. So even when this topic came up around my colleagues, who are normally very supportive of things like motherhood. One of my colleagues, actually I think pretty much all of them, my concerns fell on tone-deaf ears. I think it made them too uncomfortable to think about trying to see why I was so distraught about it. I had one of my colleagues say, "oh well I don't understand why you're so upset, I have girls they might be raped." I was like, wait what? They just lacked of empathy. It was really disheartening when you run into it over and over and with people on your team, and especially with my definition of what a team is, teammates need to have your back because we have a lot of stuff to accomplish.

Tiffany's experiences caused her morale to decrease because none of her colleagues understood her struggles, or even attempted to try to understand her perspective. For her, the isolation was exacerbated by the social context of the time. Not only was she isolated in terms of not understanding her colleagues' euphemisms and figures of speech, but she also was isolated since no one in her office could relate to her in terms of her experiences and how she processed the socially charged happenings of that time. The shooting of Trayvon Martin and the subsequent acquittal of the alleged killer had a profound effect on how Tiffany viewed life in light of her own pregnancy. No one around her understood or even attempted to understand the psychological implications of the perceived violence against black bodies that played out on headlines across the country. This lack of understanding and empathy from her coworkers created a deep sense of isolation and affected her view of the team's dynamic.

Not only did some of the participants express their feelings of isolation on their campuses, but they also expressed how some of the cities where their institutions were located provided no relief for their isolation. Mary illustrated this by saying,

I wish there were more Black people in my current city. This city is just really White. I go to work and there are only a few of us, and then I live in a city that is really White. And as progressive as it claims to be, it is not that way racially and socioeconomically. And so sometimes I just don't know what to expect here. For the most part, people are really nice, but I hear students talking about how they receive death threats walking around. While I am relaxed because this city is hailed as being liberal, I still remember I am in the South, and, you know, I could be Sandra Bland if I went the wrong way one night.

Mary's statement not only illustrated that she felt isolated in her city but also that she felt unsafe in her city. Her reference to Sandra Bland solidifies how she perceives the city. Sandra Bland was stopped by a police officer for a minor traffic violation, the situation escalated, and she ended up being arrested for assaulting a police officer. Eventually, she was found dead in her cell and it was ruled a suicide. There was suspicion of foul play as the arrest was caught on camera and her family adamantly insisted that she would not have committed suicide. The case reinforced the fear that was already present in the black community concerning the police force and the criminal justice system. Mary's quote articulated just how tense she feels about the city she lives in and the south in general. She faced isolation at work and then turned around and dealt with isolation and safety issues in her city.

Montana, who was once a development officer at a public institution in the Midwest but is now a fundraiser for a cultural center in the Northeast, also echoed Mary's sentiments about being isolated on the job and in her city. She said,

Yeah, I think that the communities that I lived in, I mean those were difficult communities to live in as a Black woman, single Black woman. That was difficult in itself. So, there isn't much diversity at the institution, and then you have to live in a city that lacks diversity.

Mary's and Montana's awareness of their isolation at the institution was coupled with their isolation within their respective cities. How they perceived their experiences at their PWIs was connected to how they experienced life within their respective cities.

Finding #3: racism/prejudice exists in more covert forms. A few of the participants talked about experiences that they would classify as being racist or prejudice in nature. Some experiences involved other colleagues and a couple of them pertained to donor interactions. The experiences ranged in the effects that they had on the participants. Most of the participants could not immediately identify the times when they encountered racism when asked about how race has been a challenge, but then realized that they had indeed faced racism at least once in their career.

During Montana's interview, she stated that she believed African American development officers are not given the same opportunities as Caucasian development officers. When asked a follow-up question about what she believed was the cause of the inequality, she answered that the underlying root is racism.

I think there's an element of racism there. I don't think that that's something that necessarily needs to be overlooked. You know, I do think that white institutions, or the individuals that work at White institutions, may believe that we are not as strong as development officers or leaders, which is completely inaccurate and is not the case. But I think they're taking care of their own. College athletics is a White male profession. Development, in general, is a white woman's profession. And so that's who they hire. I mean I've seen it here at the cultural center, I've seen it at every institution. They hire themselves. I mean because I was in the central office for 6 1/2 years, I was the only African American front line fundraiser for 6 1/2 years. So they still don't have any African American frontline fundraisers. They're all White women.

Montana's quote illuminates that the system reproduces itself. Her example is that the White people at the institutions that she has worked for continue to hire other White people. This means qualified people of color are excluded from the hiring pools and that the ones already in the organization are not given the same promotion opportunities. She insinuated that in order to

diversify the profession, the leadership charged with hiring needs to diversify. Since Black people are allowed to work at these institutions, it is not overt racism, but it is covert in the sense that they are not given the same opportunities.

Tiffany talked about how she noticed racist attitudes when interacting with one of her colleagues. She began by explaining how she felt isolated in her experiences with her colleagues. Her colleagues lacked empathy and made ignorant statements that decreased her morale. She continued by saying,

I was having a conversation with one of the colleagues that I mentioned earlier; we were actually pretty close. She talked about how she needed to buy a new house in a different area because this area used to be rural, but now too many Latino families are moving in and Latinos just don't, they just don't value education the same way. So she can't send her girls to the same school with all those Latino kids. I was like, wow that's really - can I just call her a racist? You know, as a Black person you're like this is not cool. But do I say it's not cool? I feel like this is a teachable moment, but is it really my job to teach them. And so, but this is something that you can come across being a Black development professional or not. But I just think that given the work that we do as development professionals, we want to have really great relationships with our teammates and we depend on our teammates in order to be successful as a team and also individually. And when you feel like you're depending on someone who is so anti what you are, who you are, it feels not only uncomfortable, it feels dangerous. It feels like you're not set up to succeed. So that sort of thing can be really tough.

Tiffany revealed that her colleagues would say things that she perceived to be racist without any hesitation or shame. She went on to talk about how this form of prejudice made her feel uncomfortable and unsafe. This is a valuable point since hearing statements that are “anti your identity” can indeed create an environment that feels unsafe. This covert form of prejudice or perceived racism is damaging for work environments and for the morale of the gift officer. Experiencing prejudice or perceived racism from colleagues seemed more damaging to the gift officers than similar experiences with donors.

Chris and Melissa had pronounced experiences with prejudice donors. One of the donors felt as if Chris was not knowledgeable so he defaulted to asking one of Chris' White colleagues for answers. Chris recalled the situation by saying:

I definitely feel like I've had situations where individuals would defer to a colleague instead of me because I'm Black. So, they would assume whoever is with me is the more senior person. For instance, I was with, so I think I told you when I was the associate director and there was a White woman who was older than me and she was the assistant director. And so, someone came to our office one time to ask a question, because she and I shared an office, they came to the office to ask a question and I asked could I help them. And they said no, and they left. And they came back again and they looked right at the woman and asked her the question. And she says, "Oh I'm sorry actually he's the person that you want to talk to." Stuff like that has happened. I've had it where I've been at a meeting with a donor and I'll talk to a donor about something, and the donor really didn't react or really didn't respond well to it; but when my white coworker said something similar, they're like "oh, okay that's really interesting. I was just thinking about that." I don't let it bother me much, because ultimately it is not about me.

In the quote above, Chris reflected on how donors would feel as if his words were not credible due to his race. Even though Chris had experiences when donors did not value his word because of their perceived prejudice, these experiences did not seem to shake his morale as much as the experiences other participants had with their colleagues. In addition to the experience referenced above, Chris had another donor experience that was more seeped in prejudice language.

I remember having a phone call with a guy and him telling me how he didn't want to support the institution because he felt as though they were giving all the scholarship to the black students. He said they were just giving all the money to anyone who was Black. And it was a tough conversation and he didn't know I was Black. And so we had this whole conversation and I ended up turning him around, he did end up making a gift to support scholarships and at the end of the phone call I did tell him that I was Black. But that was one of the things that just stuck with me because it's like, wow I am going to have to deal with the thought processes of individuals who are different from mine whether or not it's because it's a lack of exposure, whether or not it's because of ignorance, or whether or not it really is because of racism and prejudice. It is my responsibility to provide them with an alternative perspective. There will be some people that I reach, and others that I have to point to another colleague.

Although Chris was faced with a donor who had prejudiced ideologies, he maintained his composure and was able to sway the donor. Since this experience happened early on in his

development career, it enabled him to acknowledge that sometimes he would encounter people who may or may espouse racist ideologies. Additionally, Chris insinuated that the anonymity that a phone conversation provides might lead donors to make comments that they would not make during an in-person interaction. As a development professional, he saw it as his responsibility to maintain professionalism, and utilize his colleagues to engage donors when necessary.

Melissa also had an experience with a donor that displayed his prejudice through a phone conversation.

There was an experience where I was on the phone with a donor. And I guess the donor couldn't tell from my voice that I was black, which is really an odd thing for a person to even insinuate. But he couldn't tell my race from my voice and so we're having this long conversation. The conversation was actually going really well. Then at the end he tells me White men are the only true smart people in the world and we got to really ensure that these White students that they get into the university. I didn't expect for him to say that, but he did.

She went on to discuss how she felt like this experience was not typical, but that it did occur. Again, just as with Chris, this experience did not affect her as deeply as the experiences other participants had with their colleagues. Nevertheless, prejudice and/or racism are a part of the experience for some African American frontline gift officers.

Data Analysis for Research Question #2

The second research question explored how African American frontline gift officers navigate PWIs. During the interviews, eight findings were identified. The findings were: 4) relationships are key to navigating professional relationships; 5) African American frontline gift officers should connect with the mission and find purpose in their work; 6) Invest in themselves; 7) Advocate for themselves and for others; 8) "Pick your battles"; 9) African American frontline gift officers practice code switching; and 10) Awareness of perception.

Finding # 4: relationships were key to navigating the professional arena. Several of the participants of the study felt as if relationships allowed them to maximize their professional lives. This finding is separated into four sub-findings that are specific relationship groups: 1) Sponsors, mentors, and coaches; 2) Colleagues and allies; and 3) Professional networks and organizations. Each type of relationship played a vital role in the professional success and self-care of the African American frontline gift officers involved in the study.

Sponsors, mentors, and coaches. The first sub-finding is that sponsors, mentors, and coaches were pivotal in the success of the participants' professional lives. Richard illustrated that sponsors, mentors, and coaches all have distinct roles. When asked if mentorship was important, Richard responded by saying:

It is critical. Mentors are critical. You will not get to my level as associate dean without coaching and mentoring. And it's not mentoring, that's not really what it is, it is sponsoring because those are different. Coaching we get, we understand. Coaching is providing guidance. It is investment in you, so generally that coach has to be in close working proximity, right? A mentor doesn't have to be in close proximity, but a mentor is a guide, again, that sort of shapes and gives you vision and helps with your decision making. Those are necessary, well I'll say that those are important, I think. What is necessary is a sponsor. A sponsor is a person that may do both, he may be a mentor and/or coach, but also provides the opportunity for you to step into a role, a job, or a new place. So, this is not a recommendation. This is not a recommender. This is a person who will say, I'm hiring you for my team. That's a sponsor, someone who invests at that level, or makes a position specifically for you. So, a president of the university could say, I'm going to open up a position for you, now you may not report to me, but I'm going to make this happen. I'm going to move things around and you're going to get this job because I want you in this position. That's a sponsor. So, I consider my current boss a sponsor for me, even though I'm very qualified, he will share with you that he wanted me here years ago, but still - I do consider him a sponsor. But that's what I'm saying, you need somebody to get to those levels; because he's at a VP level and he put me in this position. See what I'm saying? He had a choice, he could've hired anybody. He chose me. So, I think for African American development officers, all of those are critical. But finding a sponsor, finding someone with a budget who can make things happen in your career is very beneficial. Mentoring and coaching are good because it broadens your network and the folks that you know, but it may or may not solidify a job for you. A recommendation is just that. They're very good or whatever, but that person may find somebody else that's very good. But if the person sponsors you and says, I want you to be in this position and

I'm going to make it happen, that's who you need to find. And a sponsor, to be clear, can be any gender, any race.

Richard's quote clearly showed the difference between mentoring, coaching, and sponsoring. He stated that mentorship and coaching are beneficial, but that ultimately a sponsor is necessary for African American frontline gift officers. Mentors and coaches provide guidance and support, but they do not directly give opportunities that will directly advance careers. To further synthesize the quote, a coach has to have a close relationship with the subject, whereas a mentor can provide distant support and guidance. A sponsor does not necessarily provide guidance, but they provide opportunity in the form of a job or opportunity. This type of support or advocacy is necessary for African American frontline gift officers to as they progress to highest levels of their careers, according to Richard. For him, his vice president was a sponsor, and even though Richard was qualified, the opportunity to appoint him as associate dean still was at the discretion of the vice president. A sponsor has to have authority within an organization and an affinity for the person they choose to sponsor. Furthermore, Richard made a point to highlight that sponsors can be any race or gender. This is important as African American frontline gift officers visualize their careers because they must strategically collect mentors and coaches that they can connect to and trust, and sponsors that have the authority and capacity to create positions and opportunities for them.

Felicia, although she conceptualized it slightly differently, also illustrated the difference in sponsors (advocates) and mentors.

The very first job that I had come straight off networking. My line sister's brother works for the president and he directly walked me in to meet the president and, you know, 20 minutes later the president was like, oh yeah, I'll hire you to this job. And that guy was my first boss, and one of my mentors. He's the vice president of institutional advancement and runs a shop, a large shop down in Florida. We have stayed in contact for 20 years, and when I have questions, and thoughts, and ideas, he's the one I call. He's been a huge mentor of mine. I can talk to him about fundraising in general, not just

within Higher Ed, but he's very politically savvy, and so those questions I may feel uncomfortable asking other people, I can pick up the phone and comfortably ask him. My previous job, I got the phone call to apply for that job because of a mentor, actually someone that I interned for when I was in college and I kept in contact with her over the years, and still am very close to her. She runs a fundraising shop in Tennessee. Again, I can ask her for insight, ask questions, feel comfortable as I'm problem solving or figuring something out. So mentorship has been critically important. Every job that I've gotten has been because either a mentor recommended me for it or directly was hiring me into the role. And I know that I wouldn't be where I am in my career if it wasn't for the fact that people believed in me early on and invested in me. And I would also add not just mentors but advocates. They're a little different. You may have advocates who don't directly mentor you, but behind closed doors when they're at tables that you're not privy to they're saying your name. They're saying, hey let's give this opportunity to that person. So being mindful that you have both on your team is important

Felicia's quote showed the power of mentoring and the power of sponsorship/advocacy. Her situation was complex; a personal relationship led her to someone who would serve as an advocate for her to get her first job in higher education. In the first instance of advocacy in her quote, the person who advocated for her was not even directly connected to her; it was more of a favor for his sister. Thus, advocacy does not have to come from a direct connection, someone you may or may not know just has to be invested enough in you to provide you with an opportunity. From there, she met a string of mentors who sometimes also served as sponsors, hiring her for positions or introducing her directly to hiring managers. The quote showed that mentors can be sponsors, but as Felicia stated, the two are not necessarily interchangeable. She goes on to say that both are necessary for a successful career in the field. Mentorship provided her with insight, direction, a sounding board, and sponsorship provided her with opportunity and advancement.

Mentors were essential in providing the majority of the participants with guidance and insight about the field. Several of the participants credited their mentors with preparing them for their next roles within the field. Some of the interviewees even stated that their mentors

introduced them to the field of higher education development. Montana expressed that she had a mentor who guided her into fundraising because he knew her career end goal. She said,

So, when I worked at my graduate institution in a management associate position, I was actually, it was almost a shadowing position of the then athletic director Mr. G. He was really the person who encouraged me to think about development as a profession. And he encouraged me to do some work in my management associate position with development, so that was my first exposure to it. Also, his wife was the assistant vice president of development there, and so I interacted with her, you know, at some of the football games in the suites and other events that were taking place there. So, it was really the two of them, Mr. G and his wife, that encouraged me to go into the profession. And Mr. G really felt it was the fastest way to become an athletic director and felt that, you know, presidents, athletic directors, deans, what have you, really needed to have fundraising or development as part of their portfolio and that was the way they would become leaders at an institution of higher education.

Mr. G. introduced Montana to the field of fundraising and development. He identified her interest in being a leader in higher education and then pointed out the skillsets and positions that she needed in order to increase the likelihood of her achieving her dreams. This showed that for her, mentorship was an intimate activity in which her mentor understood her hopes, dreams, and aspirations; moreover, he wanted to be an integral part of her reaching her goals.

Montana expressed that Mr. G not only introduced her to higher education development and counseled her on where to pursue opportunity but he also made sure that she was prepared to be competitive for the opportunity. Montana said,

There's a lot of things that you just don't know if you don't know. And so, having a mentor that has been through certain things can really help guide you. I mean, I've had two mentors at my graduate institution. Mr. G., who is now the athletic director at an institution in the Midwest, was a phenomenal mentor. He exposed me to things that I had no clue about as it relates to college athletics. And so, I'm very grateful for him. When I was looking for my first job as a frontline gift officer. I assumed I was going to get it at the institution which I completed my graduate studies. He said, "No you need to go out and learn other institutions." And then when I finally got an interview for a job, he pulled together his senior management team and did a mock interview for me. He wanted to make sure I was prepared for my next step. Then there was a White woman named Ms. S. who is a great fundraiser as well. And she was the one that helped me get through my first solicitation like before I even left my graduate institution and got my first front line job. I couldn't get "the ask" out, it was too scary. Seeing her do it made me feel that it

was an easy thing to do and it made me a lot more confident. Having her in my corner was comforting.

Montana's quote showed that mentors are needed in order to help professionals navigate their careers. Mentors have a level of understanding and experience that benefits the mentee. In her experience, her mentor told her to venture beyond her previous institution in order to grow. Then, he took her preparation a step forward, used his resources, and conducted a mock interview to ensure that she would be competitive for her actual interview. Additionally, her other mentor helped walk her through her first solicitation before she even was a frontline gift officer. Her mentors saw her potential and her dreams, and took steps to help cultivate her. This quote revealed that mentors not only guide their mentees, but they also use their time and resources to prepare their mentees for their next steps.

Chris' experience with mentorship was equally as positive, even though he initially bucked the suggestions that his mentor gave him regarding the next steps for his career. Chris said,

So, I contacted one of my mentors that I had met at the previous institution, I told him that I wanted to make a move, he suggested that I look at this institution in the Northeast, and I said thank you, no thank you. He said, "No, seriously, it's a great place." He also said, "I would really like to work with you again." And so, he really tried to sell me on it, but I told him that I wasn't really interested in the opportunity. To be honest, I had never heard of the school before, and I really appreciated him considering me, but I really wanted to get back to the South. To move the story along a little bit, he called me back several other times and finally started to convince me. He told me that the head of the advancement department at the institution was a Black man, which is one of the things that really stuck out to me. And the other thing was— I told him that I wanted to move up to major gifts, and he said they could create a fundraising position for me on the annual side where I would be doing those face-to-face consultations. So, I was hired as the associate director of leadership annual giving with the premise that I would then have other development officers working underneath me, working on leadership annual gifts.

Chris' mentor was persistent in his attempts to get Chris to consider transitioning to this institution in the Northeast. Although he was reluctant, his mentor persevered and convinced him

to consider the opportunity. Chris' mentor operated as a guide, but he also advocated for him in order to secure him a job that would position him for a future in major gift fundraising. Like Montana's mentor, Chris' mentor set him up to achieve his goal of becoming a major gifts development officer. Mentors, as presented by the participants, had the uncanny ability to guide their mentees to positions that would position them for lateral movement.

Navigating the system may be intuitive for some but for others, it is learned through mentorship. When Melissa was asked if mentorship is indispensable, she answered with a resounding yes. She emphasized how mentors help you ascend in your career, and navigate the higher education landscape. She said,

Mentors have really helped me to move along the way. At my last job, I can say that I really had this opportunity to be around some amazing women who are diverse and they were able to continue to be support system now. They are always people that I know I can bounce ideas off or get their insight on an issue. So yes, it was very important in the beginning of my career to know how to navigate the system, but I would say even more so as you transition and move ahead it's even more important to have those people that you can really have as a sounding board and can give you true advice and won't sugarcoat things. They can help you navigate the waters. Mentorship is definitely an ongoing process. And it's also important that you not only receive mentorship, but that you also mentor the next generation. So, it's very important.

Melissa talked about how her mentors provided her with support and gave her the unadulterated truth when she solicited advice from them. She expressed that as you transition into positions with greater responsibility, the insight of mentors is particularly important. Lastly, she mentioned that it is the responsibility of the mentee to pay it forward by serving as a mentor for someone else. Mentorship is the process that continually gives and expands.

The valuable nature of mentors was a theme throughout the participants' narratives. They saw the relationships as being nurturing and fulfilling. Most participants stated that development professionals should be proactive in seeking these mentorship relationships. Melissa spoke about

how sometimes a professional should research individuals who are where they aspire to be, and then reach out to them. She said,

If you can, do some research and find people in the field whose careers you either admire or you know that you can reach out to. And being a development officer, part of your job is really this cold calling approach and getting to form relationships. So, it's nice for you to start cultivating your skills early by reaching out and attempting to get mentors. Call them up and say, "Hey, I really am looking to you and am hopeful that you can provide some advice or insight that can hopefully get me to where you are." This type of conversation helps you build your network. It is two-fold, so you're able to look for future job opportunities and also in terms of your philanthropy. You need to know the right people in order to move the needle in the right direction.

The core message in Melissa's quote is that it is necessary to step out and be proactive in identifying mentors and cultivating those relationships. She suggested cold calling prospective mentors and expressing a desire to receive guidance from them. This can be intimidating for some professionals, but they should, as Melissa did, compare it to the work that they do as development officers. Essentially, cold calling potential mentors is just preparation for reaching out to potential donors. This active approach to identifying mentors is one that Felicia also endorsed. She said, "Don't be passive about mentorship. Be active about mentorship and, you know, the worst thing someone can say is no. So just ask them." Development professionals should be active and seek out mentorship.

To conclude the sub-finding of mentorship, the participants agreed that mentorship is valuable to African American frontline gift officers, but it was also expressed. When asked what was the advice he would give burgeoning African American frontline gift officers, Chris said,

I can't stress the mentor part enough. That's really what it's been all about is having really strong and positive mentors, and advocates in my corner who believe in me and who will go out on a limb for me to say, "You know, this is the person you want." And those individuals are Black, White, Hispanic – I mean I have a ton of mentors. And I think that's really been the most helpful.

For him, mentorship is not about finding someone that looks like him, but it is about finding someone who believes in him, supports him, and advocates for him. Melissa took a similar stance as Chris, but nuanced her statement different. She said,

Because, as you know, there's not a lot of people that are reflective of you in the field, so as it relates to moving forward it's very important to, for one, be open to mentorship that may not look like you. And two, where there are mentors that look like you, reach out to them and find out how they navigated the process and what is necessary or what avenues they would recommend, as well as things they see as your Achilles' heel that can help you move forward. Because it's really, as you know, in development from all stand points it's about your network.

Just as Chris, she believes that African American gift officers should not be limited to solely African American mentors, but when they do find an African American mentor they should be sure to capitalize on the experience.

There are many benefits of receiving mentorship including guidance, support, and advocacy. A few participants of the study explained that African American development officers have to be proactive in identifying and cultivating relationships with potential mentors. The study revealed that African American frontline gift officers must be persistent and not allow their fear of rejection or pride interfere with them seeking out mentorship. When asked for the advice he would give newly practicing African American frontline gift officers, he said,

My only advice is to have as many mentors as possible, and don't be afraid to ask for help. I mean I think that that's really the biggest thing. I think that a lot of times again, especially as Black and brown people, we are extremely proud, we feel as though we should be able to handle all things on our own. But that's not always the case, and so often we don't ask for help or we don't try to get people to mentor us. And I think the more that we take advantage of individuals who want to help us, the better it is going to be for us and the better it'll be for the institution that we wish to serve. Don't let pride or fear of rejection stop you from asking for help.

To sum it up, the participants felt as if development professionals have to be intentional about seeking mentorship, be persistent, and not be too proud to ask for assistance.

Colleagues and allies. The second sub-finding was that colleagues and allies can provide emotional and career support. In the study, colleagues were generally equated to being coworkers, and allies were people who the participants trusted and came from various places around their respective institution and/or communities. Julissa discussed the role of allies by saying,

I think that you develop allies internally and externally. You have to have people you can vent to because you have to have a way to blow off steam. And so internally find your support. And the truth is they may not be African American. It is really about finding people who are willing to support you, be a champion for you, and mention your name even when you're not in the room. Allies can be people across the institution or people that you have personal connections to outside of work.

As seen in Julissa's quote, allies are people that she trusted enough to share the challenges she faced at her workplace. They were people with whom she could vent and share her frustrations. An important point that she illuminated is that allies do not have to be African American; they just have to be a person who is devoted to supporting and championing the African American frontline gift officer. Due to the collaborative nature of the field of development, allies can be found in administrative ranks as well as among the faculty. Since allies are oftentimes trusted with challenges associated with being an African American frontline gift officer, it might be beneficial that they are not a team-member. This is not to say that team-members cannot have rich, trusting relationships with their African American coworkers, but the relationship can look different as compared to allies.

Another participant, Purpose, also expressed that it was important to build relationships with colleagues on and off campus. She emphasized having African American allies that she could talk to about issues related to race and the work that she does. She said,

I think you have to build your own support network. As a person of color in this field, again there aren't many of us. When I go to CASE conferences I don't see a lot of us. I think the numbers are growing, but still, being able to build your own support network is

important And I'm not just talking about within your organization but outside of it to make sure that when issues pop up that are in fact related to race and the experience of being an African American fundraiser. You need to have people who you can talk to, who you can share experiences and try to share notes on how to navigate those issues. And I think also building the support if you are at a PWI, being able to build your support network on campus because beyond being a development officer of color on a predominately White campus, you are more likely than not one of the few African Americans on the campus to begin with. So being able to develop a strong network of colleagues across campus who can be a support system is important. I think it is important to have a network within the field of development and outside of the field. I think those relationships have been important to my success.

For Purpose, it was important to have African American colleagues to support her through racial issues that she may have encountered in her work. Having community and being able to seek advice on how to navigate racially charged situations were essential for Purpose's success. Additionally, she identified that usually there were very few Black professionals on campus, so her community can include people inside and outside of the development field. Other participants mentioned building community with colleagues across campus, but as Julissa illustrated, some of the participants did not believe that those people had to be African American. Having a community of trusted allies was important to some of the participants, as was having a solid relationship with their coworkers.

When asked about what she enjoys most about being an African American frontline gift officer, Julissa expressed that she loved the intellect of her peers and the experiencing of being a member a team. She said,

The one thing I love is that we don't surround ourselves with dumb people. People who come to higher education, most of us have some intellect. So, to be able to sit among peers, and sit among faculty, and administrators who are really smart people, you can come up with really great ideas - and some of them are great and some of them fall in our faces. But what I will say in terms of me, individually, the greatest experience is being a part of this team that understands my strengths and weaknesses. Having that connection and being a part of a team is beneficial for me.

Julissa spoke on how she enjoyed collaborating with her peers across the campus; as evident in her response, she understood the power that diversity had on the creation of innovative ideas. Additionally, she went on to say that the best part of her experience was being a member of a team that understood her strengths and weaknesses. The relationships that she had with her teammates showed that there was a level of camaraderie and intimacy. Earlier Julissa spoke on the value of allies, but she seemed to equally value teammates who shared a close relationship with her.

Mary also spoke about establishing fulfilling relationships with her colleagues over the course of her career. She said,

I have over the course of my career established and maintained really good relationships with my colleagues. I think that is really important. We spend so much of our lives at work and nobody wants to work with an ass, you know? We just spend so much time here that it just makes sense for us to have good relationships. I think it just behooves all of us to be on our best behavior because we have to spend a lot of time with each other.

Mary focused on building good relationships with her colleagues due to the amount of time they spend together at the job. For Mary, she enjoyed having a peaceful work environment; that peace could not be maintained if the relationship was strained.

Maintaining a peaceful atmosphere was not the only reason that the participants in the study sought positive relationships with their colleagues. For Tiffany, relationships with her colleagues helped her to think through different obstacles, and provided her with professional support. She illustrated this by saying,

My teammates are sounding boards for me. I regularly go into my boss' office, or to the assistant dean's office and have conversations like, listen I'm thinking this, what do you think? And that's really important. I feel like if I didn't have that type of support structure and that team in place, I wouldn't be successful. I wouldn't want to work somewhere where I was the only development officer. I like having a team to work through issues and bounce ideas off of.

Vick also talked about how team members and campus colleagues can help to improve how one's ideas and approaches to development work. He said,

It is good for us to, you know, be around the table and share ideas and talk about experiences. And also, we have, you know, different educational backgrounds and perspectives so it really adds value. It is important to have those relationships on campus, with your colleagues, being able to have those allies that you're able to pick their brain. And also, as you're working with various alums, or you're trying to find ways to engage, ways to bring prospective donor back to campus, that's where you kind of get creative. But you can't do that unless you have good relationships with your colleagues in your office and across campus that will help you with that.

Again, the theme of collaborating with colleagues across campus in order to improve the quality of donor engagement is seen. Vick believed relationships that spanned his office and the university were beneficial in creating innovative donor engagement practices. Relationships with colleagues and allies can be supportive professionally and personally for an African American frontline gift officer.

Professional organizations. The last sub-finding is that professional organizations can provide support to African American frontline gift officers in the form of mentorship, network enlargement, and professional development. The organizations the participants referenced included the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), and their campus organizations for African American or diverse populations.

Julissa gave an in-depth explanation of how her local chapter of AFP helped her to connect with a mentor who greatly impacted her career. She also discussed how AFP enlarged her network by connecting her with other fundraising professionals, and how it provided her with professional development. She said,

When I first got to my current job, again, like I said earlier, I was the only African-American, I had to figure out how to navigate this system here. So, what helped me is AFP, which is the Association for Fundraising of Professionals. It was one way in which

I was able to build my chops up fairly quickly. So, the particular AFP chapter that I connected with, because there's several chapters in the area, they have what's called an AFP diversity fellow. So, it's a program for minorities who are diversity development officers of all kinds, and you have to apply for this fellowship. And what the fellowship did was it paired people who had been in the industry for 2 years or less, and they pair you with a development officer who has been in the industry for over 6 years. I got accepted into the program and was paired with a mentor. This was someone who had been in the industry for over 15 years, and she started her own fundraising consulting firm. And so, I got 2 different perspectives, one from her being a fundraising professional, and the other from her experience in consulting. And so, for a year she helped me to grow and work through the 3 things that I thought were my top weaknesses. She would help me reflect on what I could do differently. But also as a result of that being a part of AFP that allowed me the opportunity to see a larger scope of things and to network, because if nothing else, my benefit of AFP is that every month they're bringing in foundations, or bringing in corporations, to talk about different types of fundraising. Plus, I had the chance to mingle with other professionals, many of who weren't in higher education.

Julissa capitalized on AFP's diversity fellows program in order to get connected with a mentor.

Since she was the only African American frontline gift officer at her institution, she felt isolated, and AFP provided an outlet for her to connect with others. Julissa's mentor through the diversity fellowship provided her with much needed guidance and companionship. Her mentor even met with her to work through what Julissa identified as her own weaknesses. Additionally, she saw the value in connecting with other fundraising professionals and learning from their perspectives. AFP also provided her with professional development experiences; they brought in people from various industries to discuss fundraising methods and tools. She found support and community in the form of her mentor as a result of her involvement in AFP.

Felicia talked about how AFP, CASE, and the Thurgood Marshall Society were all organizations that she would recommend for young African American frontline gift officers. She spoke about how they all provided professional development, but for her, the Thurgood Marshall Society was the most beneficial.

There are several organizations that provide professional development: AFP which is the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and CASE, which is specific to Higher Ed.

Both of those organizations enable us to go to workshops, and to make connections and relationships with colleagues at other institutions. And then I know when I first started in Higher Ed, the Thurgood Marshall Society had a mentoring, a pairing or mentoring for new fundraisers at their institutions. So that gave me an opportunity to connect with a seasoned development professional, and he was a male of color, a seasoned male of color. The insight that he gave me was invaluable, and I wouldn't have been able to learn it from a book or workshop. He had years of experience. So, taking advantage of those mentorship opportunities is important. Some CASE and AFP chapters may or may not have those opportunities, so you have to find them. So, for me the opportunity came from the Thurgood Marshall Society. I would encourage young gift officers to not only get involved with the ethnic groups like the Black professionals within AFP, or the diverse fundraising officers within CASE, but to be also very proactive about getting involved in the majority groups as well.

The mentorship piece was the main component of organizational involvement that Felicia highlighted. Being a member of the Thurgood Marshall Society gave her the opportunity to be mentored by an expert within the field. She acknowledged that sometimes, insight gained through personal interactions exceeds knowledge gained through presentations and books. Felicia mentioned that young gift officers should not just get involved with organizations that are exclusively for African Americans or minorities but that they should also get involved with groups for development officers in general. Involvement with diverse and non-diverse organizations enables the gift officers to tap into a variety of networks and to experience a range of perspectives.

When asked about what mechanisms enable African American frontline gift officers to be successful, Vick mentioned CASE. He said,

I know CASE has an African American group or minority group; I don't know the exact name. But they have a diverse kind of group of development officers. There are other national organizations as well, that you can find. These organizations host conferences that you can go to where you can meet other diverse development officers that look like you, and you can kind of continue having dialogues where you share best practices as well.

Vick stated that CASE has a group specifically for African Americans where they can be connected to each other and supported by one another. Additionally, he mentioned that

conferences hosted by national organizations can provide platforms for African American development officers to connect and to have a conversation about best practices within the field.

Tiffany talked about leveraging professional networks to connect with others within the field.

She said,

In order to connect with others in the field, use organizations like AFP, the association of fundraising professionals, or professional conferences, which I go to, or just by reaching out one on one to people. I mean I have coffee with other development officers on an ongoing basis just to touch base, catch up on everything, and see what they're up to. I mean, definitely talk - maintain that network of people and continue to talk to them because there will be a lot of shared experiences, and there will be experiences that are not shared, there will be things that you can learn from talking with them and just having that sense of community, I think, will help keep you grounded.

Tiffany mentioned that connecting with others is not always about shared experiences; sometimes development officers do not need to have shared experiences, but they need the sense of community that comes from connecting to others. Having a sense of community can help development officers who are feeling isolated and it also gives them a perceived safe space to discuss their experiences.

Finding #5: connect to the mission in order to persist. Several of the participants spoke about how important it was for them to connect with the mission of their organization in order to persist in their careers. They spoke about how they used their connection to the organizational mission to keep them focused, and to help them overcome challenges that they faced. Some of the participants stated that they chose their current job partly because of the connection they felt to the mission and the impact that the organization made. Montana said,

I would say, first and foremost, I've always been very thoughtful about the organizations that I've worked for. If I don't believe 110% in the mission of the organization, I won't even apply for the job. That gives me kind of a very tight connection to the organizations that I work for. I really feel strongly that I have to work with organizations that I believe in. When you work as a development officer for an organization you believe in, it's invigorating to be able to solicit money on the organization's behalf, to be able to close gifts. It gives you the drive, the momentum, the interest, the persistence, tenacity, everything. But, again, you have to really feel aligned with the institution's mission and

vision. And I think far too often, this is not limited to African Americans, I mean, development-wide it doesn't matter your race, I think far too many people take development jobs without having their interests aligned with the organization. Since there isn't that alignment, these people are usually not as successful.

Montana spoke about how she only chose jobs that had a mission aligned with her beliefs. She credited her success to the alignment that she has had with the organizations that have employed her. Additionally, she stated that being aligned with organizational values led to greater drive, momentum, interest, and persistence in African American development officers. Montana went as far as to state that she believed the lack of alignment hindered frontline gift officers from being successful in their roles. For her, having a connection to the mission of the organization seemed to solidify the commitment she had to doing her best work in development and fundraising.

For some of the participants, connecting to the mission of their organizations helped to raise their morale and help them overcome the challenges that they faced in the field. When asked about how she overcomes challenges in the workplace, Tiffany spoke openly about how having a connection to her organization allowed her to refocus after particularly difficult days. She said,

So, when I'm feeling really kind of down about things and frustrated, bumping my head up against challenges, I try to take time out of my day to connect myself back to the mission. When I was at my former job, it meant going to the student center, interacting with some of those students, catching up with them. I get a chance to ask them questions like, what program are you in? Who's your advisor again? How's that going? Where are you interning this summer? Having some of those connections and talking to them students really motivates me. Now I go over to our ethnic centers. I always get more of a pep in my step after I go there because I can see the students, I can physically be in the space. I can see what I'm working toward.

Tiffany's quote showed just how beneficial it was for her to connect with the mission of her as well as visiting with the people that her work was affecting. Meeting with the students that her work affected gave her purpose; it motivated her to overcome the challenges she faced. For her,

being connected to the mission and engaged with the students is imperative for her persistence.

To take it a step further, Tiffany believed that physically being able to see the impact of the work she does impacts her motivation.

For Tiffany, connecting back to the mission of her organization was not just a contributing factor to her persistence as a frontline gift officer but it was a component of what she considered to be her success metrics. When questioned about what she considers to be success as a frontline gift officer she said,

There's so many layers to it, too. I mean first of all, getting big checks, that's like a rush. It's like oh my goodness I got this \$250,000 check, or I just closed a big gift. You very much feel happy about that and because you know all the work that goes into that. Or even just with my unit's fundraising dinner, the fact that we had one of our best years ever for this type of event and, you know, we haven't even gotten all the gifts in from the event yet - very much makes you feel like, I'm getting the money in. But I think that more than that, it's really feeling a sense of your work directly impacting the mission of whatever program or entity that you're connected with. So, for instance, with this unit's dinner, the fact that we had an alum speak at the program who started out in our program and now she's finishing off her graduate degree, I mean that really sends a message to me that the work that I'm doing is important and that it matters. It also contextualizes that I am not just getting the check for the sake of just getting a check; I'm getting it to invest in students like Samantha. So that is really, really important; feeling that connection back to the mission.

As evidenced by Tiffany's quote, she viewed success as being equally about meeting the fundraising metrics established by her unit and seeing the tangible impact of her work on her unit. She began by speaking about the rush associated with closing a substantial gift, but then ventured into talking about how seeing the impact of her fundraising work fulfilled her and gave her a sense of return on her investment in the work.

For another participant in the study, Julissa, connecting back to the mission helped to fuel her persistence because she viewed the mission of her organization as being her ministry. When she committed to being a fundraiser for current and former units, she took it on as ministry and

part of her purpose. When asked what she enjoyed about being a frontline gift officer, her response was:

For me, I have a save-the-world personality. I love kumbaya moments. I love uniting and connecting people. I feel like it is a part of my purpose to raise hope; so, my tagline is that I am a hope-raiser. Whether it is with a {religious} ministry, or the work that I do here, I am always raising hope. And so I'm a person who is like, I may not be able to cure AIDS, but I can raise money for the researcher who is doing that work, and if they can find a cure for a disease like that or diabetes or, multiple sclerosis, or any other disease, I feel I am doing my part. So, I am always trying to raise hope. That is why it is important for me to believe in the organizations that I work for and their missions.

Julissa viewed her work as being a part of her ministry and being intricately intertwined with her overarching sense of purpose. She conceptualized her role as not only a fundraiser, or a friend-raiser, but also as a hope-raiser. In her interview, Julissa disclosed that she was a Christian. Many Christians view the definition of hope as being something earnestly expected or anticipated. For her, if she raised money for a professor who was conducting research to find a cure for cancer, she viewed herself as raising an expectation for a cure for cancer. This meant that she had no choice but to have a connection with the organization for which she fundraised.

Finding #6: invest in themselves. Several of the participants in the study expressed that investing in themselves helped them to be successful in their roles as frontline gift officers.

Within this finding three themes emerged: Development officers should invest in themselves by:

1) Having confidence, 2) Goal setting, and 3) Participating in professional development.

Having confidence was a theme that emanated from the interviews. Several of the participants spoke about how having confidence helped them to navigate being at a PWI. They spoke about how they may have been the only black person in the room, but they had to remind themselves that they earned the right to be in the room. When asked how she navigated being the one of the few Black development officers at her institution, Julissa said:

I just have to get over myself because I had to, again, make up in my own mind that one, if I'm in this place I'm not here because they gave it to me. I am here because I earned it and that I have a right to be at the table. And that, I am the expert in my area. And I think the thing that has shifted for me is that I don't allow myself to become belittled in my own mind. I refuse to have that whole grasshopper mentality, in that I can meet with a world renowned professor who has a Nobel Peace prize in XYZ, but he doesn't know foundation work the way I know foundation work. And so, I situate myself and position myself in such a way that I am the expert in what I am an expert in. I realized that the reason I am sitting at the table is because you need my expertise. And so, I don't allow people to diminish that part of me anymore.

Julissa stated that she had to coach herself into knowing that she earned her seat at the table. She talked about how she had to win the battle in her mind and stop mentally belittling herself. In a sense, she had to conquer imposter syndrome. Regardless of accomplishments of the people whom she met or worked with, she had to recognize that they needed her fundraising expertise. Her response to the question focused more on her internal condition and less on other people or her environment. She had to recognize and embrace her worth; after she was able to exude more confidence.

Another participant, Charles, spoke about how a lack confidence made meeting with wealthy donor prospects intimidating.

Honestly man, when I go out and do my job, and I'm going out and asking for this big time money from partners, stakeholders, or CFOs of these companies, I rarely see a lot of Black people. And so, I know that when I'm in these positions at these different places, I know that a lot of times they may know me because I have a background and my name might be recognizable here in the city. But I think if you don't have that confidence in being sure of yourself, it can be a pretty intimidating set up. It can be intimidating going somewhere and asking for large amounts of money from people you don't know and who don't look like you. The exception is when I'm going out and seeking some of our former football or basketball players that I also have to build relationships. But yeah, honestly, it can be intimidating. I can totally see how somebody can be intimidated and not sure of themselves.

In his quote, Charles stated that oftentimes the donor prospects are of a different race, which can add additional pressure on the gift officer. This combination of pressure and the lack of

confidence is not beneficial for the gift officer. It is important that gift officers be assured of their skillset which allows them to be more confident in their work.

A component of being confident in one's work is trusting one's self. Chris spoke about how it is pivotal for frontline gift officers to trust themselves. He discussed trusting oneself when asked about advice she would give burgeoning frontline gift officers. His response was:

And the only thing I would say different, you know for African American development officers in particular, it's just to trust yourself. I think because we are so few, sometimes it's hard for us to know to feel confident that we're doing the right thing. I think that we have to tune out all the things that we may feeling, you know, to be going on outside of us, whether or not we feel like equals, our doubt in our abilities, or we feel like we're getting heat from here or there, it's just at the end of the day trust yourself and know that the old saying is probably true, if you got the job then you were better than the others who applied for it.

Chris' quote clarified that the lack of self-confidence can sometimes come for African American frontline gift officers because they are underrepresented in the field. He mentioned that African American gift officers must tune out negative feelings and focus on trusting themselves. They must remind themselves that they were hired for the job because they were qualified and well suited for their positions. The reoccurring statement in several quotes is that negative feelings and ideas will manifest, but the gift officers have to remain rooted in their ability and they have to trust themselves.

The next theme within the finding of investing in yourself was to set goals. A few of the participants spoke about goal setting and how African American frontline gift officers should be consistently thinking about how to get to the next level of their careers. A few participants mentioned that African American development officers should use their supervisors and mentors to envision what their careers can look like. Moreover, they should be actively acquiring the skillsets necessary to get to the next level of their careers.

One of the participants of the study, Richard, talked about how setting goals and then shadowing the people who had his “dream jobs” helped him to decide how to move forward in his career. He said,

{ In my past life, I decided that I wanted to be an executive in the industry that I was in. } So, I intentionally began paying attention to what the executive was doing, and what that entailed. If I don't have my next position in mind, or if I am not thinking about it, I'm missing opportunities, right? So, I've been working with this executive director for 4 or 5 years and if I would not have been paying attention I would have missed out on observing what that experience was like. But I realized that I didn't want to be that because that's running a business. It is wonderful and fine to feed the homeless and do whatever, but as an executive director you have to make payroll every 2 weeks. I didn't want to do that. So, I'm in higher education now, of course, fundraising - decent career. I'm thinking I want to be a vice-president for development at an institution, right? So that's where my mind is. And now being in the role that I am right now and working for a vice president of an institution, I'm actually thinking twice about that. I haven't pulled that back yet, but I'm just like, again, is that really what I want to spend my time doing?

Richard started early in his career contemplating his next professional steps and this enabled him to maximize his time with his supervisors. In his previous career, shadowing his supervisor showed him that he did not actually want to be an executive director of a non-profit organization. Now, in higher education, he realized that he might not want to be a vice president after observing his supervisor's commitments and responsibilities. For him, investing in his career entailed thinking ahead and maximizing his current opportunities to shadow the people in his dream jobs. Being proactive about career planning enables African American gift officers to best use their times in their current positions, while also observing the people who are currently in their dream positions. Having the opportunity to observe others will allow them to be critical and assess whether they actually want to move in the direction of their dream job or if they need to adjust their plans.

Tiffany is another participant who spoke about goal setting. When asked what advice she would give to burgeoning frontline gift officers, she spoke candidly about gift officers creating a career plan by leveraging their supervisors' knowledge of the field. She said,

Don't be afraid to talk with your boss about what your future could look like, because one of your boss' roles is supposed to be to help you to get to the next step in your career - whatever that could be. And if you don't know what your next step is, you can have that conversation still and say I don't know what my next step is. What do you think? Can you help me identify what my next step could be? Because we need more of us to rise up through the ranks, and to start running our own shops. We need to make sure that we're rising up and, you know, they have to - I mean we need to not be scared to ask for that guidance, and that mentorship, and that help that we'll need to get to the next level of whatever is in store for us.

Tiffany expressed that she believes one of the many roles of a supervisor is to help the people that they supervise do career planning. She encouraged frontline gift officers to consult with their supervisors and seek out career guidance. They should ask their supervisors questions even if they are unsure about the direction their career is heading. Sometimes the supervisors will be able to provide feedback regarding the gift officers' strengths, weaknesses, and achievements; having this type of outside inside can be beneficial for the career planning process. Tiffany felt that African American frontline gift officers should be proactive because there is a need for more of them in senior level leadership positions within development offices. Additionally, when frontline gift officers know what they want to do moving forward, they can request assistance in the form of advocacy, mentorship, etc. This assistance can propel them to the next level.

Julissa had a similar experience as Richard in terms of career planning. The exception was that she spoke more on how her supervisor was proactive in cultivating a mentality centered on goal setting. She spoke on the value of goal setting after she was asked about how she has navigated job transitions. She said,

The success I experiences also speaks to my supervisor at the time who I really appreciated and had great respect for him. My second day on the job he gave me a book called “What got you here will get you there.” And so, he had already set the culture for knowing it was an interim position and {he said} “Eventually I know you’re going to move out of this department, don’t know when, don’t how you’re going to do that, but let me already set your mind that, you know, this position is not your end result.” And so always thinking and talking about your next steps. Even if you don’t know what is your next step, {always have an idea} where you think you may want to be.

Julissa’s supervisor was aware that Julissa was serving in an interim capacity and he wanted to prepare her for her next career move. He equipped her with a professional development book and helped her to start the goal setting process. She credited some of her success to his guidance.

This shows that a supervisor’s role can extend beyond just guiding a gift officer in his/her current position, to providing a framework for how the gift officer can get to positions yet to come.

The final theme within this finding is that African American frontline gift officers should invest in themselves through professional development. For some of the participants of the study, professional development included attending conferences, networking, reading about the field, etc. Professional development as a theme was derived from participant quotes that centered on furthering their career, improving their craft, and/or growing professionally.

Professional development was a theme that some of the participants spoke about with passion. They discussed how African American development professionals should master their craft and have a high level of credibility. Purpose talked how becoming an expert in the field and exhibiting credibility is aided by professional development. She said,

{One piece of advice} I would say is for African American fundraisers to become an expert in all the ways that you can in this field because I think - just like any other profession- I think we always have that burden to carry of being able to demonstrate that we know what we’re doing, that we are competent, and that we are – just making sure we are on top of our game with the practices. Credibility is really important in this field, in development, whether you’re working with faculty or with donors. Credibility is hugely important. And that’s for everybody but I think when you’re a person of color you have to have that added layer of needing to show, demonstrate credibility. So, becoming an expert in all the ways that you can is really important.

Purpose's statement highlights her perception that African American frontline gift officers have to become experts in their field because they are not viewed as capable or knowledgeable as their Caucasian peers. She believed that African Americans have to "go the extra mile" in terms of proving their ability and competence. Moreover, Purpose spoke about how credibility is important within the field, and the burden of demonstrating credibility is increased for African Americans. Thus, her desire to excel and demonstrate her credibility led her to pursue professional development. How others perceived her drove her to pursue excellence in her work. The assumption is that if African Americans operate excellently and are masters at their craft, then they will have greater opportunities within the field.

Some of the participants spoke about professional development from multiple standpoints; they mentioned expanding professional networks, reading fundraising articles, and attending conferences. Richard, for example, said,

{Some advice that I can give is to} Think ahead, think about your time. Read everything. Now actually this advice is good for the intentional person as well. Read every book you can, {fundraising} publications, Chronicle of Philanthropy. Know this industry, because it is an industry. Learn as much about fundraising at all levels. I've been fortunate, not everybody has a career like I have, that I have {been able to do different types of fundraising}- the only fundraising I have never done is medical fundraising. {I have done} Higher education {fundraising}, I've done social services {fundraising}, I've done consulting, I've done all that, special events, corporate {relations}, I've been a grant writer, {worked on} major gifts, all that. I suggest learning about how to fundraise for each one. So, learn all you can, read everything, create a network.

Richard viewed professional development as a multi-faceted endeavor that involves reading, learning, practicing, and networking. He sees the value in learning about the industry from different vantage points. Having an understanding of the various types of fundraising will help frontline gift officers be more effective and collaborative in their work.

Other participants, such as Melissa, approached professional development from a more interpersonal viewpoint. She connected becoming a better professional and “working twice as hard” to increasing one’s professional network. When asked about the advice she would give to burgeoning African American frontline gift officers, she defaulted to discussing how to expand their network. She said,

I hate to use the adage my parents used to use which is you have to be twice as good, but I would say that you have to do the double work or reach out to even more people because it’s going to be even more apparent for you to need to build a network because there is such a dearth of representation. It {just} isn’t naturally there. You’re not naturally going to find people who look like you so you have to get out of the comfort zone and accept {that} your mentors may not be reflective of you. But then you must also seek out the ones that are {reflective of your identities} and hopefully find mentors that can support you.

For Melissa, professional development is about building a strong professional network and being mentored by people within the field. She advised that development officers new to the field step out of their comfort zone and accept that all of their mentors and advocates may not share their same identities. This is important especially considering the field of development and fundraising is usually regarded as a field saturated with White women but led by White men, as a later quote will illustrate. Melissa adds another layer by saying that the African American frontline gift officers should also actively seek out people that do indeed share their identities. The point she seems to be making is that mentors with different identities and perspectives should be welcomed. Approaching professional development from an interpersonal standpoint is beneficial since learning can occur within the context of relationship especially since fundraising is a professional based on relationships and emotional intelligence. Building relationships with mentors and hearing their experiences and trajectories can help a gift officer better understand his/her own experiences. Additionally, having mentors that can provide them with support, advice, and opportunity will help the gift officer to grow professionally.

Julissa also spoke about professional development in the form of expanding her sphere of influence through networking. She said,

One thing I've learned and the thing that has shifted me to where I am now is to broaden my influence outside of that home in that department, outside of my unit as a whole. And so, this is the one point of advice that another associate vice president gave to me when I met with her, and her stance was if you want to have longevity here at this university, figure out what your colleagues do and the people that influence what you do and start meeting with them. And it's even better to meet with them outside of the department. So, know the people who are internal within development, but also know who else influences your work. So that may be an accountant, it may be a particular professor, or it may be a research dean, so broaden how you see your job, and who touches your work, or influences your success. And so now I am doing that in aggressive ways and it has been phenomenal.

Julissa expressed that she realized she needed to figure out the key players within and outside of her office. She was advised to have conversations with the people who influence her work and to build relationships with them in order to secure her future with the institution. Felicia also expressed the value of building relationships with internal constituents.

Also, the internal relationship development, in my current role, I definitely see value in how our team and our division is positioned in the eyes of other leaders. And since I know that it's something valued, it's a form of success for me when one of our educational colleagues is satisfied {with our work}. So, when a Michael Carter or a Deitrick Miles, one of our program leads, when they speak well of the support our team has provided, {for example} how we chauffeured the government grant process. Yes, hopefully we'll get the money to run the program, but, to me, what's also success is that I have a richer relationship with Deitrick Miles now, and he's going to speak well of me to our vice-president and that positions me well in the eyes of leadership.

Again, Felicia like Melissa, views her relationships with people who influence her work as being valuable. For her, career longevity was determined in part by the way she navigated those relationships. To contextualize those relationship, the people who influence the work of frontline gift officers are clients, and building those relationships will help the development officer to improve their work approach and output.

African American frontline gift officers should invest in themselves through having confidence, goal setting, and participating in professional development. Although the approach to investing in themselves differed, the majority of the participants saw the need to invest in themselves in order to help them more effectively navigate their respective PWIs. They believed that the gift officer had to possess confidence, be an expert in the field, set goals and actively career plan, and participate in professional development in the form of building professional networks, reading fundraising publications, attending conferences, etc.

Finding #7: advocate for themselves and others. The next finding is that African American frontline gift officers have to advocate for themselves and for others to have a “seat at the table” and for their voices to be considered. Additionally, advocacy was also considered as providing connections and opportunities for those who may need them, i.e. students and alumni. This finding is derived from participant quotes that reference fighting or advocating for themselves and for others. When the participants spoke about advocacy they were not solely referring to development issues, but they oftentimes were talking about the Black experience at PWIs or in society generally.

Advocacy was important for the participants in the study since they were oftentimes isolated at their PWIs. Julissa explained that she had to voice her concern about being one of the few African Americans to the diversity committee at her institution. She said,

I am definitely an advocate and very vocal. I co-chair a diversity and inclusion committee for the department. And so, one of the things I brought up, very vocally, was that I did not feel comfortable being the only {African American woman}, and I should not be the only at this institution. And so, I made the case for it and pushed human resources and pushed, you know, those who did the recruitment and we changed policies on how we did that. So, I had an opportunity to work with a committee and we reevaluated our hiring processes. We evaluated how we go about recruiting development officers, we went about evaluating where we place our ads and all of those things. We looked at when we hire firms for the higher{senior level} positions, are there any minorities even being considered and where are they looking? And so, as a result of that, I will say, we are in a

much better state 2 ½ years later, and now one of our AVPs is an African-American male. I don't know if that would have happened if we had not pushed the envelope and that our leadership at the time wouldn't be open to exploring that.

Julissa believed advocacy was necessary to not only help diversify the field, but to also change the culture of the university around hiring practices. Advocacy gave her power to help reevaluate the university hiring practices and eventually change the way the university marketing positions and vetted candidates. Being one of the only African American frontline gift officers at her institution, gave her the capital to speak and initiate change. African American frontline gift officers should not be afraid to address issues that they observe at their institutions. Oftentimes, leadership teams may not have even noticed issues that diverse professionals may be facing; thus, it is important for those diverse professionals to voice their experiences in the appropriate settings through established channels.

Another component of advocacy is advocating for one's own personal interests. In higher education, African Americans have to advocate for themselves when it comes to promotion opportunities, professional development, etc. Tiffany spoke about how African Americans and women need to advocate for themselves in order to get the opportunities they deserve. Her thoughts were:

I mean I think that, more so than just for regular development officers, Black development, young professionals need to find ways to rise up the ranks and elbow our way to the table. Like we really do. I was just meeting with someone for coffee who was interested in learning about opportunities in my school, I don't think that conversation is going to go anywhere. But, you know, she was saying she had all this different experience. She wasn't Black. She had all this different experience and she was told, when looking for jobs here she was told, oh you don't really have fundraising experience. I was like that is BS, you have a lot of fundraising experience and directly applicable experience. So, we need to make sure that we're advocating for ourselves, and being very, very confident. This is something that affects women usually more than men. I'm not sure about the research in terms of Black men and women or whatever. But in terms of women, we're not so great for advocating for our interests. We're not so great at marketing ourselves. We can market the hell out of everything else, but not necessarily ourselves, not necessarily advocating for that raise, or that promotion. Women are

notorious for doing this, and there have been studies that have shown that women - we need to feel that, when looking at a job description for a job that we want, we need to feel like we qualify for 100% of the qualifications, whereas men are like, well I can probably learn this and they'll still apply. So, we need to have that confidence and be able to pursue those opportunities aggressively, but not so aggressive as to scare off the hiring manager with our Blackness.

This quote elaborates on how women and people of color fail to advocate for themselves. Tiffany mentioned that the lack of self-advocacy could be linked to gender, but she made sure to illustrate that self-advocacy is crucial for people of color and women. A notable point in the quote is that African Americans have to learn to advocate for themselves and display confidence while not being too Black or too aggressive with their Blackness. This correlates to a later finding about the perceptions of African American frontline gift officers.

The participants also talked about advocating for innovative methods of cultivating diverse donors. Tiffany, specifically talked about how universities make senseless mistakes due to the lack of cultural competency when it comes to cultivating people of color.

Listen, development as a whole is owned by White women. But then when you get into the upper leadership it's owned by White men. And I think that that's a huge missed opportunity because, yes, right now there's a huge wealth differential between White families and families of color in this country. There just is. But demographics are changing and the future is going to be different. And increasingly when universities are trying to court high level donors of color, they make just the most foolish mistakes because they just don't even know, they don't even know how to talk to these donors. I mean it still drives me nuts the way that the university has been going after one donor, in particular, who lives in my city. I made sure that I elbowed, I had to elbow our school's way to the table. They were not even going to include our school in this stuff until I elbowed my way in, started putting in requests and interacting with this lady then they were like wait, wait, wait what's going on? That's our prospect. But they had no idea how to court her. And they don't want to consult with us, and they don't want to partner with us. And so, because we are the people of color, give us a seat at the table. We always have to fight for that seat at the table. If we had more people in the upper echelons {of leadership} who had different backgrounds they would think differently and they would be like, wait a minute we really need to come up with a different strategy for these types of donors. And until then it's just going to be a continuous battle.

Her quote spoke to the fact that African American development officers have to advocate for diverse practices when it comes to cultivating and soliciting donors of color. She used language such as “I had to elbow my way to the table,” in order to communicate the urgency in which development officers must use in order allow their voices to be heard. Additionally, her quote shows the need for people of color in senior level administrative positions; from her perspective, she won a temporary battle, but without an advocate in upper level administration, she will likely be continuously fighting that battle.

Vick discussed how White development officers have to take a moment to “walk in the shoes” of diverse alumni and students in order to be enlightened about the experience. He alluded to the fact that oftentimes those enlightening moments for White development officers came because of his advocacy for alums and students of color.

I think it's really more of sharing your different experience, different stories, and also having them kind of join me on a couple visits, you know? Like come join me and kind of walk in our shoes in and listen to reasons why. I know some of our African American alums didn't have the same experience, and then also let's take a look at, let's talk to our current students right now as well that are Black and see how they feel about one, not really seeing a lot of the same faces on campus when it comes to professors, staff..... And I've done that, and I think the light bulb has gone off for a few of my colleagues, and they understand like oh, okay I get it. I understand. So, I think it's more about, again, open communication, providing examples, and providing opportunities for them kind of walk in the shoes to fully understand the importance.

This type of advocacy that Vick spoke of was not about fighting for a space at the table, but it was about opening up the space for the voices of marginalized students and alums to be heard.

Advocacy took many different forms in the participant interviews. Another form of advocacy was advocacy through opportunity. For Charles, his advocacy was about connecting current African American student athletes with opportunities that could further their lives and careers.

So, I kind of gravitate toward like the football and basketball team, because I see those numbers are so just disproportionately Black that I get a chance to see and be around them and serve as a mentor and build relationships with these young dudes, and like provide wisdom and knowledge once we connect have relationships with these guys. They know they have my information and my cell phone. They can text me. They'll ultimately be looking for jobs and looking for opportunities because once that cheering stops, a lot of those opportunities just kind of dry up. But someone like me who is in development, my day it consists of connecting with decision makers and people that are high net worth individuals who if they don't have positions, they know someone that may have a position. So, the young guys that come after me I get a chance to plug them in, connect them with someone over at Proctor & Gamble. I can connect with them people over at a law firm. I can connect them with people over in graduate schools to be able to try and work on them getting their advanced degrees. So that is, as many dudes as I can help that reach out to me, that I can build these relationships with, that is like the most fulfilling, to me, it's really the most important part of my job – helping these dudes.

Richard's fulfillment came from connecting the Black student athletes to opportunities that could positively shape their future trajectories. For him, the advocacy was working to get them in the door of the law profession, business world, or graduate school. His passion for the field was intensified since he was able to give back to a marginalized population on his campus.

Advocacy can take many forms, and for African American frontline gift officers, that advocacy extends to themselves, other professions, students, alums, and even African Americans in mainstream society. Chris, for instance, learned that his experiences allowed for him to advocate outside the walls of higher education as well as within.

I've been able to attend workshops on how do we eradicate racism, how do we address these structural and societal issues, and how can I be a better change agent and a better advocate. So, I've been able to be a part of things like that because I work for university I've been able to have intellectual conversations about the Black Lives Matter movement; what is the Trump administration going to look like and how is that going to affect people of color? Where are we on immigration – I've had the opportunity to have the wonderful conversation with diverse groups of individuals and to lend my voice to it about certain things. I mean the only way that this {being an African American frontline gift officer} really shaped me is that it's expanded knowledge base of it and my understanding of where I come from, the problems that we have in America, and just how to better relate to individuals on a whole, and how to do so in a manner that allows us to have a healthy dialogue of conversation, and to be in support of having those tough conversations with someone that doesn't want to have it. To never say that, oh my God, I'm tired of this person. I'm tired of trying to tell people, I'm tired of being the Black voice for this

certain group, but owning that if I don't lend my voice they may not hear one. And owning that if I don't have this tough conversation with them they may not have it with anyone.

Chris' experience as an African American frontline gift officer allowed him to become more knowledgeable about how to engage in intellectual discourse. It also gave him the opportunity to discover the power of advocacy. For him, it is not about his own personal gain, but advocacy is about having tough conversations that may not be otherwise had, and fighting for those who do not have a "seat at the table".

Finding #8: pick your battles. Some of the participants of the study encountered challenges due to their race, gender, and/or age that required them to reflect on if it was a battle that they should fight. "Picking your battles" relates to how the participants discussed navigating whether or not certain issues required their attention.

Part of the process of picking their battles is for them to understand that sometimes people will say and do things that may not be appropriate. A person's inappropriate actions do not necessarily have to solicit a reaction from an African American gift officer; this is especially true for newly hired development professionals. Felicia came to the realization that people will take inconsiderate action and make offensive statements, but she understood that early on in her career that they were not her battles to fight.

Sometimes people are just going to say some ignorant, crazy shit, excuse my French, and you have to ask yourself, how hard a line are you going to ignore that comment? Or are you going to proactively say something, "you know, I really didn't think this was appropriate and here's why. Let me share with you the impact of what you just said." And some of that just comes from confidence and from years of - I honestly can't tell you in my first year or two that I would've been comfortable calling out a white colleague, matter of fact, I had a crazy White colleague who said crazy things. And I would just kind of look, I'd look at my boss, and my boss didn't say anything, okay let me keep my mouth shut. But now that I've been here, that I've been in the game for a while, I'm like oh wait, hold up, I want you to think about what you just said. And because I feel more comfortable in calling folks out when they do some crazy stuff which is going to happen in a professional environment.

Felicia practiced restraint early on in her career as a development professional, but after she built up her confidence and her credibility within the space, she felt more secure in calling out the “crazy things” that some of her colleagues would say. This illuminates the importance of newly hired development officers being strategic about what they call out and comment on until they have built a solid reputation for themselves within their respective institutions.

Julissa expressed that reflection is necessary before deciding whether or not to fight a particular battle. She said,

There’s times when I could be much more vocal about the things I see in terms of race, and favoritism, and privilege that I know is this – I always try to make sure is this a battle that I need to fight today? Well, I can fight this battle and I can probably win it, but will, in time, this cause me to be on the winning end or will this cause me to lose a battle in the future.

The strategy for deciding which battles to fight cannot be based solely on emotion or on present-day wins, but it must be built on a logical perspective that considers the long-term effect of the battle on one’s career, as Julissa illustrated.

Picking one’s battles extends beyond the battles that African American frontline gift officers may face with their colleagues. Chris talked about how he had to recognize when he is not the one who should be cultivating or soliciting a donor.

I’m not so self-centered that I feel as though it has to be the Chris show or nothing at all. I feel as though if I’m not - we do this a lot at fundraisers, I’m not the appropriate person to make the ask, or I’m not the appropriate person to be in front of that donor. I don’t want it to be uncomfortable for me, I don’t want it to be uncomfortable for the donor. And that’s okay, it’s not a match. We’re in the business of making really good matches and putting people together that we think should be together, matching people with the programs that we think they’re going to be passionate about. So, I mean it’s not so much of a challenge as it is annoying. It’s just you’re frustrated to have those situations happen {when a frontline gift officer encounters a prejudice donor}.

Although he did not label it as picking his battles, the way he discussed it articulated that he had to make a decision to allow one of his colleagues to step in when he encounters a prejudice or

problematic donor. Earlier in the interview, he spoke about working with a prejudice donor through a phone call; he was able to sway that donor, but as a result of other experiences, he realized that sometimes he simply is not the person to facilitate a specific donor interaction.

Lastly, picking battles can also be implemented when assessing whether discrimination is worth combating or if one should seek out other employment opportunities. Purpose, for example, articulated that she understands her value and will not fight for or over issues she could escape by transitioning into a new position.

If I'm at a place and I feel like I'm not valued, I'm passed the point of – I choose my battles. Like I just know what I bring to the table and so I don't ever want to work somewhere where I feel like I'm not valued. And so that's where I feel like ok, onto the next season. And that totally happened to me once in my career, feeling like I was not valued. And feeling that way and knowing for certain that it had nothing to do with my skillset, feeling I'm not valued because of my race. Again, if I'm not valued because of my race, if I really feel that way, it's not a battle – I don't see that as a battle that I can win. I can't force people to look at that differently. So, in that battle I felt like okay, this means that it is time for me to move on

In this situation, Purpose believed that she did not have the power or influence to change the mind of the people who she felt did not value her because of her racial identity. Instead of fighting to make them value her, she chose to transition into a new opportunity. African American development officers have to weigh the severity of the challenges that they are facing, and then make the best decision depending on their own personal circumstances. They should never feel pressured to champion every incident of discrimination, racism, and/or prejudice. It is necessary for them to learn to pick their battles, they have to know when to fight and when to concede and move on.

Finding #9: awareness of perception. As with many industries, several of the participants of the study confirmed that their White counterparts perceived them in a particularly biased way. They were keenly aware that people brought their own set of assumptions when

interacting with them, many of those assumptions being negative. Richard acknowledged that being Black, and being a Black male influenced the way he believed people viewed him.

Being an African American man, generally in society, comes with - trying to find the appropriate word. It'll come to me. It comes with a bit of - I'm going to have to talk through it - I don't want to say baggage, I don't want to be pejorative. It's not a responsibility, but it comes with a bit of a mindset to be successful. Because - and I've experienced this, that folks see you first as a Black man than anything else. It helps that when I visit donors that they know I'm with the university, but there's still a level of - to be kind, I would say curiosity. Because I don't know, I don't want to make it negative or any animosity.

When describing what being Black means in society, it took Richard a minute to formulate his statement. He attempted to be positive, but what he was saying is that Blackness has a unique and loaded meaning in society today. He wrestled to balance the negative and positive aspects of how non-Black people perceive Blackness. Ultimately, Richard believes Black people have to have a specific mindset in order to overcome the perceived stigma attached to being Black.

Purpose acknowledged that she has to be aware of how others perceived her. She felt as if being aware of how she was perceived was essential to her success as a fundraiser of color.

I think as an African American fundraiser, again, and I shouldn't generalize. For me, it's always recognizing that there is a potential for people to have a certain perception of who I am, and what I'm about, and what my level of qualification is. And so, I feel like we carry this burden of needing to present ourselves in a certain type of way. We also need to be mindful of the potential perceptions that people have of us and a lot of have to carry that. And I don't think that's a unique challenge to African Americans fundraisers, but to fundraisers of color. But yeah, it's always having to be mindful of how people perceive you and how you are able to navigate any potential stereotypes. And that's with when you have White leadership, when you - I just feel it's always something I have to be mindful of.

For Purpose, how others perceived her was worth noting. She talked about how she felt burdened to present herself in a manner that would perpetuate the belief that she is qualified for her position. She went on to talk about how she is constantly reflecting on how others perceive her race and how they interact with her.

So, I'm always aware of my race, like I see things through that lens. I'm always aware of difference. And so, coming into the work environment that looks very much like how I grew up {predominately White}, it's nothing new about it. I think maybe the way in which I have become more aware of my race is, again, in how other people might perceive what my race means. And that causes me to be thoughtful about how I interact with people. And I don't know how to dig into that and kind of unpack. I'm just kind of talking right now. But I think I've had growing – maybe I have a growing awareness of what race means in this environment. But myself awareness, how I see myself, has not changed. I think I have a growing awareness of how other people might see me. I don't know if that makes sense.

Purpose has placed the onus upon herself for policing how she interacts with her non-Black colleagues. Additionally, she acceded that her understanding how her race impacted her interactions with others was always evolving. It seems that most of the participants believed it was their responsibility to guard how others perceived them.

Chris also noted that how people perceived him was important to him; however, he also placed equal importance on coaching people on his Blackness.

I've known that there's these certain things that come along with being a Black male. So that's never been an issue, that's never been a question for me. So, I think that I have learned ways to work with people and sort of coach them on my Blackness, and what that means, and what they can and cannot say, and how they should not interact with me. Those sorts of things.

He took ownership of being Black, and took ownership of showing others how he wanted them to interact with him and to treat him. He stated that he learned how to coach people on his Blackness; the use of the word, learned, showed that it was a process for him, and that the ability to coach others was not innate. He felt as if it was his responsibility to be aware of how he was perceived, but it was also the responsibility of others to learn how to interact with him and not treat him in an offensive manner.

Tiffany was not as positive or politically correct when it came to speaking on how she believed Blackness was perceived by mainstream society.

I started to learn that Blackness can be very intimidating and threatening for a lot of people, and so I need to find ways to mitigate that if I want to move ahead, if I want to ever get a date, if I want to ever move up in my professional life. I know that I'm an extrovert, I know that I like working with people. I can't have people turn away from me because I'm too Black. I hate to put it this way, but this is how it's been. And then working with donors, you know, up to this point have been primarily White donors. And some White donors are totally with it, totally, totally with it, they get it. They love that I share this {Blackness} with them, but not all of them are, you know? And once again, feeling I need to keep the two spheres very separate, really lobotomize myself, leave the Blackness at home as much as I can, and only just bring a small part of myself to work.

She interpreted her Blackness as being intimidating to some of the people that she interacted with during her working years. Since they found her Blackness to be threatening, she had to strategize in order to temper its effects and safeguard her career mobility. Tiffany felt as if she had to “lobotomize” herself and leave her Blackness at home. It was impossible, from her perspective, for her to bring her whole self to work.

Melissa accepted that she was aware of how her Blackness affects others, but she did not think that her Blackness or how others perceived her Blackness ever had a significant effect on her career.

I would say that I am very aware of how I am presenting myself or how I'm perceived as it relates to race. But it never has been seen as a hindrance or something that would stop me from anything. But I think that it all depends, of course, on who you are as a person and how you sort of approach things. I think that there's probably others who would maybe look at this and say because they have faced racism or that they've perceived it, that they would just stop or not move forward. It just depends on who you are or what you see as, sort of what's important to you.

She felt as if a person's response to how he/she is perceived will determine the outcome of the interactions. Moreover, she alluded to the fact that some situations involving alleged racism is about perception, and that the perception of racism should not cause one to be stagnate. How one responds to situations determines how the situation progresses or deescalates.

Finding #10: “Code-Switching”. Some of the participants expressed that they have to act differently around their White colleagues due to perception of cultural differences. This

ability to transform one's behavior to cater to the demographic is known as code-switching. Vick believed that he was taught to code-switch at an early age due to his identity as a Black male.

And I think just growing up as a Black male, you kind of learn early on that there's perceptions out there and that sometimes you have to do certain things to kind of change those perspectives or just kind of change the narrative. And so, I think because I've been used to that, and you know sometimes they say that you have to play the game, right? You have to play the game and learn how to navigate and switch it up. So, I think, for me, it's something that I've learned along the way. So, as I've gotten into the development role, I think it's been something where I wanted to make sure that I am, you know, like I said earlier, exceeding expectations and doing my job and ensuring that although I don't see a lot of representation of me in the room, that I still can navigate and be successful.

Although Vick acknowledged that code-switching was essential to his success as a Black male, he also saw the value in African Americans maintaining a sense of authenticity.

One of the main things is ensuring that I am still my authentic self. I think sometimes when you're in, sometimes you can be in a predominantly White setting and you can try to, I don't know fit in if it's the right word, but it might be the right word, kind of fit in and maybe sometimes be someone, somebody that you're not. And so, what I say about that is, again I hate when people say, I hate when people reference, or Black people reference "oh you're acting white" or anything like that. I hate that. I hate that. What I'm saying is I think sometimes we try to maybe kind of lose your identity and what makes you who you are and special. And so that's one of the things I've been self-aware of is ensuring I'm, yes I'm in these rooms, I'm navigating, I'm sitting in front of people that are high net worth individuals, but I'm not going to change up who I am at the core. So, I guess what I'm trying to say is being able to, like being able to thrive in different settings and different environments, and being self-aware of where you're at, but not losing who you are completely.

He saw the value of being able to code-switch, but he sought to maintain his core identity. Vick believed in code-switching for political and career purposes, but promoted being intentional about self-awareness and identity preservation.

Like Vick, Chris recognized that he was taught how to code-switch at an early age. He credited his ability to code-switch to his parents, mentors, and environment.

For college, I went to a PWI institution, and again from the constant coaching from my parents growing up, from mentors about how to behave and act as a Black man so that

people, so that I can be heard and not feared. I think that's all helped me in terms of how I interact with people and how I'm able to get as far as I've gotten.

Chris was groomed to be heard and not feared. Chris' quote illustrated that the ability to successfully code-switch requires socialization and practice. Furthermore, to maintain one's self-esteem and a positive view of Blackness requires intentionality. African American frontline gift officers have to be conscious about not allowing their ability to code-switch to affect their sense of identity.

Julissa believed that she had to code-switch in order to "get the job done". Unfortunately, she had not reconciled how to be comfortable in her own skin with her ability to code-switch.

So, I'm in a place of introspection and checking my own self. I said, how come I don't know what that looks like to be comfortable in my own skin? Because in order for me to do the things that I do, a lot of times my identity, my race takes a backseat to that. And now that's just me being completely honest. And so – and it's not all bad. I think, you know, at the other school, that was my first time – because I grew up, you know, poor, in a Black neighborhood and all of a sudden, I'm at these, you know, these private universities, and I'm eating brie and turkey salads with grapes in it, which I still hate. It's a culture change. And so, the person that I am outside of this university is, I wouldn't say completely different, but it is a little different from who I am here. I have to adjust to the culture in order to succeed. I don't know if I can be true, truly who I am, and I should be able to do that, but not quite there yet. And so, I adjust to the climate and there's a scripture for this that says, "I have become all things to all men that I may win some." And so, for me, sometimes I address that, and my race takes a backseat in order to get the job done.

For her she believed that she could not be comfortable in her own skin because she always had to neglect her racial identity. She also spoke about the culture shock she faced when she arrived at her PWI. However, she rationalized her code-switching and the neglecting of her racial identity by identifying with a biblical quote. She later alluded to the fact that she was continuing to develop and find ways to be comfortable in her own skin.

Some of the participants focused solely on the positive aspects of code-switching. They saw the value of code-switching not only in terms of their career trajectories, but also how it related to their social mobility. Charles said,

But then you can also, when you are able to switch it up, you can go into different roles. You can go fishing with a CEO and then you can also go into a football practice and be seamless and have the ability to be bilingual and be confident, with it and know that no matter what this person can think about you, you know you got this already. It's nothing they can say that can throw you off.

Charles equated code-switching as a strategy that extended beyond the professional arena. He saw code-switching as a way to navigate various spaces and to be successful in all of them. For him it was possible to code-switch while maintaining authenticity and a sense of self-worth.

Data Analysis for Question # 3:

The third research question explored how African American frontline gift officers described the influence of their racial identity on their work. The transcribed interviews were used in collaboration with Dedoose to identify and organize the findings and themes. The findings for this question included: 11) Race and gender as salient for African American women frontline gift officers, 12) Race as an asset, and 13) Race as a liability.

Finding # 11: race and gender were salient for African American women frontline gift officers. For the women participants, race and gender were salient for them. Several of them expressed that they could see how gender and race influenced their overall career and the work that they do. Felicia confirmed this sentiment by saying:

So, I've never had anyone directly tell me that my race played a role, I have had people directly tell me that my gender plays a role, and of course I think there's an intersection of race and gender when you look at the professional experience.

Even though people told her directly that her gender played a role in her professional experiences, she acknowledged that both race and gender have an effect. For most of the women

in the study they felt as if their gender had as much of an effect on their career opportunities as their race did.

Specifically, for the field of higher education development, it was noted that women dominate the field but usually do not hold the senior most positions at their institutions. Mary used her institution as an example of how Black people and women were underrepresented in senior leadership roles.

And there aren't any direct leaders of development or CDO's that are Black, you know {except one}? And even - so this is separate from your research, but even with gender identity. You know, 90% of development is women and we hired a White man. Like that says a lot to women. That spoke volumes that our president is a man and he hired a man to do development; and a White man at that. I think there should be more men that should be associate directors and directors of development, but you have women in all these positions and then you tell them that they aren't good enough to be the top dog.

At her institution, there was one Black chief development officer; additionally, she estimated that 90% of the development workforce was women, but that the institution hired a White man to lead the entire operation. She discussed how hiring a man to lead the entire development operation communicated the university's lack of belief in women leadership.

Not only is there a lack of women leadership in PWI development, but Julissa illustrated that women also encounter chauvinistic attitudes in their interactions across campus.

.....But the other part is I can say, on the sex side of things, dealing with particular schools and units, in particular with this one the business school. Geez. They have – and this is a little different than some other places in that it's very alpha male in its orientation and the type of development officers that we have here. And I remember coming back to my assistant vice president and okay, I'm trying to figure out if it might be a little misogynistic, white racist pig, or he's a male chauvinistic – I'm trying to figure out which one he is.

Julissa's perception was that the people who worked in certain schools and units on her campus bred an oppressive patriarchal atmosphere. The intersection of oppression due to gender and race made it difficult for her to interpret whether he was chauvinistic or if he was racist. How she

spoke about this incident further cemented that for her race and gender were intersectional and it was difficult for her to conceptualize which factor was more at play during certain moments of her life.

Montana spoke about how she perceived college athletics development and fundraising in as being an area that limited people of color, more specifically Black women.

So yes, race definitely plays a role. I think from an internal perspective, particularly at my last two institutions you know, there were so few of us. You know, you {Black people} wonder how you're perceived within the departments, you know? Are you perceived as being a strong fundraiser, or a weak fundraiser, what have you? You're not given the same opportunities that your white counterparts are given. Particularly in college athletics, you're not getting the same opportunities. It's hard to move up as a Black person, and particularly as a Black female in college athletics, it's very, very difficult, which is one of the reasons why I was like I'm just not going to stay in this profession.

She talked about how Black people wonder how they are being perceived by senior leadership, and alluded to the fact that Black people were not as highly regarded as their White counterparts thus they did not receive the same types of opportunities. She exposed that specifically in college athletics, she believed Black women are not afforded the promotions and career opportunities as their colleagues. She eventually left that area of fundraising due to the dearth of opportunity and career mobility there. She is the one participant who left higher education to pursue development career opportunities in other sectors.

Tiffany approached the racial and gender oppression she has faced from a historical perspective. She spoke on how the issues she faced within her field were related to the hypersexualization and abuse of Black women by White men from slavery until now.

I also wanted to mention as a Black female development officer just uncomfortable experiences that you can run into when dealing with older white men. There's definitely a history of hypersexualization of Black women in this country, goes back to slavery, and it was justified raping women during slavery. There's a lot of stuff, a lot of stuff. There can definitely be that ethnic otherness when interacting with some older white men. I don't know if it would be fetishism or what, and you know many times when you interact with donors it might be at a function, there might be alcohol involved. People's lips get a little

bit loose, they get a little bit more comfortable, and they'll make inappropriate come-ons, inappropriate remarks. I mean this happens. This happens. As a female professional, I mean this happened to me in the private sector as well as here. And it can be really difficult because you, I mean, you just have to deal with it. But you can't burn bridges, you still have to represent the university and everything. But yeah, dealing with some of those guys you very much have to set your boundaries firmly, but not too aggressively because you're Black. Set it with a smile, but set it nonetheless. So, there's definitely some of that. For instance, the first time I met a donor, he was a longtime donor and a planned giving donor for to my former school, he shook my hand a little too long. Then pulled me in close to him, a little too close, and was like, "Oh my God, they didn't have anyone who looked like you when I was a student here, ha ha ha." I was like oh my God as long as this guy doesn't grab my ass. These things will happen. And yeah, we had to cut him off at the bar, too. He was just - but you know this stuff yeah, man, this stuff happens. Dealing with alumni and stuff.

Tiffany pointed out that when she worked with certain White male donors, they objectified her. She wrestled with how to handle being inappropriately touched by a major donor to her school; on one hand, she did not want to ostracize the donor, but she also had to draw boundaries for his behavior. Again, the race theme comes up as she acknowledged that she had to create boundaries with a smile in order to not intimidate him. As a Black woman, she had to wrestle with maintaining her composure in the interest of maintaining the University's relationship with the donor, while also safeguarding her own reputation and safety. Never during the quote did she divorce her Blackness from her gender, which shows that she felt that both identities were salient.

Felicia also had some interactions that made her reflect on how she looked and interacted with male donors. She said,

I think you have to be conscious of how you look and how you present yourself as a Black Woman in this field. You want to be attractive, but not too attractive. Sometimes I wear my hair up and glasses which detracts from how I look physically. It's a difficult balance you know.

Felicia described working to make sure that she is attractive enough to be pleasant, but not too attractive as to distract from the purpose of the meetings. What she wore and how she presented

herself was less about her and more about the donors she was meeting. This showed that for women in the field, White men still dictate the standards and how they have to manage their bodies in order to be successful in the profession. In addition to having to manage their image, women also have to manage how they overcome the gender-based and race-based oppression that they may face.

Julissa expressed that she was compelled to just “get over things” due to where she was in her professional journey.

I think where I am at this very moment is I’m at a place where I have to get over it. So, getting over it for me means a couple of things, both on the sex side of things and on the race side of things. I have to get over feeling insufficient when I’m the only. And so, it’s a head game especially if you grew up like I did in an all African American environment and all of a sudden I’m sitting in a room with folks and like they don’t get it. So, okay, they’re not going to get it and no, I’m not going to waste a lot of energy in trying to teach them all this stuff. So how do I assert myself, but also give them what they’re looking for?

She identified gender and race and two areas in which she had to simply “get over” the obstacles that she faced. Julissa spoke about feeling insufficient when she is the only African American in the room, and how she had to learn to be assertive while also balancing the interests of everyone around her. When mentioning examples, she never designated an issue as being solely a gender or race issue; she spoke about the issues with the pretense that they were both gendered and racial issues. As with several of the other women in the study, Julissa had to appease the donors and her colleagues while also considering her own feelings. This complex dynamic is due to the salience of gender and race for African American women.

Finding #12: race as an asset. A few of the participants mentioned that they believed that their racial identity was an asset to their role as a frontline gift officer and/or to their career in general. One sentiment was that being the only African American gave them an edge or the opportunity to impress their White counterparts. The other belief was that Blackness was desired

in fundraising for certain units or programs. They believed that in spite of the challenges they faced, race could indeed be an asset.

For a couple of the participants, they noted that their racial identities were fits for the type of programs or units for which they were fundraisers. For instance, Charles realized that he was likely desirable during his job interview with athletics due to his racial identity and his background as a student athlete.

Honestly man, I've never had an issue or problem with interviews or anything like that. I've always felt like if I had a chance and opportunity I might get that job. But I think part of the allure for me is I come across confidently, and I get my stuff done. But also, the fact that I'm a black man and they can actually plug me into certain spots, certain situations. Oh, here's a guy that can maybe connect with some of our football players because they those guys don't really ever give back. It's like yeah, it's not lost on me that right there {being able to work with football players and former student athletes} can be a factor. I'm not that good.

Charles acknowledged that he is confident and that is likely a factor in his success, but he was aware that his ability to work with Black athletes also was a guiding factor. He perceived that being able to work with certain demographics and in specific spaces made him marketable. His employers seemed to believe that having a Black man interact with former student athletes would help to promote their giving. They hired him with a specific goal in mind that was tailored to his race. He ends his statement by saying, that he is aware that he is “not that good”, which reiterated that in his circumstance, race was an asset.

Vick believed his race was an asset in his work because of the unique perspective that he brought to the table. For him it was less about what opportunities his race afforded him, and more about the opportunities he created due to his race.

And so, I would say that because of my past experiences and also being an African American I think I bring a different perspective and a different way of doing things. So, at times, it is challenging in terms of being in a room and you don't see a lot of representation, but I also kind of look at it from the other way in saying, you know what? Maybe this is an opportunity for me, one, to show these people that, hey I am an African

American, I've had different experiences, but at the same time, at the end of the day we're people, a lot of mutual ties that we have. And so, I think that a lot of times as African Americans, sometimes – and I'm not lumping us all together – I think sometimes we kind of look at it from a negative perspective. But I also think like man, you know, this is an opportunity for me to kind of show out a little bit, you know?

Being the only African American in the room allowed Vick the opportunity to show his White colleagues that he had a unique perspective and value to add to the environment. His experience was shaped by his mentality going into predominately White settings. At the end of his statement, Vick advocated for African Americans to change their perspectives and see the opportunities that being the only one in the room can bring. Race was an asset for him mentally, so he made it a professional asset as well.

Similar to Vick, Melissa saw the value of her perspective in a field saturated with White people. She reflected on the fact that she brings an inclusive perspective to the field as well as a diverse face that will help to reach more constituents.

I can't say that {race} it has been a hindrance, I think because in our industry there's a lack of any form of diversity, whether that's gender, or ethnicity, you really stand out as a diverse candidate when you are on an interview panel where you're interviewing for a job, especially because there is no one that looks like you. To me that's my opportunity to really showcase that this is something that I'm passionate about, but also to be a voice that's representative not of - I can't carry a whole race of people or everyone that has had that walk, but I can bring a diverse lens to the table.

Again, the perception for her was that her race and diverse background would give her a diverse lens that made her a more competitive candidate. She used the diversity deficit to her advantage by framing herself as a candidate who can add creativity and diverse approaches to the work. Melissa, although she viewed herself as a diverse candidate, acknowledged that she is not representative of all Black or diverse people; nevertheless, she can bring a diverse lens to the table.

Finding #13: race as a liability. Several participants revealed that in some instances, race was a liability in their careers. Race as a liability means that being Black has in some way create a challenge or obstacle in the careers of the participants. As a quote from Richard mentioned earlier, being an African American male comes with a certain amount of baggage in this country; although Richard spoke solely of his experience as a Black male, this quote applied to several of the participants' experiences. For them, their race was a liability in the field.

For Felicia, she felt her race and racially identifiable name were impediments in her even securing job opportunities.

The fact that I'm an African American woman who went to an HBCU for undergrad, my network naturally leaned towards minorities. Not only my colleagues, I mean my friends and contacts from undergrad, but I have an ethnic name. So, when my resume goes out and someone sees Felicia on a resume versus Sue or Beth, they're kind of like okay who's this chick? Where has she come from? When I was first sending our applications out of grad school, it was difficult.

Due to her name, Felicia perceived that her Blackness was an obstacle to even obtaining a job opportunity. She spoke on how difficult it was for her to obtain gainful employment after law school. The unconscious bias against "ethnic" names is a form of discrimination that bars African Americans and other minorities from even entering certain institutions. This type of oppression is more silent, but just as detrimental as other forms.

For some African Americans, their race can also cause their colleagues to unconsciously create an unwelcoming environment for them. For instance, purpose reflected on the time she spent at an institution that fostered an unsupportive atmosphere for African American people.

I spent a number of years in one institution where I felt my race was an impediment. I felt that it was, that I worked with people who did not, who perhaps had an issue with African Americans generally, who were not supportive in a work environment. So, I absolutely do believe that race plays a role. I don't think it's a, I wouldn't say that people consciously are focused on race, but I think that in some environments there are limitations for you if you are a person of color. And yeah. I do feel that race does play a role, certainly even in how you interact with colleagues across campus.

Purpose descriptively labelled her race as an impediment in her previous environment. She went on to say that maybe the people were not consciously focused on race, but that they unconsciously created an environment that was detrimental to the morale of African Americans. Furthermore, she even ventured to say that race affected how she once interacted with colleagues across the campus. Her experiences were stark and her perception was that race was indeed an unspoken variable in why she was treated unequally to her White counterparts.

As illustrated in an earlier finding, Montana expressed that she felt like African Americans were not given the same opportunities as White colleagues at her institution. She credited this to the false perceptions concerning African Americans that White leadership brought to the field. Julissa also shared her experiences dealing with inequality at her institution.

At one time, I found myself being very frustrated because I felt like I was beating my head against a wall, dealing with human resources, dealing with the associate vice provost and talking to him about this and saying I'm doing the work that the same person in another position, she has a different title and a different pay grade. The same exact work. The same exact work, different side of the coin. So, I work in natural sciences and health studies, she works with academic. So, we're doing the same exact work. The work that we do isn't different; nothing that she does that I don't do..... Yeah, so that's a point of tension for me. And I try not to make it about race, and I look at the numbers and there's still not a case. I actually am bringing in more than the she is. And so, you know, they can't say it's financial, and it isn't even about gender, it has to be about race.

Julissa was underpaid in comparison to her White colleague who did the same type of work. She spoke passionately about how they do the same work, but that her colleague has a more senior title and is in a better pay grade. This was a point of tension for her, so she took the issue to human resources, and they did not resolve the issue. Julissa went as far as to look at fundraising outcomes, which is when she realized that she raises more money than her White female colleague who is paid more than her. Julissa realized that the only factor that was different, was

that her colleague was White. She painted a picture of blatant discrimination and reiterated that race is still an impediment at some institutions.

For Chris, he felt that race and age worked simultaneously against him in some instances.

I do feel like individuals have maybe doubted my capabilities at times, and I think that's, I think that can be for a combination of things, they definitely – race would play a part in that, and I think also my age plays a part in that. And it takes a while for me to sort of work with individuals who I come into contact with to reassure them that, this is what I do, this is my career, and I am the most qualified person for the job.

Chris felt that people have doubted his ability, but that it is due to a combination of factors, namely race and age. Although he faced obstacles due to his Blackness and younger age, he maintained his confidence and proved that he was qualified to do his job. He later talked about how donors would ask his age after he had coached them through his Blackness. Chris could not coach them through his age, but he made it his mission to demonstrate such a level of excellence and professionalism that his age was irrelevant. Regardless of the obstacles he faced, Chris believed he had the perseverance to overcome.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provided the plan of execution of the study, the descriptive information regarding the participants and their respective institutions, and the findings of the study. The research study gave insight into the experiences of 11 African American frontline gift officers from member institutions of the AAU representative of every major region. The findings for the 1st research question were: 1) African American frontline gift officers were connectors of people and catalysts of engagement/re-engagement; 2) PWIs can be isolating spaces; 3) racism/prejudice exists in more covert forms. The findings for the 2nd research question were: 4) relationships were key to navigating their professional lives; 5) connect to the mission in order to persist; 6) invest in themselves; 7) advocate for themselves and others; 8) pick your battles; 9)

awareness of perception; and 10) code-switching. The findings for the last research questions were: 11) race and gender were salient for African American women development officers; 12) race as an asset; and 13) race as a liability.

Chapter 5 of this dissertation will present the results related to the research questions, the overview of the overall study, conclusions drawn from the research findings, a discussion of the research findings, recommendations, and ideas for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussions & Recommendations

Introduction

In a study that surveyed fundraising professionals at 61 of the member institutions of the Association of American Universities (AAU), it was found that they averaged about 17% minorities on their staff (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). Of that 17%, only a few of those are frontline gift officers who directly interact with donors and solicit them for financial support (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). Since there is a deficit of people of color within the field, it is important to study the experiences of those people within the field. For the sake of this study, the experiences of African American frontline gift officers at member institutions of the AAU were explored. This chapter provides the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research methods, and the research questions. Then it continues through a discussion of the research findings, the significance of the study, and the limitations of the study. Finally, it concludes with recommendations for practice, implications for future research, and the summary of the chapter.

Statement of the Problem, Research Questions & Methods

Having an increased level of diversity in the field of higher education advancement is arguably necessary to enhance the identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship strategies of diverse alumni populations (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). Since advancement is the field that encompasses fundraising and development in higher education, it should diversify as the student and alumni populations change. According to an article by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), being cultivated and solicited by diverse fundraising/development professionals is comforting for some alumni of color. Some alums feel a deeper connection and sense of trust to people that they perceive have a shared racial identity as themselves. Having a diverse development staff is not only beneficial to the process of

relationship building with prospective or current donors, but it also increases their connection to the organization and their tenure supporting/investing in the organization. As Kao, Gibson, & Kim (2011) stated, “When a person’s self-concept contains the same attributes as those in the perceived organizational identity, this cognitive connection is defined as organizational identification” (p. 169). Additionally, Van Dick (2001) states that when people can identify with their organization, they tend to invest more resources and have a longer tenure supporting the organization. A diverse development staff also communicates that the institution is committed to diverse communities both within the institution and outside. Institutions have to demonstrate that they are not solely concerned about garnering the financial support of diverse audiences, but that they are committed to exemplifying diversity as a value.

Hiring and retaining diverse advancement professionals improves the relationship building process with diverse constituents, and it helps to communicate the institutions’ understanding of cultural significance and relevance (Sargeant, 2001). People desire to see their race, culture, and other identities respected and seen as significant, so it is pivotal that they get a chance to see and interact with professionals who embody their identities. In addition, Gasman and Bowman’s (2013) research supports the point as they found diverse populations prefer being cultivated by people of similar ethnic backgrounds as themselves. A true commitment to diversity should result in the diversification of the profession; this diversification will result in improved organizational climate for both staff members and donors alike.

The challenge is not solely that the profession is monolithic; it is that the diversity necessary to promote education and growth is not present within the field; meaning, there is not an adequate space for the creation of innovative practices that are inclusive. Having people of color within the profession might lead to greater strategies to garner the support of diverse alums

and donors. The students attending Predominately-White Institutions are becoming increasingly diverse, and without diverse advancement professionals, the institutions may not be able to capitalize on giving capacity of growing communities of diverse alumni. The African American community for example, is estimated to have over 1.1 trillion dollars of buying power (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). Traditionally, people have speculated that African Americans do not give because they do not have the capacity, but in reality, they do not give because they are not asked to give (Gasman & Bowman, 2013). If advancement officers feel empowered and compelled to ask diverse communities for support, because they too are diverse, then the fundraising dollars will increase due to the newfound support of underrepresented communities. In addition, having diverse advancement staffs communicates the climate of inclusivity and progress within the institutions.

While there is relevant literature on the retention of diverse faculty and admission of students at PWIs (Holmes, 2004; Jackson, 2002; Perna, Gerald, Baum, & Milem, 2007), there is a dearth of research specifically focused on advancement professionals of color and the philanthropic trends of people of color. Additionally, a significant amount of the literature is on the experiences of African Americans in student affairs roles (Holmes, 2004; Jackson & Flowers, 2003; Watson, 2001) or diversity related positions (Rolle, Davies, & Banning, 2000), but they are not inclusive of development professions in higher education. The articles that examine development professionals neither take into account the racial background of the participants, nor do they look exclusively at the experiences of people of color within the profession.

Research on general topics concerning development officers is available. For instance, there is research about donor behaviors and ethical problems in fundraising (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1989). Research is also available on the characteristics necessary to obtain employment

and be successful as a development professional. Miller and Seagren (1992) conducted a content analysis study to discover the professional characteristics that organizations look for when hiring development professionals. Worth and Asp (1994) expanded the literature by categorizing development officers into four types: the salesperson, the catalyst, the manager, and the leader. Furthermore, Ryan (2006) conducted a quantitative study exploring the behavioral characteristics of development officers. However, none of these studies addresses the racial identity of development officers or the experiences of minority development officers at PWIs. Due to the demand for fundraisers of color, there is a need for additional research examining advancement professionals of color and their experiences within the field (Bowman, 2010). This research is essential as institutions continue in an era of collegiate diversification.

It is imperative to have diverse educational advancement professionals at PWIs. In saying this, only about 11% of the approximately 30,000 registered fundraisers are people of color (Bowman, 2010). With increasing diversity in higher education, having 11% of development staffs being minorities is far from being reflective of the overall landscape of higher education. Therefore, this study adds to the literature specifically about the experiences of African American development professionals who are frontline gift officers at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the research study:

1. How do African American development professionals describe their experiences working at a PWI?
2. How do African American development professionals navigate their professional responsibilities within the context of a PWI?

3. How do African American development professionals describe the influence of their racial identity on their work?

This qualitative study is a phenomenological study meant to be revelatory in nature. The study focused on participants from member institutions of the Association of American Universities (AAU). Overall, the study was created using a constructivist epistemology. The knowledge rendered in this study did not come from a universal truth, but it came from the participants' interactions with the world (Crotty, 1998). The participants have constructed their meaning/truth based on their experiences before and during their tenure in the field of development. Interviews were the primary research method used in this study to reveal the experiences and ideas of the study participants.

The theoretical framework for this study is organizational theory from an Afrocentric perspective. The framework challenges the western notions of organizational theory and focuses on tenets of African American culture.

According to Schiele (1990) the tenets are:

1. Human beings are conceived collectively.
2. Human beings are spiritual.
3. Human beings are good.
4. The affective approach to knowledge is epistemologically valid.
5. Much of human behavior is nonrational.
6. The axiology or highest value lies in interpersonal relations. (p. 147)

The framework was used to analyze the data by providing guidance in terms of coding themes. It was a relevant framework as the participants identified as African American and worked within a profession that focused on mission driven work largely based on relationships.

To choose the participants for the study, the researcher used purposive selection sampling since the research is attempting to garner the experiences of African American development officers (Maxwell, 2013). The participants had to be: 1) African Americans, 2) Working in development positions as frontline gift officers at a member institution of the AAU for at least six months, or was previously employed as a frontline gift officer at a member institution of the AAU for at least 6 months. The prospective participants were contacted through email and then by phone to confirm their participation in the study. Then snowball sampling was used to find additional development officers. Due to the limited number of African American development officers on predominately-white campuses, the participants had to connect me with other development officers that the researcher did not originally identify.

Due to the constructivist nature of this study, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions so that they could create meaning as they saw fit (Creswell, 2012). Eleven African American development officers were interviewed for an hour each. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Dedoose was used to organize the interview transcripts and synthesize the information. Additionally, the resumes of those development officers were analyzed and used to build participant profiles.

Findings Related to the Conceptual Framework

Organizational theory from an Afrocentric perspective was the framework selected for this study. After completing the study and examining the research findings, I explored the findings that were aligned with the framework. Two findings that were aligned with the framework included: 1) Relationships were essential; and 2) Connect to the mission in order to persist. Additionally, the research was rooted in the five research perspectives (canons): Ukweli, Kujitoo, Utulivu, Ujamaa, and Uhaki. It should be noted that I no longer believe that this research should be rooted in this framework; from the results of the study, a new framework

could eventually be created for African American fundraisers. The Afrocentric perspective does not address the complexity of the professional roles of African American frontline gift officers. It also does not consider the tension between the professional and personal identities of the participants as illustrated by their proclivity to code-switch based on the setting.

Relationships were essential.

One of the findings was that relationships were essential for African American frontline gift officers. The participants expressed that mentors, sponsors, and allies were crucial for assisting them in navigating their professional careers. They defined mentors as being guides, sponsors as providing opportunities, and allies as being companions. Moreover, they described the value of their friends and family members in their professional and personal lives. According to the Afrocentric paradigm, relationships provide an anchor for support and a catalyst for productivity (Sherr, 2006). This paradigm puts the highest value on people, whether it be organizational members or clients who receive the organization's services (Schele, 1990). For the participants, their relationships were catalysts for their productivity and their overall success.

Connect to the mission of the organization in order to persist.

Many of the participants of this study discussed that a connection to the organization was a prerequisite to them applying for a position. Moreover, they mentioned that having that connection to the organizational mission helped them to stay focused and persist through the professional and personal issues they faced. They reminded themselves that they did the work because of the value of the cause. The Afrocentric perspective posits that due to cultural values, African Americans put the mission or wellbeing of the collective group over individual wellbeing (Schiele, 1990). This held true for most of the participants; they chose to persevere through perceived prejudice, racism, and sexism in order to serve the greater good of the mission.

Oftentimes, their mental well-being was compromised so that they could fulfill their duties to their organizations.

The canons of the Afrocentric perspective.

The research, in order to fit the parameters of the Afrocentric perspective, was rooted in the five canons: Ukweli, Kujitoa, Utulivu, Ujamaa, and Uhaki. First, Ukweli is the principle that the research should be rooted in the community being studied. Kujitoa, the second canon, focuses on a de-emphasizing the objectivity of research (Asante, 1990). The third canon is Utulivu, which is the concept that justice must be a part of the research framework. Further, the research must promote the reconciliatory or harmonious interaction between the studied population and others (Asante, 1990). The last two canons are Ujamaa and Uhaki. Ujamaa represents the need for community interests and wellbeing to be at the center of the research. Uhaki is the canon that seeks to place the welfare of the participants as a priority within the study (Asante, 1990; Reviere, 2001).

The study was situated within these canons as a result of my positionality and intentional research design. First, the research was rooted in the community since the researcher is an African American development professional and he only studied the experiences of other African American development professionals. Additionally, the research and brainstorming that led to the research design was situated within the African American development community. Next, the study focused on not perpetuating objective truths, but allowing the participants to formulate their own truths and narrate their own narratives. The truths that came from the research were included in this dissertation with hopes that institutions, organizations, and researchers would use them to build upon best practices for cultivating African American frontline gift officers. Furthermore, the study sought to allow the participants to express themselves and be validated through their expressions. Their wellbeing and the wellbeing of future African American

development officers were at the forefront of my mind. The intention of this research was to continue the discussion on the experiences of the population in hopes to extend and enrich the current literature.

Discussion of the Findings

This research study yielded some findings that will extend the knowledge base of the field. For the sake of clarity, the discussion of findings will be divided up based on the research questions.

Findings for research question #1.

The first research question was: How do African American development professionals describe their experiences working at a PWI? The findings based on data analysis were: 1) African American frontline gift officers were connectors of people and catalysts of engagement/re-engagement; 2) PWIs can be isolating spaces; and 3) racism/prejudice exists in more covert forms.

Generally speaking, the participants had positive comments about how they conceptualized their roles at their respective institutions. They overwhelmingly saw themselves as connectors and catalysts for the engagement or re-engagement of alumni and other constituents. First, they talked about how they developed relationships with donors, identified the donors' passions, and then helped to build the bridge between the donors' passions and the work of their institutions. Skills such as emotional intelligence, logical thinking, and persuasive speaking were all crucial to their roles. They spoke of establishing trust with the potential donors, and building sustainable partnerships. For most of the participants, they saw themselves as being especially suited (in comparison to their White counterparts) to cultivate relationships with historically marginalized populations. This is partly due to the fact that marginalized populations may not trust White agents of academia. Due to the participants' own racial identity,

they believed that their insider status would help them to be more effective in building trust with African American alums who have traditionally been neglected and mistreated in predominately-White settings. Several of the gift officers mentioned how they were able to speak the language of marginalized donors and be agents of healing for the African American community. They saw their role in development as being indispensable considering the changing landscape of higher education.

In terms of the climate, almost all of the participants felt that PWIs were isolating spaces for African American frontline gift officers. They talked about physically being the only African American at certain tables, and having to carry the burden of representing African Americans to their White counterparts. This finding directly correlates to the general literature on African American administrators; the literature says that they experience isolation, tokenism, and a host of other issues (Burgess, 1997; Gregory, 1995; Holmes, 1999; Moses, 1997; Phelps, 1995; Watson, 2001).

In addition to being isolated at their respective PWIs, some of the participants also expressed that they experienced what they perceived to be racism or prejudice. Hiring practices and advancement opportunities at some of the represented institutions were considered discriminatory. They would encounter donors and colleagues alike who spoke “anti-your-identity” rhetoric. Conversations with prejudice undertones made the participants feel uncomfortable, undervalued, and at times unsafe. Sometimes the situations were assuaged through conversations, other times they had to recognize that they could not change the situation. It was crucial for them to maintain their professionalism, and not hesitate to allow their colleagues to help navigate the situations.

Findings for research question #2.

The second research question was: How do African American development professionals navigate their professional responsibilities within the context of a PWI? The findings that came from the data analysis were: 4) relationships are key to navigating professional responsibilities; 5) African American frontline gift officers should connect with the mission and find purpose in their work; 6) Invest in themselves; 7) Advocate for themselves and for others; 8) “Pick your battles”; 9) African American frontline gift officers practice code switching; and 10) Awareness of perception.

Overall, the participants had insightful information to give about navigating their PWIs. They mentioned that relationships were indispensable in them navigating their professional responsibilities. The participants talked about the roles of mentors, sponsors, and allies. Mentors served as guides for their mentees, sponsors provided professional opportunities, and allies were colleagues who provided support. Additionally, family and friends served as support systems, sounding boards, and counselors. Team members were also of great importance to the participants. In addition to team members, some of the participants talked about how they expanded their networks to include colleagues from across campus. They felt as if having greater support across campus increased the likelihood of professional longevity. Lastly, the participants saw the value of professional organizations. Organizations such as CASE, AFP, and campus development associations provided opportunities for networking, mentorship, and professional development.

Relationships were crucial in assisting the participants in navigating their careers, but many of the participants credited their persistence in the field to having a connection with their organizational missions. They spoke about how being connected to the organizational mission gave them focus, and provided them with reasons to overcome obstacles that they faced. Another

element of connecting to the mission that invigorated the participants was seeing the impact of their work. Some of the participants mentioned how much fulfillment they received from talking to students who benefitted by the programs funded through development work, or spending time with a professor conducting revolutionary research through grant funding. These types of interactions fueled the participants and reminded them of why they entered the field.

To promote their growth within the field, many participants mentioned that they had to invest in themselves. They defined investing in themselves as having confidence, setting goals, and participating in professional development. Firstly, they largely agreed that having confidence was a form of investment in their lives and careers. It was vital for them to resist the feeling of self-doubt and to trust themselves. Overwhelming they agreed that usually self-doubt was not warranted, it was experienced due to isolation and the imposter syndrome. Having confidence was about defying the notions of inadequacy, and remembering that they were qualified and equipped for their positions.

Next, the theme of goal setting was prevalent in the interviews. Goal setting was about utilizing the people and resources in their lives in order to envision their next steps. Several participants talked about leveraging their supervisors' knowledge of the field to create a framework for their professional development. Shadowing their supervisors and mentors was another strategy used to plan for their professional futures. Many of them had supportive supervisors who promoted that they think beyond where they were at that time. It was essential for the participants to remain proactive, and to use the experiences that they were accumulating in order to prepare for their next positions.

In addition to goal setting, the participants promoted professional development. They believed that as African American development professionals, they needed to be masters of their

craft. The participants promoted attending seminars and conferences, receiving mentorship, and reading literature on fundraising strategies. The goal was for them to establish credibility within the field. It was not enough for them to do quality work, but they had to “go the extra mile” in comparison to their White counterparts. They perceived that they needed to be well versed in their field and credible in order to progress.

Due to their identity as African Americans, the participants felt that they had to advocate for themselves and others while also being selective about the battles they chose to fight. Self-advocacy, for this population, was pursuing a seat at the table to ensure that their voices would be heard. Advocacy for others was about fighting for their voice to be heard, as well as providing them with opportunities to advance their lives and careers. For themselves, they advocated for equal opportunity and equitable hiring practices. For donors, they advocated for more culturally appropriate cultivation strategies. Advocacy was about pursuing a greater good for themselves and for other minorities.

In higher education development, the participants were faced with dilemmas concerning racially charged incidents. Whether it was dealing with culturally insensitive comments from coworkers, or encountering a racist and/or sexist donor, the participants had their share of moments in which they had to decide whether to fight the battle. They had to consider whether the battle would advance them or change the climate substantially, or would it jeopardize their chance at advocating for something else in the future. African Americans have a confluence of factors they have to consider when challenging their colleagues and the system; is the battle worth what may be lost in the fight. They had to be strategic and not operate solely out of emotion, their careers could be substantially affected by the wrong decisions.

As discussed in chapter 4, being Black is accompanied by some “baggage”. It was mentioned several times that the participants’ White colleagues sometimes perceived them through an inappropriately biased lens. The participants were keenly aware that they were being perceived in negative ways because of inaccurate assumptions. References were made to Blackness being perceived as intimidating and threatening. In order to maintain their careers, the participants had to learn to temper their blackness, and even “lobotomize” parts of their identity while they were on the job. They felt as if it was their responsibility to safeguard the comfort levels of their White colleagues. Some of the participants felt as if they had to “coach” their peers on how to interact with them. They had to illustrate that Blackness was not negative, and find ways to show commonalities between themselves and their White counterparts. The fear was that how people perceived their Blackness could jeopardize their progress within the field. In order to mitigate that fear, they opted to approach their work with a hyper-sensitivity to how they were perceived.

Another strategy used by the participants to navigate their PWIs was code-switching. They viewed being able to intuitively interact with others based on a series of factors as being a valuable skill. It allowed them to maintain their identities, while also not intimidating their White colleagues. Code-switching secured the career and social mobility of the participants. Although code-switching was valued, there were concerns about remaining authentic and not allowing the alternative code to consume one’s whole identity. To effectively code-switch, the participants had to be self-assured or consistently negotiate their identities and feelings. It was a mentally exhausting process for some of the participants, but they all saw the value and had plans to continue using the strategy.

Findings for research question #3.

The final research question was: How do African American development professionals describe the influence of their racial identity on their work? The findings based on data analysis were that race and gender were salient for African American women frontline gift officers, that race was an asset in some instances, and that it could be a liability in others. The way race influenced the work of the participants was fascinating in that it depended on the setting and context.

African American women frontline gift officers had unique experiences due to the amalgamation of their race and gender. Experiences were sometimes shaped by one or both of their identities; moreover, some of the participants described the difficulty in identifying which of the identities had more of an impact at any given moment. The participants talked about how the field was saturated with women, but that women rarely held senior level positions. This was especially true for Black women. It was not that the women were not qualified for the senior leadership positions, it was that they were not afforded the opportunities to step into those roles.

In addition to the lack of leadership opportunities, women also faced situations that bordered sexual harassment. From inappropriate comments to physically aggressive gestures, the women had to navigate appalling donor behaviors. They wrestled with whether to prioritize maintaining fruitful relationships with donors, or firmly establish physical and personal boundaries with them. Though this was a gendered finding, they also connected it to race since the bodies of Black women have been violated by White men since slavery. For them, the harassment they faced was not simply because they were women, but it was because they were Black women. Female participants also had to be more conscious of their physical appearance in comparison to their male counterparts. They expressed that women in general had to appear attractive but not too attractive, and woman of color had to be conscious not to be too exotic. The

influences of both race and gender on the experiences of Black women were evident in this study.

For both the males and females in the study, race was an asset and a liability. In some instances, participants talked about being the best-suited candidate for their job since it involved working with donors of color, or former student athletes. Some of the participants also felt like their racial identity would give them an edge in terms of creativity. Additionally, they would bring diverse perspectives to their teams; to them this was an asset. They believed that having a diverse perspective would allow them to influence development strategies. The perception was that their racial identity, and ability to understand diverse populations made them more marketable and valuable to development teams at PWIs.

The participants also viewed race as a liability. They acknowledged that being Black in America usually conjured certain images and ideologies in the minds of their White colleagues. One participant talked about how “ethnic” names usually called attention to Blackness, and that because of this it was difficult for her to secure a position after graduate school. In addition to problems securing jobs, participants had issues with inequality in pay structures and promotional opportunities. They illustrated moments when they did the exact same work at an even better caliber than their White colleagues, but they were not paid equally. Other participants talked about how their colleagues reacted negatively to their Blackness, which created tense work environments. Work environments were plagued with unsupportive colleagues and leadership. It was as if they did not want the participants to succeed in their careers. One participant noticed that a confluence of his race and age posed issues within his career. He noted that people sometimes were unsure of his ability until he proved himself; this was not the case for his White colleagues.

At one point, he was even asked about his age. For him, race was a piece of the issue, but age was also a significant factor.

This section explored the findings of the study as related to the literature review, research questions, and conceptual framework. The next section will present the limitations of the study.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are rooted in the boundaries of qualitative research. Since this is a qualitative study, it cannot be generalized for all African American development officers as the study seeks to provide depth not breadth. Moreover, the experiences rendered in the study only reflect the participants of the study and not all other development officers on the selected campus or any given campus. Therefore, transferability is up to the consumers of the research.

Although all the participants were employed at AAU institutions, the institutions represented different regions of the country. Additionally, the male-female ratio was not equal; the study was predominately composed of women. Both of the above factors likely influenced the findings of the study. The next section presents the significance of the study.

Significance

The findings of this study enhanced current literature by supporting previous findings, and providing new findings specifically concerning African American frontline gift officers. It appears to be the first dissertation that focuses specifically on the experiences of African American frontline gift officers at PWIs. It explored how African American frontline gift officers contextualized their roles, how they navigated their professional experiences, and how their race influenced their work. It also uncovered the salience of gender and race for women frontline gift officers.

Although the Afrocentric perspective did not necessarily fit the experiences of the participants due to the unique nature of their job, it did have some aspects that were aligned with

the findings. Nevertheless, the study illuminates that a framework that takes into account the nature of development work, and the way in which frontline gift officers have to interact with their colleagues and with donors, should be created. This framework would provide space to explore the tensions between the work environment and the participants' racial identity. Furthermore, it would account for African American administrators desire to see more diversity within the field, and their advocacy for more inclusive hiring practices and office cultures.

This study also has practical implications as it rendered recommendations that will assist in cultivating positive experiences for African American frontline gift officers at PWIs. The recommendations are for institutions, organizations, and the African American development professionals. These recommendations are essential since alums are becoming more diverse and diverse professionals are needed to help with the cultivation and solicitation of these alums. Additionally, African Americans are underrepresented in the field and these recommendations can assist with recruiting and retaining Black professionals. This section explored the significance of the study, the next section presents recommendations for practice.

Recommendations for Practice

Meticulous consideration of the findings, current literature, and conceptual framework led the researcher to create recommendations for practice that will focus on improving the recruitment of African American gift officers, and the institutional cultures and climates where they are employed. Additionally, the recommendations will give insight on how professional organizations can support these gift officers, and steps that the gift officers can take to enrich their own careers.

For institutions.

The following recommendations are for PWIs.

1. Conduct an analysis of hiring processes for African American frontline gift officers. A team of diverse professionals who can identify biases in the hiring process should conduct the analysis. The analysis should examine where jobs are posted, the levels and types of experiences needed to secure positions, as well as the diversity of past applicant pools. This is necessary since some institutions post jobs in areas that are not traditionally accessed by African Americans. Additionally, diversity in the hiring pool can be hindered if the language describing the levels and types of experiences necessary for the position is not inclusive. Finally, the diversity of previous applicant pools should be evaluated to see if hiring committees had unconscious biases that may have led them to exclude candidates due to their ethnic names, race, gender, etc. This analysis of policies should lead to recommendations that are applied.
2. Create mandatory workshops for development teams on various types of biases. These workshops should be aimed at exposing biases as they pertain to interactions with colleagues of color and with donors of color. Additionally, they should have a component that emphasizes creating inclusive, supportive environments for all development employees.
3. Review salary structures and promotional policies. This will help to ensure that there is equality in salary structures and promotional policies. The structures and policies should take into account performance, responsibilities, contributions to the field, and time in the field. They should have a holistic approach to salaries and promotions that allow for African Americans and other minorities to be included in the process.
4. Provide support to woman gift officers. There should be clear procedures and interventions for women who are harassed by donors and/or their coworkers. These

policies should be implemented consistently and should promote the safety and well-being of women in the field.

5. Provide leadership development workshops for all development professionals. These workshops should be led by senior level development professionals who will divulge strategies for rising through the ranks of the field. The workshops should be marketed equitably amongst all development professionals. This will provide people of color with access to information that they have historically been excluded from because they are not in the inner circle of predominately White leadership.
6. Invest in affinity groups on campus. Provide them with funding and institutional support as they endeavor to be a resource for diverse professionals. The groups specifically for people of color are beneficial since they help to alleviate the isolation that the employees feel on campus. It is crucial for institutions to invest in those groups/organizations.
7. Promote that employees do presentations on the field of development and fundraising to diverse communities. This will promote an increase in diverse fundraising professionals. Not only should institutions promote the facilitation of these presentations, but they should value these presentations and include this as a metric in the overall evaluation of their employees.
8. Create a code of ethics and behavioral standards for donors. This will help donors to identify negative behaviors they might practice while safeguarding the development officers' wellbeing. Many institutions have unspoken ethical rules that govern donors as revealed in recent high profile incidents, but this code would be solidified and promoted.
9. Provide funding to assist minority fundraisers in continuing their professional education and/or joining organizations that facilitate professional development.

For professional organizations.

1. Create a national mentoring platform that pairs junior level development professionals with senior level professionals. For African American organizations, this allows for professionals who are the only Black person at the institutions or in their units to connect with African American senior leaders at other institutions. It also allows the professionals to see the diversity among the experiences of African American development professionals in other areas of the country.
2. Conduct leadership seminars that focus on career advancement and dealing with marginalization within the field. These presentations can be conducted in collaboration with the local university campuses.

For individuals.

1. Seek mentorship inside and outside of your institution. Be intentional about accumulating mentors who can help guide you where you are and to where you desire to be. These mentors can be from various racial, socio-economic, spiritual, and gender backgrounds.
2. Join professional organizations and affinity groups. Participation in these groups will help develop you as a professional, and will help to temper feelings of loneliness.
3. Look for opportunities to engage with the mission of the organization for which you fundraise. Having a connection to the product of the organization will help you to persist in the field.

This section of the chapter presented recommendations for practice based on the findings of the study. The next section presents ideas for future research.

Future Research

This research study enhances the body of literature by examining the experiences of African American frontline gift officers at PWIs. Future studies of this population are necessary

to continue understanding their experiences within the field. This study offers the following recommendations for further research on this topic:

1. This study did not evaluate the experiences of specific age ranges; however, one participant indicated that his age as well as his race affected his experiences in the field. It would be interesting to conduct a study evaluating the experiences of frontline gift officers who are between the ages of 22 and 40 versus those who are older.
2. The participants of this study mentioned their experiences engaging with people of color and with White donors. It would be fascinating to facilitate a study evaluating the perceptions of donors, by race, when working with African American frontline gift officers.
3. For the purposes of this study, the participants were from member institutions of the AAU. The experiences of African American frontline gift officers at other institutions are also valuable. A study could be conducted on African American frontline gift officers at regional institutions, or at private institutions.
4. Since the women in this study had unique experiences from their male counterparts, a study could be conducted specifically on the experiences of African American women within the field.
5. This study did not include many African American chief development officers. As senior level officials, they likely have different challenges than junior level frontline gift officers. It would be beneficial for junior level professionals to have a study that focused solely on the experiences of African American chief development officers at PWIs.
6. This work focused on the experiences of African Americans within the field; however, research needs to be conducted on other minorities within the field. The experiences of

other marginalized populations are equally as valuable as the experiences of African Americans.

This section presented recommendations for future research. The next section presents the summary of the chapter.

Summary of Chapter 5

This chapter presented a discussion of the findings, limitations, and significance of the study on the experiences of African American frontline gift officers at PWIs. It also rendered recommendations for practice and future research. This study explored how the participants conceptualized their roles as frontline gift officers, how they navigated their professional responsibilities, and how they described the influence of their racial identity on their work. The findings were: 1) African American frontline gift officers were connectors of people and catalysts of engagement/re-engagement; 2) PWIs can be isolating spaces; 3) racism/prejudice exists in more covert forms; 4) relationships were key to navigating their professional lives; 5) connect to the mission in order to persist; 6) invest in themselves; 7) advocate for themselves and others; 8) pick your battles; 9) awareness of perception; 10) code-switching; 11) race and gender were salient for African American women development officers; 12) race as an asset; and 13) race as a liability.

The study was a phenomenological study conducted through semi-structured interviews and resume/CV analysis. The conceptual framework was used to help create the interview protocol and the data analysis procedure was the Afrocentric perspective. The study rendered several recommendations for PWIs, professional organizations serving African American development professionals, and for African American frontline gift officers. This study enhanced the current literature on the field.

Appendix A: Email Recruitment to Potential Participants

Greetings,

I hope this finds you doing well. I am Anthony Heaven, a Ph.D. candidate at The University of Texas at Austin. I am looking for participants for my dissertation study, and I ran across your profile on Stony Brook's website. I would appreciate it if you would review the information below and consider participating in my study.

I am writing to solicit your participation **in my dissertation research study exploring the experiences of former and current African American frontline gift officers at member institutions of the Association of American Universities (AAU). My dissertation titled, “Flying Solo: The Experiences of African American Development Officers at Predominately White Institutions” is a qualitative study that seeks to explore how participants describe the influence of racial identity on their work, how they navigate professional responsibilities at PWIs, and how they describe and overcome any challenges faced.**

I would be honored if you would agree to share your experiences with me for this important research study. I need your assistance in generating this valuable research.

All participants in this study will be asked to submit a resume or CV, and participate in a 45-60-minute interview. Confidentiality is of utmost importance and will be maintained throughout the study.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. To learn more and indicate interest, please review the attached consent document in its entirety. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at Anthony.heaven@austin.utexas.edu or by phone at 512-595-1064. If you agree to participate in this study, I will reply to request your CV or resume and to schedule an interview time.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration!

With Much Gratitude,

Anthony Heaven, Doctoral Candidate

Program in Higher Education Leadership | College of Education

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The University of Texas at Austin

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Hello, as you know this study is about the experiences of African American frontline gift officers at predominately White Institutions.

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me about your experiences as African American frontline gift officer in a development office/department at a Predominately White Institution. As you might be aware, these institutions are usually referred to as PWIs.

If it is alright with you, this interview will be recorded in order to be transcribed and interpreted. You may stop the interview at any time and may skip questions if you so choose. Researchers will use precautions to maintain the confidentiality of your interview data by assigning a pseudonym and keeping your documentation confidential. Data analysis will be completed collectively, and no names will be disclosed.

In this semi-structured interview, I will ask general open-ended questions as prompts, in order to provide you more latitude and allow a free flowing conversation, so that you may elaborate as you need. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes and will consist of 15 questions.

1. How did you become a development officer at your institution?
2. How long have you served in this position? Tell what you like/enjoy about being a development officer.
3. How has your academic and/or professional journey prepared you for your work as a development officer?
4. What is your role as a development professional? *Please describe your job responsibilities.
5. What role does your racial/ethnic identity play in your life and work?
6. What would you consider to be a success of our job as a development officer? Can you describe those successes? Please include quantitative successes such as meeting or exceeding campaign targets as well as anecdotal successes.
7. What strategies have you used to achieve those successes? Are there any groups or support mechanisms that have contributed to your success? If so, what groups or mechanisms?
8. What challenges have you faced as an African American development officer? Can you describe those challenges?
9. How have you navigated the challenges you faced as an African American development professional? What strategies did you use?

10. Has your racial background played a factor as you achieved success and faced obstacles? If so, how?

11. How has your self-awareness of your racial identity developed or changed as a professional?

12. Do you think diversity is important in the higher education development profession? If so, why?

13. Do you have any advice or recommendation for burgeoning development officers? Would that change if I asked for advice for burgeoning African American development officers?

14. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

15. Do you have any questions for me?

This concludes the interview; may I contact you if I need to clarify anything?

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this study.

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Anthony L. Heaven completed two Bachelor of Arts degrees at Stillman College; one in History and the other in Religion/Theology. He received his Master's of Education degree in Educational Administration from The University of Texas at Austin. He has experience working in various areas within higher education, but he is particularly passionate about development/fundraising and college student success. His research interests include the experiences of minority higher education development professionals and administrators, and diversity, equity, access issues within Higher Education. In August of 2017, he earned a doctorate from the Program in Higher Education Leadership at The University of Texas at Austin.

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