ABSTRACT

BLUMELL, CHARLA ANNE. The Climate Experiences of African American Women Community College Faculty in North Carolina. (Under the direction of Tuere Bowles, PhD and Amy Orders EdD).

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the experiences of African American women community college faculty in North Carolina, and their perceptions of climate. The primary source of data for this study was obtained via semi-structured interviews of 10 purposefully selected African American women community college faculty. Participants ranged in age from 31-55 years and identified as part-time or full-time instructors. Secondary data obtained for this study included field notes, and document analysis. The research questions that guided this study included: 1) What are the incentives for African American women faculty in community colleges? 2) What are the barriers for African American women faculty in community colleges? 3) What environmental conditions affect the work experiences of African American women faculty in community colleges?

The constant comparative method was used to analyze the data, which in turn revealed several findings. The following themes resulted from the findings: 1) awards and recognition, 2) engaging students, 3) institutional administrative relationships, 4) lack of institutional support, 5) unchallenged institutional practices, 6) professional relationships, and 7) navigating uncertainty and complexity in the workplace.

Two conclusions were drawn from the findings. Communication with students, peers, and supervisors was vital to the faculty in feeling connected, supported and valued at their institution. Discrimination of any kind was a hindrance to the faculty members’ ability to thrive. African American women faculty members, regardless of internal or external barriers
within their institutions, continue to persevere. The conclusions of this study are beneficial to institutions of higher learning, specifically community colleges.
The Climate Experiences of African American Women Community College Faculty in North Carolina

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Adult and Community College Education

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DEDICATION

To the African American women who selflessly shared their lives, hopes, and dreams and allowed me to give voice to their journeys. And to all the women who came before them and those that will come after them for their resilience, tireless efforts, and amazing ability to thrive in the face of adversity. I dedicate this work to all of you.
BIOGRAPHY

Charla Anne Blumell was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1978. She graduated from Cary High School in Cary, North Carolina, in 1996 and went on to attend East Carolina University, where she graduated in 2001 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Child Development. After completing her undergraduate degree, Charla decided to obtain her Master’s degree in Health Education with a concentration in Alcohol and Drug studies, also at East Carolina University. She completed this degree in 2003. She has been an instructor at this institution for over a decade and also worked at the local hospital for five years in employee/adult wellness from 2003 to 2008. Charla has managed to marry her experience with children’s studies and health education seamlessly. Her diverse education has allowed for unique experiences working with various communities. Charla also actively engages in service at the university and beyond.

In 2008, Charla began her doctoral studies at North Carolina State University. This dissertation is a labor of love, involving academic research and her passion for equity universally. Charla’s research interest in climate and job satisfaction, specifically related to African American women, is rooted in her goal to provide a voice for the voiceless and the continued pursuit of social justice. She believes all women are powerful beyond measure, and as long as they believe it, they will continue to be powerful.

Charla currently lives in Garner with her partner. Outside of professional responsibilities and school, she participates in several civic organizations and volunteers for
non-profit events. In her spare time, Charla loves to cook and entertain family and friends. It is also important to her to exercise regularly and travel as much as her schedule allows.
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To my parents Charles and Patricia, you’re simply amazing. You have always been my rocks and safety net. I love you and I am truly blessed to have you both. My brothers Earzy and Michael, it’s so good to be the middle sister. You both always have my back and continually support all my endeavors. Thank you and I love you too. My sister Stacey, I love
you and appreciate your sense of humor and being a welcomed distraction when I was tired of everything. Thank you sis.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Capturing the essence of climate in modern higher education is best depicted by Dennison (1996), as the perceptions of organizations or workplace environments that members of academic institutions have on the social, political, and physical nature of their personal relationships, affecting their ability to work within the bounds of specific organizations. Climate has been shaped by a myriad of events in the last forty years. In the era of Title IX, passed in 1972, higher education experienced unprecedented change in the landscape of faculty members (National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education [NCWGE], 2012). The landscape of the university, college and community college systems, identifying with climate change of the times, witnessed an increasing presence of both women and ethnically diverse faculty members, contributing to an evolving institutional climate.

Progressively over the past four decades, professional females assuming the role of institutional administrators witnessed a small, but noted growth as well, as depicted by the 5% increase in women college and university presidents (Associations of American Colleges and Universities [AACU], 2011). Through the early 1980s and mid-1990s, the presence of female instructors within higher education was increasing markedly, experiencing a 53.5% growth (National Center for Education Statistics [NCSES], 1996). By the mid to late 1990s, academic areas formerly associated with or perceived as women’s, such as humanities, liberal arts and select medical areas, including nursing, where no longer the only focus of women academic leaders. The paradigm shift incorporated more women into science,
technology, engineering and mathematic, with the most prominent gains being in social sciences, psychology, and biological and agricultural sciences (Babco & Ellis, 2006). Inclusive of the classroom and administrative academic board rooms, the academic climate was experiencing a shift, creating a precedence to better understand the comfort levels of women faculty members within their institution.

According to Smith and Schonfeld (2000), the broadening of academic climate is noted with the implementation of critical mass, contextualized as the hiring of women faculty, mentors and role models of various ethnicities that mirror the dynamic student population in higher education. However, full faculty inclusion and participation are not mitigated by mere accumulation or increase in numbers. Hughes (2001) acknowledges the need for diversified faculty as higher education continues its diversification and thus, fosters increased opportunities for faculty networking and inclusion, resulting in improved campus climate. This notion is highly suggestive that the more welcoming the climate, the more likely for institutional diversity. Notably, this in turn leads to women faculty, more pointedly African American women faculty’s ability to successfully align with the overall academic climate of their perspective institutions (King & Watts, 2004; Phillips-Morrow, Burris-Kitchen & DerKarabetian, 2000; Piercy et al., 2005). However, overall academic climate only addresses limited aspects within educational contexts, whereas other specific societal factors, such as racism, tokenism and sexism potentially contribute to the unspoken discomfort, limited critical mass and presence of these women academicians.
New opportunities to engage in instruction, research, and leadership enveloped a greater population of African American women faculty’s experiences, expertise and opportunities for contribution. As such, feeling welcome or included is defined by both tangibles, such as pay equity, representation, project participation (August & Waltman, 2004; Hagedorn, 2000) and intangibles, including having a voice, informal mentoring, respect, and collegiality (Bova, 2000; Combs, 2003; Fields, 1996; Moses, 1997; Settles, Cortina, Stewart & Malley, 2007). The inclusion of African American women faculty is dependent on many dynamic variables with workplace climate at their institution being most critical (King & Watts, 2004; Phillips-Morrow, Burris-Kitchen & DerKarabetian, 2000; Piercy et al., 2005). Collectively, ingratiation of these African American women faculty members into the academic fold undergirds institutional strength and ultimate success of attracting more diverse faculty and future leaders.

Further, research indicates a connection between workplace climate and overall job satisfaction. Select studies delineate pervasive sexism within a workplace climate correlates to lower job satisfaction for African American women faculty (Mansfield, et al., 2007; Settles, Cortina, Stewart & Malley, 2007), whereas further research also concludes that negative climates may influence job satisfaction by increasing the probability that discriminatory behaviors will occur (Settles et al., 2007). Moreover, there is a demarcated connectedness and significance of personal voice, climate, and job satisfaction. According to Settles et al. (2007), having a voice creates a buffer for job satisfaction from the negativity of a poor climate. Turner Sotello-Viernes and Myers (2000) specifically studied institutional
climate and faculty of color, including African American women faculty, whereas these faculty members reported an unwelcoming climate related to denial of tenure/promotion predicated upon race or ethnicity, lending to decreased job satisfaction. Turner Sotello-Viernes and Myers (2000) further linked the concerns of a chilly climate and lower job satisfaction indicating that African American women faculty are more likely to have poor experiences in academia that affect their job satisfaction.

According to Bozeman and Gaughan (2011), the highest levels of job satisfaction are experienced by White male faculty, whereas the satisfaction of African American women faculty and other races has been stunted. Other scholars, examining female faculty, job satisfaction, and higher education work environments, report lower satisfaction in several other areas of the profession including pay, promotion, benefits and overall job satisfaction (Association of American University Professors [AAUP], 2004; Hagedorn, 1996, 2000; Tack & Patitu, 1992; Sabharwal & Corley, 2009; Settles et al., 2006). Specific research on faculty of color, especially African American women in community colleges, indicates a chilly academic climate and the link to lower job satisfaction stems from lack of promotion, being overworked, and professional tokenization (Fields, 1996; Moses, 1997; Turner, Sotello-Viernes, & Myers, 2000). The link between academic climate and job satisfaction for African American women faculty in this specific context is apparent.

**Statement of the Problem**

While national statistics indicate some representation of African American faculty and leaders in higher education, pointed institutional research clearly indicates these African
American women faculty are missing (Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009; NCES, 2011; Opp & Gosetti, 2002). There is little qualitative or quantitative data to aptly understand the aspects of both climate and job satisfaction that may contribute to the overall diminished representation of this population in community colleges specifically (Hagedorn & Laden, 2002; Lester, 2009). The available literature does not fully substantiate or better contextualize African American women faculty’s climate and job satisfaction in community colleges.

Preliminary indicators of academic climate and job satisfaction are assessed with available empirical evidence and scholarly literature (Jayakumar et al., 2009; Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Nieman & Dovidio, 2005; Olsen, Maple, & Stage, 1995; Turner, Sotello-Viernes, & Myers, 2000). However, a qualitative analysis of climate and job satisfaction, as evinced by triggers, mediators and other environmental conditions experienced by these women provides insight into diminished representation of African American women faculty in North Carolina community colleges. Research to explore this issue is crucial to increasing our understanding of the experiences of African American women faculty teaching in the community college, revealing how African American women faculty in this context not only handle inequities related to their profession, but how they discuss race and gender, along with the effects to their overall academic experiences, underpins the importance of further research.

This descriptive study included semi-structured interviews with African American women faculty in North Carolina Community Colleges. Further, the interview guide was
developed utilizing Hagedorn’s (2000) conceptual framework of identifying triggers and mediators to capture job satisfaction of faculty. Ultimately, the findings from this study are meant to bolster the literature that informs climate and job satisfaction for African American women faculty in community colleges.

**Rationale for the Study**

A gap in the literature exists and fails to adequately explore the unique experiences and detailed perceptions of community college African American women faculty related to institutional climate and job satisfaction. The increased hiring and retention of these faculty members is contingent, to some degree, upon understanding the climate and scope of job satisfaction in higher education, as it relates to African American women faculty. Attaining a better understanding of why African American women faculty, specifically in North Carolina community colleges are wholly underrepresented, as suggested in the literature (NCES, 2011). In a large urban community college, with over 400 faculty members, only 7% of the full-time faculty represented African American women, compared to a medium urban community college with over 200 faculty members, approximately 10% of the full-time faculty represented African American women (NCES, 2011). These numbers are similar or smaller within the rural community colleges in the state.

Another aspect of this study sought to explain why academic climate continues to be influential in the job satisfaction of women faculty, as indicated by previous research outlining the relationship between campus diversity, warm and supportive climates, equating to women faculty surviving and thriving at all levels of academia (August & Waltman, 2004;
Petrie & Roman, 2004; Tack & Patitu, 1992). Findings from studies indicate a correlation between job satisfaction and climate, as having a direct bearing on success of these African American women faculty. Introspection or reflection of all influencing factors helps to fully define this correlation.

Increased experience, professional acclaim and accolades will contribute to more African American women faculty in North Carolina community colleges ascending the academic administrative ranks, breaking glass ceilings and challenging the higher education status quo. Select depressed and underrepresented faculty populations in specific disciplines of study in higher education may also contribute to the complex climate for these women and the unique challenges to heightened professional inclusion and enhanced success.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of African American women faculty in community colleges and their perceptions of climate. By reviewing the perceptions of these African American women faculty regarding their individual institutional climate, this study helps illustrate what significance climate, as interwoven job satisfaction, have on their success and job retention. Assumptions for this research include potential subjectivity and bias of the researcher, as well as the participants, and that the context and answers to the research questions will not be made-up due to discomfort or concern for participation.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the incentives for African American women faculty in community colleges?
2. What are the barriers for African American women faculty members in community colleges?

3. What environmental conditions affect the job satisfaction of African American women faculty in community colleges?

The research questions were defined by the need to explore narratives from the participants, using a basic interpretive analysis of the narratives as the most appropriate design option for this study, since qualitative researchers capture the personal stories and descriptions of their participants, eliciting rich details and delicate perspectives of their everyday realities (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Interviews were completed in participant’s settings of choice, usually a workplace location or neighboring facility, thus covering numerous different locations in North Carolina.

**Conceptual Framework**

Hagedorn’s (2000) framework identifies triggers and mediators to capture job satisfaction of faculty. The framework is ideal for categorizing the factors related to job satisfaction and addressing the specific triggers and motivators experienced by the African American women in this study. Job satisfaction in this context is related to the overall climate perceived by these women. Within the framework, there are three mediators, 1) motivators and hygienes, 2) demographics, and 3) environmental conditions. These mediators are the variables that influence a relationship between other variables or situations, impacting their relationships, most specifically relationships within the work environment. The six triggers represented in the framework consist of change or transfer personally or professionally, as
experienced by the individual. The triggers are significant life events, related or unrelated to their job. This framework outlines the potential effect of motivators (incentives) and hygiene’s (barriers) on job satisfaction, a factor connected to climate, therefore utilized in this study.

**Significance of the Study**

By exploring the experiences of African American women faculty in the community college, this qualitative study provided a practical significance to the literature that contributes to the understanding of campus and individual challenges experienced by African American women faculty. It also captures various performance strategies employed by these women that affect their job satisfaction and allow them to continually persevere.

The current literature describes climate of 4-year university faculty of color and some community college faculty of color, but not in any noted depth on African American women community college faculty from a qualitative perspective. Bozeman and Gaughan (2011) researched job satisfaction and White males, compared to women and other races. Harley (2008) addressed race fatigue and African American women faculty at predominantly White institutions. Opp and Gosetti (2002) researched women faculty members at two-year institutions and discovered growth for women of color was minimal. However, this research was conducted over a decade ago, in a different socioeconomic and political context. Prior to Opp and Gosetti (2002), Turner Sotello-Viernes and Myers (2000) linked a poor academic climate to job satisfaction, but this research included all faculty of color. Only later did
Turner Sotello-Vierne (2002) conduct research for women of color specifically, African American women faculty included. This study’s practical significance can extend beyond African American women faculty, it is also for administrations, program directors, and diversity officers and any other professional dedicated to the social equity of their campus. Through semi-structured interviews and data analysis, this qualitative study explored the experiences of these women. Additionally, this qualitative research was necessary in order to provide another view of the present phenomena. The available literature that marries climate to African American women faculty in community colleges to a cornerstone of job satisfaction is mostly quantitative. This qualitative method ensured an opportunity to explore the experiences of this population through their own voices and contribute extensively to the literature from the faculty member’s perspective.

**Definition of Terms**

Several key terms will be used throughout this dissertation. To ensure a shared understanding of these terms, the following definitions are offered:

**Community College:** A 2-year, government-supported college that offers an associate degree (Associations of American Colleges and Universities [AACU], 2011).

**Faculty of Color:** A college or university faculty members who identifies as African American, Asian American, Latino, Native American, or Multiracial; also referred to as members of underrepresented groups or diverse faculty (Whetsel-Ribeau, 2007).
**Full-time Faculty:** These faculty members have long-term contracts, teaching for the duration of the academic year, with more control of their teaching schedule. At times, they are referred to as “permanent”, full-time, fixed termed faculty (Association of American University Professors [AAUP], 2004).

**Organizational or workplace climate:** Climate that refers to the perceptions of the organizations or workplaces members on the social, political, and physical nature of their personal relationships affecting their ability to work within the organization (Denison, 1996). For the purpose of this study workplace or academic climate will be used to describe climate from a faculty member’s perspective.

**Part-time/Adjunct Faculty:** These faculty members either have short-term contracts, teaching for one term, or teaching many courses from term to the next, often lacking control of their teaching schedule. At times they are referred to as “part-time,” but they are not the same as permanent part-time faculty in a particular department (AAUP, 2009).

**Racism:** A system of advantage based on race or societal advantages based on race (Bonilla Silva, 2006).

**Sexism:** This is any attitude, action, or institutional structure which systematically subordinates a person or group because of their sex (Russell, 1997).

Underrepresented-In this context, this is the lack of representation of faculty of color in colleges and universities (Stanley, 2006; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999).

**Tokenism:** In this context, this results when a limited number of African American women faculty are working in a college or university, and only afforded positions associated
with diversity requirements, or other duties presumed representative of her race or gender (Edwards, 1997).

**Job satisfaction:** Job satisfaction is an assessment of how much people like or dislike their job and is generally assessed as an attitudinal variable, which is a multi-faceted blend of experiences with several contributing factors (Spector, 1997).

**Triggers/Mediators:** The conceptual framework for this study defines triggers as (significant life events, related or unrelated to the job) and mediators as (variables that influence a relationship between other variables or situations that impact the relationships) that in turn interact with or affect job satisfaction (Hagedorn, 2000).

**Urban community college/Rural community college:** Representative of the geographical location of the institution, the Carnegie Classification uses the term serving, (e.g., suburban-serving) in order to categorize the majority of public community colleges’ geographical areas that are defined by state regulations or custom (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007). For the purpose of this study, the terms suburban, urban, and rural were used in place of the Carnegie classifications of suburban-serving, urban-serving, and rural-serving.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of African American women community college faculty and their perceptions of climate. In order to gain a better understanding of these experiences, this research focused on the specific incentives and barriers perceived by the faculty. This review of literature is divided into three sections. The first section includes a brief overview of the community college system in North Carolina as well as the number of African American women faculty in the system and in the six colleges selected for this study. The second section covers race and gender issues regarding African American women in higher education; this section addresses history, experiences, and the importance of diversity, climate, and the community college. The third section is an exploration of job satisfaction, mentoring, and the need for faculty support. To conclude the chapter, a summation of the literature review will demonstrate the relationship to the present study of the experiences of African American women faculty in community college.

Overview of Community Colleges in North Carolina

According to the North Carolina Community College System (2008), community college is a top source for job training; literacy development and adult education in North Carolina. Community colleges across the state provide many key resources to address the needs of its citizens totaling 58 institutions, supporting more than 850,000 people annually. Post World War II, the state of North Carolina experienced a profound change from a mostly agricultural community to an industrial one. With this change, varying types of education were needed to foster a thriving state economy for its citizens. A study was conducted in
1950 to determine if a tax-supported community college could be developed by the state, this study revealed that tax-supported community colleges could be sustained, and in 1957 the first Community College Act was adopted. By the early 1960s, North Carolina implemented seven education centers that focused on providing technical and vocational education, in addition to five arts and sciences public junior colleges (NCCCS, 2008).

In 1962, the two types of institutions were combined and unified under one administrative system dedicated to post-high school education—the community college. North Carolina had 43 community colleges by 1966 with over 28,000 full-time equivalent enrollments. Three years later in 1969, the system included 54 community colleges and 59,000 full-time equivalent enrollments (NCCCS, 2008). As of the 2010-2011 academic year, the North Carolina Community College System was comprised of 58 community colleges and over 850,000 students; approximately 1 in 9 North Carolina citizens over 18 years of age attends one.

Officially becoming a designated board in 1981, The State Board of Community Colleges then assumed actual governance over the 58 institutions. Today, the board still has complete authority over the adoption of all policies, regulations, and specific standards required to operate the Community College System (NCCCS, 2008). The board consists of 21 members; 10 of those are appointed by the Governor—six of them representing the six regions across the state, while the remaining four, serve on an at-large basis (NCCCS, 2008). This system provides some of the most valuable tools required for adult learners, to gain access to education and learn the skills to gain otherwise unobtainable employment. As the
community college enrollment continues to grow and the demographics of its student population undergo change, diversifying the faculty remains a timely subject.

In order to understand the current faculty diversity within the North Carolina Community College System, it is important to outline the numbers. The last produced NCCCS fact book accessible by the general population was in 2008; this fact book lists the institutional effectiveness plan guidelines for all 58 community colleges. These guidelines represent the minimum mandates required by the state, and federal government. Of the four guidelines, one mentions diversity: “Colleges must address any special planning mandates of the General Assembly or the State Board of Community Colleges in their plan unless other processes are developed by the System Office to meet those mandates. Currently planning mandates are in place for Technology and Diversity Plans” (NCCCS, 2008). This brief statement offers a wide range of interpretation regarding diversity. Therefore, each institution is charged with developing and possibly executing a diversity plan with minimal guidance. Beyond the 2008 fact book, the NCCCS has maintained a data warehouse that includes race and gender statistics through 2013 for all institutions combined. As of 2012-2013 in the North Carolina Community College System, 545 female faculty members were identified as Black; 3,361 female faculty members were identified as White out of a total of 4,101 female faculty members across the state (see Volume 48 of NC Colleges, 2012 to 2013, Table 79, for complete data). Therefore, according to this data, 13 percent of all female faculty members in the North Carolina Community College System identified as Black in the 2012-2013 academic year.

For this specific research, six North Carolina Community Colleges were selected; the most current data for all six institutions is located in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2011. The statistical reporting for the abovementioned colleges is representative of full-time
instruction, research, public service staff, non-tenured/not on tenure track. Of the six colleges (Community College F), the largest (totaling 351 faculty/staff), considered urban, had 10 percent of the female faculty identify as Black or African American (see Human Resources of IPEDS data center, 2011, for complete data). The smallest of the six colleges (Community College A) with 132 faculty/staff, considered rural, identified 0.08 percent as Black or African American female faculty (see Human Resources of IPEDS data center, 2011, for complete data). Interestingly, the third largest college of the six (Community College C), totaling 160 faculty/staff, also considered urban, identified 18% female faculty as Black or African American (see Human Resources of IPEDS data center, 2011, for complete data). The numbers suggest more African American female faculty members are working in urban areas, serving urban institutions, but only by a small margin. However, the numbers are not as impressive considering there were over 7,000 community college faculty members serving across the state in 2012-2013, and of those, 0.07 percent identified as Black (see Volume 48 of NC Colleges, 2012 to 2013, Table 79, for complete data).

Table 1 outlines the six community colleges represented in this study, ranked from smallest to largest, identified as Community Colleges A-F, based on total faculty members. Each college is also identified as urban or rural. The percentage indicates the number of African American women faculty as compared to all faculty members in the college. AA equates to African American women faculty, and W equates to White women faculty. In the first total column, the number recorded is the total amount of women faculty, including all races. In last total column, the number within the parentheses is the total number of women and men faculty, including all races. Again, these numbers are a clear indication that African American women community college faculty in North Carolina are underrepresented.
Table 1

*Community Colleges in North Carolina, IPEDS, 2011*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>College A rural</th>
<th>College B rural</th>
<th>College C urban</th>
<th>College D urban</th>
<th>College E rural</th>
<th>College F urban</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA-Women</td>
<td>10 (0.08%)</td>
<td>14 (11%)</td>
<td>29 (18%)</td>
<td>22 (0.010%)</td>
<td>23 (0.010%)</td>
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<td>(160)</td>
<td>(228)</td>
<td>(231)</td>
<td>(351)</td>
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**Race and Gender in Higher Education**

Historically, education was one of the few professions open to African American women. The integration of institutions of higher learning began in the 1800’s with cases such as Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education (175 U.S. 528 (1899)). In this particular case, the Court supported segregation by upholding a criminal conviction against a private college for teaching Blacks and Whites together (Welch, S., Gruhl, J., Rigdon, S. & Gruhl, J, 1996). Years later, Berea College v. Kentucky (211 U.S. 45 (1908)) challenged the state supreme court for upholding a law that forbade the teaching of Black and White students in the same classroom and in 1948, Sipuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma involved an African American woman being denied admission to a state-supported law institution. The Supreme Court ultimately decided that dividing students by race in graduate schools was not in line with the legal standards of separate but equal. In
order to address barriers created by the Separate but Equal Act, Historically Black Colleges and Universities were established.

Although African American women have been participating in higher education and progressing within the various academic disciplines, they still continue to face many personal and professional barriers, especially in Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) (Gregory, 2001). Multiple scholars outline the numerous barriers placed before African American students, faculty, and staff (Gordon 2004; Gregory, 2001; Henderson, 2005; Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Nicols & Tanksley, 2004; Simpson, 2001). Barriers faced by African American women faculty include a lack of support, minimal hiring and promotion (Edwards & Camblin, 1998), isolation, tokenism (Benjamin, 1997; Edwards, 1997; Moses, 1989), sexism and racism (Greene, 2000; Harley, 2008; Moses, 1989).

These barriers are not new to this population and have been in place since the few African American women graduates of the 1850’s sought employment. These barriers continue to hinder African American women faculty members’ ability to fully contribute in the realm of higher education (Elman, 1991). Mosley’s (1980) work specifically addresses African American women in leadership positions in higher education. At the time of Mosley’s study, African American women were small in number, positioned with little power, and lacked collegial support, these barriers continued into the 1990’s according to the research.

The problems associated with teaching, support, retention and tenure continue to chill the climate in academia for these professionals (Benjamin, 1997; Hall & Sandler, 1986;
Henry & Nixon, 1994; Moses, 1989; Smith, 1999). As African American women have moved into the 21st century, little has changed. For example, when looking at the number of faculty members of color in higher education, the minimal amount of representation is quite daunting. There were 176,485 tenured full professors at the nation’s public and private research universities, and only 2 percent represented women of color (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

The commonality all these women share is double jeopardy (Hargrove, 1999) which, in this context, is generally defined as the position of African American women and other women of color representing two oppressed categories (Fleming 1996; Petrie & Roman, 2004) and thus facing oppression in the form of racism and sexism. Women in American society have been devalued, but African American women are “assigned a subordinate status” in addition to this devaluing (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996, p. 466 cited in Greene, 1990). This double discrimination of racism and sexism are so tightly woven as barriers, it is often difficult to decipher between the two.

Hughes and Howard-Hamilton’s (2003) research, documents the issues of racial and gender inequality for African American women in higher education. After the civil rights movement of the 1960’s and 70’s, the employment of African American women in higher education grew. However, African American women were often placed in positions as tokens and were overlooked with regard to promotion or tenure (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Camblin, 1998; Sandler, 1986). According to Sandler (1986), these positions were usually situated within multicultural affairs and/or minority affairs with no possibility of
advancement. Furthermore, once placed within these positions, African American women are expected to wear a myriad of hats, serving as teachers, researchers, and advisors. The tokenism and professional sabotage is situated in a way, that even though African American women were serving their various institutions, they had no true upward mobility and merely provided a face for diversity, without any real power.

All of these compounded societal factors illuminate what African American women faculty members are missing: support in higher education. Women and minorities have not had support groups; a benefit white male faculty traditionally receives (Merriam, 1983). They also deal with exclusion from all sides, from their white male colleagues, white female colleagues and African American male colleagues (Myers, 2002; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). More often than not, women faculty and faculty of color indicate chilly climates within their institutions or departments, feeling left out or isolated (Boice, 1993; Olsen, Maple, & Stage, 1995; Olsen & Sorcinelli, 1992). This intersectionality of sexism, racism, isolation and tokenism presents inimitable challenges for African American women in higher education; as barriers persist through the generations, these women continue to deal with the lack of support and fight discrimination on all fronts.

Sexism, Racism, Isolation, Tokenism, and Exclusion

To consider the crucial factors pertaining to African American women faculty members' experiences, we must explore the significance of exclusion, marginalization, isolation, tokenism, racism, and sexism in more detail. The aforementioned intersectional factors not only represent some of the historical barriers for African American women
faculty, they also speak to the current tensions and negative hurdles these women are subjected to today.

**Sexism and Racism**

As members of two groups, African American women faculty experience racism and sexism conjointly. This would indicate that sexism and racism are intertwined significantly, impacting climate and the job satisfaction. Women have encountered sexism—discrimination due to gender—since their inclusion in the workforce. Women are typically hired less frequently, paid significantly less, and promoted less often, than their male colleagues (Aguirre, 2000; Sandler & Hall, 1991). Furthermore, many women face more negative behavior from male colleagues, such as sexual harassment (Sandler, 1986). According to Edwards and Camblin (1998), “Though sexism can severely affect the lives of all women on campus, racism, and sexism compound the impact for African American women” (p. 33). A large part of the intersection of racism and sexism is attributable to race and gender privilege (McIntosh, 1995). More specifically, White privilege—the invisible support lent to White colleagues in terms of access and opportunities (Dillard, 2000; McIntosh, 1995; Patton, 2004). The repercussions are clear as indicated by Edwards’ (1997) and Sandler and Hall’s (1991) findings that many women receive tokenistic employment opportunities and are often passed over for promotions, especially women of color.

All forms of racism present a challenge for people of color, and appear more salient within PWI’s for African American women (Harley, 2008). A faculty member interviewed by Moses (1989) states, “Black women faculty and administrators often bear the brunt of
jokes and subtle and overt ethnic and gender insensitiveness of their colleagues” (p. 13).

Harley (2008) indicates these “African American women at PWI’s suffer from race fatigue—the syndrome of being over extended, undervalued, unappreciated” (p.21). Race fatigue is the result of institutional racism on African Americans and other people of color. Institutional racism at its core may signify the worst form of racism for African American women faculty. Despite entrance into the halls of academia and the earning of advance degrees, the tension and negative hurdles remain, shrouded in isolation, exclusion, marginalization, and oppression.

**Isolation and Tokenism**

African American women in higher education may experience isolation within their departments or institutions often, being the only African American or woman, or both (Aguirre 2000; Fields, 1996; Moses, 1997; Sandler, 1986). According to Sandler (1986), “Isolation is an especially pertinent issue for minority women, who often suffer extreme isolation because of their miniscule number [within their respective institutions]” (p. 193). Furthermore, this group is often left out of department decisions like the hiring of new faculty members or curriculum reviews, unless the activity is a “minority” issue specifically (Fields 1996; Moses, 1997). This concept mirrors covert racism, but is specifically referenced as tokenism within the literature (Moses, 1997; Olsen, Maple, & Stage 1995). Carroll (1982) writes:

Black women in higher education are isolated, underutilized, and often discouraged.

They note the efforts made to provide equal opportunities for black men and white
women in higher education, while they somehow are left behind in the work of the black and feminist movement. (p. 115)

Unfortunately, this creates another issue for African American women in higher education: tokenism. Tokenism results when a limited number of women and women of color are working in a department, but only afforded positions associated with diversity requirements, or other duties presumed representative of her race or gender. Edwards (1997) explains:

African American women are at once more visible and equally isolated due to racial and gender differences. The token woman often finds herself in situations where she is made aware of her unique status as the only African American female present, yet feels compelled to behave as though these differences do not exist. (p. 33)

Another caveat of tokenism appears when African American women faculty are asked to serve in a capacity that is representative of all African Americans, as though they are the authority regarding all African American issues. Moses (1989) provides an example given by a study participant:

When I first arrived at the university I enjoyed the attention I received. After a short while, however, I realized that the responsibility associated with being the only black female in my college, and only one of handful in the university, was overwhelming. (p. 16)

This situation creates even larger barriers to inclusion for these women, thus the isolation and tokenism together prevent women of color from participating fully in their work role and developing professionally, in comparison to their white male colleagues (Moses, 1989, 1997;
Sandler, 1986). Fortunately, there are some tools afforded African American women faculty, such as mentoring, inclusion, and resistance (Jordan, 2005). These tools or strategies provide a bridge over the isolation and other such barriers while adjusting the temperature of the academic climate.

**Faculty Diversity, Climate and Higher Education**

African Americans’ presence within the community college setting has reached an all-time high (Blau, 1999). However, by comparison to other minorities and Whites, African Americans continue to be underrepresented as administrators, faculty and students. This underrepresentation is a reflection of the many abovementioned barriers that African Americans continue to face within higher education (Gordon 2004; Gregory, 2001; Henderson, 2005; Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Nicols & Tanksley, 2004; Simpson, 2001).

**Faculty Diversity**

An argument can be made that diversifying the faculty and administration within the institutions of higher education is equally as important as diversifying the student body. According to Villegas and Clewell (as cited in Newby, et al., 2000):

The presence of African American teachers gives students of color hope that they too can grow up to occupy responsible positions in our society. White students can also benefit from a racially and ethnically diverse teaching force. By seeing people of color in professional roles, white youngsters are helped to dispel myths of racial
inferiority and incompetence that many have come to internalize about people of color. (p. 2)

The idea of having African American faculty at institutions of higher learning in order to improve the success of African American students is critical (Bogen & Orfield, 2005; Colby & Foote, 1996; Linthicum, 1989; Newby, Swift, & Newby, 2000; Opp & Smith, 1994). Linthicum (1989) notes two major advantages of increasing the numbers of African American faculty at the community college level: (1) an increase in the educational aspirations of African American students, and (2) Caucasian students are more likely to overcome prejudices about the intellectual competence of people of color. Opp and Smith’s (1994) research concludes that there is a need for more African American faculty, reporting “the need for minority representation among full-time faculty in this sector critical” (p. 147).

In addition to the authors’ call to action, changes in policy at the state and local levels must improve in order to increase the hiring of African American faculty. Policy reform will have a positive effect by increasing African American faculty populations within the community colleges, possibly leading to more success in recruiting and retaining African American students.

Colby and Foote (1996) suggest that a “diverse faculty provides an effective and visible support system for the increasingly diverse population” (p. 3). They further attest that “minority faculty act as role models, advisors, and advocates for minority students while they expose majority students to new ideas” (p. 3). African American women faculty and other faculty of color can serve as mentors, advocates, and examples to all their students in
addition to assisting them in achieving academic success. Additionally, the benefits of having African American women faculty as role models and mentors include helping prepare students of color for leadership roles and conducting scholarly work related to people of color (Aguirre, 2000; Gregory, 2001). This not only expands the students’ epistemology, it allows the African American women faculty to act as buffers to historical and contemporary misrepresentations of people of color (Aguirre, 2000; Gregory, 2001). Having diverse faculty, especially African American women faculty, lends itself to positively supporting the student body.

**Climate and the Community College**

The academic climate is one of the main factors influencing job satisfaction for African American women faculty. Research indicates that White male faculty members, the majority population in academia, have the highest levels of job satisfaction compared to women and other races (Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011). This information supports the history and ideology of the academy aligning with ideals, values, and beliefs found primarily among White males. Furthermore, history indicates that administrative and instructor roles in higher education were not established with women or other races in mind. Notably, in this environment of higher education where African American women are seeking job satisfaction, they are often met with disdain (Harley, 2008).

According to Opp and Gosetti (2002), women faculty members at two-year institutions increased in number from 44.4 percent to 47.5 percent from 1991-1997. This is a growth of 3.1 percent; however, the growth indicated here is not representative of African
American women. White women faculty fared much better in the hiring process across all categories of two-year institutions, with an increase in the mean of 2.39 percent from 1991-1997. The change for African American women faculty and other women faculty of color was less than one percent combined (Opp & Gosetti, 2002).

Even if community colleges actively recruit faculty to reflect the diversity of a growing student population, the level of satisfaction experienced by these faculty members is poor (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Nieman & Dovidio, 2005). Previous studies indicate that faculty members of color contend with many barriers that impact their job satisfaction, undergirded by climate (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Nieman & Dovidio, 2005; Olsen, Maple, & Stage, 1995). Unfortunately, African American faculty in general have to cope with racial insensitivity and often the ignorance of colleagues, administrators, staff, and the students within the institutions where they are employed (Harley, 2008). Harley declares (2008):

African American faculty members tend to experience greater amounts of stress in the areas of promotion concerns (e.g., review and promotion process, research and publishing demands, subtle discrimination), time constraints (e.g., lack of personal time, time pressures, teaching load), and governance activities (e.g., faculty meetings, committee work, consulting with colleagues). (p. 26)

As indicated in the excerpt above, researchers have found that women and faculty of color, as compared to white faculty, experience different types of climate (Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011; Harvey, 1994; Turner, Sotello-Viernes, & Myers, 2000). Turner Sotello-Viernes and Myers (2000) specifically studied institutional climate and faculty of color. These faculty
members reported an unwelcoming presence related to denial of tenure/promotion predicated upon race or ethnicity, an expectation to work harder than their White colleagues, as well as an expectation to handle minority issues. Turner, Sotello-Viernes & Myers (2000) linked these concerns with a chilly climate and lower job satisfaction. This is one indication that faculty of color are more likely to have poor experiences in academia that affect their job satisfaction.

Current hiring practices within the community college indicate that more faculty members are being hired as part-time due to restructuring. Reichard (1997) states, “Over the past twenty-five years, U.S. colleges and universities have substantially increased their reliance on part-time and adjunct faculty instruction” (p. 1). According to the AAUP (1997), these part-time and adjunct faculty members often work in substandard conditions, defined by: (1) the lack of offices, telephones, or remuneration for office hours; (2) less access to computer resources and clerical support; (3) fewer opportunities to receive regular evaluation and feedback from professional colleagues or to interact with colleagues; (4) little or no service on committees, inability to participate in faculty governance, attend professional conferences, or engage in research; and (5) a lack of job security or notice regarding employment, class scheduling, or professional expectations. These working conditions for faculty are deemed reprehensible, and understandably, this group within the community college may feel more exploited than their full-time and/or tenured faculty colleagues.

Therefore, African American women at the community college who already expressed the feelings of marginalization, isolation, and discrimination (Boice, 1992; Boice, 1993; Olsen,
et al., 1995; Olsen & Sorcinelli, 1992) related to gender and race, coping with part-time and adjunct substandard working conditions is unfathomable.

There are several studies indicating the significance of the relationship between race, gender, and job satisfaction, undergirded by climate (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Niemann & Dovidio, 2005; Olsen et al., 1995; Petrie & Roman, 2004; Tack & Patitu, 1992). For example, Olsen et al. (1995) discovered that for women and minority faculty, job satisfaction was impacted by an individual’s control over his or her career and university support and faculty’s relationship with their department and work contexts, the support and relationships are predicated by campus climate. These needs are not unique among community college faculty members, but apparently are lacking for many women faculty and faculty of color.

**Job Satisfaction**

Fredrick Taylor (1947), who originally started the research on job satisfaction in the late 1900s, watched people carry out their work tasks and outlined ineffective and unnecessary job behaviors. Taylor’s (1947) scientific four tenets of management included 1) finding the best way to perform a job, 2) efficient personnel selection and placement, 3) stringent division of labor between workers and management, and 4) economic incentives to motivate and attract workers. Taylor’s work created the foundation for organizational efficiency and assumed the principle that workers with decent jobs connected to suitable wages will work at peak performance.

The workers’ behaviors suggest that social influences within work groups had more effect on worker productivity than other measures (Kinicki, & Kreitner, 2003). These studies,
although interesting, only tell part of the story. Other early theories of job satisfaction suggest an employee’s satisfaction is related to personal needs, feelings and attitudes about their jobs (Herzberg, 1966; Kalleberg, 1977; Locke, 1976).

An Intersection of Theories, Concepts, and Frameworks on Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an assessment of how much people like or dislike their jobs. Spector, (1997) states that job satisfaction is generally assessed as an attitudinal variable, which is a multi-faceted blend of experiences with several contributing factors. Two main categories or classifications, group the job satisfaction theories as either “content” or “process” theories (Campbell, Dunnettee, Lawler, & Weik 1970). Content theories attempt to explain the factors that influence job satisfaction by identifying the specific needs or values most advantageous to job satisfaction and explaining their effects (Herzberg, 1966; Maslow, 1943). On the other hand, process theories attempt to give an account of the process in which expectations, needs, or values relate to the distinctiveness of a job in order to foster job satisfaction (Locke, 1976). In order to understand the full scope of job satisfaction and its relevance to higher education, Maslow’s (1943, 1970) hierarchy of needs, Herzberg’s (1966) two-factor theory, and Locke’s (1976) affective theory will be discussed as they represent the classic theories of job satisfaction and have served as the foundation of much of the research informing the field of education. First, Hagedorn’s (2000) framework will be described, as it was used in this study to provide additional insight regarding climate as perceived by the research participants.
Hagedorn’s Conceptual Framework

For this purposes of this research, the framework from Hagedorn (2000), which stems from Herzberg’s (1966) theory, was used as a lens to further investigate African American women community college faculty members’ perceptions of climate and how incentives and barriers shaped their job satisfaction. Her study of faculty satisfaction was conducted on college and university faculty members from the National Study of Postsecondary faculty (1993) and has a sound basis in the literature; its methods are able to be adapted to the community college setting. Therefore, Hagedorn’s (2000) conceptual framework was also utilized in order to explore the literature on community colleges and job satisfaction through a lens that is more inclusive and able to address some of the variance found in job satisfaction research, adding to the current body of knowledge.

The flexibility of Hagedorn’s framework and its being more recent made it appropriate to apply to community college faculty members. Her framework contains triggers (significant life events, related or unrelated to the job) and mediators (variables that influence a relationship between other variables or situations that impact the relationships) that in turn interact with or affect job satisfaction. There are three mediators within this framework 1) motivators and hygienes, 2) demographics, and 3) environmental conditions. Motivators and hygienes are representative of achievement, recognition, work itself, and responsibility/advancement/salary. The demographics include gender, ethnicity, institutional type, and academic discipline. Environmental conditions represent collegial relationships, student quality or relationships, administration, and institutional climate or culture. The six
triggers within the framework are 1) change in life stage, 2) change in family related or related to personal circumstances, 3) change in rank or tenure, 4) transfer to a new institution, 5) change in perceived justice, and 6) change in mood or mental state. All are indicative of personal or professional change and their effects on the individual’s job satisfaction.

Recent support of Hagedorn’s framework from Schulz’s (2009) study of adjunct faculty within a community college proves applicability in its findings and the population studied. Schulz’s (2009) findings suggest that faculty who perceived a higher level of justice within their institutions reported higher levels of job satisfaction. For African American women faculty, being committed to equity and social justice is key (Jordan, 1995) and investigating their experience of justice in the workplace as it relates to job satisfaction matters.

For this study, faculty satisfaction refers to job satisfaction of African American women community college faculty. The conceptual framework, as developed by Hagedorn (2000), is outlined in Figure 1. This framework outlines the potential effect of motivators (incentives) and hygiene’s (barriers) on job satisfaction of the aforementioned population.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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**Job Satisfaction Continuum**

- Disengagement
- Acceptance/tolerance
- Appreciate of job
- Actively engaged in work

*Figure 1.* Hagedorn Conceptual Framework of Faculty Job Satisfaction (Hagedorn, 2000, p. 7)

This study, in part, is a modification of Hagedorn’s framework highlighting the job satisfaction of African American women faculty in the community college. Researching job
satisfaction for specific populations is difficult, therefore, being able to assess it with various research tools can only enrich the information gathered.

**Maslow’s Theory**

Content theories were derived in order to identify the specific factors within a person’s environment that strengthen or maintain behavior. More to the point, theorists who subscribe to content theory want to know what motivates people. According to Maslow (1970), individuals were driven by unsatisfied needs and this shaped their behavior. In terms of job satisfaction, Maslow (1943) suggested that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction share a single continuum, reasoning that intrinsic and extrinsic factors are capable of creating satisfaction and dissatisfaction. His theory maintained human needs from a five-level hierarchy: physiological needs, safety needs, belonging, love, esteem and self-actualization. The hierarchy described by Maslow claims that once the most basic needs are met (physiological), humans will continue to move towards the next need or level in the sequence. On the other hand, if a prior need is in jeopardy, the individual moves to regain that need in order to continue moving through the levels.

Critics Wahba and Bridwell (1976) found minimal evidence for the ranking of needs or a specific hierarchy at all. Nonetheless, Maslow’s theory is supported by Herzberg’s two-factor theory, and is even seen as improvement over other theories on motivation

**Herzberg’s Theory**

Herzberg, Mausner, Patterson, and Capwell (1957) used Maslow’s needs hierarchy to devise a theory of employee motivation. Herzberg (1966) continued this work describing the
two-factor theory which influences employees. The first factor is described as the motivator, such as achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement. The second factor is described as “hygienes,” such as company rules, supervision, working environment and peer relationships. Motivating factors promote higher performance and commitment, whereas hygiene factors affect satisfaction by negatively impacting motivation (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). This theory also suggests that intrinsic job motivators such as recognition and autonomy confirm satisfaction. However, if these are absent, it does not necessarily cause dissatisfaction while extrinsic job motivators such as pay and job security may not increase satisfaction, but are required to prevent dissatisfaction (Gruneberg, 1980). To illustrate this theory further, Herzberg et al. (1959), and Herzberg (1966) identify four scenarios describing employees’ work environment:

- High hygiene + High motivation: Ideal, highly motivated employees, few complaints.
- High hygiene + Low motivation: Few complaints, lack of motivation, job is perceived as just a form of income.
- Low hygiene + High motivation: Many complaints, motivation is high; job is challenging, and stimulating, but not monetarily rewarding.
- Low hygiene + Low motivation: Many complaints, and unmotivated employees.

According to Herzberg (1968, 2003):

The very nature of motivators, as opposed to hygiene factors, is that they have a much longer-term effect on employees’ attitudes. It is possible that the job will have to be enriched again, but this will not occur as the need for the hygiene. (p. 96)
Fundamentally, Herzberg (1968, 2003) found motivators to be the primary cause of satisfaction, and hygiene factors the primary cause of job dissatisfaction. For the purpose of this study, a more detailed scholarly critique of the theory will be discussed—in part, the specific motivators as they relate to faculty, community colleges and individual characteristics of African American women faculty.

Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman’s (1959) first motivation factor, achievement is described as the opposite of failure. Research indicates that job achievement can be identified by problem solving; successful task completion, showing work evidence, and observing the result of one’s work (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Herzberg et al. reported significant levels of achievement in workers who also indicated high levels of job satisfaction.

In terms of higher education the relationship between scholarly achievement and job satisfaction is not as clear. There is some research that has measured job achievement of faculty members by their book or peer-reviewed journal publications and their conducted research within a certain time frame (August & Waltman, 2004; Hagedorn, 2000; Herzberg et al., 1959). If faculty of color and women are underutilized, (Moses, 1997; Olsen et al., 1995) or are kept too busy to be engaged in non-scholarly activities (which would limit their publications), job achievement may be jeopardized.

Recognition is the next motivator defined as an intrinsic work factor positively impacting job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1966). Within research on higher education, various types of recognition are cited such as support for teaching, service, awards, and research,
along with tenure or salary (August & Waltman, 2004; Hagedorn, 2000). Findings by Olsen, Maple, and Stage (1995) further indicate that women and minority faculty members’ overall job satisfaction was impacted by perceived recognition and institutional support.

Work itself also impacts job satisfaction, another motivator factor from Herzberg. Work itself, for faculty includes teaching, research, and service (Hagedorn, 2000; Olsen et al., 1995). The impact of work itself, relative to faculty job satisfaction may vary depending on the institution type. Research conducted by Hill (1983) with both community college and with four-year college data concluded that four-year college faculty job satisfaction resulted from work itself, whereas in the community college devoting a large amount of time to teaching, advising and committee work negatively impacted job satisfaction.

Advancement, according to Herzberg (1966) is a change in the status or position of a faculty member and is another facet of motivation. Hagedorn (2000) indicates that advancement in higher education encompasses a promotion of rank or the achievement of tenure. For faculty of color and women, gaining advancement within higher education has proven difficult, resulting in poor job satisfaction (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Perna, 2003; Tack & Patitu, 1992). For example, several studies indicate a relationship between job satisfaction and gender, regarding advancement; however, the findings vary and researchers differ on the significance of that relationship (August & Waltman, 2000; Hagedorn, 2000; Olsen et al., 1995; Tack & Patitu, 1992). Other studies regarding race and job satisfaction add another layer of complexity, pointing to significant variance even within similar populations (Flowers & Jones, 2003; Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Nieman & Dovidio, 2005;
Olsen et al, 1995; Tack & Patitu, 1992). These studies suggest a cyclical affect, between minimal advancement, race, gender, and job satisfaction. The complexity of these studies and their significance to job satisfaction are not without criticisms.

Some of Herzberg’s critics suggest that the theory does not take individual personalities into consideration, where individuals will take credit for their own motivation and blame dissatisfaction on external factors (Myers, 1964; Park, Lovrich, & Soden, 1988; Smith, 1983). In replicating Herzberg’s study, Ewen, Hulin, Smith, and Locke (1968) could not explicitly support his methods. In spite of these criticisms, several scholars support Herzberg’s theory, concluding that job satisfaction for an individual is reached if the individual’s psychological and physical needs are met (Lawler, 1970; Lodahl, 1964; Sachau, 2007). Herzberg’s work has been verified in more current studies contributing to the knowledge base of job satisfaction (Gawel, 1997; Knight & Westbrook, 2004; Wren & Greenwood, 1998). However, Locke, one of his most notable critics, is considered a major job satisfaction theorist and his contribution of Affective theory is significant.

**Locke’s Theory**

As an early critic of Herzberg, Locke described in detail, process theory and how it differs from content theory, simply by asking: how motivation happens. Process theories are designed to elucidate how the needs and goals are fulfilled and what major variables explain motivated people (Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, & Weick, 1970). Process theorists see job satisfaction and its framework within organizations, but also the values, needs and expectations that people have in relation to their work (Gruneberg, 1980). As perhaps one of
the most famous job satisfaction models, Locke’s Affective theory provides this example.

Edwin Locke (1976) maintained that job satisfaction is based on the difference between what the individual has and what the individual wants, in relation to their job. Locke’s (1976) definition claims that job satisfaction is “pleasurable or positive” (p. 1300); therefore, feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction relate to positive or negative appraisal of the job experience, an affect-based theory. The theory further states that how much an individual values a particular aspect of work such as autonomy, can affect his or her level of satisfaction when the expectation is or is not met. The more value dictated by the individual, the greater the positive or negative impact it will have on their satisfaction.

Critics of this theory explain that individual differences or distinctive characteristics among people may place more value on certain aspects of their job, in comparison to others. More research of varied populations or cultures is needed to address the differences (Judge, Hulin, & Dalaal, 2009) that are not addressed in Locke’s theory. In other words, individual differences or characteristics matter and should be further explored regarding job satisfaction; therefore, Locke’s theory was not appropriate for the present study.

**Mentoring and Faculty Support**

Laden and Hagedorn (2000) explain that mentoring within corporate arenas is quite common, but “much less in academia” although it is in the institutions’ best interest to recognize the benefit of effective mentoring (p. 64). This is even more vital for women faculty of color. Gregory’s (2001) study indicated that Black women faculty who reported having a mentor stated that it enhanced their opportunities for promotion and tenure. Padilla
and Chavez (1995) also state that many faculty of color within higher education went without the benefit of mentors as graduate students, and therefore mentoring takes on a much more critical role for them as they pursue professional mobility. In order to fully understand how vital mentoring is to the support of women faculty of color, the term mentor must be defined. According to Bauer (1999):

A mentor is anyone who provides guidance, support, knowledge, and opportunity for the protégé during periods of need and is traditionally a more senior individual who uses his or her experience and influence to help the advancement of a protégé. Mentors have been found to provide two major functions: psychosocial support and vocational/career mentoring functions. (p. 1)

For African American women faculty, this guidance and support lends itself to providing them with support networks that create warm and “hospitable academic environments” (Gregory, 2001, p. 131), where environments might otherwise be perceived as chilly and unwelcoming (Boice, 1993; Olsen, Maple, & Stage, 1995; Olsen & Sorcinelli, 1992). Research indicates that mentoring fosters career development by providing supportive colleagues, who are willing to develop new faculty and expose them to professional opportunities, all while decreasing exclusion (Bova, 2000; Combs, 2003; Fields, 1996; Moses, 1997).

In addition to mentoring, providing faculty support is another way to improve climate which, in turn, affects job satisfaction. Applied, continuous faculty development fosters faculty members’ successful growth and feeling of support. Cafferella and Zinn (1999)
highlight this in the domains of personal and interpersonal relationships as well as personal considerations and commitments. These two areas not only work to enhance professional development when strongly established. They also provide an underpinning for the support systems required by women and women of color in order to navigate within the halls of academia and, according to Gregory (2001), to “persevere in often stressful and competitive academic environments” (p. 131).

JoAnn Moody (2004), a national diversity consultant, outlines ten recommendations that will facilitate faculty support and assist “women and minority faculty to thrive and make the greatest possible contribution to the academic enterprise” (p. 47):

1. Prepare new faculty hires and the department, beginning three months before the newcomer’s arrival.

2. Strategically welcome new hires, the chair or designated faculty should visit the new faculty hire on the first day of classes.

3. Provide yearlong, campus wide orientations--extra attention should be paid to help the faculty build community within and outside their academic discipline.

4. Hold “Demystification workshops,” especially for pre-tenure faculty. Deans and chairs should lead in order to assist these faculty members in meeting tenure requirements.

5. Be consistently friendly and helpful; senior faculty are key in providing informal and valuable information.

6. Coach and assign senior faculty to mentor new or (junior) faculty.
7. Protect junior faculty (women and women of color) from excessive teaching, advising and service assignments.

8. Assess and monitor the progress of pretenure faculty as they move toward meeting tenure requirements.

9. Monitor tenure and promotion reviews. This will assist in ensuring transparency, careful decision making, and fairness.

10. Advance women and minority faculty into leadership positions. This will aid in the dismantling of glass ceilings, as prospective candidates are appropriately prepared for undertaking harder positions.

Moody’s (2004) recommendations are just that—recommendations, that can serve as a guide that assists institutions in preventing women faculty and women faculty of color from being isolated, disenfranchised, and underrepresented. Moody (2004) further explains that employing “comprehensive best practices” designed to improve a “department’s culture, protocols, and customs [will] benefit all faculty, not just minority or women faculty” (p. 52).

All of Moody’s recommendations in relation to providing faculty support are feasible; but not without commitment to equitable change. Not only will each individual within the department need to be receptive, but the campus as a whole must be willing to change its culture and adjust its climate for these good practices to be effective. These types of campus-wide changes further support the faculty, and provide a more positive environment for faculty, students, and administration, alike (Aguirre, 2000).
Chapter Summary

This chapter begins with information about the North Carolina Community College System, briefly highlighting its place in history. This section also identifies the current state of women faculty and diversity across all 58 community colleges and the six related to this study. The next section of this chapter explores African American women in higher education, including historical background and the various factors related to faculty diversity, climate and job satisfaction. Specifically acknowledging the perils of racism, sexism, and isolation, the historical context paints a picture of where African American women faculty members began.

Research on faculty diversity, climate and job satisfaction within higher education was outlined in order to create a sense of urgency for promoting faculty diversity, but also to create the understanding that climate has a direct effect on job satisfaction. Further, this chapter also reviews the major components of job satisfaction and commonly used theoretical frameworks within the literature. Hagedorn’s conceptual framework and Herzberg’s theory (the foundation of Hagedorn’s framework) were detailed in this chapter, in order to explain barriers and incentives with regard to the current study.

The current literature also shows that there is minimal research on African American women faculty employed within the community college system. Since job satisfaction varies for different populations and institutions and will vary based on many intrinsic and extrinsic factors, more research is required. This limited research is missing African American women’s experiences in the present day. The topic of diversity (African American women
faculty) and climate is largely focused in 4-year institutions; therefore the community college has been under researched (Levin, Haberler, Walker, & Jackson-Boothby, 2014). As previously stated, the literature defines several critical components that contribute to the lack of African American women in higher education. It also offers the importance of these faculty members and their role in diversifying the academic landscape. Considering the impact these women have had as well as their importance to an ever-growing society that values diversity (Harvey, 1994), African American women faculty are underrepresented in the community college, and under-researched in the literature. Therefore, it is timely to address this gap in the literature with research from the present study.
Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of African American women faculty and their perceptions of climate. The theoretical cornerstone for this investigation was rooted in the literature, using a basic interpretive approach. The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the incentives for African American women faculty in community colleges?

2. What are the barriers for African American women faculty members in community colleges?

3. What environmental conditions affect the job satisfaction of African American women faculty in community colleges?

In this chapter, the methodology guiding this study is presented, in order to detail how the research endeavor was completed. To describe the research process, this chapter addresses the overall design of the study, the site and sample selection, data collection and analysis, issues of validity and reliability and investigator biases and assumptions.

Design of the Study

This study was designed using a qualitative approach. In general, qualitative research is concerned with how individuals or groups make meaning, and that meaning is socially constructed and ever-changing. Those changes or experiences guide people’s understanding as they navigate within their world (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Associates, 2002). Qualitative research operates according to the belief that multiple truths exist, meaning there
is more than one way of understanding how the world works (2002). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) conclude that qualitative research centers on the interpretation of an experiences in its natural settings to make sense of the experience, in terms of the meanings people bring to these settings. This type of research involves delving into personal histories as well as collecting information about personal experiences, interviews, and observations, which are meaningful or significant to the population being researched.

Merriam and Associates (2002) describe five characteristics of interpretive qualitative design. First, qualitative inquiry seeks to understand how people make meaning or make sense of their experiences (2002). According to Creswell (2007), throughout any qualitative process, the researchers are to learn how the participants make meaning beyond the meaning found in the literature or what the researchers bring to the study. The second characteristic of qualitative analysis is that the researcher is the primary instrument, collecting all data and conducting the analysis. Merriam and Associates (2002) suggest the human instrument is ideal due to the ability to respond and adapt immediately to the perspective of the data collection. Creswell (2007) also states that the researcher is key, collecting data through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing the participants.

The next characteristic of qualitative design is an inductive research process. Inductive research is designed to organize gathered data into a comprehensive set of themes (Creswell, 2007). The fourth characteristic is that qualitative inquiry occurs in a natural setting and may involve several types of data collection (Merriam et al., 2002). Creswell (2007) explains:
Qualitative researchers often collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. They do not bring individuals into a lab (a contrived situation), nor do they typically send out instruments for individuals to complete, such as in survey research. Instead, qualitative researchers gather up-close information by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context. (p. 45)

This type of design allows for the interviews to take place in their environment and address the issues of a specific group (Creswell, 2007). In terms of multiple types of data collection, the qualitative research typically uses interviews, observations, and other documents in order to provide rich data (Creswell, 2007).

The last characteristic referenced by Merriam and Associates (2002) is the researcher’s data. This recording and writing process is described as richly descriptive, using words and pictures to express what the researcher has learned with regards to the issues or experiences being studied. Open-ended interviews are designed to capture as much information as possible to enhance the rich, thick descriptions. These same standardized open-ended interviews also allow for the same question to be asked of all participants, but the questions are worded in such a way that the responses can be open-ended (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Employing the above characteristics, each participant expressed herself in a meaningful and detailed way, while allowing for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions.

The current study employs a basic interpretive approach. Merriam and Associates (2002) state that interpretive approaches are designed with the investigator as the primary
instrument and engaged in understanding how participants make meaning. In conducting a basic qualitative study, the researcher is readily involved in seeking to discover and understand a phenomenon based on the perspectives and worldviews of the participants (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Collecting qualitative data through interviews, observations, and other documents provides a detailed account of the findings, as described in the research methodology used in framing the study.

This study sought to make meaning of how African American women faculty members describe their experiences related to incentives and barriers that may affect job satisfaction and academic climate. Earlier studies indicate that women faculty members of color, especially African American women, contend with many barriers that impact their job satisfaction (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Nieman & Dovidio, 2005; Olsen, Maple, & Stage, 1995). Understanding this population’s perspectives through a basic interpretive approach lent itself to a larger understanding of academic social contexts.

Sample Selection

Identifying a sample that will provide insightful information is vital when a study strives to understand the meaning of a phenomenon from the participants’ point of view (Merriam and Associates, 2002). For this study, purposeful sampling was used; in qualitative research, this means that researcher chooses individuals or settings that “purposefully” inform what the researcher seeks to understand. Purposefully selected participants possess specific knowledge and experiences central to the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 1990).
Patton (2002) indicates several strategies that investigators can employ when selecting a purposeful sample. Some of the strategies or methods include intensity sampling, maximum variation, snowballing, and combination or mixed sampling. For this study, mixed sampling was employed, including maximum variation for the site selection and criterion sampling for the participant selection. Maximum variation is designed to capture of core experiences across the geographical sites, and criterion sampling allows the investigator to pick all cases that meet some previous selected criterion (Patton, 2002). The criteria for this study included African American women faculty who have taught in the community college for at least one year, either part-time or full-time, due to small amount of faculty members identified.

In order to address the research questions for the study, African American women faculty at community colleges in North Carolina were selected to provide a rich data set (Patton, 2002). Informal observations gleaned from the interviews and noted by the researcher aided in providing the depth and breadth of data collection and analysis needed for this study.

**Site Selection**

In order to have the rich data required to address the study’s objectives, participants were petitioned from suburban, urban and rural community colleges, again utilizing maximum variation to have geographical representation and variation within the study. The Carnegie Classification uses the term serving, (e.g., suburban-serving) in order to categorize the majority of public community colleges’ geographical areas that are defined by state
regulations or custom (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007). The term serving is also an indicator of the institution’s students that reside in a suburban, urban, or rural area based on the location of the campus; community colleges, of course, also serve students outside of their immediate geographic area. For the purpose of this study, the terms suburban, urban, and rural were used in place of the Carnegie classifications of suburban-serving, urban-serving, and rural-serving. Institutions selected for this study were based on their geographical location’s representation of a suburban, urban, or rural campus.

Originally, three community colleges were selected representing urban, suburban and rural communities. However, due to limited participants and access, six community colleges were represented in the sample (see Table 1). Within these six colleges, 10 African American female faculty members were interviewed. Based on the current information from the North Carolina Community College System (2010) about the African American women faculty in the community college, the majority was employed at urban institutions; in addition the North Carolina Community College System only defines institutions geographically as urban or rural.

**Participant Selection**

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of African American women faculty related to the incentives, barriers, and environmental conditions at the community college where they work. The unit of analysis was the individual faculty member; the four criteria that were used in selecting the sample for this study included (a) African American;
(b) female; (c) teaching at the community college for at least a year; and (d) either part-time or full-time.

The basis for each criterion is supported by the literature regarding African American women faculty in the community college. African American women faculty were selected in efforts to gain the most insight on their perceptions of climate and other factors affecting job satisfaction, due to the limited research in this area (Stanley, 2006). African American faculty members experience a high volume of responsibilities but minimal control over outcomes related to their work as compared to White faculty members (Bacchus, 2008; Harley, 2008). Therefore, criterion sampling generated the rich, thick data needed to capture the experiences of these women.

Recruitment letters were sent to the various human resources offices, program directors, and faculty at the community colleges. These letters explained the scope of the study and requested assistance in the recruitment of faculty who meet the criteria. The use of social media, and flyers was also employed. Finally, a direct email to personal contacts, specifically African American woman instructors was sent. Through this personal correspondence, the intent was to receive information from other institution’s research and evaluation offices as well as human resources. The contacts made within those two offices assisted the researcher in finding several faculty members from the urban settings to participate. These participants self-identified as African American women and as full or part-time faculty members within the community college who have taught for at least one year. In order to gain access to faculty at rural and suburban community colleges, follow-up phone
calls and emails were made to individual human resource offices, two rural community colleges, and two suburban community colleges in regards to the recruitment letter already mailed. At the conclusion of recruitment, two of the community colleges represented a rural setting, and the remaining three represented an urban setting. Due to recent information regarding the classification of community colleges by the state of North Carolina, only the terms rural and urban are used. Based on the geographical location of one of the urban colleges, it could have been considered suburban, but again, that term is not utilized within the North Carolina Community College System.

All the respondents in the current study were sent a formal email detailing the purpose of their participation in the study; as well the IRB consent forms (Appendices A and B). Upon contacting each participant, a mutually agreed upon time and location for a face-to-face interview was established. Some interviews were conducted via the phone due to time constraints of the participant. Each participant also received several documents prior to their interview including a demographic questionnaire, and information sheet (Appendix C).

Data Collection

For qualitative research, the investigator is the research instrument and is therefore charged with interpreting or translating findings with regards to the experiences and perceptions of the participants (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Patton, 1990). Following IRB approval (see Appendix A) from North Carolina State University, I employed several methods of data collection for this study. These methods included semi-structured interview
questions (Appendix D), document analysis of the faculty handbook, and web pages (Appendix E), field notes, and an investigator journal.

**Interviews.** The primary research tool for this study was semi-structured interview questions; this type of interview includes structural elements similar to quantitative research questions but with an appropriate amount of flexibility, which is an affordance associated with true qualitative research (Neuman, 2000; Sarantakos, 1998). The flexibility and minimal restrictions of qualitative interviewing is mainly reflected in the wording of questions, the order in which the questions are asked, and the interview guide. The qualitative research interview is designed to cover the factual information and to interpret what the participant is saying (Kvale, 1996).

Qualitative interviewing offers an in-depth description and exploration of a particular phenomenon as experienced by the interviewee. According to Sarantakos (1998), qualitative interviews use open-ended questions, allowing the interviewer to have greater freedom when presenting the questions; the interviewer can adjust the interview to meet the goals of the study. However, even though the questions are open-ended, according to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003), the interview is extremely structured by asking each participant the same questions via wording that allows for open-ended responses. The interview is best suited for getting the story behind each participant’s life experiences. As the interviewer digs deeper by pursuing in-depth information, the central themes relevant to the research unfold (Kvale, 1996).

For qualitative research, as previously mentioned, it is important to be flexible. However, a well-structured interview guide does aid in providing the researcher with an
appropriate instrument to engage the participant while being true to the data collection method and intent of the study (Gall et al., 2003; Padgett, 2008). The interview guide for the current study was developed using the literature review on the intended topic area as a framework. Furthermore, the interview guide is an instrument that provided a checklist of topics to cover, categories of interest, and probing questions designed to enhance rapport and generate rich data during the interview (Dooley, 2001; Padgett, 2008).

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, participants were asked to create pseudonyms to protect their identity once they have received and signed the consent form regarding the study’s intended purpose. The participants were also reminded that their involvement in the study was completely voluntary.

**Documents.** Documents pertaining to the various institutions or settings used in qualitative design provide detailed information that adds to the context of the data collected (Creswell, 2007). Documents also provide insight into the history, programming, and values of the institutions included in the study (Patton, 1990). The documents utilized for this study included faculty handbooks, historical information, diversity policies and demographic information via web pages, regarding the institutions under study.

**Data Analysis**

Analysis of the information collected during research requires preparation and organization of the data by reducing it into manageable themes or categories (Creswell, 2007). The data for this basic interpretive study was analyzed through the constant comparative method, which is similar to grounded theory (Fram, 2013). However, unlike
grounded theory, no theories were derived from this data. According to O’Connor, Netting, and Thomas (2008), “constant comparison…does not in and of itself constitute grounded theory design” (p. 41). Constant comparison is a primary tool used to methodically compare all data within the set (O’ Connor, Netting, & Thomas, 2008). Tesch (1990) also states:

The main intellectual tool is comparison. The method of comparing and contrasting is used for practically all intellectual tasks during analysis: forming categories, establishing boundaries of the categories, assigning the segments of categories, summarizing the content of each category, finding negative evidence, etc. The goal is to discern conceptual similarities, to refine the discriminative power of categories, and discover patterns (p. 96).

Therefore, using the constant comparative method allows the researcher to reduce and reorganize a large amount of data with an inductive approach, creating clear links between the research questions and the summary findings in regards to the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Thomas, 2006).

The constant comparative method of data analysis is appropriate for this study due to its goal of making meaning of African American women faculty members’ experiences within the community college in the context of their own interpretations. In constant comparative terms, this goal is taking the information collected from these participants and organizing it into a collection of key concepts or themes that reflect the meaning made by these women in the context of their workplaces.
Proper organizing and preparation of the data is necessary to ensure accurate transcription, of the recorded interviews. Additionally, reviewing the data and recording any anecdotal thoughts provide a deeper connection to the material. Once all the data was collected, it was systematically sorted into meaningful categories or themes. Litchman (2013) refers to this as the “three C’s” of analysis: coding, categorizing, and concepts. Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Charmaz (2006) referenced this classifying information as open coding. Litchman (2013) goes on to say that coding interview data, observations, documents and other important text can be captured utilizing six steps: “initial coding (moving from response to summarized ideas of the responses), revisiting initial coding, developing an initial list of categories, modifying the initial list based on additional rereading, revisiting categories and subcategories, and moving from categories to concepts” (p. 252).

Upon reading the transcripts, initial coding identifies short phrases or singular words that classify the information “according to (its) properties and dimensions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1988). Revisiting the codes then allows for modification, eliminating, renaming, or clarifying themes (Litchman, 2013). Continued modification of the initial list allocates the codes into categories, and revisiting these categories aids in identifying critical elements to capture the themes (Litchman, 2013). In this study, my use of the constant comparative method was crucial in comparing the codes and themes between different interviews. Again, utilizing this technique identified similarities and differences in the data and organized the codes into manageable themes derived from the meaning made by the participants. This step
provided significant findings, identifying important thematic answers to the initial research questions (Litchman, 2013; Patton, 2002).

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability in qualitative research are often referenced as the trustworthiness and credibility of the research and the data collected. Several techniques increase validity and reliability in qualitative research, such as: member checks, bracketing, triangulation, peer review, clarification of biases, prolonged engagement and persistent observation, negative case analysis, rich, thick data and external audits (Creswell, 2007; Merriam and Associates, 2002; Patton, 1990). For this study, rich, thick descriptions, peer debriefing, and triangulation were used to ensure validity and reliability.

Rich, thick description is utilized to create a detailed report that describes the setting, context, and situation of the research (Merriam, 1988). This technique allows the reader to identify with and make potential connections to the study. Triangulation provides researchers with multiple sources, methods, and theories to substantiate evidence (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990). It is also used to validate the data collection methods and data sources. Different sources offering codes or themes that confirm information provide validity to the findings (Creswell, 2007).

In order to protect the data, the participating faculty members were instructed to refrain from giving specific identifying information in their narratives such as colleagues’ names or supervisor names for confidentiality purposes; each faculty member was also asked to select a pseudonym that would be used to represent them and their information in the final
report. All files, including recorded audio sessions, interview transcripts, were secured in a locked location and stored on a password protected personal computer; they will also be destroyed after five years. A copy of the transcription was provided to each participant for review to ensure the validity/reliability of the information before publication. Following transcription of interviews, copies were mailed to the participant for member checks with all identifying information redacted in the transcript. A postage paid envelope was included for ease of return to the researcher, though some participants returned their thoughts via email. Finally, peer debriefing was used as an external check of the research (Merriam, 1988), but, because this study was dissertation work, the chair and committee over the research served in the role of peer reviewers.

**Researcher Bias**

As the primary investigator of this study, I am an African American woman faculty member at a four-year institution. Therefore, in part, I represent the demographic being studied, and I am living many of the same experiences as the participants in this study. Being a member of the higher education community both as a student and a faculty member has afforded me an opportunity to use professional and personal insights and understandings regarding data collection and analysis to enhance this study’s authenticity. There are also drawbacks to being the researcher as well as the primary data collection instrument and having prior knowledge. The drawbacks manifest as investigator bias, such as prior knowledge of the experience being investigated and emotional connectedness or disconnectedness towards the participants and the investigator’s value system. In order to
address this appropriately, the researcher should openly acknowledge, identify and monitor this potential bias during the entire data collection and analysis process (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Given my faculty position and the study’s intent, I am inevitably emotionally invested in the research process. Good qualitative methodology required that I reveal and reflect upon my investment in my report my findings.

As an African American woman faculty member, my status working within higher education could have caused insider bias. Fortunately, I do not have insider knowledge regarding the structure and environment of the community college. I started this study quite concerned about the job satisfaction of African American female faculty and its impact. However, the participants own their information and I relied upon their experiences in order to reveal their own “truths” in their own contexts. I believe African American women faculty members have made powerful strides within higher education; however, they are still impacted by chilly climates, insensitivity, and other negative barriers that prevent full inclusion. Therefore, I will continue to engage in rigorous research, providing a voice, in order to affect change. Revealing this information may provide a catalyst for change, not just in the community college, but across all institutions of higher learning. The ideal result of such change would be to achieve real diversity, within the halls of academia.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined qualitative methodology, participant selection and data collection methods for the current study. The necessary steps used to analyze data and ensure validity and reliability was also discussed, as were research assumptions based on the
researcher as the primary instrument of data collection. Chapter four describes the participant overviews of this study.
Chapter Four: Participant Overviews

To explore the experiences of African women faculty in the community college, the researcher interviewed 10 faculty members. These interviews were conducted on the campuses of the faculty or via the phone, due time or distance constraints. The participants, all African American women, ranged in age from 31 to 55; half of them identified as adjunct or part-time, and the others were full-time instructors. Half of these women also had additional administrative responsibilities in conjunction with their teaching loads. Regionally, half of the women represented a rural community college and the other half represented an urban community college. All of the participants had obtained a Master’s degree or higher except one, who was in the process of completing her professional degree.

Participant Overviews

The participant overview highlights the experiences of 10 African American women community college faculty in North Carolina. Included are the participants’ demographics outlined in Table 2.

Each participant offered a varied and unique perspective regarding her experiences, and in turn provided a rich narrative for this research. In this section, a participant profile is presented in order of when each interview was conducted. Each in-person interview lasted between one and one and a half hours, and phone interviews lasted between one hour and one hour and fifteen minutes, for an approximate total of 16 hours of narrative data. According to the pre-established criteria, all research participants were African American women who had taught in a community college in North Carolina for at least a year.
Table 2

*Participant Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th><strong>Current Job Title/Position</strong></th>
<th><strong>Teaching Duties at time of Interview</strong></th>
<th><strong>Years Teaching</strong></th>
<th><strong>Current Degree</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alease</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Assistant Dean/Biology Instructor</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelia</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Discipline Chair for Health and PE</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankie</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>American Sign Language Instructor</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gigi</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>English Instructor</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugenia</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Director, Center for Academic Excellence/Mathematics Instructor</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Adjunct Faculty</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tory</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Health Education Specialist/Adjunct Faculty</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>History and Humanities Instructor</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phedu</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Senior Level Curriculum Coordinator-Nursing</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrice</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Counselor/Coord of Student Assistance Programs/Adjunct Faculty</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When prompted to discuss how they became faculty in the community college, all of the participants explained that the community college was not necessarily their first choice. Six of the participants began their educational journey in a K-12 setting and realized quickly they wanted to continue in education, but in an adult environment. The remaining four just happened to be in the right place at the right time. They were told of community college jobs by other peers and ultimately matriculated in that direction.

The overwhelming majority of participants expressed that their students were the motivating factor that kept them at their community college. It is apparent that these women were impacted by their students regularly and felt the desire to be a part of a population that needs them. Veronica did an excellent job summing up this thought:

I think the community college population is a fabulous population of students to teach. I think it’s underserved and underappreciated because fundamentally, a community college instructor has to train and retrain…and it’s [a population] one that I wish more people had the opportunity to work with.

The participants held a strong allegiance to their students as well as to their areas of discipline. Each participant had a unique story that embodied the spirit of higher education and their purpose for being a community college faculty member. Their main purpose was to teach, explore, and learn with their students. Some participants had been afforded the opportunity to lead administratively, but their purpose, their career, and connections to each institution began in the classroom.
Alease

Alease is a 43-year-old Assistant Dean of Arts, Sciences and University transfer of her school and a part-time Biology instructor. Alease is married and has fifteen years of teaching experience. In her role as Assistant Dean, her areas of responsibility include organizational administrative tasks, faculty management, and student disciplinary issues, but she truly believes the classroom is where she shines. Her future aspirations are to advance to an Associate Dean position and eventually Dean or Executive Director in the same type of organization.

Alease is a confident, yet quiet woman who is truly excited about education and having the opportunity to teach others. While having dual roles within a community college is common as well as challenging, for Alease, it keeps her job exciting. Of personal importance is her pride in being an Assistant Dean who is a woman of color. Her community college career path began in the mountains of Virginia and in a college with no African American faculty. After a loss of funding, her position was terminated and a year later she returned to North Carolina, to work specifically at an HBCU, and then finally settled into her current community college in 2004.

As she sat in the desk and adjusted her position forward before speaking, Alease’s persona morphed. Her eyes danced as she began to talk about her current role and her students. She expressed how her students motivated her, and that, in turn, allows for her to be a positive example for them:
The number one thing that motivates me is the effect that I have on my students. It’s also being able to help people accomplish their goals, or make realistic goals. I have a list of advisees, but I also have a lot of people who are not my advisees that come by and talk about what they want to do and how they’re going to get there. That brings me a lot of joy. I like to see student succeed, do well, and come back and tell their stories. That makes me feel really good. Another reason that I know I am where I’m supposed to be is because of the positions I have attained. I have students and faculty come by and say, “Wow, you’re the assistant dean,” because they don’t expect to see a minority in that position. I know that is another reason, regardless of how I got here, as to why I am here. So, I try to represent very well. Students will see me on campus and I tell them my name is Mrs. A. Then, they’ll come by my office and say, “Oh, you’re an assistant dean.” So, I know I’m here to help make systemic and programmatic changes to benefit students.

When asked to provide a metaphor for African American women in the community college, Alease was reflective and cautious. She sat back in her chair and stared at the phone ringing on her desk. After transferring the call, her look was intense, yet happy. Her original comment was succinct and matter of fact; however, after a long moment of silence, she explained why this particular metaphor came to mind:

Adventurous was the first word that came to mind. Challenging. Satisfying in some ways. Purposeful, but limited. There are limitations on promotions, what you are allowed to propose, and who can participate in certain activities. So, that’s why I say
limited, but purposeful. I am purposeful in what I teach students, how I interact with students, and what I provide or students. Additionally, I am purposeful in the administrative area by being able to help students and speak for the faculty as well. However, there are still some limitations.

Interviewing Alease at her institution, specifically in her office, provided authenticity and first-hand insight into her reality. This campus is situated in an urban area and is referenced as one of the larger urban community colleges. It is characterized by a diverse student population, representative of the geographical location. However, a cursory review of the faculty and staff in those same hallways does not illustrate that same diversity. Alease explains, “You tend to see the same group of people going to particular conferences or working on different ideas that the college has. So, there is no variety. You get the same kind of expected outcome.”

Shelia

Shelia is 55 years-old, married, currently a department chair, and quite the experienced educator. At the beginning of her thirty years as an educator, Shelia was at an HBCU teaching health and physical education. She then had the opportunity to start a therapeutic recreation program from scratch at another HBCU.

Shelia’s experiences and understanding of the importance of education began as a child, as she was reared in a house of two K-12 educators. Her employment in education did not intentionally begin at the community college; ultimately she wanted to be closer to home
and applied for a job in recreation, and now is the Discipline Chair for Health and PE at that same community college.

While conversing with Shelia, it was evident that she took her position seriously and felt empowered to grow her department. With an air of strength, she exuded a take-charge persona, and it was clear that she was a leader that people wanted to listen to. As our interview unfolded, Shelia pondered what motivated her to continue in the community college. Shelia’s motivation stems from interactions with her students as well as the part-time faculty. In a booming voice she expounds:

With the students, it’s different every day; it’s different every 16 weeks when you get a different group. So, you don’t have the same situations or the same scenarios. Even though you may be teaching the same subject matter, different groups view it differently and bring their different strengths and weaknesses to it, which makes it different. Lately I’ve been getting more into administration, so being able to hire more part-time people and getting that group together keeps me motivated because they have new ideas and want to try new things. On the administrative side, being able to look at what the faculty wants that’s good for the students as well as them and presenting it to the college motivates me to continue working in a community college. My part-time faculty keeps me motivated by always looking for new stuff we can do and try to make our program better to make sure the public and the students truly understand what physical education and physical fitness are and how to stay healthy.
Considering all the changes Shelia has seen in education over the last thirty years, her high energy remains intact, as she is determined to change the health of the population one student at a time. Shelia understands health and wellness are not always seen as priorities in higher education, but it is her mission to make it holistically relevant, utilizing technology and faculty talent.

When prompted for her insights on a metaphor for African American women working the community college, Sheila’s response was original and a paralleled process. She very seriously equated these women to diamonds in the rough, recalling in a more subdued and relaxed tone, when she was hired; it took someone else to see her talents, education, and potential:

When I was hired here, there was a lady in human resources that said, “Oh, you’re fine. You have this. You have that. You have the capability to go here or there.” At the time I couldn’t see it; I was only trying to get in to teach some classes in my area, and that’s it. I never thought about being in administration or wanted to be in administration. I often go back and think about what she said. Opportunities just became available; almost like my path was set before me and I didn’t even know I was on the trail. Fifteen years ago, if someone had asked me where I wanted to be, I would not have said where I am now. Especially with always having to try to prove that I deserve to be where I am. Having to prove ourselves is something that I think still afflicts a lot of minorities in this setting. But, once you break they barrier and prove that you can do things, the sky is the limit.
During the interview Shelia was poised and thorough, providing a wealth of knowledge, and she personified the value of staying present. It is obvious technology is changing the way education is disseminated, and as Shelia articulated, we must embrace this and change with it. Shelia plans on completing her doctorate and engaging in consulting work upon retiring.

**Frankie**

Frankie is a 36-year-old shining star, currently a full-time American Sign Language (ASL) instructor at a rural community college in the east. She is married with a young daughter and excitedly breaking barriers in ASL education at a rapid pace.

Frankie is a soft-spoken, yet bubbly young woman who spoke with great enthusiasm about the interview and having an opportunity to tell her story. A first generation college student ready to be the face of teachers in American Sign Language, Frankie created her current position with the college and has not looked back. Beginning her educational career trajectory at the community college as a counselor and interpreter, this blossomed into an opportunity to create an ASL course and eventually to her becoming full-time faculty.

A petite woman with a big personality, Frankie was so enthusiastic about her discipline, it made for a fascinating interview. The way she describes how ASL not only enhances the communication for the hearing people who may have deaf loved ones, it also empowers the deaf to express themselves personally and professionally was inspiring. Sitting beside a desk in the foreign language lab for the interview, Frankie was chatty, free-spirited and comfortable. She whole-heartedly enjoys her students and teaching. Frankie explained when she is most satisfied:
I am most satisfied being in the classroom with my students. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, my classes are online. Tuesdays and Thursdays are my lab classes; that’s when I get to see my students and the fruits of my labor. Another highlight in the semester is when students meet a deaf person for the first time. Or, when they get their named signed, that’s like an initiation into deaf culture.

Frankie’s expressions are joyful as she explained her desire for students to embrace ASL and feel good about what they are learning. Her aspirations are to take a community college ASL class abroad and provide the students with an extraordinarily enriching educational experience. She talks about a potential trip to England:

Regarding traveling abroad, I’ve just located the school, courses we would like to enroll in, the contact person in England, and the global education person here that I would communicate with about scholarships. As far as mentioning it to [my] students, I don’t want to get them excited until I have complete approval from my supervisor.

Frankie is clear and precise in her responses, with refreshing confidence. Frankie’s thoughts on the metaphor were insightful and she was the first of the participants to bring up race when asked this question. She gleaned:

The first thing that popped into my mind was a caterpillar. It’s been a slow journey, but over time I’ve been able to develop my courses, grow professionally, and finally spread my wings and fly. I would say that as that butterfly, I’m finally free to express myself. I would hate to say that it was such a slow process because I’m black and it was a racial thing, but in the back of my mind I do think that to some degree my race
did play a role in it. It didn’t take my counterparts in Spanish nearly as long to become full-time. [However,] this may be due to the fact that American Sign Language was just recently recognized as a foreign language.

Interestingly, the interview was interrupted twice so she could actively assist students in the computer lab. With her unique dual roles, the interview began in the computer lab with three of her ASL students and transitioned to her office after “lab duty.” She apologized profusely for the interruptions, but sincerely explained multi-tasking at the community college is a part of the job and the part that keeps her from being bored. Ultimately reflecting on this refreshing engagement, this time in the computer lab demonstrated Frankie’s priorities, as well as her obligation to the students—she was supposed to available during this time, and she was. Frankie aspires to work for the organization responsible for the national certification of ASL.

**Gigi**

Gigi is a 55-year-old married English instructor, teaching full-time at the community college and looking forward to completing her Master’s degree in the foreseeable future. When describing her most fulfilling daily obligations, she says she enjoys being in the classroom most but has several other committee responsibilities to address in her institution. With thirteen years of teaching experience, Gigi’s aspirations are simple: “To be the best teacher I can be and help my students in all endeavors.”

As a child of the 1960’s, she was a grade school student in the south prior to segregation. Both of her parents were college-educated, and her mother was the first Black
teacher in an all-White school in Lenoir County, North Carolina. Gigi was being raised by college educated parents during segregation—an amazing feat at the time. Gigi’s story is an actual walk through history, a history she may not have been aware that she was creating. She has a quiet mannerism, but her voice is strong as she reflected on the death of Martin Luther King, Jr:

I was about nine years old when Dr. King was shot. I remember that night, but the funny thing is, even though she [her mother] was teaching at a White school, I still did not know who Dr. King was because I guess it had never been explained to me. I was still at a predominantly Black school. This was a little bit before integration that was just starting. So, I was at a Black school and I didn’t know who he was exactly.

Gigi’s experience of living through the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King and her recollection of this event may have been skewed by her childhood naivety; digging deeper, it may have been a reflection of her environment and family life. Being a young girl in rural North Carolina, this poignant time in history was not even discussed with her, nor would she understand the full impact of this until late adulthood. Race issues for Gigi as an adult, are not bothersome as she obviously was taught that she was a capable and intelligent woman, inconsequential of race.

Gigi has a soft presence, but was quite funny; her voice is clear, and throughout our interview, she kept the conversation relevant and composed. Gigi is married, has a young daughter and rapidly expresses the importance of family. She even discussed meeting her Asian husband for the first time, as well as her in-laws. These relationships have shaped her
view of the world and what humanity means to her. Of interest, her married name is distinctly Asian and provides a point of interest when students see her on the first day of class and realize she is African American. Gigi has always taken in stride the students’ reactions to her being African American with an Asian last name, even finds it comical when the students have a confused look when they meet. These experiences, for the most part, have been positive, yet she recalled a time when she was called racist by a parent of one of her students:

I had a strange situation during the last eight weeks. I was called a racist—not to my face. To explain, at the beginning of the class session I asked the students to sit in the same seats for three or four days to help me match their names with their faces. When they were allowed to change seats, the African American students were all on one side of the room and the Caucasians were on the other side. The atmosphere in the class was not normal. There was definitely a problem. In an effort to find out what was going on, I asked five Caucasian, female students to stay after class. A father of one of the females called the chairman of the department to ask why his daughter was kept after class. During the conversation he made a remark about it evidently being a racist matter. I have never been called anything like that.

This particular incident turned out to be misunderstanding, blown out of proportion. Yet, as Gigi recounts the hyperbole of the situation, her defense and understanding is couched in her life as an African American woman in an interracial marriage, raising her bi-racial child. She continues to be judged by the color of her skin instead of by the content of her character.
When reflecting on the metaphor regarding what it is like as African American woman working the community college, Gigi mused loudly:

A needle in a haystack, but of course [for] the African American man it’s worse.

Since most women gravitate towards teaching, I think there should be more of us. I feel that it’s good for the student to have someone they can identify with. I’ve had students come to me for help with their schedules who were not my advisees, simply because they’re Black students and I’m a Black faculty member.

Asking her to expand on this thought, Gigi made it clear, “there are not many of us,” meaning African American women faculty in this context, and this directly impacts her voice at the community college. Not only is race an issue for some parents and possibly some students, the number of African American faculty at her institution is disproportionately small and the few are often out-voted and dismissed.

While Gigi’s interview’s was over the phone, she was truly excited about being a part of this study but was discouraged that she could not forward this information on to other African American women in her college.

Eugenia

Eugenia is a 42-year-old Director of a department at her community college and is actively in the process of defending her dissertation. With twelve years of teaching experience, Eugenia is forging ahead professionally, anticipating an upward move administratively and ultimately establishing her own consulting business. Eugenia is fiery in personality, ambitious professionally and a force that has strategically built her own brand—Eugenia K. In other
words, becoming a brand has allowed for Eugenia to set the professional standards of her business and become a “go to” person in the consulting arena.

Eugenia, similar to all the other participants in this study, loves education, learning and her students. As the valedictorian of her predominantly white high school, it is apparent why she is a force; having grown up in the south during the 1980’s set the tone for unforeseen challenges in the future. She is a true force of strength due to her ability to rise above those challenges and thrive. Her educational interest started in chemistry and peaked with math, but ironically she forwent an engineering degree because she felt it involved too much math. Eugenia is up front and likes to deal with issues head on. During the interview, she made a point to explain the “elephant in the room” needs to be addressed - she understood that race can be issue for all people, but it is up to educators to host dialogues and confront challenges:

Working in a college where the population is about half and half, I do think that my Caucasian and African American colleagues are conscious of the student population. Sometimes it’s challenging to talk about race issues because of other individuals’ discomfort about talking about race even though these are issues that need to be discussed because of the community of students that we work with. I’ve said to my white colleagues, “Let’s talk about the elephant in the room.”

Her matter-of-fact tone is practical and made for an honest conversation, but she does acknowledge this type of dialogue or connecting can make others uncomfortable. In
addressing how she handles the contextual challenge of discussing race or race-related issues, knowing that people are generally reluctant to candid and strong discussions, she explained:

Generally, my approach is to talk about the elephant in the room; I don’t like to waste time. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t, and sometimes it intimidates people, which is also a challenge. I do think I’m reflective, I tend to be mindful of people’s sensitivities, and I have good relationships with most of my colleagues. Even if I have stepped on a toe or two, I follow up to make sure everyone is ok!

Her attitude and connections during the interview were absolute. As an administrator in the community college and African American woman, Eugenia’s no-nonsense approach and candor appears to work. She is setting a standard that dialogue matters, even when it is difficult for the participants.

Surprisingly, when asking her for the metaphor for African American women in the community college, Eugenia drew a blank. She explained it was hard to answer, confounded by a litany of items that came to mind, but no one thing was definitive enough. In this case, it is feasible to contend that her scientific mindset may have closed her off to exploring the feelings associated with her work. Alternatively, this interview may have also provided her with an opportunity to begin that exploration. During our interview, Eugenia set the tone, the energy and the flow, with a commanding and direct presence. Eugenia intends on creating a consulting business, publishing, and acquiring another academic or administrative position.
Veronica

Veronica is a 49-year-old, part-time religious studies instructor and a Reverend. Currently, she is beginning the dissertation process for a doctorate in education. Veronica has a lively spark and sassy personality, punctuating her strong opinions on numerous topics, but most passionately about the underserved. The particular underserved population she is currently working with is incarcerated men and women. She has had a unique opportunity to begin this work as a graduate student and is aspiring to a permanent position supporting this population in the future.

Veronica is the elder of two children and is currently single with no children of her own. Her spare time is active with other social activities of designing African inspired jewelry and other crafts along with delivering the occasional sermon on Sunday. Her experiences and background are truly eclectic and enthralling in the interview. Veronica is another strong representation of no-nonsense; she very vividly explained how the community college system is failing or at least the institution where she worked. Her passion and convictions were clear that administration often can make or break the institution. Veronica reflected openly on workplace climate:

It was really sad; I felt sorry for a lot of people. It was tense for people, but it wasn’t tense for me because I knew I was leaving. I still, to this day, feel sorry for the people who had to stay because they were invested in this area, they had spent their careers trying to get back to this place so they could retire here and be with their families. And, the morale was in the pits.
Veronica went on further to describe the overwhelming micromanaging on all levels and the lack of trust in the administration that caused a “mass exodus” of faculty. She pondered out loud, and then declared, “The saddest part about this whole thing is the person who loses is the student.”

As stated earnestly by all these women, the resounding shared theme of love for their students and teaching is why they stay. Veronica is no different. She explained:

I love my students; they were the reason I did it. I did have some students, who expected to be given a grade, but I had to make them understand I wasn’t giving them anything; they had to earn it. Then, I had students ask me who I thought I was grading their grammar when I wasn’t an English teacher. In those moments, I had to laugh…but, there’s always that one student that gets it, whatever it may be that day, and it makes putting up with the difficult students easier.

Veronica has had an interesting professional journey and uses the strengths of her experiences to propel her forward. In an act of comfort and trust, she leaned closer and adjusted her chair when thinking about the metaphor inquiry, “Yeah [I am] especially [rare] African American women teaching religion in a rural community college in North Carolina. I was a rare somebody.” Veronica’s position on the metaphor for African American women working in the community college proved interesting. Her reflections indicated these women are naturally occurring, but rare indeed, these were her thoughts:

I’m trying to find something. I was looking at…a rare color of a diamond. Either way, I need something rare that happens in nature because I do realize that we are very
rare. I guess at the time, when I was teaching, I never really thought about the rarity unless someone brought it up. In fact, there were like three African American females in the entire division.

Her insight into the rarity of African American in the division almost came as an afterthought. As Veronica was thinking about the experiences of African American women in the community college, a light appeared to be shed on the rarity of African American women faculty.

The interview was conducted in an informal setting—the home of Veronica’s friend. I believe this facilitated a relaxing interview setting and prompted her willingness to be so open. The interview was free and easy as Veronica’s energy is very spirited and she is truly authentic as a person. It was obvious from the beginning of our discussion that she would have strong convictions. Our interview time had many ah-ha moments, and left me impressed with her character and ability to speak frankly on a variety of topics. Veronica is also pursuing a coordinator position with the state while completing her doctorate.

**Tory**

Tory is a 31-year-old, part-time health and wellness instructor, as well as a Health Education specialist. She’s married with a young son and is moving along her professional journey at a steady pace. Tory is a twin and was raised by a single mother and her extended family since her father was incarcerated. Her formative experiences and family circumstances served to cement for Tory the importance of education and being a positive example. When speaking with Tory, her affinity for education, specifically health-related
topics, was overwhelming. From an early age, she knew what she was meant to do—be a health and wellness educator.

Tory is a young professional with infectious enthusiasm that pulsed throughout her interview. In part, her enthusiasm stems from having positive interactions with her supervisor; understandably having the support of administration is crucial to job satisfaction. Tory explained:

My immediate supervisor is awesome. As far as the structure, being open to hear our ideas, being supportive, and being an advocate, she’s definitely up there. I respect her and I love her as a supervisor. I definitely enjoy seeing her work ethic and her understanding her role and being able to teach it to newer faculty members.

Tory’s experiences are also unique in that she also works at a 4-year institution; this continual comparison brought up some interesting phenomena. She explained that community college pay competitively and the institution makes her feel good about her work. Alternatively, at her 4-year institution, she has had faculty and staff tell her that the job she does is not relevant. This type of experience speaks to the climate of the two institutions and positions Tory to reflect on her future. However, when discussing the metaphor of African American women working in the community college, the community college and 4-year institutions had one thing in common, as she sighs and said:

I would definitely say a breath of fresh air. We are still a minority and one thing I make sure that I do is post my picture, even within my online learning class through Blackboard. I do this so that they know there are people of color who are viable,
educated, and well versed in my topic area. For me, even at a 4-year institution, I can count the number of people of color that taught me; it’s no different at a community college. A lot of my students were not of color, but the ones who were would send emails to thank me for the extra time I put in to help them with their assignments. I know that’s something that some of the other instructors, who are not of color, didn’t do. But, I guess we’ve always, as people of color, had to go the extra mile; I do that in teaching.

Tory’s interview spotlights several phenomena. Her “go get ‘em” attitude is inspiring and her ability to balance two essential work roles is impressive. From her tone and conversation, Tory is not apologetic; she is frank and genuine about her dual-employment and its multifaceted benefit to her. This interview was poignant and created a new dialogue regarding the balancing act there may be for the future of instructors, in spite of having higher or terminal professional degrees. Tory is anticipating becoming a Director of Campus Wellness at a local university.

Ashley

Ashley is a 36-year-old, single mom and disabled veteran. She is a maverick in her family in many ways: first female veteran first to receive a master’s degree and will be the first to earn a doctorate. As a full-time history/humanities instructor, even after receiving her content-specific masters, she felt she needed an edge in her industry and obtained a second masters in Adult Education.
Ashley’s attitude is humbling, as she feels honored and excited to teach in the community college. Through the conversation, she indicated that she was satisfied but eager to move through the community college system and to confront any and all new challenges. As the interview progressed, she explained her sense of value and why she enjoyed her experiences by stating:

I love what I do; I love teaching. I love working with diverse group of students. There is nothing about what I do on a day-to-day basis that makes me want to quit or wish I would have chosen another career field. Every day is a new experience and you can’t get bored working in the community college system. More so, I think there is room to grow because it is so small. You are in a little community of your own where the university is a big country. I think there are more professional avenues in a community college because they need you so much. Most community colleges don’t have the resources to outsource from the instructor. So, I think they value the instructor more because the instructor has so many different duties.

As we continue to talk, her voice softens as she transitions conversation to students’ preparedness. Her teaching style is one of a facilitator, where she encourages dialogue and critical thinking. She believes if a student is prepared to engage with her, they will have a valuable learning experience. To further describe what “getting her” means, she explained an interpretation of a student “getting her”:

For me, interacting with students depends on if the student is prepared for me or not. If they understand what type of teacher I am, then they perceive me better. They
understand my humor, how I connect the dots, they just get me. They are the students that I believe are able to do higher order thinking. The students that are just here to get the course over with and have no intentions on doing any extra work are the students I have the most resistance from because I require them to be independent. I’ve learned that a lot of students just want me to give them the notes and highlight what they need to know for the test in a way that they can memorize the information. The most resistance comes from students who don’t want to take responsibility for their own education. I see more of the students who get me. I get more students who want to do well in my class; I think 90% of my students are like that. The 10% are the students who just want the notes and for me to shut up.

As Ashley reflects on her work, and satisfaction in the community college, she is content, and sees the positive over the negative. When prompted to think about the metaphor on African American woman in the community college, she expresses how a North Star came to mind. In asking her to elaborate, Ashley bolted out:

I don’t know. I guess because we shine brightly. We can attract people to where they want to go because we’ve been there, we’ve done that. We’re more exposed to the world around us than probably any other demographic. We’re probably more used to be “the only” or “the first” in our families to accomplish things. Like the North Star, we stand apart from everyone else.

The interview with Ashley was earnest, as she was honest and proud. She is at the beginning of this educational journey, being a young instructor in her third year of teaching. She glows
when discussing her accomplishments and her ability to reach her students. In closing, Ashley adds that she is a young mentor and ready to take the next steps in her profession that “teaching is worth it.” Ashley hopes to begin a doctoral program and become head of an institutional and accreditation committee.

**Phedu**

Phedu is a 54-year-old Registered Nurse, single woman with two older daughters and is currently the Senior Level Curriculum coordinator of the Nursing program at her institution as well as a full-time Nursing instructor. Phedu has been a RN for 32 years and an educator for 22 of those years. Educational achievement has always been present in her family of other educators. She decided early on the interaction with her staff is where she felt complete; therefore, becoming a nursing educator was a perfect fit. Also, being informally mentored by an older aunt who happens to be a teacher exposed her to the world of books, and helped her gravitate toward the profession.

Phedu was striking and bold in her conversation. She feels connected to her work and believes in the value of education. As we moved through the interview, I asked Phedu to elaborate on her thoughts and explain what motivates her to stay in the community college:

One thing is my work ethic. Honestly, I enjoy it. I still strive to make an impact in lives as the generations change that come thru. I don’t have a real easy answer for my motivation. It’s kind of like self-determination to be good at what I do, so I’m motivated from that angle.
While continuing our interview, we discuss her student interactions and her experiences with them as a RN and educator. As she reflected, it was apparent that she may appear to be tough, but in her own right is always fair:

My experience interacting with the students is alive, but I am pretty serious about the business that I do. My student interactions start off well, but when they see the kind of serious nature that I present, some of them are overwhelmed by it. There are policies written for my student[s]…and I hold all of my students to them.

Phedu exudes confidence and strength, similar to the other participants. Her attitude regarding the profession is stern, and her expectations for herself as well as her students are to be present, be competent, and be accountable yet compassionate. All the aforementioned qualities define her as an autonomous, consistent and skilled nurse.

When asked for a metaphor for African American woman in the community college, Phedu was brief and to the point, “survival of the fittest.” I asked her to explain further, and she cleared her throat and calmly said, “I think if you remain fit to do the job, you survive despite the obstacles and barriers that are seen and unseen.” Phedu has education figured out; she has been around long enough to see administrations come and go. She has also seen those same administrations rise and fall. Her presence is one of wisdom, and strength, she sums up how she has stayed the course for so long: “Balance it [work] early on; don’t take on the burdens of the world right away.” Phedu has no plans to retire, and she wants to continue working in nursing education.
Patrice

Patrice is a 39-year-old married mother of two small children. She is vibrant and obviously excited during our interview. In her current position, she is the Counselor and Coordinator for the Student Assistance Program and an adjunct instructor. Patrice’s family background set the foundation for her desire to advance her education and change the circumstances she grew up around. She is eldest of five children and the only one with a college degree. Her mother did not finish high school, and her father did not complete his college education. In her home, education was not emphasized, but she felt encouraged by mentors she had as a child.

Changing the topic, I inquire on what motivates Patrice to continue as adjunct faculty in the community college. She gleamed with excitement:

It’s the students that I go for believing highly that I want to provide for them what they’re paying for, but I know it goes beyond that because they tell me that. The students give me so much feedback and they help develop me as a professional, instructor, and as a person because they inspire me.

Her students are her inspiration, and through the discussion, Patrice explains that she teaches part-time because she wants to, not because she has to. She enjoys being in the classroom and engaging the students beyond her 8 to 5 counseling job. Patrice focuses on her student interactions and relationships. Her experiences go above and beyond simple academic objectives:
My experience working with my students has been and is very positive. What I do with students is I find where I can make a difference and be most effective. To give an example, I disagree with my administration that we are not a social services agency. I get told that as a counselor all the time, when in actuality we may not have the legitimate title of one, but we function in that role. Many times, our students come to campus and they don’t have insurance, a mental health provider, food to eat, and they walk to campus. So, they have a lot of basic needs. I’m currently working with someone on campus to establish a foundation where we will provide meals for people when they’re on campus. So, as far as my interaction with students, they know that I am genuine and I care inside and outside of the classroom. I’ve built a sense of trust with my students and the word has gotten around with other students that if you need to talk to someone, I’m one of the people that they can turn to.

Patrice’s counseling background appears to play a huge role regarding her helper attitude. She is aware of the students’ needs outside and classroom and wants to be an advocate for them in order to have those needs met. She is powerful, compassionate, and willing to make personal sacrifices for the betterment of her students. As the interview comes to end, Patrice is pondering the metaphor for African American women in the community college. She expressed that so many images came to mind, but she was encouraged to start with the one image she thought of first:

The first image that came to my mind was a bow and arrow. Sometimes I’m the bow and sometimes I’m the arrow. Being the bow, for me as an African American woman
faculty member, is like I have the power to propel people to go beyond and to go the
distance. Sometimes it feels empowering. Then, at other times, I am the arrow where
I make the difference by allowing myself to grow and to be propelled forward. So, the
positive side is that the bow and arrow itself is such a positive experience for me, but
it depends on who’s holding the bow and arrow at the time.

Patrice’s metaphor is potent, and deserving of further exploration. She laments the following:
Sometimes if the wrong people get their hands on the bow and arrow it’s not used
properly. The arrow is not the issue; it’s the person that’s shooting the arrow. It’s not
the instrument; it’s the user and that’s the negative side of being an African American
instructor. When I am the arrow, I don’t always have the power to go and do what I
am designed to do.

Patrice’s metaphor was refreshing and honest. Her explanation of the bow and arrow
describes the varied relationships, obstacles, and rewards African American women faculty
members are dealt. She is very clear that being comfortable with herself and being happy
with her current role are keys to survival. Ultimately, that comfort will propel faculty
members forward, regardless if they are facing a tough relationship, some unforeseen
obstacle, or accepting a well-deserved award. Patrice aspires to become a Director of
Counseling in the community college system.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the study participants, their understandings, perceptions of
being African American women educators, and metaphors for being African American
women faculty members in the community college. From the interviews the faculty members remarked on positive affirming experiences, as well as some negative and sometimes hostile barriers to their success. These experiences, in part, have shaped their satisfaction and revealed the various climates in which they navigate. Chapter five discusses the study data and its relationships to the questions guiding this research.
Chapter Five: Findings

This qualitative study embodied the experiences of ten African American women faculty in select North Carolina community colleges. Using the gaps in the literature on African American women faculty’s experiences in the community college system, the following research questions were investigated:

1. What are the incentives for African American women faculty in community colleges?
2. What are the barriers for African American women faculty in community colleges?
3. What environmental conditions affect the work experiences of African American women faculty in community colleges?

Chapter five is organized into three areas to thoroughly discuss the findings of the research: the incentivized professional opportunities, barriers the participants experienced, and the environmental conditions within their institutions.

Constant comparative was used as the method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in order to create links between the research questions and the summary of findings. Next I used Litchman’s (2013) three C’s—code, categorize, and concepts—to identify themes across the data set. Ultimately, all the data collected during this research process, including, field notes, and documents were used to understand the experiences of the participants. Table 3 provides an overview of the findings for each question with a brief explanation and support for the themes from the text. In order to ensure validity and
reliability, often referenced as trustworthiness in qualitative research, rich, thick descriptions, peer debriefing, and triangulation were utilized. Regarding bias, I do not have insider knowledge of the structure and environment of the community college. Therefore, the participants own their information, and I have relied upon their experiences in order to reveal their personal “truths” in their own contexts.

The findings determined from this study were displayed as themes and sub-themes from the three original research questions. Data revealed by the responses gave insight into the participants’ work experiences as well as perceptions of climate and job satisfaction. Data were divided into three sections according to their responses: incentives, barriers, and environmental conditions. Data were further organized according to themes. The following themes that evolved from the participants’ responses during this study offered insight into the experiences of these faculty members: 1) awards and recognition, 2) engaging students, 3) institutional administrative relationships, 4) lack of institutional support, 5) unchallenged institutional practices, 6) professional relationships, and 7) navigating uncertainty and complexity in the workplace.
Table 3

*Findings by Research Question*

RQI: Incentives and perks
a. Awards and recognition
   i. Current professional opportunities
   ii. Extramural professional opportunities
   iii. Engaging personal goals
b. Engaging Students
   i. Employing interpersonal skills
   ii. Instructional communication
   iii. Fostering stronger student relationships
c. Institutional Administrative relationships
   i. Developing open communication with supervisors
   ii. Barriers to professional opportunities

RQII: Institutional barriers and challenges
a. Lack of institutional support
   i. Supporting the professional voice and perspective
   ii. Valuing faculty performance
   iii. Failure to thrive professionally
b. Unchallenged institutional practices
   i. Institutional diversity shortcomings
   ii. Hiring practices

RQIII: Environmental conditions, climate and job satisfaction
a. Professional relationships
   i. Open communication among peers
   ii. Benefits of academic freedom
   iii. Approach to uncontrolled impacting factors
b. Navigating uncertainty and complexity in the workplace
   i. Engaging available resources
   ii. Aligning workplace reality and personal goals

**Incentives and Perks**

In research question one; the incentives available for African American women faculty in the community college were addressed. This first research question was important
in determining what positive factors may contribute to the participants’ work experiences, motivation and professional development. The additional probing questions allowed for the participant to explain the depth and richness of their experiences. Three major themes emerged from the data that discern the faculty’s available incentives, 1) awards and recognition, 2) engaging students, and 3) institutional administrative relationships.

**Awards and Recognition**

Faculty made it apparent that being recognized for their contributions was not only perceived as an incentive, but also increased their satisfaction. For some of the participants, these were also recognized as professional perks. Five out of ten of the faculty interviewed expressed this positivity related to being rewarded or recognized for a job well-done. As mentioned in the literature, recognition is a motivator defined as an intrinsic work factor positively impacting job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1966). Shelia, the 55-year-old Discipline chair of Health and PE students, mused, “My satisfaction comes in 10 year intervals. We have an intrinsic reward system here for faculty of the year. I’ve received that twice.” Gigi, the 55-year-old English instructor, also believed being awarded fueled a sense of pride, in her opinion, due to the rarity of African American faculty being recognized. She recalled:

I received an award. I was told that I am up for this award every year, but can only win it once. Most people who win the awards are the White faculty. I was pleasantly surprised and I was really proud of them [the students] for taking that initiative.

Another key incentive expressed by the participants was the availability of professional opportunities. These opportunities would be positioned in Hagedorn’s (2000) model under
the mediator category. Mediators are situations influenced by one another. For example, the availability of professional opportunities for faculty may influence their motivation to engage in additional work/projects to enhance the classroom experience for their students.

**Current professional opportunities.** All of the participants mentioned that some forms of professional opportunities were available to faculty, ranging from leadership programs to on-line or distant education courses. Faculty professional opportunities support the institution and the faculty in several ways, including increased funding, providing more positions to the various departments, internal and external workshops, and employee assistance programs. Shelia reflected on the opportunities within her institution:

They are always putting on educational workshops, seminars, or tutorials.

There are sessions on being a better teacher, workplace learning. [Also programs for] how to stay motivated, how to stay stress free, providing security in your classroom, and [these] programs or reference materials are offered for anything that numerous faculty members mention as a concern.

Regarding monies and employee hiring, Alease, the 43-year-old Assistant Dean and Biology instructor added, “We get grant funding, which sometimes allows us to add additional positions, add directors, or redo the format of the department.” The monies Alease referenced are accumulated through the networking process, and working with other faculty to enhance current programming or create new initiatives for the college.

Complementary to these opportunities is engaging in professional development off-site. Attending conferences allows the faculty to stay abreast of new information, network,
and in some cases enhance personal leadership skills within the profession. Frankie, the 36-year-old American Sign Language instructor, imparted her thoughts on conference attendance:

Within our specific areas, we can always go to national conferences. For example, for me it would be the American Sign Language Teacher Association (ASLTA) conference. They also have a leadership conference every year where the president and vice president take faculty away for a weekend or a few days and discuss certain topics. So, the professional development is really outstanding, even with the economy and budget cuts.

Phedu, the 54-year-old Nursing Curriculum Coordinator, was in agreement that conferences are necessary, even if only to hear dynamic presentations from other scholars:

At least one or two, maybe more, of us will have the opportunity within a semester, sometimes within an academic year, to attend professional conferences. I did receive a major opportunity because, unfortunately, those who could have benefited most opted not to go to a conference. So, I was able to hear amazing speakers on that topic.

The above mentioned incentives can influence African American women faculty’s motivation and satisfaction, especially as they relate retention or departure (Hagedorn, 2000). Equally as important are extramural opportunities allowing for recognition outside of academia.

**Extramural professional opportunities.** These extracurricular opportunities and awards contribute to the external support faculty members receive. Patrice and Eugenia
articulated their experiences through the lens of their students. Patrice nominated for an award by her students that was recalled due to her status as adjunct faculty, lamented: “Those students who nominated me for the community award were really upset because the faculty would not acknowledge the nomination because I was part-time faculty.” Patrice further acknowledged her confusion for the recall, considering the award was community-based and outside the realm of the community college. Eugenia commented on a more encouraging reception:

Well, I’m an advisor for our minority male mentoring program and they honored me at one of their awards programs. They were excited, and I was excited as well. I guess an award would be a perk. I personally feel like it’s a rewarding thing to be involved in, even though it’s an additional responsibility to your job.

Eugenia was rewarded and reflected positively on this extramural recognition. The experience of these participants aligns with the research that being recognized or rewarded positively impacts job satisfaction (Olsen et al., 1995). Patrice conveyed confusion, and ultimately concern, due to her students’ reaction. Eugenia alternatively felt good regarding her experience, even though it was in addition to her current workload. Ideally, all faculty members would like to be recognized for their contributions; alas, that is not always probable. Work itself, another motivator according to Hagedorn (2000), is partially representative of engaging in personal goals. One participant further explained the importance of additional work, giving back, and personal goals.
Engaging personal goals. Eugenia’s reward is being involved and doing more with a community that she feels connected to. Often faculty align themselves with additional work because they believe in it and continue to stay involved because their students believe in them. In part, the personal satisfaction or the ability to give back to their community is one of the motivating factors to continue working in the community college. Veronica explained:

I think it’s the social justice streak that I have. I believe that to whom much is given, much is expected. I have been given extraordinary opportunities in my life, and because of those opportunities, I feel like it’s time for me to give back to people who might not have been awarded the same kind of opportunities. The community college was my avenue to do that.

Student engagement within the Hagedorn model would be positioned under environmental conditions. This study reflects that positioning; however, the participants in this study also recognized their student engagement as a motivating factor.

Engaging Students

The number one motivator, indentified by several of participants was positive student engagement. Alease explained that all of her student relationships are positive, not just the ones that report to her directly: “I have a list of advisees, but I also have a lot of people who are not my advisees that come by and talk about what they want to do and how they’re going to get there. That brings me a lot of joy”. Engaging the students on various levels also proved to be motivating by employing interpersonal skills and providing instructional communication as well as fostering stronger relationships. Eugenia had a similar sentiment:
“I love education, students, and when a student struggles then becomes successful.” Alease summed this up proudly: “I feel that just interacting with my students in the classroom is what I do best and this is where I’m supposed to be.” Along with student engagement, these women feel a responsibility to their students’ development. This motivating factor is reflected in the faculty’s need to build upon the students’ interpersonal skills. Hagedorn’s model describes responsibility as a number of tasks that a faculty member has; however, the author would argue that faculty not only can be motivated by how many committees they chair, for example, but are also motivated by being responsible to their students.

**Employing interpersonal skills.** The faculty describes how interpersonal skills affect them as professionals and the effect they have on their students. Alease offers insight: “One thing that motivates me is the effect that I have on my students. It’s also being able to help people accomplish their goals, or make realistic goals.” Shelia added the varying student body also lends itself to skill development: “Even though you may be teaching the same subject matter, different groups view it differently and bring their [various] strengths and weaknesses, which [ultimately] create a new experience.” The faculty values their students and takes pride in their personal growth and academic success. Gigi highlighted this sentiment:

I enjoy the at risk students. At this level I can see growth. I’m not just standing there and giving a lecture. I can see growth from the time they come in until the semester is over. We don’t have a lot that continue through graduation, but the ones that we do have I’m very happy and proud of that bunch.
Phedu agreed that over time, student achievement and their development as professionals are the marks of success, which is why engaging students’ matters:

Students who I now see 22 years later [who have] come full circle and, now are clinical faculty. Just having one class with students, you don’t really think about the impact... Seeing those students that remember the hard work, the toughness, the tough love, and knowing that they appreciated [it]…it is a perk.

Effective communication between faculty and the students is a continuance of the building of the students’ interpersonal skills as well as the relationships between both groups.

**Instructional communication.** Communication between the faculty and the students resonated as both important and delicate. Many of the faculty supported the idea that clear communication in classroom improves academic understanding and their relationships with students. They also believed the chain of communication starts with the instructor. Ashley, the 36-year-old History and Humanities instructor, offered her reasoning:

In the community college when addressing students’ complaints, often the instructor is left out of the loop, until the very end. In other words the student has spoken to department chair or division chair, even the vice president of the college. Proper communication between the instructor and student matters, and improves relationships. Instilling the proper chain of communication would allow students to be accountable for their own learning, and make them more independent.

As Ashley discussed in further detail, this is vital to engaging students and helps them solve their own problems; in addition, it offers the instructor constructive feedback. Phedu’s
expectations are centered on communication also, and the business of being a student. She exclaimed:

I am pretty serious about the business. My student interactions start of well, but when they see the kind of serious nature I present, some are overwhelmed. The policies are written…communication is necessary, and serious, I hold all of my students to those [policies].

With regards to student relationships, August and Waltman (2004) are clear that quality relationships are a strong predictor of satisfaction. Hagedorn (2000) situates student relationships as an environmental condition, yet in this qualitative study it is also a motivating incentive.

**Fostering stronger student relationships.** Relationships with students extend beyond the walls of the classroom. Many of these faculty members express that being available to students beyond academics is a part of the job and proves just as important. Patrice’s experiences as counselor and instructor are to some extent unique and can create tension with administration: “My way of handling my disagreements with policies, administration, issues in academics, and issues in student services is to put my attention, focus, and energy into the students. What I do with students is I find where I can make a difference and be most effective.”

She specifically recalls students who arrive at campus hungry or need a mental health provider and do not have proper insurance, while the students who have many basic needs, that are being neglected. Patrice reflected:
I’ve built a sense of trust with my students and the word has gotten around with other students that if you need to talk to someone, I’m one of the people that they can turn to. I do a lot of coordinating services for mental health and personal counseling which opens up the door for me to be able to work with students all the time. This relationship-building is above and beyond, but for Patrice and other faculty, it is all about the students and that includes the welfare of the students. During the interview process, all the participants’ attitudes towards education were resounding and emphatic. These attitudes were specifically positioned to build better relationships with their students. Ashley punctuated this idea well: “I love what I do; I love teaching. I love working with a diverse group of students. There is nothing about what I do on a day to day basis that makes me want to quit or wish I would have chosen another career field.” Patrice added her thoughts and chuckled: “My students are what motivate me to be here every day, even when I don’t feel like it”. The connection between relationships and personal and professional satisfaction proved salient in this study.

**Institutional Administrative Relationships**

Support of an immediate supervisor almost always lends itself to a positive work environment (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000). Moreover, having a communicative relationship allows for mutual respect and increased job satisfaction. Unfortunately, not all the participants were afforded the aforementioned, but for those that experienced communicative relationships, it proved priceless. Thoughtful, constructive communication proves to be just as important to supervisory relationships and satisfaction as it is to any type of relationship.
Developing open communication with supervisors. Ashley, who maintains of positive perspective, commented: “I just have a great supervisor. He is very much an advocate for his instructors. He listens to us and figures out what we need.” Veronica also reflected on having a harmonious relationship with her supervisor and administration: “I had a very open-minded department chair, the administration was very supportive, I was respected, and I was treated as if I were a valued member of an education team.” These positive interactions, in part, create positive experiences, adding to overall satisfaction. Frankie also addressed the relationship with her immediate supervisor, her division and staff. Being able to connect with her supervisor and feel appreciated by other peers, warms the academic climate:

I would say that my supervisor, the division, and the staff recognize the great things that I’m doing. I always get a thank you. My relationship with my supervisor is really great. She appreciates my go getter attitude and my desire to learn more about technology.

Tory, the 31-year-old Health Education instructor, also beamed when describing her immediate supervisor, stating their relationship is easygoing, and her supervisor acts as an advocate: “My immediate supervisor is awesome. As far as the structure, being open to hear our ideas, being supportive, and being an advocate, she’s definitely up there. I respect her and I love her as a supervisor.” These positive interactions are directly connected to open communication, and supportive of faculty needs in order for them to be successful.

Understandably, the availability of professional opportunities is a key incentive, also related
to faculty success. However, the inequity of these opportunities is apparent, in turn creating dissatisfaction and are representative of the trigger, which is a change in perceived justice (August & Waltman, 2004). Triggers are life events that may or may not be job related, resulting in a change in self and work-related responses (Hagedorn, 2000).

**Barriers to professional opportunities.** Interestingly, in contrast to the faculty members’ enthusiasm regarding professional opportunities, nine of the ten study participants expressed that abovementioned were not equally available to everyone. Alease reflected about leadership opportunities and moving into new roles throughout the campus: “I don’t think its equal opportunity.” Patrice mimicked a similar sentiment: “When you talk about perks and professional development opportunities, as an adjunct faculty member and being part-time, there aren’t very many.” Shelia elucidated the aforementioned in regards to faculty classification; due to her heavy reliance on part-time faculty, internal funding is typically granted to departments with more full-time instructors:

> It also depends on how many people you have in your area full-time, to be awarded some of the funding. Because I rely heavily on part-time workers, I think we sometimes get shorted…[due to] one or two full-time people and three to fifty part-time people…we don’t get the same weight as the department that may have 25 full-time people and just a few part-time, [even though the number of faculty members is similar].

Frankie agreed that department size, correlated with subject area, makes for further monetary inequities as well:
In my department, because we are a smaller department, we don’t go to as many conferences as some of the larger departments. I’ll give the example of my husband who is also a faculty member here; he works in developmental studies in English. His department has at least three to four conferences a semester and they are strongly encouraged to go. He at least has two or more opportunities per semester to go away for a conference while I only have one opportunity per year.

Probing Gigi for more information regarding inequities, she was quite vague. Gigi’s response was reflective of more than just inequities related to professional opportunities; her experiences are also shrouded in gender and racial inequities. Eugenia, the 42-year-old Center Director and Math instructor, was more punctuated in regards to her colleagues: “I think that different departments are better at it than others. Some colleagues do not get the same opportunities to seek professional development.” Veronica, the 49-year-old Religion instructor, also revealed her disdain regarding inequities as a part of the community college experience: “It’s just corporate BS and it takes away from the merit that is supposed to be associated with these types of things. It’s a game of favorites.” Patrice, the 39-year-old counselor and adjunct faculty, takes it a step further and creates professional development:

In the time that I have been teaching for the community college, I have never been offered the opportunity for professional development. I often times take students out of the classroom for training that I participate in as well. That would be professional development for me.
The participants clearly believed that professional opportunities are important; however, they vary and securing them proves to be inequitable in the majority of institutions. These barriers are also counterproductive, enlarging a rift within the organizational relationships.

**Institutional Barriers and Challenges**

The second research question is important in exploring what negative factors may contribute to specific work challenges and institutional support. The importance of this question provided insight into the barriers that may impede the participants’ ability to succeed and ultimately shape their job satisfaction. The two themes that echoed throughout these findings were 1) lack of institutional support, and 2) unchallenged institutional practices.

**Lack of institutional support.** Institutional support is necessary in order to thrive as a faculty member. Consequently, seven of the ten participants in this study described a lack of such support. These shortcomings in terms of support ranged from disciplinary issues to funding and ever-present yet marginalized adjunct faculty members. Overwhelmingly, the majority of the participants addressed work challenges directly. However, several of the participants failed to receive administrative support. In addition, the administrations’ apathetic attitudes toward correcting these grievances were at the expense of the faculty. Lack of support or the feeling of being voiceless is also indicative of a trigger.

**Supporting the professional voice and perspective.** In reflecting on her dual roles as an administrator and instructor, Alease made several tough decisions regarding disciplining faculty is not popular since her Dean was not a disciplinarian:
As an administrator, there have been times where I thought some faculty members needed to be written up for things that they did, but it wasn’t supported by my dean. He was the type of person who liked to keep everything easygoing and everyone happy.

Alease was clear that even with her handling these issues directly, resolutions were inconsistent:

I like to address them head on and have a conversation with whoever made the decision or someone in the chain of command. It’s not usually resolved, but I at least try to understand the thought process of how they came to a conclusion.

This type of challenge is delicate. As an administrator, Alease has a responsibility to the institution, faculty, staff, and students. As a faculty member, Alease has professional relationships with her colleagues to maintain. Her story clearly indicated her belief that the institution needs more direct guidelines for faculty disciplinary issues, and these directives will address issues with faculty who do not exemplify faculty rigor. As an administrator, when she is not supported by the dean, she is not being heard—she is even being marginalized. Her professional voice and perspective are being undervalued. When probing further on this issue, specifically how the community college is handling the issue, she thoughtfully explained:

I don’t think the institution has done a good job of that. This is the hardest place to get fired from. The institution is slowly changing how it deals with employees and in
turn making the students experience here better by having informed instructors or people who know how to solve problems without creating more problems.

In addressing her professional voice, Frankie had an epiphany, reflecting on a significant challenge the college calendar. When the college eliminated exam week, the change put heightened pressure on the faculty to teach more material and deliver exams in less time. Frankie’s concern was focused and engaged:

We are still required to be on campus even though we are not giving an exam. It doesn’t make any sense to me to take away days that benefit the students to have faculty in the office with nothing to do. Don’t get me wrong, I’ll be working on my national certification material, but I’d like to be treated as a professional and given the opportunity to voice my opinion.

Frankie discussed a lack of institutional support, but due to her positive attitude and overall excitement in regards to her profession, she is joyful. Patrice is more guarded in her response, but quite passionate about feeling voiceless:

I don’t look forward to my interactions with administration…I believe that there are things that need to be said, but in my position I don’t have an opportunity to say them. So, I tend not to interact…because when I do speak up, I don’t think it’s really appreciates or even considered.

The abovementioned begs the question if disciplinary actions are unresolved, and administration and faculty feel voiceless, how is performance being evaluated or rewarded, at
least in case of African American women? If a faculty member perceives a change in justice, in this case related to performance, the effect on satisfaction is apparent (Hagedorn, 2000).

**Valuing faculty performance.** Targeting faculty performance, the majority of the faculty did not address this issue directly. Phedu, however, painfully described an incident of being undervalued and disregarded:

I made an attempt to sit down one-on-one with my dean about the type of evaluations I was receiving from two women supervisors, who were racially degrading in their conversations; my evaluations were [always] more negative than positive. Any detail considered negative by them that ever happened was included in my evaluation. [However], that was not reflective of my performance. The dean basically looked at me and said, “What do you want me to do about it?” I had spoken with the evaluator and didn’t agree with it, so I chose not to sign. Then, I did my own formal write-up, with supportive data to accompany my evaluation because I did not feel like it was reflective of the level of work I was doing.

In this case, Phedu took control of her own evaluation. She was not evaluated fairly, in her opinion, and was not rewarded for her performance. However, she maintained her own evaluations and supportive data; this ownership led to her current administrative position, and for that she is grateful. For Phedu, her performance not being evaluated fairly moved beyond just work performance; it appeared to be more personal, which lends itself to a change in perceived justice. In her words, her character was being attacked and her performance dismissed. She explicated:
This was an annual evaluation, and I didn’t understand why I wasn’t alerted earlier [to any negative issues] so that I could change such said behavior and make sure the outcome for students would not be negative. [Clearly] it did not seem to impact the students. The impact was on me, as it was a personal, and I didn’t understand it at all. This type of misalignment with administration affects climate and impacts satisfaction. Continued hostile work conditions often are the foundation to a faculty member’s inability to thrive professionally.

**Failure to thrive professionally.** Frankie’s failure to thrive is not inherently connected to hostility, but to a lack of funding and practical technology investments on behalf of the community college. Her job as an ASL instructor is supported by new technology because her classes are taught using video-based instruction. In order to affect change, Frankie discussed a proposal submission:

I have given a written proposal of how I will use an iPad for example and how it can be beneficial, but I haven’t received anything yet. I have to beg and plead for everything, but, when I explain how it is going to be used, most times I can get it.

Funding is an issue for many institutions. However, this may or may not correlate with a lack of institutional support, depending on what programs are being funded. Further, according to Frankie it is a reflection of priorities: “I think they’re willing to listen and remove the challenges where they can. But, if it’s not a priority, the challenge won’t be removed.”

Veronica, Phedu, and Patrice all shared analogous opinions regarding the paucity of institutional support. Veronica was of the belief that this insufficiency may be institution-
specific: “I don’t think this is something happening across the community college system; I think this is a result of a specific administration.” For Phedu, challenges pertinent to communication with administration are extensive and create an air of mistrust. She affirms tacitly: “I have my own outside confidante because the work environment, to a degree, it lends itself to [not] being able to say certain things. Sometimes, it does more harm than good to share certain things with certain people; you don’t always know who’s in your corner.” In Patrice’s situation as a full-time counselor and adjunct instructor, she is privy to staff concerns as well as faculty interests. Unfortunately, adjunct faculty members, in her opinion, bear the brunt of these quandaries:

I often times hear across campus that adjunct faculty always feel like they’re out of the loop, their issues aren’t really addressed…they have a lot of needs that haven’t been given adequate consideration. I know that our administration and leadership have not adequately dealt with the needs of part-time faculty.

When faculty feels closed off or unable to voice concerns, and needs, they fail to thrive, and become professionally stagnant. Shelia’s perspective differed slightly. She expressed that there is still a network that determines who gets funding and that type of external control may be problematic, echoing some of Frankie’s thoughts regarding funding: “But, that good ol’ boy network is still in place, and the college is in part [a] business. So, we need business people and money to sustain us and funnel some of their funds into some of the things…fairness is questionable.”

In order for women faculty to thrive, satisfaction must be understood. There should be
equity among all faculty, adjusted as necessary to create diverse, supportive, and welcoming campuses (August & Waltman, 2004).

The remaining barriers experienced by the participants were unique to the individual. This lack of institutional support is multi-pronged. These insufficiencies are far reaching, creating faculty members who feel voiceless and unsupported. The trust violations, inadequate funding, and lack of communication speak directly to meager job satisfaction and a treacherous climate.

**Unchallenged institutional practices.** Barriers faced by these African American women are varied and are often institution-specific. However, there are institutional practices within all community colleges that remain unchallenged, and may be quietly accepted at status quo, resulting in faculty dissatisfaction. Negative institutional practices’, resulting from a negative climate is an environmental condition are also indicative of problems within the department and throughout the campus (August & Waltman, 2004). As these practices continue to be unchallenged, they become larger shortcomings.

**Institutional diversity shortcomings.** Gigi begins to explain her department demographics in the area of English, Reading, and Math; there are 17 instructors and four of them are African American. When discussing her student population, she estimates that more than 75 percent of the students are African American. Gigi was recruited to be a part of a hiring committee; in her own words, “And of course I was the only diverse person.” Gigi believes that the community needs more diversity and be reflective of their student population. Patrice shares similar experiences having been a part of several hiring
committees: “In the last year, I have served on more than 11 search committees. Typically, I’m the only African American and I’m usually the only student services staff member.”

Phedu also recalls being the first and only African American woman at her community college: “When I came aboard, I was the only African American in the building and the only [African American] nursing faculty. It was a little overwhelming; it was the ‘90s, not the 1890s.” Frankie’s experience is similar, and she quietly whispered:

I would hate to say that [being hired full-time] was such a slow process because I’m black and it was a racial thing. But in the back of my mind I do think that some degree of race did play a role in it. It didn’t take my counterparts in Spanish nearly as long to become full-time.

These participants are clearly being impacted by a lack of diversity and have a genuine concern for their institutions response to this issue. Gigi expresses her concerns regarding faculty: “We have no Latinos or Asians, and at this time, four Blacks.” Patrice further expressed her contempt for being on committees where she feels voiceless: “At one point, I actually said I would no longer be serving on search committees. I didn’t feel like I should serve on a committee where we didn’t have a voice.” Couched within lack of diversity and support is an unfortunate practice that is often dismissed as misinformation or unfounded hearsay: discriminatory hiring practices. These types of hiring practices are also aligned with a change in perceived justice as well as a problem within the academic climate (i.e. the environmental condition). This indication of a chilly climate makes African American
women feel left out, isolated (Boice, 1993; Olsen, Maple, & Stage, 1995), and voiceless (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988).

**Institutional hiring practices.** Gigi reflects on a recent hire and explains when looking through packets of credentials, resumes, and reference letters for the best candidate, she is also looking for diversity. In looking at potential hires, she’s interested in where the candidates finished school, for instance whether they attended a HBCU or an American Indian college. Gigi proceeds to discuss her picks for potential candidates and she was ignored by the committee. The committee sent their choices to Human Resources and Human Resources sent them back: “They stated we had no diversity.” Gigi exhaled. One of Gigi’s candidate choices was on the list, and eventually two women were interviewed. Gigi recalled the interviews:

The two ladies came in, and one was spectacular; she was amazing. [The other candidate] was doing some adjunct work at Systems Tech. So, she was on [our] campus at night, [already]. What I did not know was, that the adjunct woman [Systems faculty member] had already been networking, who happened to be white.

They already knew they were going to hire her.

Probing Gigi further, it was imperative for her to describe how she felt about the decision. She expressed angrily that she felt duped, especially when other faculty approached her about the hire. Calmly, Gigi sighed: “Later on I was asked, ‘Didn’t you know they were going to hire her?’ I replied, ‘No, I thought this was fair.’” For Patrice, as she reflected on the hires, she realized there was not one African American: “Thinking back on the search committees
that I’ve served on within the last year, I think, if I’m not mistaken, almost 100% of those who were hired were either Asian American or Caucasian. I don’t think we have hired any African American faculty.” Gigi’s thoughts mirrored Patrice’s, and she feels derision for serving on a committee without a voice. She made a candidate choice along with another White committee member for the African American woman, not based on race, but based on presentation and credentials, as she explains:

As a matter of fact, the other White woman [committee member] that voted for this particular lady, along with myself, said she couldn’t even remember what the other woman did, but that’s who they hired…they knew who they wanted and they were just going through the motions.

Gigi and Patrice were able to see firsthand how discriminatory hiring practices work. Their prospective committees made it evident that African Americans were not a first choice. This type of activity is difficult to prove. The idea that no qualified African American candidates made it through the hiring practice speaks volumes. Laden and Hagedorn (2000) highlight, racist acts against faculty can range from hostile to subtle encounters. Limited opportunities, lack of advancement, and discriminatory hiring practices are examples of such subtleties.

**Environmental Conditions, Climate, and Job Satisfaction**

Question three is vital to this study because it explores the specifics of the environmental conditions that impact climate condition perceived by participants as well as their overall job satisfaction. The two main themes emerged from data in exploring climate
and overall job satisfaction, 1) professional relationships, and 2) navigating uncertainty and complexity in the workplace.

**Professional Relationships**

In contrast to the lack of institutional support experienced by the participants, the majority developed positive collegial relationships with their peers and immediate supervisors. The abovementioned sub-theme of supervisor relationships as an incentive offered a brief synopsis. Satisfaction of faculty has been shown to be greatly affected by collegial relationships and climate (Grunwald & Peterson, 2003; Hagedorn, 2000). These collegial relationships provide a source of support and a network the faculty to rely upon (Astin & Davis, 1985; Hagedorn, 1996). Communication, as previously mentioned, was a building block for faculty and student relationships as well as faculty and supervisor relationships. Since open communication among peers proves no different, this type of communication assists the faculty in feeling connected.

**Open communication among peers.** These types of positive interactions often buffer the negative impact of barriers that would otherwise stall professional growth and create a positive environment. Ashley speaks glowingly of her peers and feels connected to other African American women in her college that welcomed her immediately she explains:

I don’t think I’ve had a negative experience at Community College B dealing with my coworkers. Two of the African American females that I know at Wallace told me to email or call them if I ever needed anything. It was very refreshing, especially since they looked like me.
Ashley also closes her statement with a good point, “They looked like me;” having other peers from similar a culture and background, for her, mattered. Shelia also spoke highly of peer collaboration and working with other faculty or staff members to problem solve:

For the most part, it’s a pretty good collaboration among faculty and staff at the college. I feel it’s a good environment overall to share ideas and knowledge and to work collaboratively on some activities.

Shelia further made it apparent that working with her peers is about the students and creating a positive learning environment. Thus, she speaks of respect and sidelining differences:

I think everyone respects one another enough to work here together, knowing that our final objective is to make sure the students have a good experience here. When everyone puts aside their differences and just looks at that point, it’s a good place for everyone to work in and make sure the students are successful.

Patrice and her colleagues not only have open communication, but she is seen as a resource for the community at-large:

I think in the six years that I’ve been here my colleagues across campus have learned that I’m someone they can trust and talk to. Also because of my work in the community, I think people have grown to know that I have a lot of connections in this community.

**Benefits of academic freedom.** Nine out of the ten participants had something positive to say regarding the academic climate; the majority of the participants felt connected to their work, and, more importantly, connected to their students. Compellingly, their
collegial relationships shaped their job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of these interactions. The institution/s role related to increased job satisfaction was lackluster. Only four of the participants expanded on this subject, and all stated they had some form of flexibility or academic freedom.

For these few participants, flexibility in their schedule and autonomy in the classroom were the only elements of institutional satisfaction that stood out. Being autonomous in the classroom and over curriculum allows for the faculty member to feel invested in, and, ultimately, in charge of their students learning. Flexibility in their teaching schedule also offers a degree of freedom to explore other educational interests and broaden the learning environment beyond the actual campus grounds. Ashley sees these freedoms as true benefits: “The fact that I can basically make my own schedule and I don’t have a schedule assigned to me. My life and my schedule aren’t revolved around someone who has nothing to do with it”. Veronica’s opinion moves these freedoms beyond just an advantage but a need: “I think an academic environment needs to have a level of freedom and flexibility.”

Veronica continued to reflect that having those freedoms was a part of an earlier administration; once the college went in another direction with a new administration, the climate and morale changed. The academic freedom that the faculty once enjoyed no longer existed. She explains: “It was tense for people, but it wasn’t tense for me because I knew I was leaving. I still, to this day, feel sorry for the people who had to stay because they were invested in this area. And, the morale was in the pits.” This testament directly reflects how a change in administration may alter the climate and devastate the institution. Eugenia sums up
the overall purpose of autonomy and having academic freedom: “[I like] …the autonomy, being able to be free enough to make decisions about my classroom and department, and working with professionals who take their job seriously.”

**Approaching uncontrolled impacting factors.** All of the faculty members articulated being grounded enough to understand the politics of the workplace and how to adjust to unforeseen factors. Several of them personified that a positive attitude and finding their niche were keys to their satisfaction. Sheila discussed her take on satisfaction, regardless of some negative factors:

> When I first started here is ’88, I didn’t think I’d be here talking about retirement. I said as long as I like what I’m doing, and I still like coming to work every day, I’ll stay in that job. . . . I’m satisfied right here where I am. There are enough new initiatives put in place to make it not be so mundane. It’s not the same thing day after day, year after year. . . . I can be a part of [these changes], utilize my special talents or express my new ideas.

Tory also believed in a positive attitude, flexibility and a strong work ethic, and how they can assist you in dealing with factors beyond your control: “Be persistent. Having a fluid learning curve is a necessity, especially for community colleges. Get in and learn as fast as you can. Encourage [change] in things that you see are lacking.” Ashley’s attitude throughout was about being positive and she concluded with this: “I think positive. I’ve never been a place where you can make it as wonderful as you want or as miserable as you want; it’s up to you. It’s a positive experience, but it is what you make it”. For these participants attitude plays an
important role in their satisfaction. In order to navigate through negativity, or factors beyond their control, the women had to adjust or change their mood.

Navigating Uncertainty and Complexity in the Workplace

These women have summarized both positive and negative experiences working within the community college. In order to maintain that work, their ability to navigate through varied uncertainty and complex issues speaks to their strengths.

**Engaging available resources.** Relationship-building with support staff or knowing how to wrangle resources is a key aspect of the faculty members’ ability to navigate. For faculty, it makes the daily bureaucracy inconsequential. Phedu offered an example: “I called maintenance [for one thing] and they sent four guys, because I’m kind and I speak to the maintenance guys. I value what they do.” Furthermore, moving between departments and programs proves invaluable as well. Phedu continues, “I do network, and I can go to other offices…and [utilize] people who can get resources, when I can’t.” These informal networks, not only create a more hospitable climate, but they improve relationships. Navigating through the workplace uncertainty as described by the participants, with assistance of staff, clearly defines relationships as the foundation of success. Again, relationships are the cornerstone of satisfaction and improved climate.

**Reconciling reality of the workplace with personal goals.** It is apparent the vast experiences of the participants explore their climate and overall job satisfaction. As mentioned in previous studies, problems associated with teaching, support, being undervalued and positioned with little power continue to chill the climate in academia
(Bejamin, 1997; Hall & Sandler, 1986; Henry & Nixon, 1994; Moses, 1989; Mosley, 1980; Smith, 1999). Furthermore isolation is also an issue, especially when these women are the only African Americans in their departments (Aguirre, 2000; Fields, 1996). Patrice sums this thought up while describing climate: “At times it can be very tense and at other times isolating.”

In order to continue on their professional trajectories, these women had to couple the reality of their workplace with their professional goals. Several of them have captured this coupling. Alease references a conversation with her colleagues and explained why race matters:

I found myself saying, “Well as an African American female. . . And, I said it more than once, because non-minority administrators at this college need to understand it’s not the same experiences for minority administrators. Our interactions with faculty, staff, and students are different, and it should be recognized.

Alease as an administrator makes it clear that she can operate as an administrator, but she has to delicately yet sternly balance administrative responsibilities and the issues of race and gender. Sheila’s position is softer understanding, and painted a broader picture:

Make sure you have some fun along with your work; if you don’t enjoy it you’re not going to do your best. When you come in as an instructor, be an instructor for now, but don’t limit yourself. This is a temporary stop on the road going where you want to go.
Sheila also talked about this coupling of reality and personal goals like a family. She expressed “you will have a work family and then your real family.” Frankie believes in a family connection as well: “I really enjoy working at the community college. I feel like I’m part of a family, and for the most part, we have the same common objective.” Tory’s approach is to leave a legacy for the women of the next generation and recruiting people of color:

> You have to be mindful of the fact that anything you do could possibly affect anyone coming after you. You have to be forward thinking. My supervisor purposefully recruited people of color in her department. Most of us are also women of Greek organizations, so she knew we had leadership skills. Recruit and hire people of color, you should set an example by recruiting others.

Phedu offered a rallying cry of why having balance and using your voice will harmonize work life and personal goals: “Balance [work] early on; don’t lose you. Have a stronger sense of self, speak up, and know when to speak up. Don’t allow the job to define you”.

**Chapter Summary**

The main findings in this chapter indicate that African American women faculty in the community college are faced with several obstacles that can distract from their ultimate goal: educating students. Fortunately, these women have forged positive student-teacher relationships and created a collegial community among their peers and immediate supervisors, that have allowed for them to move beyond the negative impact of racism, sexism, and limited support. They have also utilized various resources within their
communities, and built strong personal character to propel them forward. In short, the once thought chilly environments for the majority of these women are warming gradually, and offering equitable futures. Chapter six presents the conclusions drawn from this research. The conclusions presented provided insight into the implications and future recommendations on understanding the climate experiences of African American women faculty.
Chapter Six: Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of African American women faculty who taught at a community college in North Carolina. This study also sought to describe these experiences to discover any impact these experiences might have on their perception of climate and satisfaction in the workplace. Three research questions were employed to guide this study:

1. What are the incentives for African American women faculty in community colleges?
2. What are the barriers for African American women faculty in community colleges?
3. What environmental conditions affect the work experiences of African American women faculty in community colleges?

This chapter is comprised of four sections. The first section is a summary of the qualitative study of the experiences of African American women faculty in North Carolina community colleges. The second section is a discussion of the conclusions arising from the study. Section three presents the implications for theory, research, educators, mentors, practice and policy; the fourth section includes recommendations for action and future research.

Summary of Study Findings

A basic interpretive qualitative research design was used to investigate the aforementioned research questions. Using purposeful sampling, African American women
employed as community college faculty in North Carolina were interviewed. Participant ages ranged from 31 to 55, with five faculty members representing an urban community college and the remaining five representing rural community colleges. The participants were exclusively classified as urban and rural, aligning with North Carolina Community College System definitions, even though individual colleges use the classification of suburban, urban, and rural.

Ten participants engaged in semi-structured interviews over the course of five months. Interviews were conducted for approximately one hour and all were digitally recorded and transcribed with attention to confidentiality methods. Participants were provided an opportunity to review the transcriptions or member check and were contacted as necessary via telephone regarding clarification of any information gathered during the interview. The primary data were analyzed inductively using a constant comparative method (Fram, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Thomas, 2006). Additionally, the participants completed a demographic form in order for me to collect basic information on each person.

Secondary data were analyzed from documents, and field notes in conjunction with the interviews. Participant observations were limited to non-verbal communication during the interviewing process, providing insight into the faculty members’ responses. Validity and reliability, also known as trustworthiness, was ensured during the research process, peer debriefing and triangulation.

Each research question provided its own themes and sub-themes. Question one yielded three themes and eight sub-themes; question two offered two themes and five sub-
themes; and question three also garnered two themes and five sub-themes. The themes
developed from the research questions and their associated sub-themes are outlined in Table 3. The data collected and analyzed offered succinct details and insight into the experiences of African American women faculty in North Carolina community colleges.

Research question one explored the incentives or perks of African American women faculty at the community college. The first theme revealed awards and recognition as a welcomed incentive and direct link to overall satisfaction. Furthermore, the sub-themes related to award and recognition were *professional opportunities within the current workplace, extramural professional opportunities* and *engaging personal goals*. The second major theme referred to engaging students and connectedness of the faculty to their students. Stemming from that connectedness and the students’ response to it, the sub-themes were developed; *employing interpersonal skills, instructional communication, and fostering stronger student relationships*. The third theme was institutional administrative relationships. These relationships were the offspring of feeling valued and respected in the workplace, even when specific barriers existed. Sub-themes that supported those relationships included *developing open communication with supervisors and barriers to professional opportunities*.

Research question two delved into the barriers that exist for the participants. The major themes from question two revealed a lack of institutional support, along with unchallenged institutional practices had a negative impact on the participants’ ability to thrive. The sub-themes that evolved from the lack of institutional support related to *supporting the professional voice and perspective, valuing faculty performance, and failure*
to thrive professionally. The sub-themes for unchallenged institutional practices included *institutional diversity shortcomings, and hiring practices.*

Research question three addressed the environmental conditions climate and overall job satisfaction. The major themes that emerged here were professional relationships and navigating uncertainty and complexity in the workplace. In this case, the collegial relationships and positive buffers those relationships created against the abovementioned barriers proved invaluable. Furthermore, the sub-themes *open communication among peers, academic freedom, approaches to uncontrolled impacting factors, engaging valuable resources, and aligning workplace reality and personal goals* allowed these African American women various forms of refuge, autonomy in the classroom and ability to overcome many constraints. Two conclusions were drawn from the findings and are discussed in the next section.

**Conclusions**

The two major conclusions drawn from this study of the climate experiences of African American women faculty in North Carolina Community colleges were: 1) Collegial relationships for African American women faculty in the community college are equally valued to intrinsic rewards; 2) Discrimination experienced by African American women faculty of any kind is a hindrance, yet these women continue to persevere.

**Conclusion one:** *Collegial relationships for African American women faculty in the community college are equally valued to intrinsic rewards.*
Collegial relationships and intrinsic rewards proved equally valuable among the African American women faculty in this study. Collegial relationships among faculty are representative of camaraderie or amicable connections. Gregory (2001) does not use the term collegial relationships, but is clear “that positive interpersonal relationships and support systems” are important to success (p. 131). These relationships lend themselves to inclusion and creating a positive work environment. Notably, a lack of support has the opposite effect, and is all too familiar to Black women in academia (Gregory, 2001).

Elements of job satisfaction known as intrinsic rewards or motivators are described as recognition, achievement, and responsibility (Herzberg, 1966). Faculty in this study agreed that intrinsic rewards optimistically impacted their satisfaction, especially recognition. The literature is clear that recognition, defined as an intrinsic work factor, positively impacts job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1966). Women and minority faculty are no different; their overall job satisfaction is impacted by perceived recognition as well (Olsen et al., 1995). Hagedorn (2000) adds that recognition is a motivator, representative of an incentive. For these participants, as impactful as recognition is, collegial relationships are just as important. Collegial relationships among these various groups represent an environmental condition, critical to satisfaction and climate (Grunwald & Peterson, 2003; Hagedorn, 2000).

Student-faculty relationships for women of color historically have been tense due to the scarcity of African American faculty in the classroom (Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005). Due to this lack of representation and interaction, students tend to challenge the intellectual abilities and question the authority of the faculty members; according to Hughes and
Howard-Hamilton (2003) this is known as systematic racism. In order to circumvent negative classroom experiences and build upon their student relationships, the faculty in this study developed authentic exercises that required active participation. This allowed the faculty to connect with the students and develop their interpersonal communication. Having connectedness and providing positive examples for the students to emulate proved empowering for the faculty. This type of relationship-building and positive communication is critical to why faculty diversity is equally as important as student diversity. Villegas and Clewell (as cited in Newby et al., 2000) conclude that African American teachers offer sanguinity to students of color and provide a realistic perspective to White students by dispelling myths and untruths of racial inferiority. Several other studies indicate that the success of African American students is correlated with having African American instructors (Bogen & Orfield, 2005; Colby & Foote, 1996; Linthicum, 1989). This connectedness overwhelmingly, is what keeps the faculty in the community college setting, as indicated in the Levin’s et al., study (2014); the findings in this study concur.

With regards to peers, the faculty members who were connected to their colleagues felt represented and supported. Turner (2002; 2003) suggested faculty members experience within the campus (marginalization and underrepresentation) is related to their professional relationships with their peers. In other words the more positive connections with peers the better the overall climate. This assertion proved true for many of the women in this study. For example, Sheila stated, “For the most part, it’s a pretty good collaboration among faculty and staff at the college. I feel it’s a good environment overall to share ideas and knowledge
and to work collaboratively on some activities”. Historically African American women have been denied access to the social support that benefited other groups, such as White male faculty (Gregory, 2001). The participants in this study have, in part, overcome this barrier and built protective support systems. When connecting with peers, the faculty articulated the feeling of family and open communication. This collegial support, in turn, plays a critical role in faculty satisfaction. Collegial relationships are typically a source of support and a way for faculty to build their professional networks (Hagedorn, 1996). These relationships often come in the form of mentors, friends, and confidantes, where research suggests these relationships prove even more vital for women of color. Padilla and Chavez (1995) concluded that mentoring is critical for women of color as they pursue upward mobility. Further, this guidance and support creates more hospitable environments (Gregory, 2001; Sorcinelli, 1992).

The relationships between supervisors and the faculty prove difficult, especially if the faculty believe they are not supported. From a historical context, African American’s have not felt welcomed or supported in the academy (Thompson & Louque, 2005). Studies have indicated this feeling of exclusion can directly affect satisfaction and aid in creating a hostile climate (Davis, 2008; Henry & Glenn, 2009). The study conducted by Laden and Hagedorn (2000) states that support of an immediate supervisor almost always promotes a positive work environment. Four women in this study expressed similar experiences, describing positive relationships with their immediate supervisors and open communication that warmed the academic climate. This type of connectedness does not appear to be the norm experienced
by most African American women faculty. In higher education literature (Thomas & Hollendshead, 2001), for instance, African American women express “feeling invisible” (p. 166), believing their work or research is devalued. Furthermore, research by Patitu and Hinton (2000) concluded African American women felt a lack of support from peers and managers, feeling marginalized and isolated. These relationships with colleagues, students, and supervisors as well as perceptions of culture and climate of the institution can significantly impact faculty job satisfaction (Hagedorn, 2000). For the majority of the participants, their ability to connect and communicate openly proved just as significant as being recognized for their professional contributions.

Community college settings vary depending on institutional structure, geographical location, and the disciplines that are offered. These variations define the internal and external relationships experienced by the faculty. The African American women in this study represented either urban or suburban community colleges. Levin et al., (2014) studied four community colleges (representing urban, suburban and rural settings), and based on their structures and the limited faculty interactions, satisfying relationships across campus were problematic. The faculty of color interviewed for the Levin et al., (2014) study maintained relationships within their department, yet they also expressed that interdepartmental interactions were difficult. In comparison to this study, ten out of ten of the participants stated they felt comfortable outside of their department. Patrice summed it up best: “I’m comfortable across campus outside of my department. I have built very strong relationships with faculty and staff across campus”. According to Gregory (2001), African American
women have “expressed the need for and importance of shared understandings, mutual respect, trust, and support. . . They have indicated they have sought professional relationships and friendships with other academic women” (p.134). They relationships are critical to collaboration and reducing the feeling of isolation. For these women, it is all about relationships, and they have managed to persevere in part by maintaining these relationships.

**Conclusion two: Discrimination experienced by African American women faculty of any kind is a hindrance, yet these women continue to persevere.**

Throughout the interview process, race and gender issues were subtly but pervasively described. Several participants recalled and reflected on varied racial microaggressions and in one case, a true act of racism. Microaggressions are defined as “conscious, unconscious, verbal, nonverbal and visual insults [that] are directed toward people of color (Hamilton-Howard, 2003). Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal and Torino (2008) expand on this understanding of microaggressions and power: “European Americans have historically had the power to impose their own reality and define the reality of those with lesser power” (p. 277). These microaggressions are positioned within the barriers experienced by the participants, outlined in Table 3. Phedu recalls her experience with this reality:

> They [the microaggressions] were attitudes, literally behaviors aimed at me. I didn’t always absorb all of the negativity…it was very obvious that I was the target. Some of my barriers are so invisible that if I talk about them, people will accuse me of being paranoid.
Even in her recollection related to the microaggressions she experienced, Phedu is vague, as if to protect herself, or even to protect others. However, she specifically discussed the devaluing of her work performance; “The evaluations were more negative than positive, [disseminated] by two of the meanest ladies I have ever worked with. . . Their conversations were racially degrading.” The women described were supervisors and also White. These acts of discrimination are representative of issues related to the institutional climate or culture, their behavior was subtle enough not to draw attention, but systematic enough to cause Phedu’s satisfaction to waiver. The multiple barriers faced by women of color are clearly outlined in previous research (Gordon 2004; Gregory, 2001; Henderson, 2005; Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Nicols & Tanksley, 2004; Simpson, 2001) and echoed on a micro-scale in this study. The barriers, cloaked in discrimination include a lack of professional support, minimal hiring and promotion, isolation, racism and sexism (Benjamin, 1997; Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Camblin, 1998; Greene, 2000; Harley, 2008; Moses, 1989). The women in this study revealed similar barriers, with the majority being linked back to an overall lack of institutional support. For example, when Phedu wanted to address her experiences with other administrators, the response was simply, “What do you want me to do about it?” Fortunately, Phedu and the other women in this study have managed to solicit supportive colleagues and other staff by making connections and utilizing the power of mentoring.

In higher education, these forms of discrimination, in part, may be a reflection of the underrepresentation of African American faculty. The participants for this study indicated
that institutional practices and discriminatory hiring tactics were reflected in the lack of African Americans on their prospective campuses. Therefore, the findings of this study agree with the previous research, which suggests that African American faculty must contend with personal and institutional racism (Johnsrud & DesJarlais, 1994; Stanley, 2006). The effects of these transgressions are often internalized by the participant and impede the faculty member’s ability to succeed, both immediately and long term in their careers. The sum of the experiences translates into a hostile or chilly institutional climate, leading to dissatisfaction and exodus by the faculty (Trower & Chait, 2002).

Even though individual experiences of these women differ, several similarities existed. Many of the women had difficult work situations to overcome, but through perseverance, they were able to decipher between critical and gratuitous. Part of that perseverance is credited to having balance. Instructors who were also involved in administration expressed having balance at the workplace made the job easier. Gregory (2001) reported that African American women who were successful in academia were able to manage various role sets and acclimate to multiple responsibilities.

In addition to achieving balance, these women are being awarded and recognized for their selfless contributions to their various disciplines and communities. Many of the participants noted feeling a sense of accomplishment when working with students or other community groups to propel them forward. Their ability to give back is also a reflection of their persistence by building their communities regardless of inequities they experience. These women are engaged in empowerment and being a voice to the voice-less. They
continue to persevere as professionals within their educational institutions while being regarded as leaders in their communities. When the participants experienced a change in perceived justice, they adjusted accordingly in order to counteract the negative impact.

The women in this study have proven themselves to be successful professionals regardless of barriers in the workplace. Their resilience and its impact on their ability to persevere involve specific strategies that allow them to address obstacles head-on. Gregory (1999) offers a list of these strategies utilized by successful African American women faculty; the women in this study employed one or more of these strategies, the most relevant to all participants, were “building a coalition of colleagues in and outside of the department and institution” (p.134). Employing some of these strategies, the voice of these women is not diminished, and their participation in activities extends beyond their student/classroom obligations. They are shaped by their experiences, as demonstrated with resilience and the ability to glean perspective from events that shape the experiences of others via personal contributions and insight. These women have been afforded many roles within academia such as advisors, administrators, program coordinators, deans, and the like. Regardless of discriminatory practices, these women have become and remained successful through interpersonal relationships, networking, and support systems (Gregory, 1999; 2001; Merriam, 1983). Their success in these areas is defined through their strength, and their true professionalism.
**Implications for Theory, Research, Policy and Practice**

The findings of this study offer implications for theory, research professional practice and policy. These implications support the original purpose of the study which was to explore the experiences of African American women faculty in North Carolina community colleges. This research also relates to the topic of climate and job satisfaction of this specific participant group within the community college system. Little research exists on the topic of climate and job satisfaction of African American women faculty.

**Implications for Theory**

Hagedorn’s (2000) conceptual framework guided this study. Due to the complexity of job satisfaction research, the tenets of job satisfaction theories will be reiterated. There are two main categories or classifications related to job satisfaction theories: they are either content or process theories (Campbell et al., 1970). Content theories such as Maslow’s (1943) and Herzberg’s (1966) attempt to explain factors that influence job satisfaction and their effects by identifying the needs or values most important. Process theories similar to Locke’s (1976) attempt to give an account of the expectations, needs or values related to job satisfaction. Maslow’s (1943) hinges on a hierarchy; once the basic needs are met, humans will continue to move towards the next level in the sequence. There is minimal evidence to support the requirement of a hierarchy (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976); however, Herzberg’s (1966) two-factor theory supports it, seen as an improvement. For this study, Herzberg’s (1968; 2003) updated theory partially holds true in that incentives were shown by the participants to increase satisfaction while barriers decrease satisfaction. However, Herzberg’s
theory does not address the variance in gender or race. Scholars agree that variance within populations adds another layer of complexity to job satisfaction (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Nieman & Dovidio, 2005). This study is addresses these variances by specifically targeting African American women. The participant selection may have been a limitation in that this study only included African American women faculty at community colleges in North Carolina. Other African American women within and beyond those community colleges may present alternative experiences. Simply put Locke’s (1976) theory was not appropriate for this study either due to the fact it, too, does not take into account varied populations or cultures (Judge et al., 2009).

For the purpose of this study, Hagedorn’s (2000) conceptual framework was utilized. Hagedorn introduced a framework for faculty job satisfaction in 2000, drawing on Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson, and Capwell’s (1957) work. Hagedorn divided the model into two constructs, triggers and mediators. This model provides a comprehensive view of job satisfaction for women faculty, including contextual and personal factors. However, qualitative research in the area of job satisfaction utilizing Hagedorn’s (2000) model for African American women in the community college proved to be limited. From a theoretical perspective, the findings indicate the delicate nuances of climate and job satisfaction as experienced by African American women faculty. Hagedorn’s (2000) model outlines the diverse variables of job satisfaction for women; specific to this study, the role of environmental conditions married with motivating factors. Hagedorn’s (2000) model proved to appropriate for this study at a basic level.
In Hagedorn and Laden’s (2002) study, climate was analyzed for women within the community college, specifically addressing 1) overall assessment of climate, 2) satisfaction with salary, 3) satisfaction with students, 4) propensity to leave the college, 5) desire for more interaction with colleagues and 6) attitudes towards discrimination (p. 74). Their quantitative study concluded that these community college women faculty members “perceived climate similar to their male counterparts” (Hagedorn & Laden, 2002). However, in this study, women’s, including women of color, perception of discrimination were higher than men’s. In all fairness, the findings relating to faculty of color should be weighed against the smaller number of faculty of color (only 11 percent of the sample) as compared to the whole sample (Hagedorn & Laden, 2002).

Overall, Hagedorn and Laden’s (2002) conclusions were more positive than negative; however, they caution “the finding on discrimination should not be taken too lightly, as it may indicate undercurrents of attitudes or events” not easily captured in quantitative studies (p.76). In others words, the researchers believe more extensive qualitative work is necessary to provide a complete picture of climate for women faculty at the community college. This author agrees that in order to provide rich, thick data, a longer narrative and detailed analysis are required to understand this population’s perceptions.

For this study, I sought how to make meaning of African American women faculty members’ experiences related to incentives and barriers that may affect job satisfaction and academic climate. Understanding this population’s perspectives through a basic interpretive approach lends itself to a larger understanding of academic social contexts, and such
understanding is a step towards change: change in the job satisfaction levels of this population, change in potential policy regarding faculty diversity, and change in the climate within the institutions of higher learning for the betterment of all faculty, staff, and students. After examining race, gender, and the institution, it is apparent that environmental conditions for African American women are somewhat warmer. Hagedorn’s (2000) model has mediators and triggers and describes how they affect satisfaction. This study suggests that for these specific women, mediators had the most effect on their satisfaction and climate. Very few, if any, triggers were mentioned during the interviewing process, except changes in perceived justice. In other words, these African American women focused on relationships and the coupling of environmental conditions and incentives, not the commonly addressed triggers (change or transfer). This study adds to the research literature the equal importance of emotional and professional satisfaction. For African American women faculty in North Carolina community colleges, this satisfaction is indicative of warmer workplace climates, and increased job satisfaction.

**Implications for Research**

The data collected from the first two research questions are indicative of the two major components of job satisfaction: incentives and barriers. Hagedorn (2000) constructed a model which organized the factors that influence faculty job satisfaction. Her model contains triggers including significant life events related or unrelated to the job and mediators including variables that influence a relationship between other variables or situations that impact the relationships that, in turn, interact with or affect job satisfaction. For this research,
incentives and barriers were utilized to represent triggers and mediators. Hagedorn’s conceptual framework is lacking the connection between gender and race and the affect they have on job satisfaction, particularly for African American women faculty, from a qualitative perspective. More detailed individual narratives from African American women faculty are required to further explore the relationship between job satisfaction, race and gender. Further investigation into African American women faculty is crucial when extrapolating the reality of why these women are often positioned marginally and how the workplace climate contributes to that marginality.

This study provided additional insight into the incentives and barriers of African American women faculty in North Carolina community colleges. Further qualitative research should be completed in order to truly represent these campus cultures. Continued research may answer recent developments among the institutions on how to increase diversity across sex, race, and ethnicity. The community college often represents a diverse student body, but the faculty has yet to obtain that status (Smith & Moreno, 2006).

In-depth research in the area of critical mass may also be appropriate. Critical mass creates role models, mentors, and communal support from various ethnicities, and therefore increasing the presence of women faculty of color lends itself to reaching critical mass (Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). After revealing the findings of this research, it is apparent that historical road blocks hindering African American women professionally still exist. What is not so clear are all the tools they must utilize to overcome these obstacles in modern
environments. More research in the area of African American women faculty’s success within their various institutions would be valuable and persuasive.

**Implications for Institutional Policy**

African American women would benefit from professional development designed specifically for their needs. This research and future research should be utilized to design leadership programs and education that foster professional growth African American women, with a specific focus on community college faculty. A leadership development program could provide administrative tools to recruit, support, and retain other African American women faculty, emulating the action plan for educators and mentors. Within this training, specific to this population, discussing and understanding the intersectionality of race and gender that creates a double jeopardy (representing two oppressed groups) and inviting an even more challenging experience should be explored in depth (Fleming 1996; Gregory, 2001; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2008; Petrie & Roman, 2004). Therefore, the ability of college and university administration to address and remove these issues is critical in making African American women faculty full contributors and power-sharing professionals (Branch, 2001).

Recruitment is the essential step in facilitating African American women faculty to be full contributing, power-sharing forces on campus. In order to work more towards this lofty goal, there are three strategies suggested by Branch (2001) to enact:
(1) to replace non-supportive and/or discriminating campus [workplace] climates that drive away African Americans with empowering climates and supportive policies and procedures;

(2) to support research that will improve the quality of life in the African American community and enhance the status of the university or college; and (3) to reward teaching and service in all disciplines that benefit the university [or college] and the larger society. (p. 176)

In addressing the first strategy of recruiting, by replacing a non-supportive or discriminatory workplace climate with an empowering and supportive one, bold change is explored and implemented, not only through policy and procedure, but by enacting recruitment teams dedicated to inclusion and social justice. The program’s goal would utilize a mentoring model, applying the aforementioned strategies to recruit, support, and retain African American women faculty. Mentoring is key, as it creates a supportive environment; thus the model illustrates a relationship between the faculty and the essential ideas and is as follows:

Level one represents the use of administration, faculty, and staff for recruitment. Level two represents how these faculty members are supported through mentoring, while engaged in teaching, service, and research. The model is phrased a mentoring model due to mentoring being a centralized focus and necessary to sustain all the other relationships. Level three represents the required institutional support of mentoring, research, workload protection, and rewarding teaching/service (adapted from Branch, 2001, in Jones, 2001).
In order to recruit African American women to the community college, ideally, a team of institutionally-employed women consisting of mostly African Americans who represent the beliefs of current administration, faculty and staff, needs to be accessible. If none are available, a special co-community relationship may be a viable option. The concept of a co-community relationship would entail institutional administration seeking out these faculty members from surrounding colleges willing to form a consortium. The goal of this collaborative effort is to seek out African American women faculty willing to share their talents, professional perspective and academic work to enhance workplace climate. A negative or chilly climate that impacts the opportunity for professional networking needs to be addressed. The campus community has to embrace cultural differences and have an engendered respect of all faculty/staff of color through meaningful working relationships.

Professional support is the second strategy as a mechanism of encouragement and research into the sustenance of African Americans at the community college. Research at the community college level varies greatly due to the nature of the school’s focus from vocational certifications/degrees to student preparedness and transfer to four-year institutions (Erwin, 2005; Lundquist & Nixon, 1998).

If research is not a goal of this institution, then support for fellowships, grants and community involvement could be intertwined as a large focus of support. Pairing junior and senior faculty will allow the senior faculty to offer guidance and insight through either a formal or informal mentoring relationship. Mentors can offer workshops, group chats, and informal meetings to keep newer faculty apprised of campus changes, teaching strategies,
classroom dynamics and other timely topics. In supporting the faculty, the goal would be for the new faculty to give back to the campus, become engaged in the environment, and have meaningful experiences while supporting the campus and surrounding community. Commitment to servicing the community will require collaborative efforts and best practices for program planning via open communication channels among peers.

Retention is the third strategy; rewarding teaching and service, using mentoring, and protecting new faculty from an excessive workload are the pillars of retention (Branch, 2001). Mentors, specifically senior faculty, will be instrumental in recognizing excellence in teaching and service from the new faculty by encouraging nominations of various accolades. The administration, such as chairs/deans, should work to ensure workload protection and create a more collaborative work environment. Harvey (1994) summarizes these thoughts well, grouped in four stages:

1. “presence”, marked by hiring African American faculty; 2. “thought”, African American faculty “introducing into the institutional environment a set of thoughts/ideas/observations that would have otherwise not been available”, 3. “action”, African American faculty are diligent and action orientated in addressing academic [and societal] issues of concern; and 4. “impact”, the university or campus positive response to the actions of African American faculty. (p. 24)

The presence, thoughts, actions, and impact by empowered administrative individuals will provide the necessary climate, institutional, and faculty change required to recruit, support, and retain African American women in the community college.
Implications for Practice

Implications for practice reflect initiatives community colleges may need to ensure warmer academic climates and job satisfaction for African American women faculty. Based on the findings and analytic work completed, most of the participants’ comments indicated they were satisfied at their job. Through further exploration, it was revealed that these women believed being awarded and recognized for their contributions to the institution, or at least in their various programs, was a true incentive. Positive student and supervisor relationships further supported this incentive and reflected their true motivation for staying at the community college. However, disproportionate professional opportunities were a resounding theme for these women as well. In discussing the professional opportunities offered to them, the inequity of this incentive was mentioned by nine of the participants. A transformational change would make professional opportunities, transparent and available to all interested faculty members. All faculty members should be able to engage in professional development and encourage their colleagues to do likewise.

The barriers that emerged entailed a lack of institutional support and discriminatory hiring practices. The lack of institutional support varied among participants, but more importantly, the lack of support impeded collegiately, retention, and professional commitment to their prospective discipline. To improve institutional support, the above mentioned implication for professional policy should be highly recommended, if not mandated, with the intent that community colleges will align themselves with teams to recruit, support, and retain African American women faculty.
Discriminatory hiring practices were illuminated strongly by two participants in particular, while other participants were not as forthcoming regarding this topic. However, several of them alluded to this practice, yet they felt helpless to address it beyond private conversations among peers and other external supportive colleagues. Discrimination is illegal, yet often, it is subtle and shrouded within the institution’s practices and overlooked. Policies regarding discrimination that already exist need to be enforced; hiring committees also need to be diverse and all participants should be held accountable if the institution fails to adhere to the law. This would include supervisors and administrators, who have the final word on new hires. These implications all require vision, resources, and a commitment to change in order to become reality.

The literature suggests diversifying faculty and administration in higher education is equally as important as diversifying the student body (Colby & Foote, 1996; Newby et al., 2000). According to Colby and Foote, having a diverse faculty lends itself to “effective and visible support systems” (p. 3). African American women faculty can serve in numerous capacities while maintaining a positive presence throughout the campus community. The diversity within the faculty not only supports a diverse student body; it changes the overall academic climate.

Campus diversity should start by diversifying the faculty on all levels and thoroughly scrutinizing hiring practices. Research indicates that students of color are more motivated and often are more successful when they have faculty of color as their instructors (Bogen & Orfield, 2005). Educators can embrace this notion by developing and implementing plans to
recruit and retain women faculty of color. The plan would provide administration with a set of criteria for the institution that addresses best methods of recruitment and retention. Diverse committees, comprised of various departments and focus groups, would be instrumental in developing the criterion that they will support and believe in. Faculty would be charged to probe why some faculty of color stays at the institution while others choose to depart. This plan of action can also serve as a source of recognition by administration, indicating that the faculty needs more diversity. It is vital to the institution that administration be committed to becoming more inclusive. Moving forward with the action plan, faculty can then decide how to conduct appropriate research to change their campus culture, and diversity.

The community college should consider establishing retention policies for faculty of color. Professional development, fellowships, and mentoring are a few tactics that may improve retention. Professional development that includes continuing education courses and applicable credit from graduate course work is a start. The fellowships should be geared toward faculty of color to continue research of interest, and also encourage a deepening relationship between the campus and needs of the community. Lastly, formal mentoring programs that connect senior and junior faculty in order to provide new hires with a confidant or knowledgeable peer should be formed. These strategies offered in a consistent and productive approach can be encouraging, giving faculty a voice and a feeling of respect.

**Recommendations for Action**

The present study sought to explain African American women faculty’s perceptions of climate and their experiences within the community college. The following
recommendations are designed to offer additional methods imperative to the success of these professionals. This list is not exhaustive, but it provides a blueprint to guide action-orientated professionals committed to the journey of social justice.

**Professional Development**

According to Caffarella and Zinn (1999), one way to achieve success in higher education is to engage in professional development for the span of an academic career. Gregory (2001) states, “Numerous studies have indicated that positive interpersonal relationships and support systems are important factors for a successful career” (p. 131). One main construct is that people and interpersonal relationships outside the work environment influence teacher-leaders and their development (Zinn, 1997).

As previously mentioned, these programs need to be developed specifically through an African American women faculty lens. Research such as this and those previously discussed should be referenced in the development and implementation of leadership program or year-long orientations that build community across disciplines and the college. This paradigm shift will work to remove the individual gate-keeper persona and provide appropriate resources that can be accessed by all faculty members.

These particular domains represent, in part, what faculty members need in order to feel supported. Each faculty member is faced with the task to seek out professional development activities and discover which ones work for them. However, the institution in which they practice must also provide an environment that supports these factors. Encouraging participation in professional associations and extramural professional
engagement fosters new relationships and builds the network of the individual as well as the institution.

**Institutional Support**

As aforementioned, part of how faculty members become successful and feel supported is through appropriate, useful, and continuous faculty development. The other critical piece is establishing support systems, especially for women faculty, faculty of color and women faculty of color. As African American women faculty continue to enter into academia, it is imperative that visible and purposeful support be available, not just by immediate supervisors, but also by senior administration and other leaders representing the institution. Recognizing that racism and sexism still exist within the halls of academia can begin the process of developing support processes by creating and fostering effective relationships with women faculty, especially African American women faculty to remove those barriers. Again, senior administration needs to be at the forefront of diversity planning, implementation, and honest evaluation. One option is to start by developing a faculty of color task force that engages administration and sets expectations for future relationship building and faculty mentoring. African American women faculty members also need to be included on committees developed for campus improvement, not as tokens, but as viable, important contributors with a voice.

**Mentoring**

Appropriate mentoring is one way to build or increase faculty collegiality and limit exclusions. These relationships will offer the seasoned faculty an opportunity to share their
expertise and increase invaluable connections between old and new. Furthermore, mentors act as guides and a support system, which is another way to protect faculty relationships and improve retention. JoAnn Moody’s (2004) ten recommendations, outlined within the literature review, provided a foundation to build a mentoring program upon. Employing these strategies offers inclusivity, and a supportive climate for African American women faculty to thrive.

**Future Research**

This research is unique in the sense that it is a qualitative contribution to the literature. Future contributions should include more qualitative studies, especially when a theory targeted for quantitative research can be adapted. Herzberg’s (2000) framework largely guides quantitative studies, yet it proved useful for this qualitative basic interpretive research.

The findings of this study provide recommendations beneficial to institutions of higher learning, specifically community colleges. Future research should explore and study experiences that concretely define the factors related to job satisfaction and overall workplace climate. A pointed review of various institutions in the North Carolina Community College system in addition to an exit interview and study of the African American women faculty who left their institutions may prove to be a valuable catalyst for change. Using a case study approach would focus the practices at the varying colleges and provide comparison information across the state. This type of data could reveal best practices already implemented at one institution versus the next, offering a cohesive plan to improve
experiences for African American women faculty in North Carolina community colleges. Intentional individual narratives and reflections of African American women faculty are needed to truly capture the intersectionality of race, gender, and job satisfaction.

Another recommendation for future research is utilizing Critical Race Theory or Black Feminist Thought as an interpretive lens. This research was a basic interpretive study which did not focus specifically on the legal studies of critical analysis (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) or the “outsiders within” as labeled by Collins (2000). In future research, CRT could be used to theorize, examine, and challenge the explicit and implicit ways race impacts social structures and practices including those within community colleges (Bell, 1995). The inclusion of Black Feminist Thought could provide more clarity on race, gender, class, and other oppression, thereby detailing the importance of interpersonal relationships between these women, their families, and their community (Collins, 2000).

Chapter Summary

Changing the structural and attitudinal barriers within an institution of higher learning will not happen overnight; however, it is not impossible. Institutions of higher learning, especially community colleges, have been in the forefront of change, diversity, and inclusiveness throughout a major part of history. Improving the academic climate for faculty would be another major effort, turned success, if research is combined with action.
REFERENCES


http://www.aft.org/pdfs/highered/aa_parttimefaculty0310.pdf


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APPENDICES
INFORMATIONAL SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

PLEASE READ ALL OF THIS INFORMATION CAREFULLY PRIOR TO COMPLETING THE CONSENT FORM

An Informed Consent Statement has two purposes: (1) to provide adequate information to potential research subjects to make an informed choice as to their participation in a study, and (2) to document their decision to participate. In order to make an informed choice, potential subjects must understand the study, how they are involved in the study, what sort of risks it poses to them and who they can contact if a problem arises (see informed consent checklist for a full listing of required elements of consent). Please note that the language used to describe these factors must be understandable to all potential subjects, which typically means an eighth grade reading level. The informed consent form is to be read and signed by each subject who participates in the study before they begin participation in the study. A duplicate copy is to be provided to each subject.

If subjects are minors (i.e. any subject under the age of 18) use the following guidelines for obtaining consent:

- **0-5 years old** – requires signature of parent(s)/guardian/legal representative
- **6 – 10 years old** - requires signature of parent(s)/guardian/legal representative and verbal assent from the minor. In this case a minor assent script should be prepared and submitted along with a parental consent form.
- **11 - 17 years old** - requires signature of both minor and parent/guardian/legal representative

If the subject or legal representative is unable to read and/or understand the written consent form, it must be verbally presented in an understandable manner and witnessed (with signature of witness). If there is a good chance that your intended subjects will not be able to read and/or understand a written consent form, please contact the IRB office 919-515-4514 for further instructions.
North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: The Climate Experiences of African American Women Community College Faculty in North Carolina

Principal Investigator: Charla Blumell
Faculty Sponsor (if applicable): Tuere Bowles, PhD

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the experiences of African American women faculty in the community college.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in approximately a 1-1.5 hour, in person interview at a campus location or other location convenient to you. You will be asked to sign a consent form for participation, once we review it. The interview will be audio recorded and all information collected on the audio recording will be transcribed to a hardcopy document for review and analysis. Following transcription of the interview, a preliminary copy will be mailed to you for content review, stripped of all identifying information in a generic letter. A postage paid envelop will also be included for ease of return to me, if necessary. Review of your interview information should take no longer than one hour of your time, post-interview. The researcher(s) will also take notes via pen and paper and record observations associated with the interview, when appropriate. Participants will be provided with the final written report of the interview and will have access to the final dissertation as well.

Risks
There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts for study participants. All names and identifying information will be redacted or appropriately coded so no individual participants can be identified in published reports. The interview time will be minimized to the absolute time necessary, so as to minimize impacts on your other commitments. I understand that any discomfort or stress experienced during the interview process will not exceed that which I experience during normal daily activities.

Benefits
I understand I will not benefit directly from the research; however, I understand that my voluntary participation will provide an opportunity to share my experiences in regard to the topic area; and will benefit other faculty members, administration, and professional staff; and in general will add to the current body of literature related to African American women faculty.

Confidentiality
The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants. Any physical documents retained will be destroyed 5 years after the project ends. We have taken
several precautions in order to protect your confidentiality. However, those who know you or work with you may be able to identify from the publication.

**Compensation**
You will receive a $25 retail gift card as compensation for your participation.

**What if you are a NCSU student?**
Participation in this study is not a course requirement and your participation or lack thereof, will not affect your class standing or grades at NC State.

**What if you are a NCSU employee?**
Participation in this study is not a requirement of your employment at NCSU, and your participation or lack thereof, will not affect your job.

**What if you have questions about this study?**
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Charla Blumell at 919-615-3016.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**
If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

**Consent To Participate**
“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature_______________________________________ Date _________________
Investigator’s signature___________________________________ Date _________________
Appendix B: Letter of Invitation to Participate

Dear Prospective Participants,

My name is Charla Blumell, and I am a doctoral student in Leadership, Policy, Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University. I am currently conducting research on African American women faculty in the community colleges as part of the completion of my doctoral degree in adult education.

This is a qualitative study which uses primarily interviews to explore the experiences, incentives, and barriers among African American women faculty in community colleges in North Carolina. One of my career goals is to increase the amount of research in this area.

If you agree to participate, I am asking for a commitment to one in-depth interview, approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours long, scheduled at your convenience during the summer session or fall semester. Face-to-face interviews are preferred, but telephone interviews may be necessary for compliance with the researcher’s or participant’s schedule. The interviews are a detailed summation of your professional and personal experiences working within the community college.

Your response to this request is important to the advancement of my research on African American women in adult and higher education. Your participation is greatly needed, valued, and would be deeply appreciated. If you are interested in participating, please submit a vita/resume and complete the enclosed biographical profile in the self-addressed envelope by (date). Shortly after receiving your vita/resume and profile, I will call you to set up interview dates and times.

If you have questions or need additional information please feel free to contact me at (919) xxx-xxxx or (252) xxx-xxxx or you can e-mail me at cstudent@ncsu.edu.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Charla Blumell
Letter of Invitation to Participate via Administration

Dear Human Resource Officer or Program Director,

My name is Charla Blumell, and I am a doctoral student in Leadership, Policy, Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University. I am currently conducting research on African American women faculty in the community colleges as part of the completion of my doctoral degree in adult education.

This is a qualitative study which uses primarily interviews to explore the experiences, incentives, and barriers among African American women faculty in community colleges in North Carolina. One of my career goals is to increase the amount of research in this area.

If you agree to the circulation of this invitation to potential participants, I am asking for a commitment to one in-depth interview, approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours long, scheduled at their convenience during the summer session or fall semester. Face-to-face interviews are preferred, but telephone interviews may be necessary for compliance with the researcher’s or participant’s schedule. The interviews are a detailed summation of their professional and personal experiences working within the community college.

Your response to this request is important to the advancement of my research on African American women in adult and higher education. Your participation is greatly needed, valued, and would be deeply appreciated. If you are interested in participating, please provide me a list of faculty emails in which to invite them to participate. I will then email a similar request to the faculty and upon compliance, request a vita/resume and complete the attached biographical profile by (date). Shortly after receiving their vita/resume and profile, I will call them to set up interview dates and times.

If you have questions or need additional information please feel free to contact me at (919) xxx-xxxx or (252) xxx-xxxx or you can e-mail me at cstudent@ncsu.edu.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Charla Blumell
Greetings Prospective Participants,

My name is Charla Blumell, and I am a doctoral student in Leadership, Policy, Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University. I am currently conducting research on African American women faculty in the community colleges as part of the completion of my doctoral degree in adult education.

This is a qualitative study which uses primarily interviews to explore the experiences, incentives, and barriers among African American women faculty in community colleges in North Carolina. One of my career goals is to increase the amount of research in this area.

If you agree to participate, I am asking for a commitment to one in-depth interview, approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours long, scheduled at your convenience during the summer session or fall semester. Face-to-face interviews are preferred, but telephone interviews may be necessary for compliance with the researcher’s or participant’s schedule. The interviews are a detailed summation of your professional and personal experiences working within the community college.

Your response to this request is important to the advancement of my research on African American women in adult and higher education. Your participation is greatly needed, valued, and would be deeply appreciated. If you are interested in participating, please provide me a copy of your vita/resume and complete the attached biographical profile by (date). Shortly after receiving their vita/resume and profile, I will call you to set up interview dates and times.

If you have questions or need additional information please feel free to contact me at (919) xxx-xxxx or (252) xxx-xxxx or you can e-mail me at cstudent@ncsu.edu.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Charla Blumell
Appendix C: Participant Demographic Form

Please answer the following questions. This information will not be shared with any other party and will be destroyed following completion of this project.

Pseudonym: ___________________________________________

Race/Ethnicity __________________________________________

Age ______

Marital Status _____S (single) _____ M (married) _____P (partner) _____ D (divorced)

Current Address
____________________________________________________

Current Email Address
____________________________________________________

Please complete the following survey questions regarding your professional employment during the last academic calendar year.

1. During the last academic calendar year, did you have any instructional duties in the community college? This includes teaching students in one or more credit or noncredit courses. __________

2. During the last academic calendar year, were your teaching duties considered as full-time or part-time? __________

3. How many years have you taught in this current institution? __________

4. How many total years have you spent as a teacher (instructor), including time spent in primary, secondary, and postsecondary education? __________

5. What are the current division(s), and/or department(s) you work in? ____________________________, ____________________________

6. What is your current academic position/title?
___________________________________________

7. What is the highest degree you have completed? Please circle one choice.
   a) Doctoral Degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)
   b) Professional Degree (M.D., D.O., D.D.S., J.D., D.V.M., etc.)
   c) Master’s Degree
   d) Bachelor’s Degree
   e) Associate’s Degree
   f) Certificate or Diploma

8. Are you currently working towards an additional degree? If, yes which degree
9. During the last academic calendar year, have you been employed in other institutions or worksites? __________________

10. Were you employed full-time at any other job while working at your current institution? __________________

11. While teaching at your current institution, on average, how many hours per week did you spend on unpaid activities (e.g., class preparation, research, tutoring, club assistance, attending institution events, and/or professional development, etc.)? __________________

12. How many credit hours did you teach during the last academic calendar year? __________________

13. How many credit hours did you teach through distance education or online, including hybrid courses, during the last academic calendar year? __________________

14. What are your five-year professional career goals?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

15. What are your ten-year professional career goals?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D: Interview Guide

Pseudonym: Charla Blumell
Interviewer: Charla Blumell
Date: TBD
Scheduled Time: TBD

Opening statement and questions:
During the interview, I would like to discuss your work experiences as African American woman and faculty member in the community college.

1. With this in mind, tell me a little about yourself
   a. family background….
   b. schooling
   c. academic preparation for becoming a community college faculty member
2. Why did you choose to become a faculty member at a community college?

Let’s move to a new topic; the next few questions are in regard to perks you may receive from your workplace and other motivating factors. I am also interested in professional opportunities available to faculty. This will help me understand your perception of those perks or motivating factors, as well as the professional opportunities within your institution.

RQ1. What are the incentives for African American women faculty in community colleges?

Can you tell me a time when you were most satisfied with your job?

1. What happened? What was going on? Who was involved?
2. What are some perks you have received while working in the community college?
3. What motivates you to continue to work in the community college?
4. What types of professional opportunities are available for faculty within your institution?
5. How are these professional opportunities made available for all faculty members equally?
6. What professional goals would you like to accomplish in the next five years?
7. How are you making progress towards these goals?

We will move to the next topic of discussion; the following questions are in regard to any barriers you may face at your workplace, and this will help understand the challenges you may experience as a faculty member.
RQ2. What are barriers that currently exist for African American womenfaculty in community college?

Can you share an instance when you were least satisfied with your job?

1. What happened? What was going on? Who was involved?
2. While working in the community college, what challenges have you experienced?
3. How have you addressed these challenges?
4. How has the institution taken measures to remove these challenges?
5. If you were to provide advice to another African American woman desiring to work on faculty in the community college, what would you share?

The final topic is in regard to your job satisfaction and the environmental factors that may affect that satisfaction.

RQ3. What environmental conditions affect the work experiences of African American women faculty in community colleges?

4. Please describe your experiences interacting with
   a. Students
   b. Peer faculty colleagues
   c. Supervisors
   d. Administrators
5. How would you describe your workplace climate?
6. How comfortable are you in your department/division?
7. How comfortable are you in the broader campus?
8. What specific environmental factors have shaped your job satisfaction?
9. What has your institution done to increase job satisfaction for the faculty on campus?

Closing Questions

10. As we near the close of our conversation, I am going to ask you for a metaphor. Think about what it is like as an African American woman to work in a community college. Then fill in the blank to the following question. An African American woman working in a community college is like _________.
11. Please tell me more. Why did this image come to mind?
12. Given what you now know about working in a community college, what advice would you give to your younger self before entering academia?

Thank you for your time, and for participating in this interview.

The probes below will be used to assist in the interview process, as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2002):
• What do you mean?
• What were you thinking at that time?
• I’m not sure that I am following you.
• Give me an example.
• Would you explain that?
• Tell me about it.
• What did you say then?
• Take me through the experience.
Appendix E: Participant Observation Tool

Pseudonym: ____________________________

Observer _______________________________

Date of Observation____________________

Setting _________________________________________

Individuals present within setting______________________________

Activities __________________________________________________________

Time: ______start _________stop

1. Appearance of participant (i.e. clothing, age, demeanor)

2. Verbal behaviors and interactions (i.e. initiation of conversation, tone of voice)

3. Physical behaviors and gestures (use of hands, how participant is seated, any observable distractions)

4. Personal space (participant proximity to investigator or others)

5. Additional observations
Appendix F: Document Review Form

1. Type of document:
   ______________________________________________________

2. Unique physical qualities of the document:
   ________________________________

3. Date(s) of the document:
   ______________________________________________________

4. Author of the document: __________________________ Position or Title:_______________________

5. For what audience was the document intended:
   ______________________________________________________

6. Document information:
   a) List three things that the author stated that are important:
      ______________________________________________________
      ______________________________________________________
      ______________________________________________________

   b) Why was this document written:
      ______________________________________________________
      ______________________________________________________
      ______________________________________________________

   c) What evidence is there regarding the purpose of this document:
      ______________________________________________________
      ______________________________________________________

   d) What questions has the author left unanswered:
      ______________________________________________________
      ______________________________________________________
      ______________________________________________________

Adapted from the National Archives http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/document.html