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Perceptions of Maxine Smith Fellows on Barriers that Contribute to the Underrepresentation of African Americans in Faculty and Administrative Positions at the Tennessee Board of Regents

Sidney R. Hill
East Tennessee State University

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by

Sidney Hill

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Dr. W. Hal Knight, Chair

Dr. Pam Evanshen

Dr. Don Good

Dr. Jasmine Renner

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ABSTRACT

Maxine Fellows' Perceptions on Barriers Contributing to the Underrepresentation of African

Americans in Faculty and Administrative Positions at the Tennessee Board of Regents

by

Sidney Hill

African Americans are underrepresented in full-time faculty and administrative positions at

Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) institutions. This study examined the perceptions of 11

Maxine Smith Fellows on the underrepresentation at TBR institutions and provides

recommendations that could assist in increasing representation of African Americans in full-time

faculty and administrative positions.

A qualitative method was used for the study. Each participant was required to participate in a

recorded SKYPE interview. The researcher transcribed the interviews and analyzed the data using

coding to derive overarching themes that provided findings based upon the research questions.

Based upon the analysis of data, the researcher found that participants perceived a lack of

intentional efforts, lack of recruitment, racism, and the devaluing of diversity in the workforce to

be contributing factors to the underrepresentation. The researcher further determined that

participants perceived the trainings and the program's ability to prepare individuals for future

positions as two factors that separated their success from individuals who did not participate in the

program.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Equitable educational and employment opportunities in higher education for African Americans have been a controversial issue in America. Centuries of segregation and discrimination have been prevalent in colleges and universities (Rai & Critzer, 2000; Woods, 2008; Zamani-Gallaher, Green, Brown, & Stoval, 2009). Slavery, Jim Crow Laws, and other aspects of racism have had long-term damaging effects on African Americans; consequently, this population has been deprived of equitable employment and education (Orelus, 2013). Rai & Critzer (2000) noted that African Americans have struggled to establish themselves, especially in Predominately White Institutions (PWIs).

Prior to Brown vs. Board of Education, African Americans were segregated in educational settings and placed in less than desirable learning environments (Bell, 2006). Because of these barriers, African Americans were not able to acquire terminal degrees or reach levels of professionalism in most PWIs of higher learning (Davis, Chaney, Edwards, Thompson-Rodgers, & Gines, 2012).

It was not until events such as the civil rights movement of the 1960s that national efforts were implemented to bring about some form of equity to the education of African Americans (Rai & Critzer, 2000). Although civil rights efforts gave a perception of change and equality, the reality is that states and higher education still exhibited discriminating practices that prevented this population from reaching academic and professional attainment. Padilla, Boxley, and Wagner (1973) found that institutions of higher learning had not placed representation and diversity initiatives as a priority. The underrepresentation of African Americans in collegiate programs and faculty positions was brought to national attention during the 1960s and 1970s in which a study

was conducted that examined the success of the American Psychological Association's ability to represent African Americans in graduate and faculty positions in clinical psychology. The study consisted of 144 programs that offered clinical psychology as a major. Results from the study determined that minority groups were significantly underrepresented in both faculty and student positions. The US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) (2015a) noted that institutions of higher learning have made efforts to provide equitable learning and employment opportunities for all individuals since the onset of civil right legislation. Fernandes and Alsaeed (2014) wrote that African Americans are provided limited opportunity for equitable educational attainment and faculty positions because of years of civil and racial injustice.

Strauss (2015) noted that the issue of why there are so few African American professors has been a question that has been posed to the higher education community. Diversity commitment on behalf of many colleges does not appear to align with the percentage of African Americans being hired in faculty positions. Few African Americans are promoted at PWIs, with a majority of the US tenured African American faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Whittaker, Montgomery, and Martinez-Acosta (2015) stated that in recent years post-secondary institutions have examined the disparity between the percentage of African Americans and Caucasians in faculty positions. Institutions of higher learning have implemented initiatives and programs to decrease disparity including climate assessments, mentoring, and collaborative engagement. Unfortunately, these efforts have been limited and proven somewhat less effective on a transformational level. Because of the disparity, African Americans continue to be underrepresented in faculty positions.

The significance of African-Americans as representatives in higher education has been highlighted by researchers; however, most research determined that the disparity between the number of African-American and Caucasian faculty in some areas is increasing (Vereen & Hill, 2008; Whittaker et al., 2015). Despite research indicating that minority faculty assist other minorities in their retention and graduation, colleges and universities still may employ practices that create barriers for African American faculty and deter them from climbing the ladder of academia (Reis & Lu, 2010; Whittaker et al., 2015). Woods (2008) noted that the low numbers of African American professors could be attributed to a low percentage of African Americans acquiring Ph.D.s. Despite the fact that African Americans make up 14% of the population, the percentage of African Americans in Ph.D. programs is approximately 6% (Reis & Lu, 2010). The issue of limited African Americans coming into the Ph.D. pipeline may attributed to underrepresentation, biased hiring practices, and barriers involving inequity that have also been identified as potential factors in the underrepresentation of African Americans in faculty positions (Woods, 2008).

Although the pipeline attributes to under-representation of African Americans in faculty positions, institutions across the United States continue to impose different hiring standards for African Americans seeking faculty positions (Woods, 2008). The inability of colleges and universities to increase diversity on campuses has prompted protests and demonstrations by students who demand to see more African Americans in faculty positions at institutions of higher learning (Barry-Jester & Casselman, 2015; Flaherty, 2015). Institutions like the University of Miami that are known for being ethnically diverse have sought to bring about diversity among their faculty by hiring more faculty of color (Dominick & Barros, 2015). Flaherty (2015) stated that institutions from the Midwest also need diversification initiatives. Students at the University

of Missouri at Columbia called upon their institution to increase the percentage of African American faculty to 10% by 2017-2018. Other institutions like Brown University have set a definitive target in an effort to address the underrepresentation of African American faculty on their campus and have made a commitment to increase underrepresented minority faculty from 9% to 18% by 2025 (Flaherty, 2015).

<div align="center">Critical Race Theory</div>

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been highlighted in educational research as a form of racism that has hindered the educational and professional opportunities of people of color (Sablan, 2019). According to McAdam and Davis (2019), CRT has placed the concept of race at the center of social constructs and forces individuals to look at the color of individuals. Writer (2008) further stated that CRT has served as systematic and historical process that has hindered people of color and promotes the concepts of white privilege and power. Writer further stated that institutions must examine CRT in order for true multicultural education to occur, and that the goal of the critical race theory is that it allows people of color to have a voice to express their reality and experiences. By having a voice, it allows people of color a platform to explain what it is like to be a person of color. It further allows people of color with a voice that transform negative beliefs widely held by Caucasians.

<div align="center">Background of the Study</div>

Data acquired from the Tennessee Board of Regents for 2014 indicated that African Americans are under-represented in faculty and administrative positions at Tennessee universities and community colleges. Winn (2008) noted that the lack of African American representation and the presence of discriminatory practices involving the hiring, retention, and salary for African Americans at Tennessee institutions was brought to national attention during the 1968 Geier vs.

University of Tennessee lawsuit. The basis for the case centered on the idea that the state of Tennessee continued to have dual systems that prevented African Americans from receiving equitable educational opportunities (Winn, 2008). Although the lawsuit would go on for approximately 40 years, the court came to an agreement in 1984 laying out a strategic plan to address years of discriminatory practices (Winn, 2008). In 2001, the US District Court for Middle Tennessee put forth the Geier decree. The decree resulted in the state allocating an additional $20 million to Tennessee State University, an HBCU, and $40 million to fund strategic initiatives at TBR institutions to eradicate discriminatory practices and increase the retention, hiring, and professional development of African American students, faculty, and administrators (Renshaw, 2007). Because of the decree, the TBR implemented the Maxine Smith Fellows program, a strategic initiative designed to provide professional development opportunities that would assist in increasing the number of qualified African American applicants for faculty and administrative positions (TBR), 2018). Since its inception, the Maxine Smith Fellows program has been expanded to include other underrepresented groups in addition to African Americans (TBR, 2018).

In 2014, the underrepresentation of African Americans in faculty and administrative positions continued to be evident at most TBR institutions. Data from the TBR in 2014 determined that of the 303 administrators at 4-year TBR institutions, African Americans accounted for 60 positions (20%) (M. Greppin-Watts, personal communication, July 1, 2014). However, these numbers included a significant number of administrators at Tennessee State University (TSU). When data from TSU was excluded from the data set, African Americans accounted for only 20 (8%) of the 263 administrators at the other five TBR universities: Austin Peay State University (APSU), East Tennessee State University (ETSU), Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), Tennessee Tech University (TTU), and the University of Memphis (U of M) (M. Greppin-Watts,

personal communication, July 1, 2014). The underrepresentation of African American faculty was also prevalent at TBR community colleges where African Americans accounted for less than 10% of 170 administrative positions (M. Greppin-Watts, personal communication, July 1, 2014). The underrepresentation was also evident in faculty positions in which African Americans accounted for 470 (9%) of the total 5,343 faculty positions at TBR community colleges and universities (M. Greppin-Watts, personal communication, July 1, 2014). As with the administrators, the disparity is greater when the TSU data were excluded from the numbers, showing that African Americans accounted for 321 (6.5%) faculty positions of the 4,970 faculty positions at the remaining 18 institutions (M. Greppin-Watts, personal communication, July 1, 2014).

A report acquired from the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) (2018) determined that African Americans continue to be under-represented at 4-year Tennessee institutions and community colleges. An IPEDS report (2016), identified that only 25 of the 371 full-time faculty at Austin Peay were African Americans. During the same reporting period, African Americans accounted for 61 of the 897 faculty at Middle Tennessee State University. African Americans were also under-representative at TBR community colleges such as Nashville State and Motlow State. African Americans accounted for 8 of the 93 full-time faculty at Motlow State Community College, and 11 out of the 149 full-time faculty at Nashville State Community College.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

The underrepresentation of African Americans in professional positions in higher education has proven to be a national and state concern. Despite research indicating that African American representation is beneficial in recruiting and retaining African American faculty and students, the representation of African American faculty and administrators in some areas is

decreasing. Although there has been a considerable amount of research conducted on African

Americans and institutions of higher learning, there is little research and literature on the

experiences and representation of African American administrators at predominately White

institutions (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015).

Fifty years after the civil rights movement began African Americans continue to be

underrepresented in academia at Tennessee public institutions. Despite strategic efforts to bring

equality to academia, lawsuits demanding diversification, the allocation of over $70 million in

diversification efforts, state mandates, and decrees issued by Tennessee courts, data from the TBR

revealed consistent underrepresentation of African Americans in full-time faculty and

administrative positions at TBR institution (Winn, 2008). In 2014, data further determined that

there was an underrepresentation of African American professors and administrators at state

funded institutions of higher learning in Tennessee (M. Greppin-Watts, personal communication,

July 1, 2014). Whittaker et al. (2015) found that in order to address the underrepresentation of

minorities in faculty positions, it is necessary to identify environmental factors that serve as

barriers and implement specific initiatives to assist in the recruitment, retention, and promotion of

minorities in faculty positions. Although strategic initiatives are in place to address the issue, there

is not a significant body of research examining African American professionals in academia about

their perceptions of the causes for underrepresentation at the state level.

The intent of this qualitative study is to assess the perceptions of African American faculty

and administrators who are in the Maxine Smith Fellows program to determine what they perceive

to be contributing to the underrepresentation of African Americans at TBR institutions and to

include suggestions on how to increase African American representation in faculty and

administrative positions. Therefore, purpose of the study is to determine if there are specific

perceived barriers contributing to the underrepresentation of African Americans in faculty and administrative positions at TBR institutions.

Research Questions

In order to assess the perceptions on the underrepresentation of African Americans in faculty and administrative positions at TBR community colleges and colleges of applied technology, five research questions form the basis of this study.

1. What are Maxine Smiths Fellows' perceptions on how race and ethnicity contribute to employment opportunities at TBR institutions?

2. What factors do Maxine Smiths Fellows perceive to be contributing to the under-representation of African Americans serving in full-time faculty positions at TBR institutions?

3. What factors do Maxine Smiths Fellows perceive to be contributing to the under-representation of African Americans serving in full-time administrative positions at TBR institutions?

4. What are Maxine Smiths Fellows' perceptions regarding the current initiatives of the TBR to address the under-representation of African Americans in full-time faculty and administrative positions?

5. How do Maxine Smith Fellows perceive their experience similar to or different from other African Americans' experiences who serve in faculty and administrative positions at TBR institutions?

Significance of the Study

The underrepresentation of African Americans has been an issue in higher education in America for decades. Despite diversity initiatives, decrees, and federal mandates African

Americans have continued to be underrepresented in professional positions on the collegiate level. This study may add to the research on the underrepresentation of African Americans and may further assist TBR community colleges and colleges of applied technology in examining potential barriers that negatively affect the representation of African Americans at TBR institutions. Results may also provide the TBR with suggestions on how to increase the representation of African Americans in faculty and administrative positions. Furthermore, this qualitative case study may have some significance to other institutions of higher learning communities outside the Tennessee institutions. Data from this study may provide administrators with assistance in their recruitment and retention efforts addressing African American faculty and administrators.

Definitions of Terms

The definition of terms for this research study are as follows:

Administrative Position – Administrative positions in Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) institutions and universities that were formerly under the auspices of TBR can be classified into four exempt faculty or non-faculty categories of academic (faculty), executive (non-faculty), administrative (non-faculty), and professional (non-faculty); each institution has the prerogative to decide on the classification (TBR, 2016).

African American – The US Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines Black or African American as an individual originating from "any of the Black racial groups of Africa... includes [Census] respondents who reported... such as African American; Sub-Saharan African... and Afro-Caribbean" (Rastogi, Johnson, Hoeffel, & Drewery, 2011, p. 2).

Diversity Initiatives – Roberts (2011) stated that diversity initiatives are efforts taken on by organizations to ensure varying cultural differences and recognizing and addresses structural barriers in the workplace that serve as hindrance to diverse populations. In many

cases, this could include recruitment and retention efforts that provide a supportive work environment to individual from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Faculty Position – "All faculty members who hold academic rank, and who are directly engaged in instruction, departmental research or public service" (TBR, 2016, Definitions para. 1). Faculty for this research include those who are tenured, on tenure track, and those who are not on tenure track.

Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR)- Formerly TBR included all state of Tennessee public institutions, which included community colleges, colleges of applied technology, and universities. In 2016, the FOCUS Act allowed the universities to have their own governing board. For this study, the TBR will only include state of Tennessee community colleges and colleges of applied technology.

Under-Representation – For the purpose of this study, under-representation is defined as the disproportionally low number of African Americans serving in faculty and administrative positions at Tennessee Board of Regents institutions.

Scope of Study

The study is delimited to African American Maxine Smith Fellows who participated in the program from 2013 to 2017 and currently serve in faculty and administrative positions at TBR community colleges or Tennessee colleges of applied technology. Because the study was delimited to African Americans in the Maxine Smith Fellows (MSF) program, results from the data can only be referred to African Americans and no other participants in the MSF program who are not African American.

The study is limited to results obtained from participants who elected to participate in the study. This study is further limited by the qualitative in-depth interview method that was employed

to determine the perceptions of the study sample. It is assumed that data collection and the coding method used in the study is valid, applicable, and reliable. The study is limited to the extent that participants in the study answered questions honestly.

Overview of the Study

This qualitative study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 consists of an introduction to the study, a statement of the problems, research questions, and the significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study, definitions of terms, and an organization of the qualitative study. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature pertaining to the study. Chapter 3 describes the procedures and methodology used in the study. Chapter 4 presents the data and findings that came out of the study. Chapter 5 provides a summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The underrepresentation of African Americans in higher education has been a consistent problem in the United States (Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, & Brown, 2015). Titcomb (2016) and Naylor et al. (2015) stated that effects of slavery will continue to have damaging effects on African American participation in higher education both as students, faculty, and administrators. Although the effects of racism, discrimination, and slavery have negatively affected African Americans throughout the nation, they have been more evident and problematic in the South (Anderson, 1988; O'Connell, 2012).

Issues pertaining to slavery and discrimination have historically placed African Americans at an educational disadvantage (Anderson, 1988). In 1799, Presbyterian minister John Chavis became the first African American to attend an American university; despite his accomplishment, there was no record of his graduation (Titcomb, 2016). In 1823 Alexander Lucius Twilight became the first African American to receive a bachelor's degree from an American college. Prestigious institutions like Harvard did not open their doors to African American students until 1850; however, Caucasian students later closed the doors because of fear.

Historical Factors Contributing to Underrepresentation of African Americans in Academia

The disparity between African Americans and Caucasians has been a significant problem in academia. Because African Americans endured slavery and oppression brought about because of race, this population has been plagued with negative stereotypes about academic achievement and self-perception (Orelus, 2013). Anderson (1988) wrote that slavery ultimately robbed African Americans from becoming educated. Harper, Patton, and Wooden (2009) noted that the education of African Americans did not begin until the early 1830s when only a few free slaves were given

opportunities to attend college. Although there were efforts to educate African Americans beginning in the 1830s, accessibility for most freed African Americans was extremely limited. The Cheyney State Training School in Cheyney, Pennsylvania – now Cheyney University – was established in 1837 to serve as an elementary and secondary school for African American students although it was not until 1862 that the first African American female was given an opportunity to graduate from college (Harper et al., 2009).

In most states, education for African Americans was not a common practice until the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 (Anderson, 1988). The Emancipation Proclamation began the process that allowed freed slaves to be educated even though the southern states did not deem their education as a necessity and in many cases viewed it with fear.

Webb (2006) noted that African Americans' pursuit of college degrees in the South was hindered by the perception of famous African Americans such as Booker T. Washington who traveled around the South promoting education for African Americans. He did not contend that African Americans required the same level of education as their Caucasian counterparts and because of this, he hindered the pursuit of higher education for African Americans in the South. In 1895, Washington presented the Atlanta Comprise, which provided assurance to Caucasian leaders that African Americans were not seeking educational and political equality but were merely seeking to earn a living. In the early 1900s activist W.E.B. DuBois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) encouraged opportunities for African Americans to attend high school that resulted in higher education becoming a reality for African Americans in the South.

Anderson (1988) stated that the fear that African Americans would become educated was a concern for many economic and governing powers in the South. Some Caucasian farmers

developed farming schedules that purposefully hindered the education of African American children. Between 1880 and 1900, many southern Caucasian landowners enticed African American families with the prospect of earning money by working in the fields. To prevent African American children from attending school, Virginia planters would threaten to put the family out of their home if the children attended school. As a result, young African American children in the South spent a significant amount of time in the fields and little time in the classroom. Even though the number of school age African American children increased between 1880 and 1900 in the South, the percentage of those attending school decreased (Anderson, 1988).

Bell (2006) noted that years of post-Civil War segregation as a factor that hindered the education of African Americans and the implementation of segregation ultimately subjugated and stigmatized African Americans in much of the South. Rose (2007) found that historically, African Americans received less than favorable education experiences. There was a belief in the South that freed slaves were intellectually inferior to Whites. Although White people in the South claimed that freed slaves were mentally inferior, they were also fearful of the possibility of equality. In the late 1800s, southern states such as Mississippi began to examine the issue surrounding the education of the Negro, and in 1890 the Mississippi State Superintendent of Education claimed that the purpose of educating Negros was to simply avert degradation and crime (Rose, 2007).

The US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) (2015b) noted that most Black institutions of higher learning focused on elementary and secondary learning skills for freed slaves who had not received any education. It was not until after the Second Morrill Act of 1890 that Black Colleges were provided additional support for higher education.

> The Act required states with racially segregated public higher education systems to provide a land-grant institution for black students whenever a land-grant institution was established and restricted for white students. After the passage of the Act, public land-grant institutions

specifically for blacks were established in each of the southern and border states. (OCR, 2015b, Background para. 3)

Despite countless efforts to increase educational attainment by African Americans, it was not until the NAACP devised strategic plans for the South that possibilities for educational equality were strengthened (Bullock, 2005).

Bell (2006) noted that African American children continued to have a hard time getting an education into the 20th Century. For example, during the 1940s and 1950s Kansas was one of the states that did not require cities with a population less than 15,000 to have separate schools for African American students. In Kansas, Black schools were often inferior and unequal in academic resources when compared to their White counterparts and segregation continued to create a sense of inferiority in African Americans. In the 1940s, southern impoverished Black children oftentimes lacked school buildings and in many cases received their education in homes or barns without electricity. After Brown v. Board of Education, African Americans had a greater possibility of equality in education. Brown v. Board of Education enforced that separate education was not necessarily equal. Although this was a significant win for African Americans, it did not eradicate racism and discrimination; the ability for true equality was still out of reach for most African Americans in the South (Bell, 2006).

The ruling of Brown v. Board of Education strengthened the desire for Caucasians in the South to preserve and endorse segregation (Rose, 2007). Cottrol, Diamond, and Ware (2003) stated, "very little progress had been made toward school desegregation. In 1960, forty-six school desegregation cases were pending in southern states. Ten years after the *Brown* decision, only 1.2 percent of black students in the South attended schools with whites" (p. 204). Cottrol et al. (2003) stated that, "the seeming progress that has occurred has been more illusory than real, that blacks

remain entrenched at the bottom of the American social hierarchy despised and apart, perpetual outsiders, perennial victims of discrimination" (pp. 234-235).

<div align="center">Potential Barriers for African American Faculty and Administrators</div>

It was not until the 1960s that African Americans began to envision the potential access and equitable opportunity in higher education. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Executive Order 11246 that forced agencies receiving federal funds to enact strategic steps to increase the representation of African Americans. Because of this, African Americans in higher education became more prevalent (Harper et al., 2009).

Issues of underrepresentation have continued to create inequities that negatively impact African Americans in institutions of higher learning (Orelus, 2013). Vereen and Hill (2008) wrote that in order to continue to address under-representation of African Americans in faculty positions in academia, academia must bring awareness of discriminatory practices that are plaguing institutions of higher learning. Vereen and Hill noted that African Americans are forced to endure hidden racism and are often prevented from multicultural opportunities. This is contributing to the number of African Americans going into the pipeline for professorships. Furthermore, African Americans are often subject to negative biases that reflect in teaching evaluation; thus causing them to be ineligible for promotional opportunities. Ultimately, institutions must recognize that race plays a significant part in the under-representation of African Americans in teaching positions in academia.

Hoyt (2012) pointed out that it was important to define and understand racism because of the disparity negatively affecting ethnicity brought about through discriminative practices. He proposed a definition of racism to examine its effect on African American faculty and their perception of potential barriers. He pointed out that racism is more than a simple feeling of

superiority; it is a form of oppression that has historically been exerted through power, which has created limited access to equitable practices and created a sense of White privilege that is still common.

Racial oppression appears to be more widespread and problematic in academia (Hoyt, 2012). The effects of discrimination and discriminatory practices have served as barriers for African Americans in acquiring terminal degrees, which have contributed to disproportional numbers of African Americans in acquiring promotional status in academia (Davis et al., 2012).

Padilla et al. (1973) conducted research to examine potential barriers to explain the underrepresentation of African Americans in higher education began in the 1960s by the American Psychological Association (APA). In 1969, members of the APA began to notice a significant underrepresentation of African Americans in psychology and a disproportional number attending graduate schools offering post baccalaureate degrees in clinical psychology. At that time, the APA noted that segregation and discrimination might be occurring in clinical psychology graduate programs.

Neville and Lilly (2000) noted in their research that African Americans during the civil rights era may have had a hatred for Caucasians. Data from this study determined that many African American college students felt inferior to their Caucasian counterparts. Some may presume that African Americans would hold a generational feeling of inferiority that served as an internal barrier toward academic and professional attainment. Studies on racial identity and education in America have determined that African Americans had a positive perception of themselves whereas certain subgroups of the African American community in higher education perceived that there was a disconnect with the higher education process.

A Lack of African Americans Entering the Higher Education Pipeline

African Americans have been historically underrepresented in higher education. Although the number of African Americans attaining a college degree has risen significantly in the last 20 years, those earning doctoral degrees are still significantly below their Caucasian counterparts with African Americans accounting for 7% of doctoral degrees in the US in 2013 (Naylor et al., 2015). The National Center for Education Statistics (2017) determined that only 10.3% of the doctorate degrees conferred in 2014-2015 were awarded to African Americans. During the same period, 66.7% of the doctorate degrees were conferred to Caucasian students.

Lower rates of African Americans going through the higher education pipeline make it difficult for African Americans to join college faculty or administration (Naylor et al., 2015). African Americans are more underrepresented in graduate and doctoral programs than in undergraduate programs, ultimately influencing the number of African Americans receiving the necessary academic credentials for faculty and administrative positions at institutions of higher learning (Evans, 2007).

Evans (2007) found that the lack of minority faculty might be attributing to the limited number of African Americans entering into the higher education pipeline. The underrepresentation of African Americans in professional fields of higher education can be attributed to universities not placing a focus on race and initiatives that provide faculty of color with quality networking and professional development opportunities; it also places more faculty of color out of the pipeline for professional positions.

Camera (2015) stated that numerous efforts have been made to decrease achievement gaps among the races for over 25 years. Despite these early intervention efforts, African American students continue to have lower levels of achievement. Camera (2015) stated that African

American graduation rates are even more problematic in the South, specifically in states like Mississippi.

High school graduation rates continue to be problematic for African Americans (Finkel, 2010). Even though the national graduation rate has increased from 68% in 2012 to 73% in 2014 and from 73% to 75% when examining data from the 2014-2015 adjusted cohort graduation rates, African Americans are graduating at a lower rate than other ethnicities (NCES, 2015; NCES, 2016; NCES, 2017). The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) (2014) determined that African American students in Tennessee were less likely to go to college than most other ethnicities with college-going rates of 53.2% in 2013 and 54.3% in 2014 for Black students compared to 59.6% in 2013 and 59.0% in 2014 for White students and 69.1% in 2013 and 69.2% in 2014 for Asian students (Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), 2014). Ultimately, this has caused a domino effect on the accessibility and hiring of African Americans at colleges and universities.

Research data have shown a quantifiable difference in achievement gaps between Caucasian and African American students in the South in the areas of high school graduation rates, standardized test scores, and conferred degrees (Frierson, Pearson, & Wyche, 2009). Frierson et al. (2009) found that African American students have historically entered educational programs at a much lower rate than Caucasian students.

Beaudry (2015) noted that the academic achievement and graduation gaps between African American males and other ethnicities are of great concern for the nation. The low percentage of African Americans graduating from high school has had a direct impact on the number of African Americans earning a 4-year degree.

The National Center for Educational Statistics conducted a study disaggregating data by race from 3.1 million students (Stetser and Stillwell, 2014). For the 2010-2011 school year, Black students had the lowest graduation rate of the population studied with 67% graduating on time in comparison to 68% of American Indian/Alaska Native students, 93% of Asian/Pacific Islander, 75% Hispanic, and 84% of White students" (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014, p. 11). For the 2011-2012 school year Black and American Indian/Alaska Native students had the lowest graduation rate of the population studied with 68% graduating on time in comparison to 93% of Asian/Pacific Islander, 76% Hispanic, and 85% of White students" (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014, p. 13). The NCES findings determined that in 2010-2011 African Americans graduated from high school at a smaller percentage than all other ethnicities. The 2011-2012 data further indicated that southern states such as Alabama had a significantly lower graduation rate for Black students (68%) with 80% for White students (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014). The NCES (2017) found that in 2014-2015 African Americans had a higher graduation rate than in 2010-2011 with approximately 75% of African Americans graduating from high school. Data further indicated that African Americans continued to lag behind Asians at 90% and Caucasian graduation rates at 88% during the same time. Therefore, African American graduation rates were only slightly above Native Americans who possessed the lowest graduation rate of 72% during the time. Furthermore, there were larger gaps in graduation rates between African Americans and Caucasians in southern states such as Tennessee.

The American College Testing (ACT) (2012) benchmark scores represent a level of achievement that is necessary "for students to have a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of earning a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses" (p. 3). The ACT (2016) identified that the assessment has a range of 1-36 in which

benchmark scores are: English 18, Mathematics 22, Social Studies 22, and Science 23. The 2015 composite score (21.3) is an average of the four section scores. To address college readiness in Tennessee, the ACT (2014) complied data on scores by ethnicity. Data from the report indicated that in 2013 African American students scored 16.3, White students scored 20.5, Asian students scored 22.2, and an average of all students scored 19.5 (ACT, 2014). The data for 2014 indicated that African American students scored 16.5, White students scored 20.8, Asian students scored 22.7, and an average of all students scored 19.8 (ACT, 2014). The data showed that 4% of African American students, 23% of White students, and 35% of Asian students met or exceeded the four benchmark scores for 2014 (Act 2014).

The low percentage of African American high school graduates has been an ongoing concern for Tennessee governing agencies. In an effort to examine college readiness and graduation rates in Tennessee, THEC (2014) conducted a study to examine race and college enrollment after graduation. The study revealed that in 2014 African Americans had the third highest college-going rate (54.3%) with Asian (69.2%) and Caucasian (59.0%) students having the first and second highest rates respectively (THEC, 2014).

Titcomb (2016) found that African American students lagging behind Caucasian students when it came to entrance exams such as the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), thus affecting African American students' ability to be admitted into graduate programs. In 2014, the ETS compiled data on the mean scores and number of US citizens taking the GRE, the graduate record examination, between July 1, 2013, and June 30, 2014. During this time 336,367 US citizens took the GRE with a mean score of 153.0 in verbal reasoning, 150.1 in quantitative reasoning, and 3.8 in analytical writing. Data indicated that mean scores for Black test-takers (verbal reasoning = 147.0, quantitative reasoning = 143.7, analytical writing = 3.3) were the lowest of all ethnicities. There

were 24,466 Black GRE test-takers in comparison to 200,343 White (Non-Hispanics) who had a mean score of 154.0 in verbal reasoning, 150.8 in quantitative reasoning, and 3.9 in analytical writing (Educational Testing Service (ETS), 2014). Bleske-Recheke and Brown (2014) noted that the GRE scores of African Americans is a significant concern and factor that is attributing to the lack of African Americans in the academic pipeline.

<u>African Americans' Perceptions on the Underrepresentation of African Americans in Academia</u>

To examine the perception of African Americans on the lack of representation of African Americans in administrative positions, Glenn (2010) conducted a qualitative ethnographic study with five African American males and five African American females serving in senior level positions at various colleges throughout the Mid-Atlantic. Interviews with the participants indicated several themes that may contribute to the underrepresentation of African American administrators including a lack of college-wide diversity initiatives, racial barriers, hiring pools, a lack of African American mentors, and additional job duties (Glenn, 2010). Participants in the study indicated that diversity awareness is necessary on the college campus. Recommendations from the study included the need for better mentoring programs for African Americans aspiring to be administrators, increasing diversity initiatives by creating diversity programs, and diversity boards (Glenn, 2010).

While Glenn (2010) focused on administrators, other researchers focused on the experiences of students. To more adequately address the feeling of racism and discriminatory practices that continue to plague African Americans in higher education, Bourke (2010) conducted a qualitative study with 40 African American students attending a PWI. In this study, the participants stated that they endured open and hidden forms of racism. In many instances, participants stated that they endured open and hidden forms of racism. In many instances,

participants stated that Caucasian students would assume they were athletes instead of scholars. Other participants stated that Caucasian organizations asked only for their assistance when it came to performing at athletic events and step shows; however, the same organizations did very little to recognize the academic accomplishments of African American students. Ultimately, African American students were ignored and tolerated demeaning stereotypes that created a disconnect with the collegiate process (Bourke, 2010).

Percentage of African American Faculty and Administrators at Universities in Tennessee

The data on racial make-up in Tennessee community colleges and universities is collected by systems such as the Integrated Post-Secondary Education System (IPEDS). IPEDS (2018) reported that 3,481 full-time instructional staff were working at state universities and community colleges in the spring of 2016. In the spring of 2016, African Americans accounted for 652 of the 8,935 full-time instructional staff for Tennessee universities and community colleges; the system does not collect data on the racial make-up of full-time instructional staff.

According to the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), personal communication, August 29, 2017), Diversity continues to be a focus for the TBR system. A report presented at the Diversity in TBR System Leadership meeting examined the percentage of minorities and Caucasians in administrative positions, 84.6% of system-wide presidents were Caucasian. According to the report, 81.5% of the presidents at TCAT were Caucasian; 18.5% were minorities. The disparity was even greater when looking at the racial breakdown of community college presidents in which 91.5% of community college presidents were Caucasian and 8.5% were minorities. The report also addressed system-wide presidents and vice presidents by race, which indicated that 89% of the executive positions at the TBR system-wide level were Caucasian.

To determine trends in doctoral programs in the US, the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (2016a) compiled data on the percentage of US minority citizens receiving doctorates. The National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics found that "African Americans were the largest U.S. minority population in education and other non-S&E fields" (2016a, p. 4). The National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics determined that in 2014 523 (13.3%) doctorates were awarded to US African Americans in education (2016b). During this same period, only 178 doctorates were awarded to US African Americans in the physical sciences (2016c).

To examine the promotion rates of minority groups, a longitudinal research study (encompassing 1983 through 2000) was conducted to examine the percentage of 88,432 faculty promoted at 128 medical centers (Nunez-Smith et al., 2012). Data from the study revealed promotional inequities at medical institutions that were shown to be favorable toward Caucasian faculty. The African American promotion rate from assistant to associate professor was 18.8%; the promotion rate for Caucasian associate professors was 30.2%. Data revealed that the promotion rate from associate to full professor was 16.7% for African Americans and 31.5% for Caucasian faculty. Despite the fact that Hispanics and African Americans account for more than 30% of the population in the United States, African Americans and Hispanics account for less than 10% of the physicians in America (Nunez-Smith et al., 2012). Stewart (2012) stated that the percentage of African Americans in faculty positions could be inflated because HBCUs ordinarily have a high percentage of African Americans. The percentage of African Americans in faculty positions at PWIs is significantly lower.

Microagressions that include subtle ways African Americans are tokenized or subjected to indirect racial comments by Caucasians, have created inequities that negatively impact the

perceptions, hiring, and promotion of African Americans in academia (Orelus, 2013). Despite the research that has determined that hiring African Americans increases the retention, recruitment, and graduation of this population, the low percentage of African American faculty members continues to be problematic (Woods, 2008). The severity of the problem has prompted researchers to bring awareness of discriminatory practices that have plagued institutions of higher learning (Vereen & Hill, 2008).

Because colleges and universities may possess barriers toward African Americans in achieving success leading to promotions in professoriate, research has been conducted to examine the perceptions of African Americans in higher education (Ferguson, 2013). Qualitative studies by Modica and Mamiseishvili (2010) were conducted to examine the negative perceptions of African Americans. Participants in the study cited racial discrimination and inequitable opportunities as barriers for African Americans. Anderson, Varghese, Trower, Sandlin, and Norwood (2013) stated that African Americans perceive colleges and universities as exhibiting forms of hidden racism.

Bourke (2010) examined the perceptions of African Americans at PWIs and revealed that African Americans continue to perceive discrimination as a significant barrier in higher education. Because the achievement and promotional gaps among African American women is greater, researchers have conducted qualitative studies to examine this disparity. A qualitative analysis of the perception of African American women in academia was conducted. Participants in the study reported that African American women perceive themselves as having more barriers than their Caucasian counterparts. Participants in the study perceived that they are often burdened with additional responsibilities, negative stereotypes, and less than equitable salaries.

To get a greater understanding on the perceptions of African American female faculty, Herbert (2012) provided a self-analysis on the disparity and expounded upon her perceptions as an

African American female encountering racial inequities, practices, and stereotypes. Herbert (2012) stated that as an African American female, she was forced to be a scholar, mentor, and nurturer. She further stated that she was often tokenized by being showcased as an example of diversity, which increased the level of resentment leading to what she deemed as a burn out among African American females. Hebert further addressed forums and panels that deal with the perception of what she called Black Female Faculty (BFF). Panel guests frequently cited the same issues and resentment. She explained that she is often perceived as the go-to Black woman in her department and, because of this perception she is often forced to deal with issues involving African Americans or those involving diversity.

Because initiatives, programs, and fellowship have been created to reduce the promotional gaps between Caucasian females and African American females, research was conducted by Davis et al. (2012) to examine the perception African Americans had about specific programs designed to reduce racial disparity and divide. Participants in the study citied their perception of specific programs being offered to assist in the promotion status of women of color. Davis et al. (2012) found that participants perceived programs such as the Sisters of the Academy (SOTA) Boot Camp as primary factors that lead to achieving professor status. Participants further perceived the training, workshops, and financial assistance as other major factors that afforded them the opportunity to reach an equivalent rank as their Caucasian counterparts.

Ferguson (2013) addressed the perceptions of African Americans at the University of South Florida. Ferguson's purpose was to examine the disproportional number of African American females in faculty positions, and to examine the experiences of McKnight Doctoral Fellows using a phenomenological approach. In the study, African American female participants in the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program (MDFP) participated in comprehensive interviews

that provided an opportunity for participants to expound upon their perception of barriers that prevent African American women from becoming full-time professors, as well as provide their personal perceptions on the usefulness of the program in assisting African Americans in acquiring professorship.

Ferguson (2013) recruited multiple investigators and sources that led to more accurate conclusions from the data, which included interviews, archival data, reports, and promotional marketing materials pertaining to the MDFP. Three themes emerged from the data related to the participant's ability to earn a degree and progress professionally: 1) The importance of social support, 2) The importance of financial support through the MDFP stipends, and 3) The importance of academic support workshops offered by the MDFP (Ferguson, 2013).

Although racism has proven to be a barrier for African Americans, the issue of gender may serve to be a greater barrier for African American females in academia. As stated previously, Henry (2010) conducted research to examine obstacles African American females endured in academia. African American females appeared to face significantly more barriers and inequalities than Caucasian females. Furthermore, Henry (2010) reported that she was rarely given a voice and that her ideas did not seem to be valued in the promotion and tenure process. The researcher attributed these inequities to her being an African American female and stated that African American females often feel that they must perform multiple jobs and are often tokenized because of the color of their skin. Because upper administration has not provided adequate support to this population, African American females consistently report feeling ignored and underrepresented in faculty positions in institutions of higher learning (Herbert, 2012).

To address the difference in numbers of African Americans and Caucasians, researchers have compiled data to examine the percentages of African Americans in faculty and administrative

positions in higher education in the United States. For example, Modica and Mamiseishvili (2010) conducted a study of the number of African Americans in faculty positions during 3 years covering a 10-year period. They found that African Americans accounted for 40.9% of the positions in 1993, 29.0% of the positions in 1999, and 33.5% of the positions in 2004 as assistant professors. Although these numbers appeared to be promising, the percentage of African Americans in the sample were more dismal when examining full professorships, with African Americans accounting for less than 19% of the positions (Modica & Mamiseishvili, 2010). In addition to the under-representation of African American faculty at PWIs, African Americans on average make less than Caucasian faculty at PWIs (Renzulli, Grant, & Kathuria, 2006). This disparity was coupled with fewer promotion opportunities for African American faculty. Ferguson (2013) found that African American females accounted for 4% of the faculty in 2009. Davis et al. (2012) determined that this underrepresentation could be attributed to discriminatory practices that afforded individuals of color – especially women – with little opportunity in academia.

The disparity of African Americans in academia extends beyond faculty and students; it appears to be similar for administrative positions as well. Patitu and Hinton (2003) found the disparity between Caucasians and African Americans were more significant in administration positions with African Americans accounting for 5% of the positions in higher education in 1999. Although there has been a continuous growth of African Americans serving in administrative positions from 2001-2015, African Americans continue to be under-represented in administrative positions at institutions of higher learning (Kline, 2017). In 2016, the Colleges and University Professional Association for Human Resources found that only 7% of administrative positions at institutions of higher learning were held by African Americans (Seltzer, 2017).

To address these issues of disparity, a number of institutions have dedicated significant funds to implement initiatives to recruit and mentor minority faculty. Intuitions such as Brown University have committed to allocating $50 million toward efforts to diversify its faculty by providing mentoring programs, conferences, and creating a Presidential Diversity Post-Doctoral Fellows Program (Flaherty, 2016). These initiatives have been replicated in states such as Florida where administrators and faculty members noticed significant promotional gaps and degree attainment between minorities and Caucasians. As discussed previously, the McKnight Fellowship program was created. The purpose of the initiative was to offer support and financial assistance to minorities with hopes of increasing the number of faculty members (Ferguson, 2013).

The lack of African American representation in higher education was also evident at the regional level. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), a non-profit agency created to promote the education and economic development of southern states, determined that while one-third of America's college population are people of color only approximately 5% of the faculty positions in the United States are held by people of color. In an effort to increase African American representation in faculty position across the United States, the SREB created the State Doctoral Scholars Program (SREB, 2016).

States including Tennessee have been mandated to examine and address the lack of representation of African Americans in academia (Winn, 2008). Governing boards such as the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR, 2018) have dedicated specific initiatives to increase the representation of minorities in faculty and administrative position in Tennessee institutions of higher learning. According to 2014 data compiled by the TBR, Austin Peay State University (APSU) employed 32 full-time administrators; African Americans accounted for 9.4% (3) of those positions (M. Greppin-Watts, personal communication, July 1, 2014). East Tennessee State

University possessed a greater underrepresentation of African American full-time administrators with 2.2% (1 of 46) of the full-time administrative positions (M. Greppin-Watts, personal communication, July 1, 2014). Data indicated that Tennessee State University (TSU), an HBCU, employed 74.1% (40 of 54) African American full-time administrators (M. Greppin-Watts, personal communication, July 1, 2014). Data further determined that of the 303 full-time administrative positions at 4-year TBR institutions, African Americans accounted for 60 (19.8%) of those positions (M. Greppin-Watts, personal communication, July 1, 2014). The lack of African American representation in faculty positions was greater than administrative positions, in which African Americans accounted for 372 of the 3,655 (10.2%) full-time faculty positions at 4-year TBR institutions (M. Greppin-Watts, personal communication, July 1, 2014).

The underrepresentation of African Americans in faculty positions was evident in both the University of Tennessee System and the Tennessee Board of Regents. Data from the University of Tennessee (University of Tennessee Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2014) regarding the 2013 full time instructional faculty indicated that Black faculty members numbered 3.7% (55 of 1,502) of the positions at the University. During the same year, White faculty accounted for 82.8% (1,243 of 1,502) of the university faculty (University of Tennessee Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2014). Data from the TBR (M. Greppin-Watts, personal communication, July 1, 2014) also indicated an underrepresentation of African Americans in 13 TBR community colleges. Of 170 full-time administrative positions at 13 community colleges, African Americans accounted for 9.4% (16 of the 170 positions); Pellissippi State Community College did not have any African Americans in full-time administrative positions (M. Greppin-Watts , personal communication, July 1, 2014).

Programs and Initiatives Designed to Increase the Representation of African Americans

in Higher Education

During the 1960s and 1970s, fellowships were started with the purpose of increasing the representation of African American professionals in higher education. Initially programs such as the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) were created to provide financial and educational assistance to increase the number of Ph.D.'s and faculty positions for African Americans (Padilla et al., 1973).

Institutions such as the University of California Berkeley have worked to address the under-representation of African American students, faculty, and administrations. In 2015, the university began working on creating a $20 million endowment to assist in the recruitment of African American students, faculty, and revamping the entire climate and culture for individuals of color (Public Affairs, University of California Berkeley, 2015). Prestigious colleges and universities such as Yale University have supported initiatives to increase the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty. Yale University has pledged over $50 million over a decade toward diversity initiatives that recruit minority faculty and provide professional development for minority faculty (Yale University, 2015).

Programs such as the McNair Scholars Program (2016) provide another initiative to assist underrepresented groups in acquiring a graduate degree. In the program, students are given the opportunity to participate in classes, lectures, and seminars that address research and various topics pertaining to higher education (McNair Scholars Program, 2016). Regional efforts have been created to address the underrepresentation of African Americans in Ph.D. programs and faculty and administrative positions. Organizations like the SREB have been instrumental in increasing diversity in the South. The SREB created fellowships to provide assistance for minority

students by identifying specific barriers and providing multiple levels of support including financial assistance and training for those seeking a doctoral degree. Because of these efforts, the SREB has been successful in graduating more than 800 minority Ph.D.s since its founding in 1993 (SREB, 2016).

The Tennessee Board of Regents is also committed to providing opportunities to enhance diversity among institutions (TBR, 2018). In compliance with Executive Order 11246, as amended, the TBR has policies in place to "ensure equal opportunity for all persons without regard to race, color, religion, sex, ethnic or national origin, disability status, age or status as a protected veteran" (TBR, 2014, para. 1). In an effort to meet the federal mandate, TBR has a strategic affirmative action plan to ensure equal treatment and employment. Tennessee has also made attempts to increase the representation of African Americans in higher education by creating the Maxine Smith Fellows Program (TBR, 2018). This program was created to provide learning opportunities and environments that would specifically benefit African Americans in attaining and increasing professional growth. The program was designed to increase the academic and professional credentials of the fellows and provide a greater understanding of collegiate administrative practices and policies while providing financial assistance to the participants. Ultimately, the program's design and purpose is to enhance the marketability of the participants and provide them with resources and skills to assist them in attaining promotional status (TBR, 2018).

<div align="center">Chapter Summary</div>

The underrepresentation of African Americans in higher education has been a consistent problem in the United States (Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, & Brown, 2015). Jim Crow laws and other forms of discrimination have negatively impacted African Americans' ability for equitable

employment and education (Orelus, 2014), and years of slavery will continuously negatively impact the representation of African Americans as students, faculty, and staff in academia (Titcomb, 2016; Naylor, 2015). African Americans have historically lagged behind in the percentage of graduates for doctoral program (Frierson, Pearson, & Wyche, 2009). In order to address underrepresentation of African Americans in positions at institutions of higher leavening, institution must examine issues pertaining to racism and discrimination (Vereen and Hill. 2008). In addition, institution of higher learning have been plagued with centuries of segregation and discriminatory practices (Rai and Critzer, 2000; Woods,2008). The underrepresentation of African Americans in academia in Tennessee was also brought to attention through the Geier lawsuit forcing the state of Tennessee college system to enact policies that would assist with the fair treatment and representation of African Americans (Winn, 2008). In an effort to increase representation of African Americans in academia, the Tennessee Board of Regents created the Maxine Smith Fellows program. The Maxine Smith Fellows program was designed to assist African Americans in obtaining credentials and obtaining promotional opportunities (TBR, 2018). Despite efforts brought about by the Geier lawsuit and the implementation and continuation of the Maxine Smith Fellows program efforts, African Americans continue to be underrepresented in faculty and administrative positions at TBR institutions.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods and procedures that was used to gather and analyze the data needed to determine the perceptions of participants in the study. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of Maxine Smith Fellows on the under-representation of African Americans in full-time faculty and full-time administrative positions at TBR institutions. This case study used a qualitative approach. A purposeful sampling method was used to include 11 participants who have successfully completed the Maxine Smith Fellows program in the past 5 years. A series of interview questions was posed to the participants that provided data to help the researcher address five research questions. Data was acquired through in-depth interview questions developed by the researcher. Coding was used to provide an analysis of interview data. This chapter provides a detailed description of how data was analyzed and the ethical considerations that was addressed in the research.

Research Questions

In order to assess the perceptions on the underrepresentation of African Americans in faculty and administrative positions at Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) institutions, five research questions were posed to the participants.

1. What are Maxine Smiths Fellows' perceptions on how race and ethnicity contribute to employment opportunities at TBR institutions?

2. What factors do Maxine Smiths Fellows perceive to be contributing to the under-representation of African Americans serving in full-time faculty positions at TBR institutions?

3. What factors do Maxine Smiths Fellows perceive to be contributing to the under-representation of African Americans serving in full-time administrative positions at TBR institutions?

4. What are Maxine Smiths Fellows' perceptions regarding the current initiatives of the TBR to address the under-representation of African Americans in full-time faculty and administrative positions?

5. How do Maxine Smith Fellows perceive their experience similar to or different from other African Americans' experiences who serve in faculty and administrative positions at TBR institutions?

<u>Research Design</u>

A case study with an inductive qualitative approach was used to acquire participants' perceptions about possible explanations for the underrepresentation of African Americans in faculty and administrative positions at TBR institutions. Data was collected and evaluated using coding and content analysis in the study.

Because of the nature of this research, the researcher used the case study approach. Kohlbacher (2006) suggested that case studies are one of the most useful methods when conducting inquiries through a qualitative approach. Because case studies have rigorous research strategies, this qualitative approach was considered an acceptable and credible form of research in the social sciences. Zainal (2007) further stated that case study research is a robust approach when examining complex issues pertaining to behavioral issues, educational practices, and initiatives. Patton (2015) contended that, "A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case" (p. 297). Patton further stated that case studies provide a greater understanding of the research, issues, and participants, which adds to the quality of the research. According to Patton (2015) case

studies use data from multiple participants that can include background data acquired about the participants, informal and formal interviews with participants, and quotes acquired from the participants.

Patton (2015) stressed that research using case studies should include coding to analyze data. According to Glaser and Strauss (2012), coding allows the researcher to quantify qualitative data by identifying patterns. Patton (2015) further emphasized that content analysis is common and used to locate reoccurring words and themes.

Qualitative methods consist of naturalistic inquiry through a holistic-inductive design and content analysis of qualitative data. Thomas (2006) stated that, "inductive research provides an easily used and systematic set of procedures for analyzing qualitative data that produce reliable and valid findings" (p. 237). Through the inductive qualitative approach, the researcher is able to condense raw data into a summary, provide links to the data and research objectives, and devise a framework based upon the data. Using this approach allows the researcher to use raw data from transcripts to devise potential emerging themes and concepts discovered in the research.

In this study, the researcher used the traditional case study approach by collecting data from participants through interviews, examining data to determine overarching themes and concepts that have arisen from the study, and further examine repeated themes and concepts to devise a theory or conclusion that explains the reason for the phenomena.

According to Patton (2015) qualitative field work strategies using interviews provide detailed descriptions of participants' perceptions and qualitative data provides the best approach to explain a phenomenon because it provides a method for the researcher to describe participants' perceptions. Patton (2015) stated that qualitative data allows the researcher to undertake in-depth inquiry with participants and explore questions that may not otherwise be part of a study; this

study requires the researcher to delve deeply into the participants' perceptions and because of the design of this study a naturalistic setting will be used.

Through the use of coding, the researcher was able to quantify descriptive data into specific categories based upon content analysis. This researcher further analyze the data collected through in-depth interviews to identify themes and patterns that was used to address the five research questions. The researcher had each participant to review the transcripts to ensure that information in the transcripts accurately reported each participant's response.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher served as the principal investigator for this qualitative study and was responsible for the details concerning the study. The researcher arranged interview dates and times, record and transcribe interviews, provide storage and data management, and serve as the data analyst for the study.

Ethical Considerations

According to Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, and Cheraghi (2014), ethical considerations are concerns and challenges for any researcher. This is because of the level of interaction between the researcher and participants. Ethical considerations must be considered because of the level of intimacy often involved in qualitative research. Ethical considerations include, but are not limited to, confidentiality, the ability of the researcher to be candid and honest throughout all interactions, informed consent, and ensuring that all information is correct and not misrepresented by the researcher.

Because of the nature of the study and the race of the researcher, ethical considerations was considered when interviewing participants and analyzing data. To assure that there was no bias on the part of the researcher, all interviews were recorded. Interview transcripts were provided to the

participants for review and correction. Each participant was asked to review the transcripts and send an email confirming that the information transcripts were accurate. Prior to using quotes acquired from participants, the participants had to review the quotes and confirm that the quotes could be used in the study.

Researcher Bias

This topic addresses the researcher's race, so the researcher must employ what Patton (2015) refers to as empathetic neutrality. A researcher using a qualitative approach must "adopt a stance of neutrality with regard to the phenomenon" (p. 51). Patton described this as the process by which the researcher does not cloud his or her judgment by becoming too involved while at the same time not becoming disconnected from the research and participants. Using this process will reduce potential bias and provide credibility to the research.

Empathetic Neutrality

According to Patton (2015), a qualitative researcher must be cautious of empathetic neutrality. Patton stated that inquiries involving fieldwork causes the researcher to be actively in contact with the participants and can negatively influence the researcher's emotional status, thus increasing the likelihood of bias and error entering the study. Because of this, Patton stated that it is important for the researcher to develop a point of departure to ensure that the researcher does not become engrossed with the problem being studied, while at the same time being actively involved in the research.

The researcher will develop a rapport that will ensure to the participant that the researcher is respectful of his or her views and have an open yet disciplined line of communication. Patton (2015) stated that this requires the researcher to remain professional and prevent any issues that

outwardly show anger, surprise, or disgust. In order to do this, the researcher must remain focused when collecting data.

The researcher provided a clear understanding of the purpose of the study and the manner in which interviews will occur. The researcher began each interview thanking the participant for his or her time and commitment to the study; thus providing a clear appreciation of the participant's time and commitment to the study. In the event that participants sought advice on the problem being addressed, the researcher redirected them to the purpose of the study and reminded them that the interviews are not designed to provide advice but to provide a greater understanding of the problem being studied.

The researcher also recorded all interviews to ensure that any biased or leading questions were not present. All initial and follow up questions and interviews were the same for each participant. The researcher provided the opportunity for participants to review his or her transcripts to ensure that all information is recorded correctly free of personal bias.

In this study, the researcher conducted interviews with the participants. Interviews were conducted via Skype and all interviews were recorded. The researcher employed a nurturing and professional environment that allowed participants to speak honest and freely. The researcher conducted follow up interviews if there was a technical issue impeding on the participants ability to answer all questions.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is extremely important when obtaining research data. Researchers must be cautious when identifying information that may cause punitive actions or harm to study participants (Patton, 2015). Although anonymity is important, complete anonymity is rarely possible (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015). Because of the nature of the topic and potential

issues that may arise from participants' employment, each was assigned a pseudonym whereby their names are disguised (Saunders et al., 2015). This method should ensure anonymity and confidentiality. To ensure confidentiality with the transcripts, each transcripts was encrypted with a passcode. The researcher sent a text message to each participant providing the participants with a individualized password that was need to open the document.

IRB Approval

The researcher submitted all required documentation to the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting any research or acquiring data. Each participant in the study completed a signed informed consent, which ensured that all participants are notified of the purpose of the study, what will be asked of them in the study, and provided with information about any risks and benefits that can come out of the study. Participants were given the opportunity to terminate participation at any point in the study without reason. No identifying information was listed in the study. As soon as IRB approval was received and the informed consent form signed by participants, the researcher began the interview process.

Interviewing Process

Each participant was provided with a copy of the survey questions and asked to sign an informed consent form. The consent form was read aloud and the researcher restated the purpose of the study. Participants were informed that interviews were recorded and that the results would be presented in the dissertation. Participants were reminded that their names and institution affiliation were assigned a pseudonym to assure confidentiality. Interviews ranged from approximately 15 minutes to 45 minutes and conducted via Skype. The participants were informed that additional interviews may be needed to ensure the data are accurate and that there are no

discrepancies in the transcripts. The researcher employed member checking by having the participants review their transcript data quotes that were used in the study.

Purposeful Sampling

Sample size is often contingent on the study and should support the purpose and design of the study. The researcher should take into account the purpose of the research, the ramifications of the research, how the data from the research will be used, and the amount of resources needed to conduct this type of research (Patton, 2015).

In a qualitative research design, purposeful sampling is one of the most widely used methods (Patton, 2015). Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to use participants who can provide insight and clarity on the phenomenon being examined. Patton (2015) further stated that purposeful sampling provides detailed in-depth information on why certain phenomena are occurring and purposeful sampling is often used when conducting qualitative case studies. The researcher used purposeful sampling for this study. This method allowed the researcher to recruit participants who were interviewed and were able to provide insight for issues contributing to the underrepresentation of African Americans in academic at TBR.

Recruitment of Participants

There have been approximately 94 participants in the Maxine Smith Fellows program from 2011-2017. The researcher obtained the contact information from the Tennessee Board of Regents website, which contain the names of Maxine Smith Fellows from 2013 to 2017. The researcher also acquired contact information for any Maxine Smith Fellows participant that completed the program between 2013 and 2017. After contact information had been acquired, an email was initially sent to approximately to 15 prospective participants explaining the purpose of the study

and its significance. Due to limited response, the researcher had to send out additional to 10 more candidates requesting their participation in the study.

By using purposeful sampling, up to 11 participants from the Maxine Smith Fellows program were recruited for the study. Their participation were voluntary and based solely on their involvement in the Maxine Smith Fellows program, as this population was deemed most relevant for this study. Participants in the study were contacted by phone and by email to request available interview times. A reminder email or text was sent to participants confirming upcoming interviews.

Credibility

According to Høyland, Hagen, and Engelbach (2017), credibility is vital when conducting qualitative research. Høyland et al. (2017) detailed specific methods to ensure credibility in qualitative research that includes prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and rich and thick description.

Prolonged Engagement

Høyland et al. (2017) defined prolonged engagement as the researcher's ability to fully understand the participants and their overall culture. This ensures that participants trust the researcher and are able to be honest throughout the study.

Because the researcher is a member of a TBR institution and a member of the Maxine Smith Fellows Program, the researcher was aware of the culture of the TBR system and the members of the Maxine Smith Fellows Program. This also provides the participants with a certain amount of trust in the researcher.

Persistent Observation

"Persistent observations: Aims to identify the characteristics and elements in a situation that are most relevant to the phenomena under investigation and to focus on them extensively to achieve depth" (Høyland et al, 2017, p. 3). By conducting in-depth interviews in a natural setting through an inductive approach, the researcher will be able to get a greater understanding of the problem.

Triangulation and Member Checking

Triangulation of data aids in its credibility and accuracy by assuring the findings are consistent (Patton, 2015). The researcher will revisit the data by listening, transcribing, and reading transcripts repeatedly to ensure there are no inaccuracies. The researcher asked participants to review transcripts to ensure there are no inaccuracies and afforded them the opportunity to make changes and provide further explanation.

Peer Debriefing and Rich and Thick Description

Høyland et al. (2017) examined the importance of peer debriefing and rich and thick description. Peer debriefing is defined as the process in which the researcher will review the research methods, procedures, and findings from the study. In the study, the researcher will continuously review the procedures with participants and. Any substantive or significant changes in the study will be communicated with the participants, the researcher, and the third party reviewer to ensure findings are accurate. According to Høyland et al. (2017), rich and thick description, is the researcher's ability to provide specific information about the participants in the study, an explanation of how the data are collected, a detailed analysis of the data, the role of the researcher, and specific details about any events or behaviors that were observed during the study ((Høyland et al., 2017). For this study, the researcher provided a detailed description of the

participants, the method in which data will be collected, the role as researcher, and all details, events, or behaviors that arise while conducting the research.

<div align="center">Setting</div>

Sanjari et al. (2014) explained that qualitative research often requires the researcher to use a naturalistic setting. They defined this as the process when there is not a control group and the researcher is actively engaged with participants. Because of the level of intimacy, it is necessary for the researcher to be aware of his or her prejudices and biases. For this study, the researcher will use a naturalistic setting.

<div align="center">Data Collection and Management</div>

Interviews are used most frequently when conducting case studies. Data must be organized prior to conducting the analysis (Patton, 2015). Questions were revisited to address any issues or gaps in the information given when participants review their interview transcripts. Interviews were recorded for accuracy and recordings (with backup copies) will be stored in a secure online drop box; the recordings will remain solely in the care of the researcher. The online database was username and password protected and the researcher will be the only one who can assess the information. Patton (2015) stated that once data have been collected it is imperative to create a case file for each participant that will be used to handle the large amount of data acquired from in-depth interviews. The files included recordings, transcripts, field notes, and all materials collected from each study participant. All interviews were conducted via Skype and recorded to ensure that all information has been collected appropriately and accurately.

Data Analysis

Case study analysis requires the researcher to organize data and conduct an analysis of each participant's input for comparison to all participants. According to Patton (2015), qualitative analysis allows the researcher to transform data into findings. Patton further stated that qualitative analysis allows the researcher to take extensive and massive amounts of data and reduce them into significant patterns and themes. A number of themes will be found in the data provided by each participant; those themes may be compared among all participants to reveal patterns in data.

Coding is the first method to use when analyzing qualitative data using the comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 2012). Witte and Witte (2010) stated that qualitative data can be coded into themes. Once data have been examined the researcher determines which responses are found most frequently and codes them under a common theme (Witte & Witte, 2010). Researchers must address convergence when attempting to code data by determining if the categories have "internal homogeneity" or "external heterogeneity" (Patton, 2015, p. 465). This method allows the researcher to see themes and patterns in data. Inductive analysis and synthesis is best used when attempting to discover important themes and patterns. The process begins with exploration and is followed by confirmation (Patton, 2015). Thomas (2006) stated that the inductive approach consists of condensing data into a format, providing a link between the research and the finding, and developing a framework.

The inductive approach requires the researcher to analyze data when a theory has not been predetermined (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). The inductive approach allows the researcher to analyze patterns and discover themes; codes will be created using content analysis. This researcher will align with the inductive content analysis approach used in the Burnard et al. (2008) report because of its practicality. According to Burnard et al. (2008), the

researcher locates themes that emerge from interviews by transcribing the data word-for-word and performs this process several times in hopes of finding additional themes and categories. The researcher notes common concepts in the transcript margins, which is a method referred to as open coding. Once the open coding is completed the researcher reviews data repeatedly to reduce and combine the coded categories. The researcher continues to examine the categories to determine if any can be combined.

By using the method described by Burnard et al. (2008) the researcher will group participants' responses into categories or themes that explain their perceptions on the phenomenon addressed in the study – the under-representation of African Americans in full-time faculty and administrative positions at TBR institutions. This qualitative method allows the researcher to present findings in the form narratives to address each of the five research questions.

In this study, the researcher compiled the data acquired from interviews with participants. The data was sorted by locating any overarching themes that were obtained from the transcripts by using MAXDQA (a software program that is often used in qualitative research). This program allowed for examination of all the compiled data, creation of themes, and provides an opportunity to examine any words or phrases that were gathered from the interviews.

<div align="center">Chapter Summary</div>

Chapter 3 provided the research design and method that was used to analyze this qualitative case study. The chapter further provided a detailed explanation of the participants, the interviewing process, and the data collection process. Using a purposeful sampling method, 11 participants from the Maxine Smith Fellows program was interviewed and the data provided was used to analyze participants' perceptions. Data acquired from the interviews was coded using content analysis, themes, patterns, and categories. The chapter further provided an explanation of

related literature that aligns with the data analysis process used in the study, ethical considerations,

and the manner in which findings was presented.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to analyze the perceptions of Maxine Smith Fellows to determine if there were specific perceived barriers contributing to the underrepresentation of African Americans in full-time faculty and administrative positions at TBR institutions.

Chapter 4 provided a summary of the findings from this qualitative case study based upon the interviews with the 11 participants. In an effort to ensure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

Each participant was asked to participate in an in-depth interview in which the participant described his or her experiences at TBR institutions and their perceptions regarding the underrepresentation of African Americans at TBR institutions. The findings were derived from the in-depth interviews.

The following research questions provided the framework for this research study:

1. What are Maxine Smiths Fellows' perceptions on how race and ethnicity contribute to employment opportunities at TBR institutions?

2. What factors do Maxine Smiths Fellows perceive to be contributing to the under-representation of African Americans serving in full-time faculty positions at TBR institutions?

3. What factors do Maxine Smiths Fellows perceive to be contributing to the under-representation of African Americans serving in full-time administrative positions at TBR institutions?

4. What are Maxine Smiths Fellows' perceptions regarding the current initiatives of the TBR to address the under-representation of African Americans in full-time faculty and administrative positions?

5. How do Maxine Smith Fellows perceive their experience similar to or different from other African Americans' experiences who serve in faculty and administrative positions at TBR institutions?

Six overarching themes emerged from the data:

1. Lack of Intentional Efforts on the Part of TBR

2. Lack of Recruitment of African Americans

3. Racism

4. Networking

5. Preparation for Professional Advancement

6. Valuing Diversity in the Workforce

<u>Lack of Intentional Effort</u>

Participants in the study stated on various occasions in the interviews that TBR does not strategically or purposefully participate in efforts to retain or promote African American faculty and administrators. Although some of the participants referenced recent initiatives that promote equity with the student population, none of the participants listed any specific initiatives or intentional efforts, outside of the Maxine Smith Fellows program, that assist with retaining qualified African Americans.

Naje was straight to the point when asked about her feelings on race and employment opportunities:

I feel that there are not intentional efforts to ensure diversity in leadership positions.

Sally focused on intentionality when asked about her perceptions for the

underrepresentation of

African American in full time faculty positions:

In order for us to have a diverse staff, I literally have to be intentional. This means that I
have to reach out to different organizations. I have to be intentional to go to Higher
Education and post those jobs. I have to be intentional in Facebook and those type of
things. I think we must be intentional and sometimes, even as African Americans; we get
comfortable and do not reach out outside our area.

Connie focused on the need for TBR's statement of commitment to action:

I think that there is an opportunity for alignment of our verbal statements of commitment to
action steps. I feel like in general that hiring managers at all levels understand and can
espouse a need for diversity, but I don't see that everyone actualizes that and at times I see
some hesitancy in terms of doing some best practices that are known and have been
demonstrated to do things that would help increase diversity among employees.

Robert expounded on the need for following polices:

I do think it is enough once you leave those presidential ranks and once you come out of
those rural communities and go into the rural communities. I do not think you will see as
many African Americans represented on faculty, staff, or administration. At least that is
what I have seen. When I walked through, the only ones I really met or talked have been a
part of the Maxine Smith Fellows program. I think they should do a better job on their
policies in making sure that that is a true thing

Sally stated the following as it related to a potential cause for the underrepresentation of

African American administrators:

We have programs such as Maxine Smith Fellows that are supposed to promote or improve
our skills and supposed to be an avenue for more administrators in the TBR systems. As I
was reading Maxine Smith's book, she was fighting for this way back to have more TBR
representatives or administrators there and it still has not happened.

Cody was direct as it related to practices that could assist in the underrepresentation of

African Americans:

One is take the Maxine Smith program more seriously. I feel that those who participate in
the program names should automatically be sent to the institution if they fit what the
institution is looking for. The TBR itself should be able to submit the Maxine Smith
Fellows to those institutions, and let those institutions determine an assessment just as they

would do any other candidate. I feel that TBR should take a more role in showcasing the program, and the value of the candidates who have completed their program.

Sally was clear when it related to the lack of intentional training efforts:

I think that it may be the lack of training. Once you get in, I am not sure that there is a training path to get promoted. That is for internal candidates.

Connie focused on the fact that she could not list specific intentional efforts:

Well, I guess the fact that I am not aware of any specific efforts might speak. Aside from the Maxine Smith and the continuation of that fellowship program, nothing in particular is coming to mind. So if there are other efforts, I am not aware of them. So, Maybe that is an opportunity for more transparency of what those initiatives are and expectation are and goals

Amy was also unable to list current initiatives or intentional effort to assist with

promotional opportunities:

I am not aware of some of the most current initiatives that they are doing as it relates to faculty and staff. I do know that our campus has adopted the Achieving the Dream for students to ensure that we have students that are recruited retained and graduate, but I am not aware of what the current practices are on the system level for the recruitment of minorities.

Amy used one sentence to describe her perception on the importance of intentionality:

We need to be intentional to make this person feel like they are part of that team.

Connie focused on create strategic and intentional efforts:

I think that encouraging the institutions to name, in terms of a specific goal, and to have some accountability measures that were going to be accountable for and that could start at the system as a base line as to what our expectation is and then each institution, based upon their unique situation or starting point, could then work from that in order to create their own institutional goals. I think a lot of time we don't have specific goals so was are aiming for or we can make assumptions, but now one is really evaluating it on a annual basis to see whether or not progress is being made. Then, I think requiring campus surveys or climate surveys by the employee to get a read for what is going on and how folks are feeling.

Tommy focused his attention on the lack of intentional retention efforts to promote African Americans:

I have seen minorities come and go because retention is a factor. I think that once they get in here they realize there is not a way they can move up. They cannot grow in the environment there; they cannot be promoted to another level. I feel that strong. I am not telling you something that I have heard. It is something I know firsthand.

Naje placed a focus on intentional efforts:

I have not experienced any intentional effort to secure, help, assist, promote minorities at any level, whether that is a classroom or up to a presidency.

Naje stated the following at it relates to the importance of succession planning to assist in retention:

I think there needs to be intentional succession planning at each institution, and TBR should lead the effort to help institution to do the succession planning and it needs to be for a diverse group of people not exclusive to minorities.

Timmy stated the following as it relates to the underrepresentation of African Americans in

full-time administrative positions:

It is not clearly stated that TBR nor its institutions are accepting of diversity, inclusion, and people from different backgrounds. Most of the interview teams and committees lack the diversity; therefore, you lack the perspective from those various backgrounds. As a stated in my last response, it is not clearly stated that TBR nor its institutions are accepting of diversity and inclusion and people from different backgrounds. Most of the interview teams and committees lack the diversity; therefore, you lack the perspective from those various backgrounds that could be able to offer insight and look at a potential candidate from the perspective of we are lacking this piece.

Lack of Recruitment of African Americans

Responses from the participants revealed the they believed that that the lack of recruitment is an attributing factor to the underrepresentation of African Americans in both faculty and administrative positions.

Robert focused on the importance of recruitment in order increase representation:

I think again, there needs to be a focus on recruitment. Even if you look at the TBR board or TBR senior staff, it is only one African American that is on that senior staff. You cannot tell me that throughout this whole state of Tennessee or even in the Nashville area, that they can only have one senior staff at TBR. I just think that have to do better with recruitment maybe even hiring a diversity officer at TBR that will focus on working with the president on how to diversify their staff.

Amy was direct:

I think that we need to recruit qualified underrepresented minorities, get them on campus, and do things that are designed to keep them.

Robert focused on the importance of recruitment when he stated:

You are not forcing people, and I hate to use the word force, but you are not forcing people to have a standard of trying to recruit African Americans at these institutions. It is at whim. I you have a president that really wants to do it, they will. If you have a president that does not care, they are not going to do it as much, and you do not see the recruiting efforts.

Cody stated the following as it relates to the importance of leadership to support efforts in

recruitment:

I feel that there is underrepresentation because of the leadership. I think the leaders at that time did not have the focus on the need to include representation of minorities. I do not think it was on there to do list; I do not think it was a focus or priority at that time.

They need to do more recruiting of minorities who have an emphasis and a gift in the areas that they need. For instance, at our institution, if we are trying to build the STEM program, I feel that we need to do better outreach in our HR areas to recruit those who possess those abilities and qualities.

Robert stated the following as it relates to the employment pool:

It is hard to say. It's kind of there, but I do not think they have a concerted effort not to hire based on race. I just think again, when they start to look at the pools, they may look to see if one is in there, but they are not truly trying to recruit and look at why people are not applying.

Minnie was clear about her feelings on the importance of recruiting:

It is recruiting and hiring. I think that there are a good number of African Americans who are qualified, willing, and able to work at TBR institutions. I think it is about recruiting.

<u>Racism</u>

Racism was a consistent theme among the responses from 10 out of the 11 participants.

Several of the participants perceived that their race served as a barrier to them as they attempted to

acquire promotional opportunities and has served as an attributing factor to the

underrepresentation of African Americans in full-time faculty and administrative positions.

Timmy was direct when asked if racism influenced his promotion:

At one point, definitely I felt like that my race hindered me a road block or obstacle.

If I compare myself to my counterparts that have the number of years and level of degree attainment that I have, their titles typically reflect the experience they bring to the table.

Naje focused on systematic racism:

I feel that institutions have systemically used the excuse that there are not enough African Americans who will fit in serving in those positions. I also think that people of color, minorities, African Americans that we have become disenchanted because of the systemic racism, which causes us to leave the profession altogether or not expect to have opportunities for advancement. The other thing I think the excuse is that institutions can't find qualified faculty members is perpetuated.

When asked about her feelings on race and employment, Inez replied:

Race as it is currently defined has been ideological, specifically in the Southeast. This has impacted the way in which organizations and higher education has been staffed; it has impacted the hiring practices. It has impacted in what we call structural racism, which means sometimes there are policy, procedures, guidelines and commentary that are observational and could also be arguable in terms of why do our institutional make-up look the way they look when I see the way the student population looks the way that they look.

Timmy placed a focus on the need to create a culture of acceptance:

It's just a lack of culture of acceptance. I think there is a culture of tolerance in some instances, but there is not truly a culture of acceptance among TBR and the institutions of people from diverse backgrounds.

When asked about factors that attribute to the continuous underrepresentation, Connie said:

I think there is still a fair amount of systemic amount of racism that not just only our campus is dealing with but within TBR, the state of Tennessee, and our nation as a whole, and I think those are huge and this poses a huge barrier to processes. It is the lack of awareness or willingness to be open and aware that one has and harbors some underline racist beliefs that causes them to think that African Americans are less skilled or less knowledgeable, whatever the case might be. I think that is really the underline factor.

Tommy was direct when comparing the issues people of color endure when he said:

You can take a person of color with the same skill and mindset and put them against someone else, and for whatever reason it appears that the other person is more attractive or they have the look for a certain position or the field.

When asked if race was a factor in the promotion and retention, Naje said:

I think as unfortunate as it is I think race certainly plays a role in lot of the decision making, whether that is pay increase or job position, or access to a particular course or not. I think race plays a factor in promotion because the evaluation of minorities is different than many White counterparts. I think that factors in the historical context of the country, and the expectation that minorities do not have the skill set to perform the job.

Tommy was direct when he replied to his race serving as a barrier:

I do not feel that I would have the same struggle if I was at another state. I am not going to say that we are the only state that has to deal with this. However, I do know others that serve at other institutions, and the minute you walk on they are trying to look at areas in which they can promote you. Here it's a situation in which you get here, you do your best, get a pat on the back, and get as much escalades that are there, but we do not want you on that decision table. You are good to carry out what they decide, but you are not good enough to have a voice at the table. I do not think that is across the board in higher education. I just think it is just an issue here at TBR.

When asked if she felt that race is a factor, Sally stated:

I think that race is not just a factor in TBR; I think race is a factor period. I do think that race, even though you have people say that they do not see race, then you do not see the individual. I do think that race in any government agency or college plays a factor.

<u>Networking</u>

Overall, participants perceived that the Maxine Smith Fellows program assisted African Americans in networking. The participants perceived that the employment trajectory was higher for those that participated in the program versus those who did not participate in the Maxine Smith program. In addition, participants perceived the Maxine Smith's Fellows program as a venue to provide opportunities to meet with influential people in the system and to make professional connections with their peers and institutional leaders.

Robert focused on the benefits for employment trajectory for Maxine Smith Fellows:

It is higher if you are part of the Maxine Smith program. Again, you know the ends and out. You know who to call. Without it, it is kind of like you are left out on your own.

Unless the school itself does a major recruitment effort or the HR has a really on-boarding program, you are kind of left to your own.

When asked about the program's ability to assist in the promotion and retaining of African Americans, Connie said:

The biggest benefits that had the potential to aid individuals who wish to advance their careers was the opportunity to meet with the key players all the way to the Chancellor to the Vice Chancellors and have very candid conversations with them. This gave opportunities to start building and develop a relationship and of course it was up to us and continue to be up to each of us individually how we utilize that wonderful opportunity to meet with those individuals and start those connections and relationships.

Inez said the following as it relates the employment trajectory of Maxine Smith Fellows:

Most people who complete the program are promoted. If they are not promoted, they are provided with a broader brush of opportunities to have their own personal leadership brand to develop by having opportunities and other capacities.

Minnie focused on the program's ability to provide networking opportunities:

I was able to meet other individuals that worked through TBR. I feel that you are able to get information from other people, talk to other people and it is networking. I think the biggest thing as far as Maxine Smith Fellow is the networking. It allows you to network with people at other colleges and institutions to kind of bounce ideas.

Preparation

Preparation was another common theme that was expressed by the participants. Participants perceived that the Maxine Smith Fellow program prepared minorities to matriculate in the higher professional roles in the system. Participants perceived the program's ability to prepare candidates as one of the benefits of a Fellow being promoted in comparison to someone in the system who has not been a Maxine Smith Fellow. Respondents expressed their positive views on the program's ability to provide professional development opportunities in which they were able to communicate and learn from influential people and attend trainings, which allowed them to learn processes and procedures of the TBR system.

When asked if the Maxine Smith program helped with promotional opportunities, Timmy

said:

I do feel as though the Maxine Smith Fellows is an opportunity for emerging African American leaders to get a better perspective and understanding of how the system functions, how it operates, and how they can try to best position themselves for that next step up.

When asked if the Maxine Smith program helped with promotional opportunities, Smith

replied:

I think the Maxine Smith Fellows program prepares you for upward movement whatever that may be. I am not always sure that being in the Maxine Smith Fellows program does that. I would like to hope that being a Maxine Smith Fellows would do that. I do think that it does give you the skills you need, or it equips you with the skills.

Amy focused on the program's ability to assist in preparation when she stated:

The Maxine Smith Fellows Program did allow me to see how things are run on a system level, but when we go back to our campus we lose the intent of the Maxine Smith Fellow. As a Maxine Smith Fellow, we were able to see what it what like to be a president for a day.

Minnie focused on the program's ability to provide quality professional development:

I can personally say that I think the workshops, the professional development, and the networking personally have helped me, even if it is not in the immediate. It has helped me to give me the tools so when I am put in a position to where I can act on those things. I think it has helped my trajectory based upon the things I learned while in the program.

Inez focused on the program's ability to assist with promotions at institutions outside of

TBR:

Most people who complete the program are promoted. If they are not promoted, they are provided with a broader brush of opportunities to have their own personal leadership brand to develop by having opportunities and other capacities

<div align="center">Devaluing Diversity in the Workforce</div>

The devaluing of diversity was a common theme expressed by the participants.

Participants expressed that the TBR system could improve upon expressing and implementing

efforts that promote the value of diversity among staff. Although participants stated that the

system is making strides in promoting diversity and providing equity to underrepresented groups

of students, the system needs to do more to promote the value in hiring and retaining African

Americans in administrative and faculty positions. In addition, participants did not list specific

initiatives outside of the Maxine Smith Fellow's program that are in place to assist in the retention

and promotion of African Americans in administrative and faculty positions.

Timmy was direct when he stated the following as it relates to his perceptions on how TBR

views diversity and employment:

I do not think that diversity or inclusion are a priority in the hiring and the promotion of those from diverse backgrounds. It's not clearly stated in a job description; therefore, I do not think it is a priority for TBR institutions.

Amy was straight to the point when asked about current initiatives designed to assist in

increasing representation:

I am not aware of some of the most current initiatives that they are doing as it relates to faculty and staff. I do know that our campus has adopted the Achieving the Dream for students to ensure that we have students that are recruited retained and graduate, but I am not aware of what the current practices are on the system level for the recruitment of minorities.

When asked about some practices that could assist in representation, Minnie replied:

It is about having a culture of diversity and inclusiveness. I think those are the things that are going to keep African Americans and increase the presentation of them at TBR institutions.

Robert focused on institutions not being required to think about diversity:

I think in some communities they would tell you that there are not enough applicants I think you still have the "who you know" syndrome within TBR. I think with some institutions you do not. I do think they have not given the opportunity to the African American population, and they really have not been force to.

Robert focused on the lack of importance as it relates to diversity when he said:

I do not think that the importance is there. Am I happy that we recruited two new presidents? Yes. Is that enough? No. They will have to really talk to these presidents and

be part of their strategic plan on efforts not to just give African Americans jobs, but try to recruit the best ones to give them opportunities at the institutions.

Connie focused on the need for a great understanding for the need for diversity:

I think not enough intense knowledge across the board by those individuals who serve on committees whether it's the deans or other faculty members or staff members across the campus who are asked to serve on those hiring committees. So, sometimes it's a lack of understanding and training as it relates to those best practices and things you can do to be intentional about having a more diverse pool, but then secondly I think that sometime there is an unwillingness to do those things that are necessary.

Connie was direct when she stated:

For sure, folks made comments that it made it clear that they had a devaluing of certain experiences or things based on race.

When asked why there is an underrepresentation, Timmy stated:

There is a misunderstanding about the acceptance of African Americans and the value they add to the student experience. Research tells us time and time again that when a student sees someone that looks like them, leading them, teaching them, mentoring them, and guiding, that it plays a part in their success. We have folks in the position. There are VP's of Academics Affairs and Chief Academic Officers that do not understand that, that do not value that research; therefore, they are not placing African American faculty in these classrooms. Even if we are placing them there, are we giving them the same opportunity as their counterparts? Are they being considered for rank, promotion, tenure, and those sorts of things? Are we only working them in as adjuncts and even at that at a very low rate? We currently have a community college that has absolutely zero African American male faculty members on their campus, zero. What does that speak? What does that say to the average African American male student population or even the female population at that particular community college? It says you do not value me; you do not value what I bring to the table because you can't even have someone that looks like me in any classroom at that particular community college.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of Maxine Smith Fellows on the underrepresentation of African Americans in administrative and full-time faculty positons at TBR institutions. In this chapter, the researcher provides a summary and recommendations for future research based upon the study. An analysis of data revealed the following overarching themes that were derived from the study: lack of intentional efforts on the part of TBR, lack of recruitment of African Americans, racism, networking, preparation for professional advancement, and valuing diversity in the workforce. The above-mentioned themes were derived out of the following questions:

1. What are Maxine Smiths Fellows' perceptions on how race and ethnicity contribute to employment opportunities at TBR institutions?

2. What factors do Maxine Smiths Fellows perceive to be contributing to the under-representation of African Americans serving in full-time faculty positions at TBR institutions?

3. What factors do Maxine Smiths Fellows perceive to be contributing to the under-representation of African Americans serving in full-time administrative positions at TBR institutions?

4. What are Maxine Smiths Fellows' perceptions regarding the current initiatives of the TBR to address the under-representation of African Americans in full-time faculty and administrative positions?

5. How do Maxine Smith Fellows perceive their experience similar to or different from other African Americans' experiences who serve in faculty and administrative positions at TBR institutions?

The researcher recruited 11 participants for the study. Each participant participated in an interview, and all interviews were transcribed. All of the participants' transcripts were coded using a coding software program that assisted in determining overarching themes that answered the five research question posed in the study.

Lack of Intentional Effort

It was clear that the respondents have a strong belief that the TBR was not being strategic or intentional about increasing representation of African American faculty and administrators. Most respondents perceived that the Maxine Smith program was the only initiative that was in place to assist African Americans in being promoted; however, there was an overall feeling that the Maxine Smith Fellow program was more geared to preparation and networking than promoting African Americans in higher professional ranks in the TBR system. Based upon the interviews, the respondents perceived that additional efforts, practices, and initiatives need to be implemented to ensure equity and inclusion as it relates to addressing the underrepresentation of African Americans in administrative and faculty positions.

Lack of Recruitment of African Americans

Participants perceive that the system is not putting forth a valiant effort to recruit qualified African Americans. Specific and strategic initiatives and practices to recruit and retain qualified staff need to be implemented not only on a system-wide level. Participants perceived that efforts such as recruiting minorities from historical black colleges and universities (HBCU's) and advertising more job listings in publication that appealed to minorities need to occur on a system-

wide level. A greater examination of how the Tennessee Board of Regents institutions promoted and recruit individuals need to examined, and staff must begin in open dialogue on hiring practices.

Racism

Racism was noted by a majority of the participants as a barrier that has hindered their promotional opportunities, and as an obstacle that is attributing to the underrepresentation of African Americans in the system. Some participants stated the issue of racism was not limited to the system, but was also an issue as it relates to the state of Tennessee.

Networking

All participants expressed that they believed the program provided networking opportunities to the participants, and that this served as an advantage to those who participated in the program versus those who had not participated in the program. Participants highlighted the program's ability to allow Fellows to make connections and communicate with influential people who are making decisions on the institutional and system-wide level. Participants also expressed how the program allowed them to meet other like-minded individuals and colleagues who were able to assist them and provide professional support.

Preparation

Every participant noted that the Maxine Smith Fellows provided preparation and training to the participants in the program. It was stated in many interviews that preparation, which was provided by the trainings, workshops, and meetings, were perceived as the major advantage for Fellow being promoted versus an individual who desire promotional opportunities who had not participated in the program. If this is the case, then the institutions need to provide additional

equitable opportunities and professional development to African Americans who are not able to participate in the program.

Devaluing Diversity in the Workforce

Participants expressed in the interviews that they perceived that the TBR system did not value diversity in the workforce. Although the participants perceived that the institutions are exploring opportunities for equity for students of color, each participant perceived that the system needs to implement more efforts towards equity in the workplace as it relates to hiring and retaining African Americans. The TBR system has adopted Achieving the Dream; however, the pursuit of equity, diversity, and inclusion needs to incorporate in every aspect of higher education, including the hiring, retaining, and recruitment of people of color.

Recommendations for Research

This study was limited to only Maxine Smith Fellows currently employed at community colleges and Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology. This study provides a framework for additional studies that can assist with increasing representation, retention, and promotional opportunities for African Americans employed in academia across the state. To this end, the researcher proposes the following recommendations for research:

- Further research needs to be conducted to determine if there is a difference in the perceptions of African Americans who are employed at TBR community colleges versus African Americans who are employed at a Tennessee College of Applied Technology.

- Due to gender potentially impacting experiences and perceptions, further research needs to be conducted to determine if there is a difference in the perceptions between African American females and African American males.

- Further research needs to be conducted to examine the perceptions of African American full-time faculty and administrators who have not participated in the Maxine Smith Fellows program.

- Additional research needs to be conducted on Maxine Smith Fellows who are no longer in the system to analyze their perceptions on the reason for the underrepresentation of African Americans in full-time administrative and faculty positions at TBR institutions.

- In recent years, the Maxine Smith Fellows program has been available to other unrepresented populations outside of African Americans. Research needs to be conducted to determine the perception of Maxine Smith Fellows who are not African American.

Recommendations for Practice

Institutions across the United States have seen an underrepresentation of African Americans in full-time faculty and administrative positions. Despite decades of affirmative actions designed to provide equity to this underrepresented group, African Americans are not adequately represented in academia, and in predominately-white institution in the south, the representation is more dismal.

Based upon the findings from this research study, the researcher proposes the following recommendations for future practice:

Recruit qualified African Americans within and outside of the TBR system for faculty and administrative positions. All 11 participants were direct about the need for the TBR system to improve their efforts when it came to race and employment and promotional opportunities for African Americans. Developing intentional strategic initiatives at the TBR system level to assist in targeted recruitment and the retention of African American faculty and administrators is

imperative. Human Resource departments will have to go to institutions, agencies, and companies where there is a high percentage of qualified African Americans. Many Maxine Smith Fellows have left the TBR system. The intentional recruitment process can begin by recruiting those individuals who left the system and placing those individuals in the applicant pool.

Mandate trainings on race and diversity in the workforce. 10 out of the 11 participants stated that they perceived that race is a factor in the promotion and the retention of African Americans at TBR institutions. 2 of the participants highlighted the need for training, and 10 out of the 11 participants perceived that the institutions may not value diversity or understand the importance diversity in the workforce. The system would benefit in providing additional quality trainings on the importance of diversity in the workforce. The system also needs to administer a survey to all employees or conduct focus groups to acquire employees' perceptions on the importance of diversity and use data to develop required trainings on the importance of diversity in the workplace. Institutions could benefit from having speakers to visit institutions to conduct trainings and seminars on racism and equitable hiring practices.

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APPENDIX

Interview Questions

1. What is your role at the institution in which you are currently employed?

2. How long have you served in your current position?

3. What are your feelings on race and the ethnicity as it relates to the employment and promotional opportunities at TBR institutions?

4. Why do you feel that there is an underrepresentation of African Americans in full-time faculty positions at TBR institutions?

5. Why do you feel the there is an underrepresentation of African Americans in full-time administrative positions at TBR institutions?

6. What factors do you attribute to the continuous underrepresentation of African Americans in faculty and administrative position at TBR institutions?

7. Do you feel that race is a factor in the promotion and the retention of African Americans at TBR institutions? If so, please elaborate.

8. Do you feel that your race served as a barrier to your ability to get promoted in higher education in general, as well as TBR institutions?

9. Do you feel that the Maxine Smith Fellow program assists with the promotion and retention of African Americans in full-time faculty and administrative positions at TBR institutions? If so, what are the factors of the program that assist with the promotion and retention of African Americans at TBR institutions?

10. What are your feelings about the current initiatives, practices, and policies at TBR as it relates to the retention and promotion of African Americans in both administrative and faculty positions?

11. What are some practices and initiatives that could assist in increasing the representation of African Americans at TBR institutions?

12. What do you consider to be the difference between the employment trajectory between an African American in Maxine Smith Fellow program and an African American who does not participate in the Maxine Smith Fellow program?

VITA

SIDNEY HILL

Education:	Tullahoma City Schools, Tullahoma, Tennessee B.A. English, University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee 2001 M.Ed. Education, Tennessee State University, Nashville, Tennessee 2005 Ed.D. East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee 2019
Professional Experience:	Family Resource and 504 Coordinator, Coffee County Schools; Manchester, TN, 2007-2011 Assistant Professor; Motlow State Community College; Lynchburg, Tennessee, 2011-2015 Academic Assessment Specialist, Motlow State Community College; 2011-2015 Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment, Motlow State Community College, 2016-2017 Academic Dean, Motlow State Community College, 2017-present