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Minority Women in Administrative Professional Positions in Higher Education

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Minority women in administrative professional positions
in higher education

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Ames, Iowa

2009

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I. INTRODUCTION

George Santayana first made the statement that “people cannot know where they are going until they understand where they have been” was referring to the importance of knowing one’s history. It is wise for a future professional to understand the history of the area of study in which he or she is pursuing a career. As a future student affairs professional, it is vital for me to understand how higher education evolved in this country. *The History of Higher Education* (1991) by Harold Perkin broadened my knowledge of the evolution of higher education, which was influenced greatly by the Europeans. Actually, the higher education system of medieval Europe was pivotal in shaping the university system of the twenty-first century. This fact is evident in the following statement: “Although all advanced civilizations have needed higher education to train their ruling, priestly, military, and other services elites, only in medieval Europe did an institution recognizable as a university arise: a school of higher education combining teaching and scholarship and characterized by its corporate autonomy and academic freedom” (Perkin, 1991, p. 3).

The early emphasis of medieval Europe contributed to the early rise of specialized higher education institutions. Today, we still have institutions that are focused on teaching, research, both teaching and research, and liberal arts. Examples include the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith, which is a teaching institution, and Harvard University, which is a research institution. Iowa State University is an excellent example of a school that focuses on both research and teaching, and Grinnell College specializes in the liberal arts. The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890 paved the way for the development of another type of specialized institution-- historically black colleges and universities (Perkin 1991, p. 22). Cheyney University was one of the first historically black colleges and universities to be established as

a result of this act. Cheney, along with other historically black colleges and universities, specializes in educating mostly African Americans.

Article I. In the early history of American higher education, people of color were not the only ones denied access to education. Women, in general, also found themselves victims of such discrimination and women of color specifically. Women were to be seen and not heard. Their primary roles were to stay home and take care of their families. As the country progressed, so did the mindset of women, and they began to work outside the homes and enroll in higher education institutions. However, their education focused more in the areas of home economics, teaching, nursing and secretarial skills (Thelin, 2004). In addition, higher education was mostly available to middle class and upper class students.

The expanded access to education has resulted in a more educated American populace, an increase in the number of people of color and women with bachelor, masters, and doctoral degrees, and an increase in the number of people of color and women in higher education administration. The percentages are increasing, but higher education administration is still a man's world ruled predominantly by white males. The fact remains, that few women have advanced to administrative positions, such as deans, vice presidents, or presidents.

In the research presented in my thesis I attempt -- based on higher education literature on women of color and personal testimonials -- to provide some reasons why there are few women in administrative higher education and to give the perspectives of women that are already in higher education administration.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

I explored numerous scholarly journals, books, and articles on women in higher administration. My goal was to explore what higher education professionals had to say about women in of color in higher education and to see what information was out there that supported the themes that I had found from my research. The information that I found is summarized in this section.

In *Leaders of Color in Higher Education* by Leonard A. Valverde (2003) in the chapter titled “Women of Color Double the Problems, Twice Enriched Leaders,” Leonard A. Valverde begins with discussion of some timeless ways of thinking about sexism and racism. He explains these ways of thinking in terms of myths. Gender bias stems from a false but widely believed premise that males are dominant, and racism is rooted in the erroneous proposition of white dominance. This way of thinking has shaped the mold of what the traditional roles of women and men were, and still are in different ways. He gives an example of how young men were shaped for leadership roles in boyhood. However, young women were shaped for more traditional professions like teachers, nurses, librarians, and clerical work. And, this thinking is carried and reinforced into adulthood and into the professional level. The mythical ideals are upheld when it comes to racism. Valverde uses the example of the idea that no matter what -color black, brown, yellow, or red (all but white) - there is intellectual inferiority. This thinking carries into white male dominated institutions, which forces woman of color to reject themselves psychologically and become more like white males.

The chapter goes on to discuss how the power that women have is very low and that racism is more of a problem for women of color than gender bias is for white women. He cites the number of white women compared to women of color who held the positions of presidents of colleges. Valverde says that in 1986 there were 379 women presidents of institutions of higher education in the United States. In this number 332 of these women were white and women of color were 47. The numbers changed in 1998, when there were 453 women presidents of institutions of higher education in the United States, and the women of color who were presidents was 63. Valverde refers to these small numbers to challenge the mind set of white society that affirmative action has prevailed and is no longer needed. He also talks about how in a 1998 survey there were only nine reported Latino women that held a presidency of a college, and of the nine eight were presidents of community colleges. Valverde mentions that the placement of Latino women and Native American women in higher education institutions of their own racial background only contributes to the stereotypical role of women.

The statement that “from whom much is given much is expected” certainly holds truth with women in higher education who achieve the higher roles of leadership. Valverde discusses this when he refers to hardships that begin for women of color when they enter into leadership roles. He refers to a study that was conducted on women in higher education, which covered two main racial groups of women, white and black. The African American women administrators reported that they were constantly challenged because they were seen as being inferior; over scrutinized by peers, superiors, and students; assumed to be affirmative action hires and thus less qualified; considered tokens; have to work harder than others in order to gain respect; and are denied access to sources typically given to someone in

their position (Farmer 1993, cited by Valverde). Valverde goes on to say that Latina administrators are subjected to the same kind of negativity. Valverde also discusses how women of color who are in these administrative leadership roles are making decisions, particularly in a presidency.

“Toward a Humanist Justice” by Susan Moller Okin (2005), begins with the thought that the “nuclear” family is a key player in the issue of gender which is continuously passed down from one generation to the next. She goes on to express that this is not a positive influence on the way society thinks of social equality. The example that is given in the chapter is that in the family, in spite of all the talk about a balance between women and men in all settings, the traditional or quasi traditional division still prevails. These issues are important to all women who seek to have families and careers. The factor of having to be the primary care giver can be a challenge for any woman, particularly if she holds a position in administrative higher education. Okin explains those women are made to feel vulnerable by their constructing their lives to around the expectation that they will be the primary parent. The vulnerability continues when they get married, which adds another expectation, and these woman become the most vulnerable when a divorce occurs, and then they become the sole care giver for their children. Okin goes on to recommend that we should be moving toward a genderless society. She discusses how that can happen through policies and laws set in our nation’s government. She argues that “employers must be required by law not only to eradicate sex discrimination, including sexual harassment. They should be required to make positive provision for the fact that most workers, for differing lengths of time in their working lives, are parents.”

She also talks about what schools must do to eliminate gender. She quotes and cites Amy Gutmann, that in present authority structures, 84 percent of elementary school teachers are female, and 99 percent of superintendents are male. Schools “perpetuate the social reality of gender preferences when they educate children in a system in which men rule women and women rule children.” This is relevant when looking at how the system is set up in higher education administration where woman hold fewer administrative positions and men hold more of these positions. Okin concludes her article with the thought that, “Families in which roles and responsibilities are equally shared regardless of gender are far more in accord with principles of justice than are typical families today.”

In her essay (1998) “It’s All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation,” Patricia Hill Collins maintains that there still should be gender-specific roles of women and men in our society today. However, Patricia Hill Collins views the family unit as not being traditional, and she believes that there are all types of families. She argues that in order to have more equality of roles between women and men in the family unit, the family should be viewed as a haven of love and harmony. She believes that the traditional thoughts of how women and men are viewed in the family can be damaging to the effort to achieve equality in the family.

Collins says, “Those who idealize the traditional family as a private haven from a public world see family held together by primary emotional bonds of love and caring. Assuming relatively fixed sexual division of labor, wherein women’s roles are defined as primarily in the home and men’s in the public world of work, the traditional family ideal also assumes the separation of work and family.”

The truth is that in some households women work to support their families, and their husbands or partners make the choice to stay at home to take care of their families. This approach to the family household may then make the traditional roles of both the woman and the man reversed, thus creating a more matriarchal approach in the family unit. Collins sees it as the responsibility of women and men to work together to create a balanced role in the home. This approach can also help to create a more unified way of viewing the family. The idea of men and women working together should be applied in not just in the home, but in the workplace as well.

In the book chapter “Female and Minority Deans and the Keys to Success” (2002), Walter H. Gmelch and Mimi Wolverton start by making the statement that, “Few deans take leadership positions because they want fail. They want to succeed and believe that they can. In essence, most deans hope and expect to leave their colleges better off than when they found them” (Kouzes & Posner, 1993, cited by Gmelch, Wolverton). I think that this statement is the basis for the chapter. The text discusses the glass ceilings-visible and at times invisible-which affect career promotions and at times stand as barriers, particularly for women. In the book the authors talk about how prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping are contributing factors to the glass ceiling. The authors claim that we “make decisions based on perceived notions of leadership as a male construct; we discriminate based on ease and comfort (we simply prefer people who look and think like us).” The statement is very valid and we carry these on into everyday life, especially when we think of what is referred to in the book as “gender-based behavior expectations” and these carry into the expectations that we have of others in a professional setting. The example that is used in the book is the

stereotypical of role of women as being responsible for household duties and rearing of children, and these so called expectations conflicting with a woman's career aspirations.

Gmelch & Wolverton cite the findings of Bell and Nokomo (1998), that colleges and universities often find it difficult to recognize the high leadership potential white women and people of color. And, even when they do recognize their leadership potential new deans from underrepresented groups often feel isolation, in part because few have role models and mentors. A study done on professional women and mentors yielded these results consistently: women suggested that the greatest benefit for them at the beginning of their careers is having professional role models (Twale & Jelenik, 1996 cited by Gmelch & Wolverton). Mentors were instrumental in securing administrative positions for women more often than they do for men. The authors discuss a study done on deans. In the study done on deans 41 percent of them were women; almost half of these women were deans of nursing colleges, and a quarter of them worked in education colleges. Another 23 percent headed liberal arts colleges. Only 4 percent were deans of business colleges. It was noted in the text that the minority population represented in the study was 12 percent, and just one half of them were African American. The percentages shown here support the thoughts of the authors that racism and sexism are part and parcel of American identity, and although universities are populated by individuals who believe they work in communities of diversity, we are little better off than that the of society. In fact, we simply mirror it (Banks, 1995 cited by Gmelch & Wolverton).

This situation has not changed much since 1998. According to the 2008 *Digest of Education Statistics*, published by the U.S. Department of Education, the number of doctoral degrees that were granted to women in the field of education in 2006-2007 reported by race

were the following: White women 3,554, Black women 1,081, Hispanic women 258, and Asian and Pacific Islander women 218 (Table 291, p. 432). The number of doctoral degrees that were granted to women in the field of education in 2005-2006 reported by race were the following: White women 4,290, Black women 774, Hispanic women 231, and Asian and Pacific Islander women 165 (Table 292, p. 433).

The study done on deans looked at mentor relationships. The results showed that two thirds of all deans experienced mentoring relationships. Men were less likely than women to be mentored, and most of the men were mentored by white men. Women on the whole were less likely to be mentored by men. The results also showed that female deans of color were more apt to be mentored than were males deans of color but less likely to be engaged in that type of relationship than were white female deans who were much more likely to have white mentors than any other group. I agree with the authors that these findings suggest that support systems maybe important for some deans, but other deans seem to succeed by their own volition.

In the book chapter “Women Administrators in Higher Education Today and in the Future” (2001), Carolyn Terry Bashaw and Jana Nidiffer present research that they have done over a decade. They discuss how they used Geraldine Clifford’s volume entitled *Lone Voyagers: Academic Women in Coeducational Institutions* as inspiration to write this chapter. They talk about how in this book Clifford examines how an “array of women faculty and administrators on the relatively unexplored terrain of the coeducational campus, offered hope, inspiration, and instruction.” The authors use a quote from Clifford’s book as a guide in the chapter and as a basis to recognize scholars in history and what they call “contemporary higher education” who were paving the way for women in higher education.

What have we learned from our work and that of our contributors? And, how does the work affect our understanding of the future of women administrators in higher education? These are the questions posed by the authors as they reflect. They marvel at the variety of women in higher education in the last century and half. Women of all different classes, all varied in their educational attainment, commitment to scholarship, and leadership skills. The authors conclude the main goal for all these women was to attain what they call “genuine access” to the full college experience. They go on to highlight the main points that were made throughout the book.

The point that Nidiffer makes is that “effective presidencies actually require not only expert and referent power, which both genders possess, but also skills frequently associated with women’s socialization, which enhance their connective leadership.” She goes on to express that having women in high level positions as college and university presidents on one level is an “equity” issue; it is strategic because the future leaders in higher education need to have “collection” skills, and because women have such skills it is logical that they be utilized in high leadership roles. Since women students compose over half of the undergraduate population, the role of women in higher education administration is crucial to the future educational welfare of young women who seek to obtain higher education degrees and have careers in higher education.

In the journal article “Pipeline to Presidencies Carries Lots of Women, Few Members of Minority Groups” (2008), Audrey Williams June makes the statement, “According to a new survey by a leading higher education group, women represent a significant share of the senior campus administrators whose jobs are most likely to lead to a college presidency. However, when it comes to members of racial minority groups, the

supply of such potential leaders in much smaller. The survey, which was conducted by the American Council on Education, revealed that women—most of them white—made up fully 45 percent of senior administrators.”

In the reading “A Troubled Peace: Black Women in the Halls of the White Academy” (1997) by Nellie Y. McKay reflects on hardships that she and other women of color were experiencing in their newly appointed positions as faculty at predominantly white institutions. She quotes what she wrote then: “To be a black woman professor in a white university is difficult and challenging, but exciting and rewarding, and black women professors like it here, we aim to stay!” She expresses at the time she did ask herself at what price? She discusses how she had been a part of the generation where many minorities had just graduated from “white” graduate school programs, at where get their first professional jobs at white institutions. But with their new jobs minority women did not have a sense of feeling welcome or appreciated in these positions. She like many other minority women were breaking the barriers of sex discrimination, and they were paying the price for this as well. She talks about how African Americans were made to feel isolated in certain programs of study, and yet trained in the same programs of studies as their white classmates, like sociology, literature, and history. McKay goes on to talk about how this affected the scholarly experience for black students in predominantly white institutions.

In the essay “Black Women in Academe: Issues and Strategies” (1997), Yolanda T. Moses explores the experiences of minority faculty members and administrators at both predominantly white and historically black institutions. The issues that she focuses on are “stereotyping, disrespect, isolation, and the lack of support.” She goes on to discuss issues such as professional climate, double discrimination: racism and sexism, and the “token”

syndrome. Moses cites interesting data, such as between 1977 and 1986 the numbers of African Americans that earned their doctorate degrees declined by 27 percent, after 1986 the slump decreased with more African American women earning doctorate degrees. These findings are positive considering all the barriers that plague minority women faculty such as support, retention, research, teaching, and tenure. She concludes the chapter with the thought that “the job of integration is not one that black women should tackle alone; it will take the hard work of many members of the academic community.”

The “Power of Black and Latina/o Counterstories: Urban Families and College-Going Process,” (2004) by Michelle G. Knight, Nadjwa E. L. Norton, Courtney C. Bentley, and Iris R. Dixon take a closer look at the diverse ways in which African Americans and Latina/o families of the working and poorer class are helping their college bound children prepare to attend college. They conducted a year long experiment that involved twenty-seven African American and Latina/o ninth graders students from urban families and used the counter stories they collected through interviews, to show how family involved shaped the lives of these college bound students. The students in the study were from families where they would be the first in their family to attend college. The authors used excerpts from the interviews of kids and their families to draw their conclusions. A young lady, whose family migrated to United States from Jamaica, talked about how she from a big family and needed to be close to her, but her mother was encouraging her to attend New York University. She felt that was good choice because she would not be to far from home. She wanted to study law. In the article the author’s express that students who attended college had the opportunity to “broaden their horizons by participating in extra curricular activities.” They cited Gandara (2002), “that increased levels of higher education provide such social benefits as better

health, longer lives, and the likelihood of attending cultural events, voting, and leadership in their communities.” A Latina young lady, who was currently attending college, talked about how African American and Latina women with college degrees had to fight themselves, fight for their families, and fight their communities against societal inequalities. Graduating from college is an aid in this fight.

“*Forum Book Review: Faculty of Color in Academe: Bittersweet Success*” by Carolina Sotello Viernes and Samuel L. Myers, Jr. (2000), reviewed by Estela Mara Bensimon, begins with thought that the “whiteness” of professional academia is often apparent. This becomes more apparent when compared to higher education institutions that have a more ethnically diverse student population. She goes on to express that higher education institutions big and small have set a goal to institute “target of opportunity programs” that encourage and reward departments that fill vacant job positions with constituents of the United States that belong to racial and ethnic minority groups. She draws from the situation that occurred at Duke University—and what the book *Faculty of Color in Academe: Bittersweet Success* explores more intricately. Duke University in 1988 had the goal to implement a “target of opportunity program.” All fifty-six departments of Duke University were required to add an African American professor on a five-year timeline. The result was that five years later in a publication entitled “Duke Tries Again” the university admitted that their plan had failed despite their best effort. However, during this five-year time frame Duke University hired twenty-five African American faculty, but eighteen of them had left their positions. This made the net gain for African American faculty five. The authors of the book contended that the under representation of African American faculty at

Duke University was caused by the “racial and ethnic bias resulting in unwelcoming and unsupportive work environments for faculty of color.”

In “Critical Racial Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students” (2000) the authors Daniel Solorzano, Miguel Ceja, and Tara Yosso, discuss microaggressions and by using critical race theory as support in their study. I think that this is relevant to my study because of the way they define microaggressions and racism. They define microaggressions as subtle insults, that can be verbal and non verbal. These insults are typically directed at toward people of color, and frequently these insults are routine and unaware for those who are delivering the insults. The authors use this in their study of how this influences the “collegiate campus climate”. The authors start by defining race and racism by citing scholarly works. The authors cite Lorde (1995) that the definition of racism is “the belief in the inherently superiority of one race over all others and hereby the right of dominance.” They also cite Marble (1992) that racism is “a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress Africans-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color.” I believe that these definitions of racism are truthful and can be applied to the themes that I have found my research.

The literature that I found supports these themes that emerged in my study. There are other aspects that were not presented in literature, but that emerged in my study. The tone is the main element that emerged in the study, in the following ways: extremely personal detailed stories of the women; dramatic stories about the trials the women faced and their responses to these trials; and the sense of the women having developed an “attitude” toward

the difficulties in their lives—emotions of being defensive, self-justification, and anger arose during the interviews.

III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of my study was to learn specifics rather than generalities about the challenges and successes of the women in my study. They each provided specific details and intimate stories of the racial and gender discrimination that they endured, and they shared the triumphs that they achieved in their lives and careers.

The rationale for the sample that I used for my research was a “convenience sample”. I collected information on five women of color who currently hold administrative positions in higher education. I used the strategy of encouraging free flowing conversation in conducting the interviews; this produced the intimate, detailed narratives that I was hoping for in the interviews. These interviews focused on the events that have occurred in these women’s personal and professional lives that have contributed to their professional success and have served as the keys to their future endeavors. The personal stories that were told in the interviews tell of things in their lives that propelled them forward, while there are others that may have resulted in setbacks. Regardless of the events that happened in their lives, the subsequent effects, the objective of my research was to identify common themes among all of these women’s experiences and show how the events influenced their success. The essential inquiry was to focus on challenges, triumphs, role models, mentors, individual determination, family-life and any other common themes that might have surfaced during these interviews.

I sat down with each of the women that participated in my study and conducted face-to-face interviews. I essentially set out to conduct one hour interviews, but some of them lasted longer due to the fact that some of the women had so much that they wanted to share

with me. I asked them a series of questions that I had written prior and some that emerged as these women told me their stories. The questions that initially set to ask in the interviews were the following:

1. Could you please tell me your name and what your current position is in higher education administration and your educational background?
2. Can you describe your story/path in higher education administration?
3. What was your original professional path? Was it in higher education administration?
4. What are the challenges you have faced in pursuing your career as a higher education administrator?
5. How did you overcome these challenges?
6. Did you have a mentor that inspired you to pursue upper level higher education?
7. Where do you see yourself in five years? Maybe a higher administrative position?
8. What event positive or negative contributed to your path to higher education?

I recorded each interview on an mp3 audio recorder and then transcribed each of the interviews. The women that I interviewed each have been given an alias: a name of state. The state names that I chose are as follows: Montana, Dakota, Arizona, Nevada, and Carolina. I chose not to do “member checking” in my study for the following reasons: the time constraints for conducting my study, the fact that my major professor and I wanted to use all the information that I collected in my study, and the difficulty of transcription. I did

not conduct a series of follow up interviews and with the women in my study. The reasons for this are because of time constraints of their professional time and the constraints of my academic time. And the willingness of the women to agree to participate in multiple personal interviews was problematic. The information I collected from the women my study, I found to be very enlightening and useful. I hope that as you read this thesis you too will see why my research was so fundamental and important.

According to Patton's (1985) definition, qualitative research "is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting—what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting. . . . The analysis strives for depth of understanding" (quoted in Merriam, p. 5). This was my exact goal.

IV. FINDINGS

I reviewed the transcripts of the interviews that I conducted with these women in administrative higher positions. As I looked over data I collected in the interviews, there were similarities and differences in the responses that the women gave in their answers to the interview questions. I found that five major themes emerged from the research that I collected. The five themes that emerged were: 1. Future career paths. 2. The role of family in their careers. 3. The role of mentors in their careers. 4. Discrimination that the women have faced in their professional lives. 5. The factor of being the first generation in their family to attend college. The best way to achieve a clear understanding of what the women in my study had to say about each of these themes is to provide a definition of what each of the themes means, provide excerpts from the interviews that I conducted with these women that will serve as examples, and support the examples of what these women said with scholarly sources that I cited from the literature that I collected.

- Future career paths

I would define the career paths of the women that I interviewed as the future professional goals that each of them has set for herself. Some of the women were not sure what their next step in their career might be. My thoughts when I asked in the interviews were to find out whether or not they saw themselves in deanships, presidencies, or vice presidencies. My method of finding out this information was by asking each of the women where they saw themselves in three to five years. The responses varied because of the background of each of the women and where each of them is in her professional life. The first person that I asked was Dakota. Her answer to my questions was as follows:

I know that eventually, I want to be a chief student affairs officer, a vice president. Depending on what kind of institution you are at they are different -- they use different terms. I'm not sure I want to be a president. I'm not ruling it out and I have a long time to decide.

The responses that I received from the other women were different, in a sense of the position that they aspire to have one day, and their feelings towards the positions. Nevada was not sure where she saw herself in five years. Arizona, Carolina, and Montana knew where they would like to be in five years. And each responded by saying the following,

Arizona: Vice-president in technology, that's my next step, and then who knows? Everything is on God's hands.

Carolina: I don't know. The Provost recently asked me, 'How long does a person stay in a Dean's role?' And I said, 'At least five years.' And the reason is because initially if you come in and you want to contribute to the university you will need at least two years to implement and then you will want to at least see the outcome so minimum four years to five years. Most Deans want to see the outcome of whatever it is they have achieved. They do not want just to put it in place and then not know what the outcome is. If they leave there is no guarantee that it's going to continue as you have planned so the outcome may not be what you desired because you left but it will be on your name that this terrible outcome occurred. So, he says have you thought about being a Provost or a President, and I said not really. He says why not? And I said, 'Because I don't know if I want that headache.'

Montana: In five years, I'd like to be a Dean of Students or some other type of administrator -- the equivalent. Different universities have different titles, but the equivalent of a Dean of Students.

The responses that each of the women gave to my questions of where they saw themselves in five years was encouraging. Each of them aspires to have an administrative position in higher education. Some of these positions are vice presidents, provosts, and deanships. These goals are encouraging for young women who seek to have administrative positions in higher education. The fact is that positions in higher education administration are still dominated by men. And most of those positions are held by white males. Gmelch and Wolverton (2002) discuss a study done on deans. In the study done on deans 41 percent of them were women; almost half of these women were deans of nursing colleges, and a quarter of them worked in education colleges. The minority population represented in the study was 12 percent, and just one half of them were African American. The fact that minority women are in these positions is good.

The research that I did provided enlightenment on women in higher education administration as they seek to do their best in these administrative roles. Gmelch and Wolverton in the book chapter, "Female and Minority Deans and the Keys to Success" (2002), say: "Few deans take leadership positions because they want fail. They want to succeed and believe that they can. In essence, most deans hope and expect to leave their colleges better off than when they found them." This statement relates to what Carolina was saying about when a woman comes into an administrative role in higher education, she wants to see the results of the things she worked so diligently to implement.

- Role of Family in Careers

The stories of the professional goals that women who participated in my study shared with me led to conversations about all the numerous roles that they have as women, including the roles of being professional women, wives, partners, and mothers, and the way they balance these roles. These conversations led me to my next theme, the role of family in their careers. Each of the women discussed how their families were very important in their professional lives. In some cases the family served as practical support and in other cases the family was by their side for moral support. The story that I remember first was the story of Carolina. She balanced being a single mother and earning her Ph.D.

I had a daughter. As I told you, I was a single parent and an extra consideration was would she be willing to move with me? She didn't want to leave her friends, and I didn't want to disrupt her life much more than being a single parent. So, I said, well that means that I would be the one disrupted. I would be the one flying back and forth so I didn't have to take her out of school and one day for the first semester my mom, or my sister, or somebody would pick her up from school and keep her and then at midnight I would go and pick her up and bring her home and I'll go to work and she'll go to school next morning. Then I decided that would take me forever so I needed to take at least 18 hours each semester. That's what I did. I finished my course work I think in 3 semesters. I did 18 to 19 hours per semester. But that required me to be there more than one day, so I had to take a leave of absence from my job.

I went on to ask Carolina how she balanced all of her roles of working, being at home, and earning her degree, and still had time to spend with her daughter.

Carolina: Again, it was a commitment. I knew it was something I wanted to do.

Whenever I could I bring her with me, every now and then she would miss school, fly with me and sit with me in class and I was in Houston. What is the name of that amusement park they have there...Six Flags! So you know, she would fly with me, we would stay there, I would call my work and take the weekend off, she would go to class with me, and we would do things together in the evenings, and that weekend, after class on Thursday, we would take Friday, Saturday and Sunday and go to Six Flags. So, it was a juggle, and you gave up certain things but I always told myself this is an inconvenience for the short term but just think about the long term gain.

The sense of knowing how to balance all of the roles that women have was the overall theme I gleaned from the conversations that I had with each of women. As with every decision that we make, there is sacrifice and regret. Often women are more scrutinized for the decisions that they make, particularly if they have families and are striving to have a successful career. I recall the story of Arizona, who was single, with a daughter and was trying to excel in her career.

Arizona: Children, my worse regret. I was a young woman, like you, and I always balanced to work. I'll regret that all my life and I don't know what to do now. When I was working for the company, I worked so hard, you know, in industry, if I'd have been working in a university I'd have lived better, but I don't know. We have deadlines; always, they sell the product six months before it. Once we got in trouble, and I promised each customer that never, ever would they see that poor quality again, so I had to make the whole R&D staff stay overnight to meet the deadline? My daughter was only ten years old, So, I said Wai-Wai, go to the refrigerator, grab food,

go to bed, and tomorrow get up and go with one of your friends to school because mom has to stay in the company the whole night and not go home, many nights. And she said, -mom come home and when I feel sleepy you go back-, and I said no, I can't. If I leave everybody goes. If you lead you sacrifice a lot, and I regret it so badly, but my daughter became very strong. And also I went home very late. Our work didn't finish 'til 1:00, 2:00. So you have to balance; otherwise you'll lose one part.

Nevada provided me with an interesting perspective on how she balances being a single parent and her administrative role. Her experience is that she has found male supervisors to be more supportive of her being a single parent than women supervisors.

Nevada: I think that ... see and that's where I would argue that men have been more supportive of me than women. The women bosses that I had have been right around when I had Lucinda and then afterwards and I had chosen after she was born to take six months off of the work place and I was doing work in the grants office and I took six months off from the grants office and my boss was a woman and she really didn't ... she said no you need to stay here and work and I said no, I need to go be at home with my daughter and it wasn't because of any other reason than I knew I wasn't spending enough time to give her that. So, how do I balance? It is constantly remembering, and this really has to do with mentoring, I am constantly remembering who I am, what my role is, what I'm trying to achieve and whether or not the actions that I'm taking right now are in alignment with those purposes and objectives. So it's a constant check. It's being able to say "stop, this is where my personal life begins" because you get all of this other stuff from me.

Susan Moller Okin speaks about how women are expected to achieve balance in “Toward a Humanist Justice” (2005). The example that is given in the chapter is that in the family, in spite of all the talk about a balance between women and men in all settings, the traditional or quasi traditional division still prevails. These issues are important to all women who seek to have families and careers. The factor of having to be the primary care giver can be a challenge for any woman, particularly if she holds a position in administrative higher education. Okin explains those women are made to feel vulnerable by their constructing their lives to around the expectation that they will be the primary parent. The vulnerability continues when they get married, which adds another expectation, and these woman become the most vulnerable when a divorce occurs, and then they become the sole care giver for their children.

The role of men was a factor that was brought to my attention in my conversations. The role that men have in the lives of women is important. Their roles are supportive to women who are excelling in their careers. The support can be in different ways from helping with the overall household to being a good confidant and moral supporter. Dakota shared with me the support role that her husband has had in her life and career.

Dakota: I can tell you that my husband has been my biggest supporter, throughout my entire career. And one of the things that’s so wonderful about him is that if I’m wrong, he’ll be like “Dakota, you are wrong.” “That just sounds . . . “He’s not going to sugar coat it. And it’s like every so often, when he does that, because I try never to be wrong, but if it does happen, I appreciate that I have that other point of view.

Because a lot of times we have people who we trust, but they don’t have the ability to

be objective. You know because their whole thing is supporting you, not necessarily supporting you constructively and there is a difference.

Patricia Hill Collins speaks about the role of men in the family unit in “It’s All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation” (1998). She argues that in order to have more equality of roles between women and men in the family unit, the family should be viewed as a haven of love and harmony. She believes that the traditional thoughts of how women and men are viewed in the family can be damaging to the effort to achieve equality in the family. This approach to the family household may then make the traditional roles of both the woman and the man reversed, thus creating a more matriarchal approach in the family unit. Collins sees it as the responsibility of women and men to work together to create a balanced role in the home.

- Role of Mentors

The role that other people have in the lives of women is critical, especially when we are on the road to success. It is important for the people in lives of women to know that role that they have and how vital it is. The role can be as family member who helps us take care of our children if we are single parents, being supportive husbands or partners, and even support from friends. With every road to success there are also people who may inspire who are not related to us at all. They may just see the potential in us and encourage us to be the best. These people are what I call mentors.

I asked each of the women if they had a mentor that encouraged them to excel further in higher education than they ever thought that they would. The answer that I received varied—but some admitted to me that was combined with the fact they were very involved in student

life as undergraduates. And I found it interesting that some of them had women who served as their mentors. Some had men who served as their mentors. And others saw themselves as their own mentor. For example, from Dakota and Montana, who had women mentors, the responses were:

Dakota: As an undergrad, I had a great experience as a student. I loved it. I was in everything I could get my hands on that interested me. I was an athlete. I was in clubs and organizations. I was a (we call them CA's here) but I was a resident assistant. I was a hall director in my senior year. I mean, I loved it. I remember my senior year in taking my exams to go on to grad school and things like that and saying, "you know, I really wish I could just come to school and not have to go to class." It was the Director of Multicultural Student Affairs at the time (she's now the Dean of Students there), who she says, "you idiot, what do you think I've been telling you about college personnel for?" "This is what I have been telling you about." So that was kind of my transition into thinking of higher Ed as a career.

Montana: It was actually a woman who worked in our union and she was my supervisor for one of my many campus jobs. She was telling me about this field and stuff. And so it was a woman, actually it was not a woman of color, because there were not a lot of women of color at my undergrad at the time.

The other response that I received about the role of mentors was different. Nevada shared with me that most of the people who she saw as mentors in her life had been men. I found this respectively comical, yet very interesting.

Nevada: Don't laugh too much, but a majority of my mentors have been men, white males. Dakota is my first woman of color boss that I have ever had – ever had. I have had women before, as bosses. I have had several women supervisors, but the majority of people who I would call very critical mentors have been white males, including Mr. Clark, who was my Ag Education teacher, who smacked me up side the head and said, “You are too bright. “ And he didn't say it this way, but what he meant, is “you're too bright to stay here and have kids and get married. We need to get you to college so you know what options are available to you.”

Carolina did not identify anyone specifically that she viewed as mentor in her career. Arizona thought of herself as being her own mentor.

Arizona: I think that mainly...I don't know where to get this confidence it's in you. That's so crucial for a woman. If you have confidence in yourself, no matter what, if you don't know something you can learn it, learn it and do it better. If you put the time, anybody can, as long as they have intelligence... that's why the brain is so important.

Gmelch & Wolverson (2002) discussed that mentors were instrumental in securing administrative positions for women more often than they do for men. The authors discuss a study done on deans. The study done on deans looked at mentor relationships. The results showed that two thirds of all deans experienced mentoring relationships. Men were less likely than women to be mentored, and most of the men were mentored by white men. Women on the whole were less likely to be mentored by men. The results also showed that female deans of color were more apt to be mentored than were males deans of color but less

likely to be engaged in that type of relationship than were white female deans who were much more likely to have white mentors than any other group. I agree with the authors that these findings suggest that support systems maybe important for some deans, but other deans seem to succeed by their own volition.

- Discrimination

In studying women of color, I found that they face many challenges. One challenge can be discrimination and specifically how to cope with discrimination and still be professional. I asked each of the women about the challenges that they have endured in their professional careers. Each of them identified discrimination as challenge. The discrimination that they described had been mostly racial, and came from women and men. But mostly the women identified the discrimination as coming from men. In the essay “Female and Minority Deans and the Keys to Success” (2002), Gmelch and Wolverson make the comment that we “make decisions based on perceived notions of leadership as a male construct; we discriminate based on ease and comfort (we simply prefer people who look and think like us).” I thought that this statement was very valid when I listened to the stories of the women. Discrimination was important to examine in this study—in how to identify discrimination in a higher education professional setting and how to be professional in the face of it. Each of the women shared with me in depth their stories of discrimination that they had endured in their professional lives and the steps that each of them took to handle themselves professionally to overcome the challenge.

Arizona: I would tell you it’s a challenge. If you are a woman, minority, you basically wait to see what they are going to do to you, because they have this mentality-specially if is a woman- that women should be home having and caring for children not working. If

you are a minority (woman), where do you come from? What is your color? What are you? Nobody has ever discriminated against me, never, because I won't let it happen. I won't let that discrimination happen ever because if you allow that to happen once you will always. You know, in any place, you are woman, you are colored, different; they think you are stupid, they think they can crush you like an ant. No, I would rather die than let you do this to me. But if you have the attitude and, you know, you are not afraid to die, if you don't be afraid to fight, you will win.

Carolina: The fact that you are a female is a challenge and the fact that you are black, I faced, number one being female. Sometimes, I think people don't do it purposefully, the discrimination. I tell people all the time sometimes it's subtle, it's not even recognized by the person. The person doesn't realize that they are acting in that way themselves. Where I came from one of my colleagues in a meeting passed me in the hallway and she stopped and she was giving me a compliment. She was smiling and she was bright and you could tell that she had no idea that what she said could be construed in a different way. And she passed by and she says, "Carolina you never cease to amaze me; every time you open your mouth, something intelligent comes out." I knew she didn't mean any harm, because you could tell from her face, her animation, and everything else that she was giving me a compliment. So, she had no clue about how she was coming across. Those are some of the challenges. I believe, my personal philosophy in handling difficulties is to nip them in the bud right away, because if you fail to do so the problem only escalates. If there is animosity, and you don't address it face on, the animosity will just continue to grow and you will have more problems.

Dakota: I remember my very first graduate assistantship. I had a horrible supervisor. We had a horrible relationship, but I learned so much from it. So when you have those kinds of experiences or whatever you . . . it's kind of like the . . . test is probably the wrong word, but it really makes you reassess, is this what I really want to do. Is this something that I'm going to keep coming across over and over again. I learned a lot about the political dynamics. I learned a lot about old boys club, old boy's network. I have always had white supervisors. This is unique in many ways for me. To me it comes down to credibility and I think that's where a lot of the built in bias and that political baggage and all the stuff manifests.

I don't have the time necessarily to work harder and . . . that doesn't sound right. I think that I work hard, but I'm not going to sit there continually with a measuring stick and say okay White Male Colleague X, you do this, I'm going to do this. Because it's not necessarily that. If I can help demonstrate my worth, my value, be credible, be responsible, all of those things, to me that erases that mess. The same for color.

Montana: In terms of triumphs, I can say it's being able to say that I have navigated the system. I have learned how to be savvy. I'll give you a specific example: I have learned how to walk into board meetings full of vice presidents who are all white men, and feeling like I belong at that table and that my ideas deserve to be heard, instead of going in and being like "oh what am I doing here, nobody's going to listen to me" type of thing, but being able to do those types of things, so not in an arrogant way, but in a confident way. And I think that that has been one of the hardest things about being a woman of color administrator, having to deal with some of those issues.

Nevada: My job when I know I'm lacking as a human being is to go seek others to help me find that. I think many women have been taught that someone should come to them. I just have that natural curiosity.

In the interviews a number of issues that pertained to discrimination emerged in the conversations -- issues such as tenure, identifying other staff of color for support, and gaining respect and support from colleagues. The situation that Carolina had, when she first was appointed in her administrative role, was a good example.

Carolina: I came here as an Associate Dean and I hadn't been in my role position more than six weeks when the Dean that was here went in to the Associate Provost's office and resigned; then they asked me to be the interim Dean. I did that for about a year and then they appointed me full Dean. So I came here in an Associate Dean role but this college never had an Associate Dean before; the people had always reported to the Dean. There were faculty that made the transition difficult and had difficulty in reporting to me, and there were others who would always bypass me to go to the Dean. So first I came and talked to the Dean, because I felt she was contributing to the problem. I spoke with her first and she did assure me that there were some persons that have difficulties with me so I said how did you handle that? She said she thought she was handling it right, but I said I don't think you are handling it right because you should have sent them to me. Since I am going to be here, they cannot go around me, or then I have no power, I have no purpose for being here if I cannot help you, if they are going to come to you and that's why she hired me. So, she said, I'll talk to them and I said no, I don't want you to talk to them. I'll talk to them. I said I

need to handle this if they are going to respect me. I haven't had any problems since. But I think it all deals with how you handle it. I haven't had any problems since. But I think it all deals with how you handle it.

The essay "Black Women in Academe Issues and Strategies" (1997) by Yolanda T. Moses explores the experiences of minority faculty members and administrators at both predominantly white and historically black institutions. The issues that she focuses on are "stereotyping, disrespect, isolation, and the lack of support." She goes on to discuss issues such as professional climate, double discrimination: racism and sexism, and the "token" syndrome. She also discusses the barriers that plague minority women faculty such as support, retention, research, teaching, and tenure. She concludes the chapter with the thought that "the job of integration is not one that black women should tackle alone; it will take the hard work of many members of the academic community."

- First Generation College Goers

The dream to attend college today in America and to earn a college degree is attainable for anyone who wants to attend college. The rulings that have been made in our nation's government have made this possible. The rulings such as the Morrill Act of 1862 and the Morrill Act of 1890 have been making sure those women and minorities would have the chance to achieve their goal of attending college. I thought about this when I looked closely at the research that I had done. The goal to attend college can be a hurdle, particularly if a person is the first in the family to attend college—a first generation student. A student can get over this hurdle. It just may take extra encouragement from family, high school counselors, or a mentor. Three of the five women in my study were the first

generation of their families to attend and graduate from college. Each of those women shared with me her experience as being a part of that first generation to attend college.

Carolina: None of my parents, believe it or not, were fully educated. Neither one of them graduated from high school even. And the reason was my family, both my parents initially, lived in what they called a plantation. And they grew cotton, cut sugar cane... So they came from that area where education was not encouraged. My parents, on the other hand, recognized the importance of education, even though they didn't have it. So they encouraged all of us to go back to school, to finish high school at least. Then we got our degrees; my brother got a degree in engineering and I got my bachelor's in Nursing.

Montana: I guess the triumphs and the obstacles are kind of the same thing: being a first generation college student and being a woman of color. Those have been triumphs.

Nevada: I went to college. I was a first generation college student, low-income, didn't have any idea, and didn't apply for college until I was in February of my senior year when my agriculture teacher said to me "what are you doing after this?" I thought I was going to get married and have kids. Because that's what Mexican women do on occasion. That's what we are trained to do. That's what we are told to do.

In "The Power of Black and Latina/o Counterstories: Urban Families and College-Going Process," (2004) the authors take a closer look at the diverse ways in which African American and Latina/o families of the working and poorer class are helping their college bound children prepare to attend college. They conducted a year long experiment that involved twenty-seven African American and Latina/o ninth-grade students from urban families and used the counter stories they collected through interviews, to show how family

involved shaped the lives of these college bound students. The students in the study were from families where they would be the first in their family to attend college. A Latina young lady, who was currently attending college, talked about how African American and Latina women with college degrees had to fight themselves, fight for their families, and fight their communities against societal inequalities. Graduating from college is an aid in this fight.

V. CONCLUSION

Overall the data I collected from the interviews that I conducted with the five women that participated in my thesis research provided a thorough look at the issues these minority women in higher education face in their professional careers and in their personal lives. The things that I learned gave me an opportunity to take what I learned and develop themes that emerged from the interviews. These themes were: future career goals, the role of the family in women's professional and personal lives, the roles that mentors play in the careers of these minority women, the sexual and racial discrimination that the women have endured in their career, and the circumstance (for some of them) of being the first generation in their families to attend and graduate from college.

The research of the literature I conducted aided me in supporting my themes. I feel that the information that I collected for the review of literature provide was helpful to my thesis research. The interviews that I conducted raised the question of who really is a mentor. The mentoring experience for each of the women who participated in my study is so different, there could be confusion about who plays the role of a mentor in their lives. And, because the role of a mentor is so different for these different women, the traditional mentoring model does not fit their experiences. The women that participated in my research showed that the path of a first generation college student does not end after the attainment of a bachelor's degree—but leads to further pursuit of higher education. Related to mentoring, the issues that prevent minority women from succeeding may be: interference from people around them, lack of encouragement from the people around them, unconstructive criticism from people in their lives, and the lack of role models. And it helped me gain a better

understanding of the issues of minority women and women in higher education administration and the workforce in general. I can see by doing my research that there is not an easy balance for minority women in higher education administration to excel professionally and still be nurturing in their personal lives. These women have just continued to strive to be the very best they can in all the roles that they have as women. And it is up to the people in their professional and personal circles to aid them in doing the best that they can in these roles.

Overall, I think that the study will be helpful to all women who wish to excel professionally, but at the same time want to have it all personally. I think that minority women in particular will be able relate to things that the women in my study shared with me and to the themes that emerged. I hope that minority women can see what we have accomplished and where we are going as we strive to achieve our goals.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

The implications of my study, *Minority Women in Administrative Professional Positions in Higher Education*, are small but could be important for some readers. I hope it will provide a personal perspective from some minority women who are in administrative higher education positions. I hope that my study shows women who want to excel professionally in administrative higher education how minorities have persevered, yet the progress that still needs to be made in the college setting. Overall I hope that it will inspire all women to strive to be their best, no matter what hurdles that might involve. The future research that I saw could be done with my study was the following:

1. A person who pursued my research further would want to look at minority women in higher education positions who all have higher professional positions -- for example vice president, provost, and president positions.
2. Another desirable factor would be having more subjects participate in the study over a longer period of time, and interviewing the women in the study at two different times over the longer time frame.
3. Perhaps a future researcher might go back and find the same women that participated in my study three to five years after my original study, and report where these women are in pursuing their professional goals and collecting their stories.

VII LIMITATIONS

The main limitation that exists in my study on Minority Women in Administrative Professional Positions in Higher Education is the relatively few women who were actually interviewed. It would have been ideal to have an opportunity to interview several more minority women with positions in administrative higher education and women from more different ethnic backgrounds. I had the opportunity to interview one Asian American woman, two African American women, and two Latina women. But I did not get the opportunity to interview a Native American woman or a Pacific Islander. I believe that their perspectives would have contributed significantly to my study. Overall, given the time span that I had for my study, what I hoped to achieve was accomplished from the research that I conducted.

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IX. APPENDIX

Interview Transcription of 'Dakota' September 23, 2008

MAH: My first question to you is, how did you first get on the path of higher education?

DAKOTA: Probably not so much unlike other folks -- although I probably shouldn't say that, because I know Nevada's story.

As an undergrad, I had a great experience as a student. I loved it. I was in everything I could get my hands on that interested me. I was an athlete. I was in clubs and organizations. I was a (we call them CA's here) but I was a resident assistant. I was a hall director in my senior year. I mean, I loved it. I remember my senior year in taking my exams to go on to grad school and things like that and saying, "you know, I really wish I could just come to school and not have to go to class." It was the Director of Multicultural Student Affairs at the time (she's now the Dean of Students there), who she says, "you idiot, what do you think I've been telling you about college personnel for?" "This is what I have been telling you about." So that was kind of my transition into thinking of higher ed as a career.

MAH: At what point in your career, obviously, you have a master's degree and Ph.D. too; at what point between the masters and Ph.D. did you decide you wanted to be a dean or the more administrative part of the position?

DAKOTA: I think I knew that early on. I think that I knew that probably even during my masters program and my first job or two. In my masters program, I knew that I wanted to get a doctorate. What I knew though and what my advisor, in my opinion, very wisely told me was, don't go straight through. They said you need a lot of that practical experience to be able to reflect appropriately in your doctoral program. And then on the practical side of things you have a doctoral degree and no experience, who's going to hire you. You know, it makes it a little . . . there are some assumptions that could be made in the job search process. His advice to me was just take a break for a little while, think about it and if you really want to do it, you're still going to want to do it.

MAH: Of course. My next question, building off that, with your transition did you have any challenges (of course we all have challenges) and what about people who inspired you? Could you tell me more about that?

DAKOTA: I think that I had challenges and they were all interpersonal challenges, to be truthful. I remember my very first graduate assistantship. I had a horrible supervisor. We had a horrible relationship, but I learned so much from it. So when you have those kinds of experiences or whatever you . . . it's kind of like the . . . test is probably the wrong word, but it really makes you reassess, is this what I really want to do. Is this something that I'm going to keep coming across over and over again. And I remember very much, with that first one, it was really an issue of difference. I will tell you off the record, I believe he was a racist/sexist. That really puts me at a disadvantage! So that was real interesting. It was one of those to where I had to . . . It was the first time that I had ever come across that type of adversity.

You know my undergraduate experience; you had people you had to deal with or issues with faculty or whatever. But there was always . . . you have a system that protects you as an undergraduate. And so if you are having an issue here, you can go to your Dean or you can go . . . I felt very alone. So I had to rely on myself, loved ones to figure out okay, how am I going to do this and so made decisions to go get a different assistantship. Unlike ISU, where we expect that our graduate assistants are going to move and change, in the program I was in they didn't. There was no process to help you. The practice was frowned upon. I mean all sorts of things. I was swimming against the current and so I made a decision to switch assistantships because of how that one was going. It was going very poorly and so I think that in that, I learned so much. I learned a lot about the political dynamics. I learned a lot about old boys club, old boy's network.

There are all sorts of things that you know I'm glad I had the experience. As horrible as it was, I landed on my feet and I think that I'm wiser because of it. And so to me that was probably one of the biggest challenges I've ever had to face and learning to look out for little nuances -- what's said, what's not said. Things like that, as an undergrad, I'd never had to encounter something like that. I have heard people talk about it. You know like listening at the grown folks table at Thanksgiving or something like that, but I never experienced anything like that nor ever expect to have to deal with it at the ripe old age of (how old was I) 21, 22. And so I'm glad that I experienced it and I'm glad that I experienced it that early.

MAH: You were saying as you go up the career ladder you see more men than you see women. How do you deal with it? I'm not saying deal with it in a negative way, but do you still ever feel like you are good at what you do but you have to be a little bit better. Even as a grad student, I feel like what I might do and what my male counterparts do, we can do the same thing, but I have to do that little extra to make sure what I do stands out? Do you experience that even now?

DAKOTA: In a different way. I think I acknowledge very much that it is not a level playing field. I acknowledge very much that the system, the politics all of that is very male oriented and anything that is remotely feminized can also be devalued. So it's interesting because it's . . . I have to think about how I put this . . . I recognize it. I know that it's there. I see it every day. I can tell you honestly, I have never been in a working environment where I wasn't one of the few people of color, and, with the exception of when I worked at a women's college, one of the few women. And it becomes more so the case as I progress along. I can also tell you that this is the first time in my life I have ever been supervised by another person of color. I have always had white supervisors. This is unique in many ways for me. To me it comes down to credibility and I think that's where a lot of the built in bias and that political baggage and all the stuff manifests.

I don't have the time necessarily to work harder and . . . that doesn't sound right. I think that I work hard, but I'm not going to sit there continually with a measuring stick and say okay White Male Colleague X, you do this, I'm going to do this. Because it's not necessarily that. If I can help demonstrate my worth, my value, be credible, be responsible, all of those things, to me that erases that mess. The same for color.

You know, I laugh every so often because you know, I'll say well, you know what, so and so didn't give me the time of day until they realized I could put together a coherent sentence.

And especially, not so much now, but in previous roles, where if I'm at home and I've got on sweats, my jeans might have holes, just because I'm comfortable. You know and then when you ... and you've probably had this experience too, if you're going to customer service at Home Depot or at Target or something, and you can see somebody look at you like this and then you put a coherent sentence together or your not biting their head off and their demeanor changes. And the same thing happens in the workplace, even though we are supposedly educated, sensitive individuals, we are people and people have biases and all those other things. And so for me, it's more about trying to help others overcome their biases and helping me continue to . . . making sure that I continue to recognize them and that I don't feed into them or that . . . I recognize very much that they're out there. If I feel as though I'm treated unfairly or if I'm disappointed about something, that's not my default position. Like if you know, whatever the case is, and the decision doesn't go my way, I'm not going to automatically assume, oh, they did that because I'm a black woman. That's just not just how I am. I may eventually come around to that but that's not going to be my first foot forward.

And I think that that's helpful for me too because who wants to be that person where you're always angry about something that you are blessed with. You have no control over that. I have no control over my gender or my race and so it's a fact of life and I refuse to be bitter or have a chip on my shoulder about it, but I'm going to try and always be aware of what other people are bringing to the table. That again, is outside of my control, but to make sure that I try and be as . . . act as responsible, credible, all of those things to help mitigate whatever baggage is out there.

MAH: Of course. What advice would you give someone like me who is coming up in the Student Affairs realm? I feel like I do a pretty good job now, but I can sometimes feel myself . . . I feel like I am mentoring myself? What advice would you give to somebody like me -- another student?

DAKOTA: A couple of things I guess. I can tell you that I didn't step out of my master's program being able to do that. It's experiential learning. It's being reflective. It's having a trusted, yet realistic, someone to bounce things off of, be it at work or at home or wherever. I can tell you that my husband has been my biggest supporter, throughout my entire career. And one of the things that's so wonderful about him is that if I'm wrong, he'll be like "Dakota, you are wrong." "That just sounds . . ." "He's not going to sugar coat it. And it's like every so often, when he does that, because I try never to be wrong, but if it does happen, I appreciate that I have that other point of view. Because a lot of times we have people who we trust, but they don't have the ability to be objective. You know because their whole thing is supporting you, not necessarily supporting you constructively and there is a difference.

We used to laugh, of course, living in urban areas, there was every so many months, there would be a story on the news about some young African American, who either got shot by the police or their mamma feels they were wrongfully accused of some crime. . . On the outside looking in, you only

have has many facts as the media is going to give you, but whose mamma is going to say, "oh, yeah, that TJ, he is always with the wrong crowd. I'm surprised he didn't get capped earlier." They are not going to just say that.

I think that having that objectivity is very helpful. So I would say that having to go through situations, experience them reflect on them, not only internally, but being able to talk though with . . . my husband he knows me. We met as undergrads and so . . . “Dakota you have a tendency to do blah, blah, blah” or “Dakota . . .” So I have that feedback and I think that that is important.

I also think that there has to be a level of confidence and trusting yourself. And I really see those as two different things because there has to be a belief that you are doing a good job or that you know . . . Usually, if I’m getting to a point where I’m in uncharted territory, I’m going to reach out and say, “okay, this is what I think needs to happen. I’m not 100% sure. Can you help me? Does this make sense? Blah, blah, blah.” If it’s something and I know I’m right, I know I’m right and I don’t care what you say, you are wrong. And I’m never going to say that, but I think that there are certain things that I know am confident about. I know where my strengths are. I know where my weaknesses are. I think that kind of being confident about what you can be confident about and even the things that may not be second nature to you, growing in that kind of confidence by pulling in all the resources that you can is really important. And so, that confidence is one thing. The other one is that whole sense of intuition.

And you know you can go back to student development theory on this one and there are a couple of things, that the one I don’t think is as applicable to me, and I’m not saying it’s a bogus theory, but the women’s ways of knowing. You remember how in the progression it becomes . . . the person kind of progresses from being a receiver of knowledge to being someone who has knowledge. I think that that in many ways there are lots of parallels in all of our lives, male and female, to where you come to the point to where you’re confident and you can accept, you know what the answer is. This is what I’m going to do or I am competent or confident. And I think that that kind of transition or that kind of progression is important. And getting to the point where you do trust yourself.

You don’t have to validate something with someone else all of the time.

Also if you think of the Myers-Briggs typography. What year was that . . .? When did I take that? . . . In the late 90’s, my type switched from an “S” to an “N.”

MAH: OK, I think I am familiar with the letters, but “S” is “sensing”?

DAKOTA: So it’s more the tuned in, being more intuitive. And I really attribute it to motherhood. Around the time I had kids is when my Myers-Briggs type changed. I’ve always been ITJ, but I used to be an ISTJ now I’m an INTJ.

I think that . . . because that’s when it happened (it could not be the case), but to me it was, my gut is right. And so, I think that in the practical sense, when we work with other people, we do still have to validate things because we know we bring biases and maybe there are multiple perspectives out there and you want to make sure that things have muster and you are also communicating, building relationships, getting buy in. There’s all sorts of reasons to do that other than: jeez, I’m not confident in what I’m doing. And so it still makes it a very worthwhile exercise. And it also helps reinforce your confidence in what you are doing and what you believe. So it’s a long answer to a short question, but in terms of . . .

MAH: It makes sense. In doing this research that I'm doing, I am wondering how you do that because I'm learning too here. That makes a lot of sense.

DAKOTA: They continue to grow for me. I am sure that there are things that I'm experiencing now that I haven't experienced before, that in another 3, 5, 7, 10 years, I'm gonna to look back on and say, "you know if it weren't for blah, blah, blah, I wouldn't know this" and that's how life is supposed to be.

MAH: What do you see yourself doing in 3, 5 or 7 years? Do you see yourself as a president?

DAKOTA: I want to continue to serve students at Iowa State University. How's that for an answer! I don't know. I know that eventually, I want to be a chief student affairs officer.

MAH: I'm not familiar with that term.

DAKOTA: A vice president. Depending on what kind of institution you are at they are different -- they use different terms. I'm not sure I want to be a president. I'm not ruling it out and I have a long time to decide.

It's a relatively recent phenomenon where you find presidents who take multiple presidencies. Like they are president here and then after so many years are president there. Whereas, twenty years ago you usually went to retire as a president, now you see people stay here, go there and do their thing and then go here and they do their thing. And so I'm not sure. A lot of it will depend on the type of institution. An institution like Iowa State, I wouldn't even be a long shot because I don't come out of faculty. And I think that research and that faculty and governance is such a strong part of our psyche, to where I think that as an institution, you would probably have a hard time hiring someone who is out of student affairs rather than out of faculty ranks. That's an assumption on my part. I've never asked anyone because I'm not interested in a presidency right now. Whereas, other institutions may look at it differently. You know what, I shouldn't say that. It depends on what the institution needs at the given time that it's looking. Um, when you look though, statistically, at presidents, most of them come from having started as faculty. Not having started in student affairs.

MAH: I did not know that, like starting as faculty at the university where they are president?

DAKOTA: Not necessarily at that same institution but that their career in higher education included being a faculty member. And so if I were really, really interested, I could switch over and teach somewhere or do some things that seem to be more academic in nature like certain grants or things like that.

MAH: Would you enjoy doing that?

DAKOTA: I think that I could, I don't know that it's what I want to do right now.

Or what I want to do day in/day out. I've taught courses before mostly college success courses to undergrads. But I'm happy doing what I'm doing.

MAH: What do you like best about your job? Is it multiple things?

DAKOTA: It's a little of both. I like knowing that I get to make a difference in someone's life. I remember, this is sick probably, when I wrote my admissions essay for my

masters program, I talked about how I enjoyed my experience in residence life in particular, and as a hall director in being able to help people and know that somehow I made a difference in their life and was able to call on particular students that I helped through this issue or I helped through that issue and so the root of it still is, I enjoy knowing that I've made a difference and helped someone to reach their goals. The someones are different and how I do that is different. I still meet with students but not nearly as many as I did 10-15 years ago or even 5 years ago.

MAH: Do you miss that?

DAKOTA: It depends, because usually if I meet with a student, chances are that they don't want to meet with me. And so like the student appointment that I had right before you was someone who said "you know what, I want to talk to you. I have a problem, I need help." Those are more enjoyable a lot of times than me saying I need to talk to you, you've got a problem, and you need help. Those are very different. And so it . . . I know that in the role I have now there is not time to do both. I can't be Sara and Michelle and Laura and me. And so it's fun because the one's that I get are generally some of the more challenging ones and so that's kind of fun helping unravel things for a student. It's also I realize that I'm often the last ditch effort.

PHONE CALL INTERRUPTION – not transcribed.

And so that's rewarding about it too. You do more working through others. So I know that if there is a change that needs to happen somewhere else, it may not be me doing it, but me helping the person who's responsible for that area do it or who's responsible for that area, who's responsible for that area do it and so that's a different kind of challenge. But that's fun too because you get to help set the tone and philosophy for the entire organization, which is broader than just what we do. And so that philosophy, those ideals, those values that vision has the ability to be transcendent and isn't just within your direct area. It's more diffuse, more dispersed. And so that's a good thing.

There are lots of things I really like about it and some of the challenges are great. I'm a glutton for punishment in certain ways because I like being able to tackle things when people say that it's a lost cause. I'm like right, whatever, and they go on ahead doing it and getting something to work and making end rows or making improvements and so those are things that I like as well.

MAH: I hate to be negative -- is there any part of your job that you don't like?

DAKOTA: I don't like doing paperwork. And this has been again the whole "know thyself," all the weaknesses. I am horrible. I will meet with a student, we can have a conversation, but that follow up letter might take me a little while. And so that's where I have to enlist help – Joy, or if it's a judicial issue sometimes Michelle is like you know, "Dakota, you have that case. Can we have it back? Are you done?" Different things like that. If there is something that I don't like to do, that's it. The whole tasky, task thing. I prefer broader projects.

Certain traits in people really bug me. I don't like a lot of the dishonestly or slight of hand and the political game playing. Things like that just really are a more unpleasant part of the job. The fun part is figuring it out.

MAH: How do you do that? You deal with a lot of different people.

DAKOTA: It goes back to that other conversation, that whole “the experience, the self confidence.” And it takes a while and some people are easier to read than others. Sometimes it takes me a minute to size people up. Sometimes I can do it Johnny on the spot. Sometimes it takes me a long time. Depending upon the person, depending upon interactions, depending upon whatever, but it goes back to the same skills and things like that that we talked about in the whole . . . how do you . . . the whole inequity issue. Being in a society that is, or in a culture or an environment that is, very much white male. And it’s the same thing, it’s the confidence, the knowing where you stand, trying to understand the environment, reflecting on all of it. It’s all the same stuff and also trying to pay attention

MAH: Do you find yourself sitting back and listening? I’ve always found that sitting back, watching and listening that I can learn so much.

DAKOTA: Yeah, you have to. You know what I didn’t . . . I’ve always been . . . I’m a pretty happy-go-lucky person. I always give people the benefit of the doubt. I offer trust before it’s earned. All of those kinds of things. I’m pretty Pollyannaish. I went to a job (not this one) but a job where, no one told me, but I got the vibe that my hiring was contested -- not contested, I shouldn’t say that, that’s too strong of a word. All of . . . my predecessor was a middle-aged, white man, all of my colleges were middle-aged, white men and I remember very actively thinking “what the hell am I getting myself into.” I made it a . . . it was very conscientious that I have to figure my colleagues out. I’ve got to figure out how they work, what their hot button issues are, where their passions are, what their dislikes are so I can build those bridges and figure out how we are going to work together. It worked.

MAH: (Cannot understand/hear question)

DAKOTA: Because I remember what you said, the whole you got to sit back and listen sometimes and I would do that. In meetings where we were together, people would fall into ruts, and so I would have individual conversations (because you can do that when you are new – right?). You have those licenses and liberties. I would have individual conversations, talk about them, talk about this, that and the other. You know, we would interact in meetings. Kind of the same deal. You know watch how they interact with other people. You can generally get a vibe for how they feel about someone else without them uttering a word.

Those kinds of things, you know you try and pay attention to and validate, not necessarily by gossiping, because I think that’s destructive, but by going back to that person and saying “I saw you kind of made a face when so and so said blah, blah, blah in this meeting. Is there something about this that I don’t know. Has there historically been an issue with this program or with this service” or whatever the case may be. And I think too that over time . . . but I think that that rapport and things like that are important and that people kind of can get it figured out. It’s kind of the same thing that you are doing for your assignment. You’re going to listen to what I say along with what everyone else is saying, pick out themes, key transitional moments whatever it is you are going to synthesize that information and pull it together. Same concept. See research prepares you for real life!

MAH: It does. That's all the questions I have for now. Thank you very much. I learned a lot.

Interview Transcription of 'Nevada' September 25, 2008

MAH: Tell me how you got to where you are right now. What was your career path?

NEVADA: I am not the traditional student affairs professional and need to be really clear about that. You know there are some people who have come up through residence life or were a CA (community assistant) or resident assistant, moved to be a hall director and then moved up the chain. That's not me.

I went to college. I was a first generation college student, low-income, didn't have any idea, and didn't apply for college until I was in February of my senior year when my agriculture teacher said to me "what are you doing after this?" I thought I was going to get married and have kids. Because that's what Mexican women do on occasion. Right? That's what we are trained to do. That's what we are told to do.

I came from very conservative Mexican family and my oldest sister, because she was the brightest, could go to college. Well, I was working 30 hours a week after school on the farm and at home. So I was not the most educated person in my home. And so I went to Cal-Poly _____ to be an agriculture teacher because I had spent a lot of time doing 4-H and FFA activities. And so, I went and I thought, "oh, how cool college is." I could actually learn things.

I was in a class on critical thinking and this speech and debate coach said "you need to come try out for the team," because we had to argue with each other in class, right, to do a critical thinking debate. That's how I got involved in student activities. In high school, I participated in leadership. I did speaking contests. But I was never a stellar, outstanding, star student. So, I didn't realize I had any academic ability until I got to college.

So I went to college and I got very involved in the student government, very involved in the union government. Then I started working in the Memorial Union, which, did anyone ever tell me you could work in games areas and have a good time? No, I didn't know that. Then I worked in their production A/V unit at the union. And then I transferred to another institution. My Mom had a heart attack and so I took a year off and then transferred to San Jose State, which was closer to home.

I had friends in the union who told me to go get a job in the union at San Jose State. So what did I end up doing? Working in personnel, hiring, training students. It was just kind of like, "Oh, this is really a career choice." In the mean time, while my mom was ill, I took a few classes. Now, I wasn't teaching classes. I was doing diversity training for some of the community colleges because I had had a friend, a faculty member, who wanted me to partner with them and go to work in consulting. That's how my corporate consulting started. I didn't have a degree, but they knew my experiences. I talked with a lot of them about how to become a manager/leader, so it was really . . . it was cool. That continued all the way

through when I got my master's degree. Now mind you, I was in communication. I was doing organizational development. I was doing leadership, management training – nothing to do with Student Affairs.

Next I went to Washington State and got a master's at Washington State, studying women in corporations and how women are portrayed in the media. My thesis topic was Jennifer Flowers, "Deflowering Jennifer." It was about Bill Clinton and how she was portrayed in the media during the presidential campaign. So I was doing corporate work then too. I was going out and doing consulting. And it's really funny, because while I was there, I was a TA and then I was getting ready to go pursue a Ph.D. Everyone said you need to go get a Ph.D. I said, "what for?" I had no idea what a Ph.D. did, except it was a doctor title. I had some people kind of mentor me through that process. And again, it's always just happened. It's not like I have known I that I should go get my master's or Ph.D., because people laid the foundation for me to go and be successful.

I started out in an interdisciplinary program where I was doing sociology and business. I didn't want to be a faculty member in sociology and business where I was at, it was all about that. And so, I went and did some communication business/sociology and then the teacher education department called me up and said (because I had worked with several of the faculty on committees), "If you need a home, come to us and we will get you settled." They had a really strong educational leadership program, which was about management, teambuilding with a sizeable component of student development theory and learning theory. And I just thought wow, this is a field!

Then I started doing grant work inside of the college, grant work in the office and worked in a first year experience program, worked in a student advising and learning center. So I had about six jobs during my Ph.D., which was really cool, but I was also doing corporate consulting and working in the hospitality industry with the folks in hospitality and resource management. So it's a really huge, vast experience. Then I got my degree. I was looking at a lot of different options, because I still had a lot of contacts in communications, so people were saying "come apply to be a professor, you can do organizational communication." I wasn't sure I wanted to do the faculty route, because I'm just not a fan of research. I love teaching, but I hate research, it's not me. So several people mentioned applying for jobs as a Trio program director, which is for first generation, low-income or disabled students. And I was like, "oh, that's kind of cool," so I got several job interviews and several offers. I ended up going to North Dakota and running a Trio program, which was very similar to the program that helped me at San Jose State and the program that helped me at San _____ become the college student that I was. To help first generation, low-income college students become successful. It was just in rural North Dakota. These were all white students, but they were all facing the same issues I faced. It was a really good experience. Plus, I was one of the very high up women of color in the administrative system, in the whole university system of North Dakota. So I was able to sit on committees like diversity task force or retention task force. I was able to get access to higher up leaders to learn things. I ended up building an academic success center that included advising, first-year experience, all kinds of learning center, math center, writing center, tutoring, Trio program, disabilities. All of the programs that... if I did not have any of those, I wouldn't have made it through college. I was able to build that there at Dickinson, which is how I ended up here at Iowa State. So really, it

was really a very circuitous, convoluted way to get here. It wasn't a step ladder approach. Does that make sense?

MAH: It makes a lot of sense. It sounds like more fun than just A, B, and C ...

NEVADA: Yes. Along the way, what I did was, I had people who said, "Boy you're really good in this area." I've always been really good at programming and event planning, from way back when. We had to do it in high school and we did it in elementary school. You know, I'm the youngest of ten, we had big parties, made people feel good, well you know. So those skills really made a difference throughout because now I can relate it to different kinds of things. Like when we are running an event for MSA, for example, how do we portray the best image and get people involved and included in the activities that we are doing. Well, it's by making a connection: how are you doing, oh, you have a star on your . . . you're special, you won an award . . . Little things that make people feel like they belong. And so, I don't have the traditional skill set, but I also bring a lot of the traditional values that go along with that skill set without the baggage of that traditional skill set.

Like to me, people who go through one track of higher education and then end up in leadership really only get that one track. They don't understand that, for example, if I grew up in residential life, I may not understand financial aid or I may not understand counseling, or I may not understand multicultural student affairs. I have the advantage of knowing "oh, financial aid sometimes works this way, sometimes works that way and this is how the different ways interact." I can see different cultures and different organizations from a broader perspective than I think someone who's just been brought up in a singular chain or in a singular area, maybe is the word.

MAH: I can see that. I like that path better and I have noticed that too even on campus that some people like res life, and res life has been their whole lives and it's like they don't know anything about what's going on even in different shops, which can be a bad thing sometimes.

NEVADA: And, well, for women of color it is extremely bad. In terms of your career path and future, you have to be able to know that our way of understanding the world may not be somebody else's way and so the asset that we bring is that we can live in those two cultures. So it's really useful when we talk with others about new programs or new events to say, "oh, I understand what you mean, I may not have gone through it, but is this what you are trying to achieve? This is what I'm trying to achieve, can we do it together?" So you learn to speak in multiple languages, would be the way I would phrase it as a woman of color.

MAH: During your career path, Nevada, did you have any mentors? I know you mentioned a teacher in high school. Tell me about your mentors and the positive and negative things they might have had.

NEVADA: Don't laugh too much, but a majority of my mentors have been men, white males.

MAH: Really?

NEVADA: Yes. Dakota is my first woman of color boss that I have ever had – ever had. I have had women before, as bosses. I have had several women supervisors, but the majority of people who I would call very critical mentors have been white males, including Mr. Clark, who was my Ag Education teacher, who smacked me up side the head and said, “You are too bright. “ And he didn’t say it this way, but what he meant, is “you’re too bright to stay here and have kids and get married. We need to get you to college so you know what options are available to you.”

I think about John Stupichovich, who worked in the Memorial Union at San Luis Obispo. He knew I had had a lot of family problems. And, that’s another issue we face, I think uniquely, as women of color we often can’t leave our families behind. They come with us, including the dramas that happen or the issues that happen. So he understood some of that, because he was Italian. I remember him talking very strongly about his culture, but he would listen and hear and then remind me that that’s all that it was and it wasn’t. I have had a Dr. Flores, who was at Cal Poly in agriculture education. He had known about me as a high school student and helped me through my undergraduate, helped me to realize that I didn’t want to do Ag education. Boy, now I’m thinking about all of them. At San Jose State, I had Phil Wander who was nationally known in the field of rhetorical communication, so he connected me to wide places. He married a woman from Taiwan. We were friends, but she was never a mentor of mine. I think she kind of molded him to how he should be as a mentor. You know, I think of Michael Salvador, and it’s really funny, I’m giving you all of these names of men. There’s two men of color, but I have not had women of color as mentors and it’s not because I didn’t want to, it’s because not many of them were there and available. The ones who were like I think of Patty _____, who was at Washington State she was overwhelmed with all of the students she was working with in her masters and Ph.D. programs. She just couldn’t spend the time with me that she wanted to. And so those are some of the issues that I faced along the way.

I also have what I would call a group of people. There’s not one person who serves in all of those angles. In fact, I was talking about this with my daughter the other night because she was signing up for a mentoring program with the YWCA. She said, “I’m not sure if I need a mentor.” I said, “well, what do you think being a mentor is supposed to be about?” She said, “Well, you know, I’ve got kind of you” and I said, “no I’m your Mom. “I’m not a mentor.” So I talked about how there are different types of mentors. I have in some ways a financial mentor, who I consider my sister, who has saved money and acquired a lot of real estate. She is what I would consider a mentor in the financial/housing area right. I have a spiritual mentor, I have what I would call peer-to-peer mentors, people who are equal on the chain to me. We talk about “Argh, am I going crazy today...” you know, and I have those people who are above me, and very above me, that I really think highly of that I call and I say, “Hey, George” George McClellan, my last Vice President at Dickinson, I could call and say “you know, I’m not sure how to approach this, here’s the scenario, what do you think, do you think I should do this?” and he would give me guidance and direction. And then I think of some of the other men that I still have as colleagues at Dickinson. We talk about some of the bigger issues that our institutions are facing and how they are addressing it. So to kind of give me some ideas, I have all different kinds of people. I try not to rely on just one person because often times, I think one of the difficulties that women face

is that we want people to idealize us and put us on pedestals, because it makes us feel good, it fills someone's need to be important and valued. So I was taught very early on it's really dangerous to put somebody in that role because they're eventually going to fall off of it. So it's better to have a wide variety of people who you can talk to and work with and share with what's going on with in your lives and realize that each of them are experts in those areas and you admire them but they may not all have the same characteristics or traits. Does that make sense?

MAH: Yes, it makes a lot of sense. I think it's interesting that they have all been men. During that time do you think you ever would have preferred to have a woman mentor or do you think the men have been better?

NEVADA: My job when I know I'm lacking as a human being is to go seek others to help me find that. I think many women have been taught that someone should come to them. I just have that natural curiosity. I remember one of my mentors in particular; he's a CEO of a consulting company. I remember us gravitating towards one another because he was talking and I had like eight questions after he was done talking and asked so what about this, what about this and he said you need to come work for me and so I did. So because I have that natural desire to go out and seek information, I think that has opened the door to different kinds of mentors. So I think what happens is women because we haven't been taught that those needs are legitimate, we don't go and seek them in healthy ways. Instead, we build these little networks. There are a lot of things we do as women in communication that are not beneficial to the mentoring relationship. Being honest enough to know where our issues are is important for mentoring. I don't think that women are comfortable yet doing that because we are challenged in every single angle of who we are, feeling like we have to prove ourselves. So, of course, they are going to get manipulative and demanding and have high expectations of you without laying down some pretty solid foundation for having that kind of trust-filled, healthy relationship. Does that make sense?

MAH: Makes a lot of sense.

NEVADA: If for example, I got mentored badly, I'm just going to do exactly to you what was done to me because I don't know any better. And I think that's what's happened for women, we don't have a lot of good, strong, healthy, productive relationships in the workplace to be able to sustain us. Because there really isn't a sizeable population of us up in the higher, in the pipeline for administrative leadership.

MAH: Why do you think that is?

NEVADA: Oh, that's historical. I think it's a combination of things. I mean you look at the trend data, where women of color are mostly located in community colleges. They're not located in research institutions. You look at where students of color go to college. They don't come to Ivy Leagues or higher ends. They go to community colleges. So there's a lot of compounding factors. I don't know about you, but sometimes I wonder whether I belong at this university or I wonder whether I belong at that university. And when I'm asking myself that question, how do I ethically and morally sell that to you if I am still questioning that? So in many ways I think that young women see that we are speaking out of both sides of our mouths but yet, we don't acknowledge that. One of the things that I try not to do is for a year to make a decision about whether or not I belong at the institution. I have to go

through a full year to understand if my values and the institution's values are aligned and we actually can meet each other . . . and I can give the institution what it needs to move forward and it can give me what I need to move personally forward. That's a long process. So, should I be mentoring women while I'm doing that? I'm not sure I should. And I don't know that there's an answer for that, I'll just be straight up with you on that.

MAH: It makes a lot of sense. I like the honesty. I don't think that we have enough of that honesty. I think it even happens a lot especially with minority women.

NEVADA: It's because we have multiple layers of oppression. I'll get real theoretical for a moment, but you are talking about years of oppressive behavior that we're having to change in a very short amount of time to be able to do something healthy for you. And some of us are still working through that process. I mean, I'm still in meetings here where I'm one of maybe two or three people of color at the table. That still happens for me. So I'm still working through some of that as a professional. I think most people don't want to talk about that but I think an honest and open mentoring relationship, it says you need to be really clear about what some of the issues you are going to face. It may be different. But you're probably still going to deal with that, because it's not going to be until after my daughter's children that we're going to have some equity and parity in a lot of this stuff. Remember women have only been allowed to vote since 1920. And then, African-Americans and other minorities, 64 the voting rights act. That to me has a historical perspective that will take a long time to move through. I don't know if that helps.

MAH: It helps; it makes more sense to me now. So I have another question for you Mary Jo. Where do you see yourself ultimately? Do you see yourself as a VP?

NEVADA: I don't know. And I know that sounds really odd. The other difficulty of having all men or mostly men as mentors is that they try to prepare you for what happens next. So often times I have thought, I should be a faculty member or I should be a VP. I don't know where God is calling me. I didn't know I would end up in Iowa. I didn't know I would be here. I knew I was getting ready to get moved on to somewhere else. I didn't know why. This is the other difficulty that we as women face because we are forging brand new pathways in a lot of different ways. We are the pioneers in some sense. So I always joke with some of my colleagues from California. The Midwest needs me, because I am one of few no matter where I go. To me I think it's going to be somewhere in the Midwest. I can't tell you what it is though. I enjoy teaching. I love mentoring. I want to raise my daughter. I think right now it's really ironic that part of my job as a Mom is really mentoring her through her teenage years and helping her figure out who she is as a young woman, what she desires, making sure that all of the class stereotypes that go along with being the daughter of a Ph.D. which is something I didn't grow up right. What it means for her to be privileged. So the conversations we are having is about how she as a niece of 18 . . . or she is one of 20 now, 20 nieces and nephews, she's one of 20 who has so much more opportunity, she has traveled to 30 states. I am going to take her abroad before she graduates from high school for a year. She has all of these things that a lot of my other nieces and nephews don't have. And so what does that mean for her, what are her obligations as a person, as a woman as a leader? She is probably the most important thing to me when it comes to my life and there's no question in my mind that she is my first obligation. If it means we are here for six years to

get her through high school and then let her go where she wants to go then that's what we are going to do. She's learning a lot of other things that other kids, she's very politically savvy, she knows how to address elders, she interacts in intellectual discussions, but she needs to find what's going to float her boat.

MAH: Right. How do you balance that? I've seen you do it.

NEVADA: I don't.

MAH: I know how it feels. My mother is the first in her family to get a Ph.D. and I think she is awesome. I'm almost 30 years old and I think she is awesome. How do you stabilize around it? I think sometimes single moms especially with a career have a tough job. How do you do it so well?

NEVADA: I think that ... see and that's where I would argue that men have been more supportive of me than women. The women bosses that I had have been right around when I had Lucinda and then afterwards and I had chosen after she was born to take six months off of the work place and I was doing work in the grants office and I took six months off from the grants office and my boss was a woman and she really didn't ... she said no you need to stay here and work and I said no, I need to go be at home with my daughter and it wasn't because of any other reason than I knew I wasn't spending enough time to give her that. So, how do I balance? It is constantly remembering, and this really has to do with mentoring, I am constantly remembering who I am, what my role is, what I'm trying to achieve and whether or not the actions that I'm taking right now are in alignment with those purposes and objectives. So it's a constant check. It's being able to "say stop, this is where my personal life begins" because you get all of this other stuff from me. So it's teaching, reminding people who I mentor that look, your job is not your life and it cannot be your life, because if it is your life you become a part of the system that teaches young women that they don't have a right to their personal growth, development and self fulfillment. So to that is to me one of the major calls when it comes to her is because that is then modeling for other people look, no my kids are important, my family is important if I have a partner, that person's important in my life. I have my friends and we're doing something, it's important that I do that and fulfill myself and make myself whole instead of expect you to as my mentee. I don't want to live vicariously through you. I don't want to be excited by all of the adventures you are doing as a mentee. That's stuff I should be doing so I don't put you in the wrong direction or the wrong path. It's about being healthy emotionally, mentally, psychologically, and not trying to fill some crazy need to be somebody's idea of perfection or what it should be. Which is why I don't know what I'm going to do?

MAH: I think I like that. I find sometimes in this field of higher Ed that sometimes people get so tracked, like I'm going to do this and I'm going to do this. I even find that with myself. Even when it comes to my peers, they say I'm going to do this, this and that. I tell people, I just want to graduate. I don't know what's going to happen next. But I don't want to get so I'm going to do X, Y and Z, because that's no fun and I think that your job should be fun.

NEVADA: There are days that are challenging, but there are days ... I mean, where else could I get paid what I'm being paid to talk with people about how to be better? Whether it's a student who comes in who made a bad decision, whether it's a staff member who needs

encouragement to go get that master's degree. Whether it's a brand new master's student who says I'm going crazy. Where else could I get paid to do that?

MAH: Women in general have some obstacles. Do you think there are double standards for minority women when it comes to balancing family and work or when it comes to how you perceive yourself in meetings?

NEVADA: I think it's actually both real and perceived. As a woman, part of the engraining I have had is cultural engraining meaning, serve others, like I'm still, when we are in a meeting, I still try and fix the chairs around the table and move things. Those are just things I have been trained to do since I was a little kid that I have a hard time breaking and so some of that baggage of those actions plays into what I think others expect of me. Then when they see me do it, they expect it of me afterwards. So in some ways, I think that double standard is self imposed, but I think it is other imposed as well, it's not like a one way street. So men who, for example, might see me take a half an hour off early to go with my daughter to a play, I remind them that they were gone last week to go see their son's football game and it's not like I'm demanding they remember, but I'm like hey, how was your son's football game? So it's kind of like a reminder of the reality that we all have these separate lives from work. Some of it's what we make of it, some of it is other people's making. I haven't yet figured out what's theirs and what is mine. I don't think men would say there is a double standard for women or I don't think women of color would automatically say yes there is or no there isn't. You know as a first-generation college student and as a low income student I always feel like a fraud, to this day. I have my Ph.D. Graduated in 2001. Seven years and there are parts of me on certain days where I still feel like a complete fraud. Like I don't belong here. Like I'm not good enough. If we are not honest with our mentees about that, we are setting up this false illusion that there comes a time when it's done. And I really don't believe if we are growing and learning and developing all the time that it's completely ever done. Does that shock you?

MAH: Wow! I'm saying wow, because I know that everyone feels that way. But it makes me feel like my actions, though I'm not where you are, but hope to be one day, that what I feel is not in vain.

NEVADA: Explain that to me, help me to understand that.

MAH: Like, I know this is supposed to be about you, but it's my research. I can just talk.

NEVADA: Oh, it can be all about you, in your research it should be all about you honestly.

MAH: I'll put it this way; even how I got to graduate school is not traditional, which I like better. But there are some days I feel I don't deserve to be where I am? People talk about how great I am and I feel like am I really? Lot's of people get a master's degree, but am I really?

NEVADA: Here?

MAH: Yes, am I really here?

NEVADA: That's the power of oppression and privilege. That's what I mean by the real and the perceived. We've been told along the way, in very subtle ways, we're not smart enough, we're not fast enough, our ACT scores aren't high enough, oh, and you got the position because of affirmative action. That's four sentences in less than 20 seconds. Imagine hearing that and then all of the sudden in a two-year period or a four-year period or a six-year period to get your masters and Ph.D. Do you really think that's going to change overnight? It's not. So, I think the number one thing for women of color to acknowledge in terms of mentoring and the role that it plays is that we really have to talk about our baggage, not bring it to the table and give it to the next generation. Part of that baggage would be to tell you that I don't still doubt myself. That would be bad, because then I'm not being real about my experience and I'm not sharing with you that it's ok for you to go question, do I really belong here, because some of those questions have been really important to what happened has happened for me next. Is Dickinson State still for me any more? No, I've pretty much grown out of that institution. I've gone as far as I can; I have achieved all of the objectives I've wanted to. I need a bigger campus, I need a broader community. I like building relationships and doing that stuff with people. I needed that kind of environment. I wanted a woman boss, a woman of color boss in particular. I wanted something better for my daughter. I was fortunate to find it.

MAH: You doubt yourself, is there anything else that you don't mind sharing?

NEVADA: I wonder whether or not all those student loans I took out for college that I'm going to be paying for the next 80 years, you know, was it worth it. I wonder if I am being fair to my daughter about how much time I do spend with her? I wonder whether or not I am a good enough support system to some of the woman of color who I supervise? Those are all questions that any human being who cares about the work that they do would be asking. I'm wondering if I'm spending the money for Iowa State, for the citizens of the State of Iowa, if the money that we are spending is really making a difference in student lives. Those are constant questions that never go away for me, I'm just really curious. I think that's what's driven me so far. I am just curious. I want to know. My hobby is learning new things. That's a hobby for me. Reading new books. Trying new things.

MAH: It's good to know you have a life outside of work too, hobbies, and learning new things.

NEVADA: So it's hard to answer, but again, my nature is to go get things. And this system is really built around people who go get things. Our system is not about let's go get those folk and bring them to us, it's no you come to me. So, I think that plays out in mentoring, it plays out in who comes to select me. I think mentors often select their mentees more often I think it should be the opposite way. I see someone bright and talented, hey, come work with me on this project, come develop this with me. They show initiative back, we move forward, what about those people who don't step up?

MAH: I don't know, I can't speak for everybody, but I've found that minority women I know, who are on this track don't do that well, I know a few, because I work with them in my office. They want to someone to come to them.

NEVADA: And imagine, I think this is what happens at institutions. The institution is saying you come to me. They are saying you come to me and there's this huge gap so

somebody's got to change. Something has to give. I think in the bigger scheme of our world if that doesn't change, I think women of color, you know we are going move forward and make strides in leadership and we are going to start making significant impact on those rank and file of faculty and staff, but we won't be able to create the next generation of successful women because we have taken our baggage with us. You talk about what's important to me and the balance is to make sure my baggage always stays where it belongs which is out of a relationship when someone is asking me for advice. I can share my struggles and where I've battled, but to tell you, that's just like one of my cardinal rules, I can't tell you what to do and I won't tell you what to do. What I will say is well that is a good choice here might be some consequences. I won't. I can't. It's unfair.

MAH: I see your point.

NEVADA: It would be unfair. For me to say, you need to take this course and this course and finish by this day. I'm doing exactly what the system has done to you from this point on. Why would I do that? I just wouldn't do that. Because I don't want that for my daughter, I don't want that for anyone who works for me. I don't want that. That's not how I believe the world should be run. This is my way of changing an organization and transforming it just by my presence and just by choosing to violate some of those norms so that the changes can happen and that people can grow and develop here, but also then what they take with them when they go elsewhere.

MAH: One more question. You said you've had some struggles. Are those personal struggles or professional struggles or battles. I guess, for me, I am very fortunate because I have a mother, where at my house, it was not a matter of are you going to college it was, where are you going to college. It wasn't one of those things where you had a choice. Of course there are always some challenges. Has it been like that for you?

NEVADA: The struggles that I have had have been constantly reminding myself what do I really want to achieve in this relationship? For example, there are several examples of this at Dickinson and at Washington, where there was somebody who we just battled because we were on opposite of the sides of the fence all the time. They'd think this, I'd think that. My job and struggle was to have to reframe that battle to not be a battle but for it to be about learning something new or trying something new so that we could come to a different place and I'm the one who's always facilitated that relationship? Rarely is the other person worried about that. Once I start moving in that direction, I have to start talking with that person in a different way, learning a different way of thinking, communicating.

I have to remind myself daily that I'm not on here on this planet to fix anyone else. I have to remember that my family affects my daily work so when things are going wrong at home, and I'm not talking home with me and Lucinda, but home with me and my brothers and sisters, that it does impact my work and I think that when big crises happen and several of them have over the course of my life, that I get to choose how I'm reacting to them. I get that choice. So that's what I mean by baggage and struggles is constantly being vigilant about being optimistic, hopeful, turning the ugly stuff into really positive stuff. Those are the things that I think the baggage and struggles that we as women of color face because often times we don't have outlets because our families, if we are the first generation, they don't understand, like when I call my dad, he jokes with me, he calls me "Dr. Edumacated" cause

that's the way he teases me is I'm Dr. Edumacated and he's not. He doesn't ask me about my job. He doesn't ask me. So I was dealing with some student issues, was dealing with some staffing issues. We can't talk about that as family members, because he doesn't get it, he was a gravedigger for the last part of his life. That's what he knows because he was serving people and he worked in ... we were farm workers before. It's never been supervision or leadership. So I can't call him I have to call somebody else and it's usually one of my friends or one of my mentors. It's not my family.

MAH: Does that disappoint you?

NEVADA: That's another struggle, because I should not expect them to understand it. I really should not expect my Dad or my Mom, who have never had to supervise anyone, who've never had charge of budgets, who've never had to make strategic decisions for what we are going to do for student support and services. I can't expect them to understand that. I can't. And it doesn't make me sad, but they just don't have a part of my life and that's I think probably the number one issue that we should talk with our mentees about. Is there is going to be a part of you that's going to be left behind if you are first generation, low income and/or a woman of color. There are going to be some things you leave behind, unless your family has a legacy of going to college and understanding the college experience, a part of you will be left behind. It doesn't mean that you can't go back and visit it every once in a while and spend time with them, but nobody in my family is going to get what I do every day. Nobody.

MAH: I can relate. Though there are people in my family that have gone to college, it's just where we are in our lives that's totally different.

NEVADA: That's what I'm trying to tell you is a part of your research should be about informing how you go about and building your future. This should not be removed from you. Research should not be removed from you, and it being useful to you and productive to you.

MAH: I can relate to that. It's different calling my cousin and talking to her, we graduated from high school and undergraduate the same year, but I'm getting a grad degree, she's getting married and having a family. So it's different talking to her about what I'm doing.

NEVADA: And part of it is, this is one of the major issues that women of color face as well, there are not enough of us to go around to talk with the ones that are coming up to say you may be all by yourself, these are some of the things you need to think about. There aren't enough of us to do that.

MAH: To whom much is given, much is expected. I can relate to that. I don't think I'm sacrificing. My personal life is on hold. I do have friends, I don't let what I'm doing take over. My long-term personal relationships that stuff is on hold. So you know, where people already have their families, I'll probably be in my mid 30s.

NEVADA: Well, I didn't plan to have kids. I didn't want to mess up my daughter like my family messed me up.

MAH: All those things, it's not that they won't happen, but for me they'll be on hold. I don't think I see them happening anytime soon because after I get done, I want to do something with my career. I don't think at this point being somebody's mom will be in the cards right away.

NEVADA: That was really interesting, cause for me, all of my sisters had had kids, except for my two oldest and they were working then. My sister was a police officer so that was okay and my other sister was a preschool teacher, which was kind of a de facto Mom, but everybody else was having kids. I didn't feel like I was whole until I got married. It was a really strong cultural value. So to reject that in some ways as a woman of color we are dealing with that. White women, I think, deal with it differently cause really they're just rejecting the gender role. While we are rejecting our cultural role, our gender role and often times our class role that goes along with that. So it's almost, it's really interesting, one of these days I'm going to spend time writing about this issue in particular, because I think we have to be more honest with what it means to go up the chain of command and what the sacrifices are and, you know, it is lonely at the top. There are certain things I cannot share with people as much as I would want to here. I just can't. I don't have that outlet. So sometimes I have to call up somebody from Washington, who's working at the same level, and go at it and fight and argue with what's happening. But I also need to be honest that there isn't a whole lot of that network for us here and not just at Iowa State but in higher ed and how do we build that without creating these little silos of people who are just like me, little clones, mini me's?

MAH: Exactly. I like being different. It's who you gravitate towards. I have girlfriends, but where we are in our lives is very, very different. The South is different like what expectations you have in the south and in the Midwest is totally different.

NEVADA: Often times too, I think as mentors we don't realize how fake the image that we present is. We don't. A lot of people will tell you, I'm really good at making friends, building relationships; well there are some people that I just don't like. I fake it and you know we have to, to get along in this world we have to do that we don't share what we are really thinking or we stop and hesitate and so some people see that as manipulation. To me it's self-preservation. Because if I share an idea that I'm not ready to justify or finish, I have to be really careful about what I'm willing to advocate for and what I'm not. A lot of times I know young women, and I know I thought about this of several women who I worked with, that they sold out and it wasn't that they were selling out cause now I'm in that position, going I'm doing exactly what they did, probably for the same reason, and it's not selling out. It's really about preservation of yourself, of your integrity and what you're trying to do. I used to be a young, really super hard advocate or you know activist and do all kinds of not crazy things, but really push the envelope well I've grown old and I'm going hum, okay that probably wasn't the smartest way to handle that back then, but that's all I knew. It's called growing up.

MAH: Even from when I first started my master's until now, I've done a lot of growing up. You have to do that. I just don't like some people. I'm trying, I smile, but I feel like I'm being a little fake. I just don't like this person. We can work on this project together but, we don't have to be friends.

NEVADA: Women, we are infamous for that, everybody has to like us or everybody has to approve of what we are doing. Well if that isn't a big old huge albatross on our necks. This big old chain hanging around. Many of the women who are right now currently working through the issues, that's their biggest hiccup, is they want to please me. Well it's like hello, I don't know where you got this message that you need to please me, but that's not what this is about. It's about you figuring out what you need to move forward and if I can help you along that road great, if I can't, let's find someone who can and move forward and be friendly and be positive each one of us brings a different set of skills to the table. I think that diversity of the team including who they are and what they are-what strengths they bring to the team- are absolutely critical to the future for us as women of color.

MAH: Thank you.

Interview Transcription of 'Montana' February 4, 2009

MAH: My first question to you is, how did you first get on the path of higher education?

MONTANA: I think, like a lot of people, I was an over-involved student. And so, I had a mentor who told me about this field and I really was very interested in it and interested in the area of helping other students of color succeed. That's what prompted me to get a degree in higher education/student affairs and go into this field to work.

MAH: Your mentor, was that a teacher or a family member?

MONTANA: It was actually a woman who worked in our union and she was my supervisor for one of my many campus jobs. She was telling me about this field and stuff. And so it was a woman, actually it was not a woman of color, because there were not a lot of women of color at my undergrad at the time.

MAH: With being on the path of student affairs how did you know you wanted to be in administration? What attracted you to administration?

MONTANA: What attracts me to being an administrator, because that is my goal is to someday be dean of students or vice provost, that type of thing, is because at that level is where you actually get to dictate policy that will impact the students. Working with the students on the day-to-day is fine and that's great. I love it, but I also see the need of having good people at the administrative level that can make decisions who are able to cognitantly make decisions that are for the well-being of the students. That's what attracts me about being an administrator and I'll share this with anyone. I view this position as a way of me advancing my career as well. It is a logical step for me.

MAH: In anything that's worth time and effort, there are triumphs and there are obstacles, what have some of those been for you?

MONTANA: I guess the triumphs and the obstacles are kind of the same thing: being a first generation college student and being a woman of color. Those have been triumphs but they have also been obstacles. For example, I said that my mentors were not women of color. They were white women because, at the time, that's what there was on our campus. It was a predominately white campus, and still is a predominately white campus. So I had to seek out

mentors that did not always know where I was coming from but I was still able to kind of use them to help me become a better professional.

In terms of triumphs, I can say it's being able to say that I have navigated the system. I have learned how to be savvy. I'll give you a specific example: I have learned how to walk into board meetings full of vice presidents who are all white men, and feeling like I belong at that table and that my ideas deserve to be heard, instead of going in and being like "oh what am I doing here, nobody's going to listen to me" type of thing, but being able to do those types of things, so not in an arrogant way, but in a confident way. And I think that that has been one of the hardest things about being a woman of color administrator, having to deal with some of those issues.

The interesting thing is that in the field of student affairs, at the upper level of administration, it is a lot of white males and they will all be approaching retirement within the next 10-15 years. I mean, some of the research shows that. So that's where I try to look at that and think, how can I position myself to be able to take on some of those positions. I think that we will probably notice a shift, probably within the next 15-20 years, of more women and, specifically, more women of color in upper administrative positions.

MAH: You said this about confidence; to me confidence is something you have to work on. What are some of the things you have done to be that confident?

MONTANA: I think you know there are so many ways to do it and a lot of times it's for show also. As long as you (to put it bluntly), as long as you talk a good game that's really all you need. You could be dying inside, but you need to not let them see that. So the advice that I follow is: don't let them see you sweat; don't let them see you upset; and don't let them see you angry. And by them I mean the outside world. You should always look like you are poised, well put together and some of it might be . . . some of my feminist friends might disagree with that, but I think that as a woman of color I should always act professionally. You know, back in the day they said act like a lady, but I look at it as act like a professional. That means that if I'm angry or upset in a meeting, I'm not going to let them see that. I'm going to be a professional. I'm going to work through it and having some of that self-confidence helps me remain poised and everything.

As a person of color and, more specifically as a Latina, I think I also draw strength from my heritage because just like the comedian George Lopez says, "I can still kick your butt." You know that's a weird way of maintaining that confidence, but I think that's one way of maintaining that confidence. The other reason is, I do have a second degree black belt in karate, so I really could if I wanted to. I do credit the martial arts for giving me that self confidence and helping me be able to work through different situations because it's all mental. It's all a mental situation. We can look at our recent presidential election, you know during the debates, one of the candidates got very flustered and was like blah, blah and another candidate was very poised. He made his comments, he made his statements, backed them up with facts, and didn't get frazzled. Now, after the fact, in the privacy of your home or in your office, that's when you can fall apart. That's when you can be like "oh my God," but I think that while you are in public, I feel that it is important for myself, as an administrator, to maintain a poise and a self-confidence.

MAH: I find that having something in your personal time helps you in your professional time too. Have you found that also? To me, when you are at home, that's when you vent. You vent and someone listens to you and they give you advice and they help you see things in different ways.

MONTANA: That's where I think that I've been very good about developing those appropriate boundaries with staff and students. I don't give out my cell phone number to students. Because I don't want phone calls in the middle of night. Now if I'm on call, that's different. If I have the emergency phone, that's different. For me, students know how to reach me. A lot of my colleagues think "oh, you're so cold and you're so cruel, the students need you." Well, you know, I need to get sleep too. If students want me to be able to help them with their problems, I need to be able to take care of myself. I'm very mindful of my time and taking care of myself and I do things for myself. I'll sometimes turn my phone off or I won't be available in terms of checking e-mail or that type of thing. I make sure that I surround myself with positive people and positive things like hobbies and things like that so that I can be assured that I have time for myself that's not work.

MAH: I think that's good. Because I often find as a person who wants to be a higher education administrator that sometimes people think, well, they tend to have this idea that if you are in student affairs that your whole life is your job. It's nice to know that there are some people out there I find with women more than men, I have to have my time, I have to turn it off at some point.

MONTANA: You can be part of the university community without necessarily working 24/7. Because my family, we are an Iowa State family, I mean we will be, we just moved here. We will be at the basketball games, we are going to be at the picnics, things like that, but I will also be aware of the fact that if a student comes up "oh this happened and this happened," I'm going to be like you know what, I'll be in the office on Monday, why don't you come by and see me then, and we can chat, but right now I want to get my child some cotton candy. The analogy that I use, that I have always used, is that if you are on a plane and if the plane is going down, they say put your oxygen mask on first. You put it on first and then you help your child or the person next to you. So that's my philosophy. I need to help myself first and make sure that I'm okay so that I can help our students and our staff be successful.

MAH: I like that analogy. Another question for you. As I've been doing my research for this, being a minority, you're always going to be who you are, but in different situations people may treat you different. As an African-American woman, I might be treated totally differently during a meeting than a white male or a white woman. Do you have anything specifically that people come to you with because you are Latina? Everybody has something, I won't say obstacle, but different things they deal with because of their race. Have you dealt with any of that in your professional career?

MONTANA: Do you mean what obstacles have I dealt with?

MAH: Yes, exactly. Thank you.

MONTANA: I think I have. I think pretty much it can be summed up in dealing with some of the institutional racism that I've had to deal with. If you look at the history of racism,

racism used to be legal in our country. The government had racist practices, racist policies, African Americans were not allowed to vote. We had Jim Crow blah, blah, blah . . . and slowly with the civil rights movement and all the different movements, the move towards a policy of creating equality. Now we have a president who is bi-racial, who's African American, and a lot of people think our problems are solved. But you and I both know that's not the case.

What's happening is now there is more of an institutional racism, so before I could keep you out of my college because it was legal for me to discriminate against you as a person of color, but now it's not legal anymore. It's illegal, so now what's happening is there's a shift in creating institutional racist policies in terms of saying this is the GPA, this is what you have to do in order to get into this college. That's what I'm talking about. Now, how I have experienced it is being turned down for certain positions because I was not "qualified" enough or because of personality conflicts. Well, because I'm the type of person that I ask a lot of questions, I seek clarification. If you present me with a budget, I'm going to ask you "why did you spend \$600 on sandwiches." It's a simple question. Because it's my job to be able to know why you did this and so people misinterpret that as me being mean or being very aggressive, but it's not aggressive, it's being assertive.

And so, I think that sometimes there is this natural fear of black and brown people, you know, that if we raise our voice we're going to riot when you and I both know we could be having an animated conversation where we are disagreeing about something. That's an example of the type of things that I have had to experience -- not having gotten a particular position and also being misinterpreted where people think that I'm angry just because I'm thinking and I'm doing this in a meeting. Well I'm thinking and I'm trying to understand what you are saying or I'm just busy, or I'm just tasky, and if I'm not smiling people are like "oh she's mad today." No, I'm not mad. I'm just not where you are at right now. My mind is somewhere else.

MAH: I don't know anybody who does what you do who's smiling all the time. No one does that and if they do that's great, but I know very few people who do that.

MONTANA: Well, the funny thing is, I'm not going around saying oh, this person is not smiling today so are they mad at me. No, they probably had a bad a morning. They probably missed the bus and had to walk or something. Who knows?

MAH: Do you ever have those moments where you just have to do what you have to do no matter who may not like it? How do you deal with that?

MONTANA: That's part of being an administrator. You will be asked to make some difficult decisions. The advice that I give and the advice that I've gotten about some of those things is that you gather as much information as possible, you make your decision and you stand by it. It's very simple. Yes, people are going to come to you and tell you why the decision was wrong and question your decision-making skills, but you stick to it because you did what you thought was right and it's very simple to me. The decision is made.

MAH: My last question is where do you see yourself in the next five years?

MONTANA: In five years, I'd like to be a Dean of Students or some other type of administrator -- the equivalent. Different universities have different titles, but the equivalent of a Dean of Students.

MAH: What type of university would you like to be at? What is your dream – Big 12, etc.?

MONTANA: To be at an institution similar to Iowa State. You know, I like large institutions. I did a stint in community colleges, but that didn't really seem to be a good fit for me. Two-year institutions don't really seem to be a good fit for me. Not for any reason but just that ... I also worked at a historically black institution. I worked there for a year. That was a wonderful experience but, unfortunately, the Midwest is not known for having HBCU's. They are more in the South and on the East Coast and, frankly, those are two areas I probably don't want to live in.

MAH: Thank you.

Interview Transcription of 'Arizona' February 20, 2009

MAH: So, I guess, if you don't mind, just tell me your name and what your current position here at UAFS is.

ARIZONA: My name is Arizona and I am the Director of Instruction and Support at UA Fort Smith.

MAH: When you first went to college...what got you on this higher education path, what is your background?

ARIZONA: My dad was a professor of Higher Ed. I've grown up in China... if you were teaching in that time everybody lived on campus, everybody, so I've grown up since I was little on numerous campuses. My only way was to teach. In fact I didn't want to be in some other kind of position or whatever. I wanted to teach higher education at the university level. You want me to elaborate?

MAH: Oh, yes. Please elaborate.

ARIZONA: I was thinking about the questions you may ask. In fact I was thinking about what led me here and I am going to talk a little bit about that. I came from China and I think that leadership is innate, you know, in a way. Think about - Obama that innate "inside" you come with. I did not know I would be a leader until pretty late, because in China my mom and dad worked and I grew up in a nursery school from 3 to 7 six days a week. When you graduate...they have all these graduation papers; they write all your features, your nature, what you like, everything is written down. And 'I want to be a leader, I have leadership' I wrote. I was young-I didn't even remember, "Sometimes I can't follow Alice", but that is on the paper, I still have that paper. That was before I was seven years old. So, I look at it and that is strange, I did not think I had that 'I want to be a leader' but that I wrote leadership showed that when a crisis comes you stand out, you stand up to lead.

When I was in China, I was teaching at Beijing in the university. You remember the Tiananmen Square student's movement? Maybe you are too young. In 1989, I was there as a professor; I even have a picture to show you. When the crisis came I stood up to lead naturally. Nobody forced me. I was going to work that day, before the major big demonstration, and they said they were going to shoot. I was teaching at a different university. I'd go to work on the bike and from my husband's campus to my campus I passed

a major road and a soldier was there. It was dangerous for students. When I got to my university campus all correspondents were there, and the gates were closed but I got in. I was going to teach and I saw my students there, they were going to come out and it was dangerous. I told them to be careful not to confront them. I was helping them, I was on the first road, and it came out in the press that day as a 'leader student'. In fact, I was just a professor in the demonstration, and because I was so young they did not know, but my students took a picture, look, and gave it to me as a souvenir. So when I started leading, in a way I was not even intended to. Later on they started shooting that day, June 4th; I was at Tiananmen Square with my students. China wanted me to show them the student leaders, so they came to my home, and we met in my home. They left and they started shooting that night, my husband told me not to go to Tiananmen Square tonight, stay home and tomorrow go, but at 11:00 pm they started shooting and I could hear the shots, and I was devastated. I rushed to the main gate of my husband's campus, where we lived, and everybody was gathered there but they had no leader. I said we need to alarm the city and people followed me. Every critical moment needs someone to stand up and I was the one who stood up. When I came to the U.S. they sponsored me here in the Lutheran Church. They said it was too dangerous for me to stay there; besides you are a leader so we are going to sponsor you. So I came to California to the Lutheran University and did another master's there. Then I went to Utah for my PhD. There is a very good program in instructional design there. Before I graduated some company came to hire people, I was in the PhD program and that was a teaching university and I never wanted to work anywhere else. I was just, you know, 'do this and that' leading people...signed up for a master's defense and I was helping friends to set up things when a person from the company came and asked 'who's this woman?' My department chair said 'Oh, that's Kathy', so the person asked 'can I hire her?' And my department chair said 'no, she is a PhD student, she doesn't want to work in the industry', but the person asked 'can I talk to her?' 'Yes, talk to her' so the manager of the company came and asked me 'do you want to work for me?' and I said 'no, I want to teach, that's my job, that's what I do'. But he said 'think about it, you will be guiding a whole company starting up...etc, etc.' At that time I had finished with all my course work and I was half way through with my dissertation so I went to talk to the chair and ask the chair 'who's this person?' She said, 'oh, that is a famous person. He always comes here to hire people,' so I asked 'should I work for him?' And the chair said 'oh, yeah, that is a very good project I think you will enjoy it.' So I was hired by this person and of course I asked for big money to start with... so I was hired as a manager and in two years I was vice-president.

MAH: What kind of company was it?

ARIZONA: It is a software company. I started the whole R&D from the ground up, I built the whole company; in fact, let me show you a picture, very successful company. Think about Sysco, Novell, Microsoft, they came to ask us to produce for them.

That's when I began to know that I can lead, that I can do very well. Even in (name of a company) my company people are very conservative because they are all male. Later I hired a few people, some women, very strong women in that group. The department chair of computer science in Salt Lake community college quit her job and came to work here, because people knew at that time that the company was hiring qualified people and the pay was high. She was very famous, she was on TV, and she works in B&A now. She was here

but quit pretty soon; but anyway, you can see the picture, all white males, you can see the color.

MAH: I do see that. I am sure that no matter where you work there's male domination, and how do you deal with that?

ARIZONA: I would tell you it's a challenge. If you are a woman, minority, you basically wait to see what they are going to do to you, because they have this mentality-specially if is a woman- that women should be home having and caring for children not working. If you are a minority (woman), where do you come from? What is your color? What are you? Nobody has ever discriminated against me, never, because I won't let it happen. I had a big fight in Spain. Once we went to a conference, the top managers, we went for a trip in Europe, and somebody tried to discriminate against me, and I had a big fight just there in the city. Because in the U.S. they dare don't because I will fight, but in Spain they said you are Chinese--you don't even speak Spanish. There is a language barrier as well, I only speak a few words that I have learned from janitors, and I can't speak Spanish.

I won't let that discrimination happen ever because if you allow that to happen once you will always. You know, in any place, you are woman, you are colored, different, they think you are stupid, they think they can crush you like an ant. No, I would rather die than let you do this to me. But if you have the attitude and, you know, you are not afraid to die, if you don't be afraid to fight, you will win. So for example I walked in the evenings in New York and San Francisco in the streets of course, and I am thinking "Am I safe? I don't know. "And then I said," I am pretty safe. Predators only catch those weaker ones. "Lions and Tigers look at all these animals around to see which is left behind those are the ones they catch, so if you are stronger nobody will touch you, because they know they will have a big fight and you can be very hard to kill. That is the attitude you need to have, in every situation, specially minorities and women. Like me, I came from China without a penny, I did not have anything, I did have a scholarship all the way and that's all I had, but I would never let people to look down on me, ever.

MAH: I like that. Did you see a difference?

ARIZONA: Let me tell you about Utah to start with. It is all male dominant, and women stay home. If you are in a leadership role, first they are not obedient when you first hire them, so why should you be there? So you have to keep growing, stand up firm, and do not let prejudice affect your judgment and your work. You know, women tend to be emotional, as many men know. They can push your button and make you mad, and you will lose your cool. If you lose your cool you cannot be a leader if you cannot control the situation. First, you need no prejudice, you know, you have to think one of them just has a different opinion, it's nothing to do with you, it's only that they don't like it. It's not your problem; it's their problem. Second, don't let it affect your judgment, if you have this person criticizing you; treat them just as if nothing happened. When I was hired there were a few people in that group who were very strong women, they were leaders before they came here and they had to go under me, and they were like, who are you and why do we have to work under you? You should work under me! I said No, I am here to hire you, so you work under me and you better get the job done. In fact a guy cried once because he didn't do the work, and he said nobody has ever criticized me before, and I asked him did you do it right? If you didn't do it right I should criticize you and make you do it right. If you stand up firm, in three months they'll change their attitude.

MAH: So is there any specific thing you do to keep calm?

ARIZONA: Yes, I meditate.

MAH: Ok.

ARIZONA: I am very spiritual. I meditate a lot, I get guidance from God, from my spiritual guide, I don't know if you understand spiritual guide, we all have spiritual guides.

MAH: Yes, we do. We all do, I agree, we all have spiritual guides.

ARIZONA: Spiritual guide...I meditate, and also I have lot of mantra, you know, here. That one Chinese word, it says, endurance, tolerance, it's not direct translation, that's why I put it there to remind me, in a confrontation back up one step, you will see a broad view. Maybe you haven't showed your good side yet, give them time to see. I wasn't an American citizen until the last election, because I did not like America, you know, just to think that they mess up the whole world. Last year, I found that Americans have a big heart, but I didn't like America until last year I saw a sense of justice and the courage to admit what (they) did wrong in the past. Not everyone, there are always some narrow-minded people, no matter where, but, the majority of Americans are so open-minded, so I just burst into tears and decided to become an American citizen. To do that I had to give up my Chinese citizenship. I began to think good things about people, I always think positive about people. If you give people a chance let them see, like Obama, a lot of Republicans began to like Obama, let them see the good side and give them the time, but there's always bad people, the minority, those people, what are you going to do? Just ignore them. You don't want them to control your life. You control your life. If you let them control your emotions you lose. Somebody is more powerful than you, think about it, if you let this person push your button, control your mind; this person is your boss, no matter whom, even what kind of work, this person is your boss because you can be easily manipulated by this person. So, that's why I meditate. In my company very few people chose to stand up to argue with me, because, first, I set a good example, I was the first one, I worked there seven years, always the first one to arrive at the company, never late, and the last one to leave the company. First, you have to set the example. Even here, there is one person working with me, and I always come early, always go home late. You have to stand up firm, set a good example to follow, that's how they are going to see you as a leader. Any other question? I talk too much.

MAH: In your profession the key is, to separate work from family. How do you do that?

ARIZONA: Ok. I have to let you know. I grew up in China. Hillary Clinton went to China to criticize how the Chinese oppressed women, and I was very upset and I intended to write a letter to Obama to say, hey, don't let Clinton mess you up with the Chinese women issue. I was going to say to Hillary Clinton-hey, do some research before you talk to Chinese people. I grew up in China and in China women are exactly equal to men. My husband, you know, worked at the university, and I had fewer problems in China and more problems here in the U.S. about women's issues.

MAH: Really?

ARIZONA: Yes. Definitely in China, everybody knows women equal to men. You know, my husband and I have the same education, we were equally paid, and I was paid a little bit more, because they pay women a few dollars more than men. We have a lot of women top administrators in the government in China, so I grew up naturally believing that we were equal. In China when I worked, my husband always will share all the house work, but later I married an American, and that's a totally different story, (laughs). My first husband and I

were both professors and he pampered me so much because he did all the house work. In fact, before we had our baby, we always did the house work together, we would cook together, wash the dishes, dry the dishes, but every opportunity he said, no you sit I'll do it. He always did more house work. After we had the baby, basically he took over the house work. I was with the baby, watching over the educational program, and all the baby things, and he took over the house in China. We came here and we divorced because of a misunderstanding. He still lives in Vermont and we are still good friends. After I came here and because of a misunderstanding I divorced my first husband and that was what led me to join the church, it was God holding my hand I was not looking for God, you know, in China we don't have religion, but, anyway. So, I married the second husband, I fell in love with a white guy, his family background is from Alabama. That means he was a macho man, you know, woman should stay home, you know, an American man and white. He loved me very much, but the problem at home was that if women are in a leadership role you come home you carry the 'bossiness' 'til home, you still feel, even if it's unconscious you still bossing people around at home. So I bossed my husband around. Now, his personality, he's eldest son in his family and he did not want to be bossed around, he thought I was very bossy at home. I tried to correct that...but still (laughs)

MAH: (laughs). It's ok. That happens.

ARIZONA: I tried to balance but that is when conflict comes. If the other one doesn't like to be bossed, then you have conflict. Another thing, is that he expected me to cook for him, wash the dishes, do things, but I-hey, I work too! I tried, you know, though the Chinese are different from Americans. I did everything, you know. He built the house after we got married, and I had to drive past Salt Lake City 78 miles to go to work so I would get up at around 5:00 and leave home at 5:30 so I came home at 8:00 and there's no meal, no meal, I had to cook. So, that meant it was very hard to be married to an American man. Sometimes you double, besides all your other work and the after work you put to that, you have all the house work, and it was very hard, but I had to be very strong if I wanted to maintain a family. Another thing, this was in Greece, we had dinner together and after dinner we were going to get a taxi, and there were three men, all white men, and I was a leader, and I was heading to get the taxi and my husband got so upset because he's supposed to do the job, I didn't realize it. It is natural I am looking to lead. I never thought I should depend on men, never. So that is a conflict, a women's challenge, how to balance and be conscious, if you want to make your husband happy you have to let the husband lead.

MAH: I can see. It can be hard

ARIZONA: Yes, at home you have to be very conscious and make an effort to not lead all the time. If you lead all the time your husband feels like, you know, men have ego, and specially physically you will lead all the time and you will affect him too, so that's a main challenge. I think I forgot to talk about what you asked me earlier, I didn't finish, when I came from Utah to Arkansas remember?

I have a very fancy resume, a very strong background. I came here and first interview and somebody tried to challenge me, and I am trying to be nice, because it's an interview, do you know? She said hey, do you know smart board things? I said "do I need to know those things? I thought in my job description it didn't say anything about knowing all trivial details. That is your job (Laughs)."

MAH: Smart?

ARIZONA: Yes, you know “smart board” in classroom...

MAH: Oh, yes, yes...I am with you.

ARIZONA: I had to fight back and I said, you know my job description didn't say that I have to take care of that, so that's your job. You have to be able to give them a valid reason and fight back, even if you do know how to take care of the smart board. I'm not going to do it, it's not my job. So, you don't even have to answer directly, you say my job description doesn't say that.

MAH: It's interesting... and funny ...a woman was challenging you. In my research I've found that sometimes men can be adversaries but sometimes women can be even worse than men.

ARIZONA: Yeah, yeah. Women and jealousy. At my other company, people knew that I was very stable, very thorough; nobody challenged me because I was a woman because I had hired everybody there. But here, I am into the White, southern realm, where they are not even familiar with a Chinese accent, because they see very few Chinese. Of course there are a lot of black people, and they suffered from prejudice for a long time. I don't know now how bad it is, but even students are prejudicial with professors. They said 'why are you here?' There was a professor from the Philippines and in one evaluation a student wrote 'why don't you go back to your home'. And that professor quit from this campus.

MAH: Oh, my goodness, I am so sorry.

ARIZONA: Yeah, I know prejudice is that strong! And that's why the bigotry has to change. People have to understand. For example, I help every student, I help, let them know, everybody. If you know to get people, everybody would be nice. Like the professor, I don't why she had to quit. I told her -don't quit-, and she said yes, -I cannot stand it anymore- she was a very good professor. She taught math.

ARIZONA: Another thing is being genuine. I am very sincere. For example, I am honest to a point. I was in another company here, and I am probably getting better in getting to say things, so they said if they want to hire a truth cop go to Kathy. For example, at a situation, if they ask, I said, let me find out. If you are honest they will understand, nobody is God, because only God knows everything. In Chinese there is a saying that only ignorant people think they are the wisest person. To Chinese the wisest men pretend they don't know much. The foolish man pretends to be the wisest man and that can be very offensive especially for women. You are young and I don't know if you want to learn this but people respect you when you don't pretend (when you) don't get defensive. Just be honest and try to get knowledge because knowledge is power. Because, otherwise; if you are pretending, people can see. Somebody can be very obnoxious and ask do you know? Do you know? And you say yes, I know, I know, so then you get lost. I don't know everything, I am still learning so when you grow older you become wiser.

MAH: So, another question I have, after talking about some of the challenges you've had. What are some of the best things that have happened to you in your career? Some of the things that you looked back and make you really proud.

ARIZONA: I think, the best thing that happened was in the company where I worked. I really think, I probably talk too much divinity, but I really think that God leads you, me at least. Because I was not looking for that company, I didn't even think about working for a company. To me in my Chinese mentality the holy job is teaching because you give, give, give, not for money and that's why I returned to teach. And in the industry everything is

money, money, money and even good things are done for money. But in Utah when I worked for that company I built that company from start. I hired everyone and began to learn that you need to hire somebody that is a little better than you. If you are not secure and you hire somebody who is worse than you because you fear that person could take over your job, if you have that mentality, you lose. It has to be all a win-win; another thing I learned is quality, quality, quality product. That's why I came here, this job fits me better. I have a specialty in the field of knowledge and I also have industry knowledge. Here I can tell why quality is so crucial and why service is so important because I always tell them. I am your servant. I came here to serve you. You know, that is why I needed to be here, that's why I am here. I am supportive faculty, right, so that's why I am serving. In a company with bad quality in three days you are out. Here, you can lose a student in three years with low quality because you hurt them. They pay money to come here to get an education. If you have low quality courses you are hurting the university. You cannot see that now, but wait three years and you will see what that does to your university.

My attitude I bring with me anywhere, that leadership even in the negotiating table, I never yell -you want this or not (our product). You know, I don't know how to say it, the leadership role, you have to show it everywhere except at home. In fact, just yesterday I talked to another colleague, and I said -job is always first, never next- that is the reason I need to balance life. That's why I go to Shinto yoga every day or to a different training because I need to release all my tension and go home relaxed because I just work very hard and there are a lot of things especially family, like if you are married and have kids, you need to balance life. Lots of women leaders are single because they put too much into work and don't have any for family. And that's why you want to balance that to be successful, and it's very delicate I guess I am thinking not to be bossy, to have a balance and to make the man happy; otherwise they will leave. They already have a boss at work they don't want a boss at home. Second, children, my worse regret. I was a young woman, like you, and I always balanced to work. I'll regret that all my life and I don't know what to do now. When I was working for the company, I worked so hard, you know, in industry, if I'd have been working in a university I'd have lived better, but I don't know. We have deadlines; always, they sell the product six months before it. Once we got in trouble, and I promised each customer that never, ever would they see that poor quality again, so I had to make the whole R&D staff stay overnight to meet the dead line. My daughter was only ten years old, So, I said Wai-Wai, go to the refrigerator, grab food, go to bed, and tomorrow get up and go with one of your friends to school because mom has to stay in the company the whole night and not go home, many nights. And she said, -mom come home and when I feel sleepy you go back-, and I said no, I can't. If I leave everybody goes. If you lead you sacrifice a lot, and I regret it so badly, but my daughter became very strong. And also I went home very late. Our work didn't finish 'til 1:00, 2:00. So you have to balance; otherwise you'll lose one part.

ARIZONA: But, you know, especially us (women of color) you need to put your kids first. I should have and I put work first. And that's something I regret, otherwise not.

MAH: Where do you see yourself like in... not five, but in three years?

ARIZONA: Vice-president in technology, that's my next step, and then who knows? Everything is on God's hands.

MAH: In all of this, have you ever had a mentor or anybody who...I know your God is first, but have you ever had anybody else that mentored for you or anything?

ARIZONA: No. And that's why I was looking for an inspiration mentor. I'm proud of what I built in my company and I am proud of what I am doing here as well. There is nothing, there is no rubric, no policy, I built this policy, I built complete training success, which they validated and they loved it. And I am proud of what I am doing with the work. I start building up. I think for inspiration, you know, somebody you look for as example, no. No, I don't...my mom, had a job but she gave up so much for my dad because he was a professor. I didn't have a model. I never thought there was a model. I don't know, inspiration, people say I have inspired them.

ARIZONA: I don't regard myself as a woman. For example, I broke my leg. It was Saturday and I was riding a horse. I couldn't walk. I spent two days in the hospital and then at home. So on Monday I called my boss, and my boss said come to work. I had broken my leg and with crutches, somebody pushed the wheelchair so I could negotiate in California. Some manager on sales pushed the wheelchair so I could have the conference, you know. They didn't think... didn't think I should be at home. So, work...they didn't regard me... because of the way I behave myself, I guess, you know, nobody thinks I am delicate or something. They forgot I was a woman.

MAH: So, tell me how that made you feel, did it make you feel angry?

ARIZONA: No. I forgot myself. I just all of the sudden realized it. He asked me to work, so I had the crutches and the cast, and he said he would drive me from and to home every day. But, because I was the first to arrive and the last one to leave and I knew he didn't arrive that early, I said no, no, I can drive, because the broken leg was the left, so I could drive my automatic transmission car with the right leg. My husband was so angry, he didn't drive me, because he had two houses, one 78 miles away and the other one closer to work, so he said - oh, you are going to work, drive yourself then-. Anyway, I didn't complain. They said -we need you right here. We really do need you to make a decision- and I went. And you know, because you are so important an ingredient they forget you are a woman and that's a compliment even they forgot, you are different, yeah, yeah you are minority and you are a woman. They think you have to be there. I think that once you achieve to a certain level they get rid of gender, they only see abilities, the true you, the sense of you, instead of the skin color, or what clothes are you wearing, whatever, they forgot all those things, they only sense, you can do the job, you can negotiate, you can win this contract, you can, that's all they see. Let's see what other questions you have. The only thing is I don't have inspiration. I spoke for ten minutes, just to say that. (Laughs)

MAH: No, it's ok. It's just a question that I thought of. Different people in different places can say different things. I personally think you said that you got guidance from God and God can be a mentor too. I mean, sometimes, I don't think that a mentor has to be somebody specific. And since your path didn't start off in the university setting it's different, you bring something different to the table. It's a little bit different. We all have gotten inspiration from other people, it's ok. And I think that it's interesting actually that you don't have a specific person.

ARIZONA: I told you I grew up in China and I never thought women have limitations, no. Why? They can get up. What is wrong with me? I can do that too, why not? We are all equal. Maybe you grew up differently than I grew up in China and nobody thinks that I shouldn't be better than men, so why not?

MAH: I think it's interesting how you said that you saw more problems when you came to the United States. I think that in the United States, we think we've come so far and we really haven't. There are still distinctive separations.

ARIZONA: I think the reason is because Mao took over. Even though Mao took all the land from my family, I don't hate communism at all. They took my land, my house and my family got punished for being rich but it made me a strong person. If I had inherited a lot of things, I wouldn't try myself. I might inherit money from my grandparents or my parents, and then why did I need to try? As long as I have a brain still working, have good health, I can start all over again. I can be successful. When I got my first job, I said I'll buy a big house in a nice neighborhood; everybody was very surprised and told me, "oh! You have such a big house," because at first I didn't have a student loan. I worked so hard. Because I am Chinese I never intended to borrow money. I had a scholarship, and I worked two jobs, one was teaching at the university and the other one at the air force base. I've always had a job I've always been financially independent as well, even though I didn't have anything when I first came. So, I bought a house five minutes from work, perfect, nice neighborhood, cul-de sac, because the best school for my daughter was there so I had to have it, walking distance, and everything, so (a name of a person).....said, "oh! Your house is better than mine," and I said, yes, why not.? Do you think that I should live in the worst place? Or because I'm Chinese I have to live somewhere else? I have earned this; at least I didn't invade this country, so why not? I remember in California I have a school sponsor, very nice couple, and they talked to me and said oh, those people come here, and I said why not? At least they did not invade the country. You know, White people invaded this country and genocide American-Indians. I am not saying only they did wrong. Everybody did wrong. Chinese did a lot of wrong things. For me, if you can come, other people can come, if you live here why not me? So it took me very long. They invited me to women's church but I didn't join them. I didn't believe. I attended the church for one year and I did read their book. I am willing. I am so open minded to learn what makes sense to me. I am always open-minded to learn things and see what makes sense using your own judgment, not to follow because somebody says that's true, not to me, never. I have to find out for myself, where is my conscience?

MAH: Listening to what you are saying, would you say that is possible that you are your own mentor?

ARIZONA: Yeah, yeah. I think that mainly...I don't know where to get this confidence it's in you. That's so crucial for a woman. If you have confidence in yourself, no matter what, if you don't know something you can learn it, learn it and do it better. If you put in the time, anybody can, as long as they have intelligence... that's why the brain is so important. To take care of the house (laughs) first, to take care of yourself...your mom would say, take care of yourself. We need to look good, to behave well, you know, if you don't take care of yourself you don't respect yourself, to me.

MAH: I agree. I think that peers are always looking at you and people do kind of judge you by how you look even if you are in a professional setting or a professional position. They still see how you dress if you go to a board meeting. It's intelligence. It's the appearance. It's the whole package, clothes, poise, eye contact, all of those things.

ARIZONA: Yes. You dress professional if you want to gain respect, you have to dress well. If you do something silly and they look at you if you have too many things put on, they

would look at you as a woman, not as something inside. Beauty is inside. And you don't want to look as if you were dating. No, we are not dating we are negotiating. It has to be professional. One time my boss and I went to a negotiating meeting and the other company had sent women to negotiate, but they were trying to seduce my boss to get the contract. So, my boss said, let's get away from this woman. Maybe that's why that company is not successful. So, the effect was the opposite, my boss spent all the meeting trying to keep himself away from this woman. You know, too low cut, too close. You don't do things like this, so unprofessional.

MAH: I do have another question. When you were working for the company and you had your daughter, were you single at that time? How did you do that? I guess, how did you balance? It had to be a huge challenge, because you were very, very busy.

ARIZONA: It was very hard. I didn't have a personal life. Except work and my daughter, after work of course my daughter, the only thing we did, we went to the library and I read, you know, I sat with her to do homework if I went home that night, if not...of course not. She was a very good girl. She saw examples of hard work, that's why she works hard too, because her dad worked very hard too, my ex-husband, you know. I think she doesn't want to get married, because she saw me. That was probably bad for her, she saw that if she wants to be professional, she won't get married and will never have kids. That's why I said, that's one of my regrets as a professional woman that I didn't balance well because my job always came first. So, my daughter... I always cooked dinner for her. And if I came home, I spent time with her, or on weekends, but sometimes I had to work weekends. Her dad was in Vermont, so she saw him during vacation. So, she was with me most of the time. For me, school is very important, that's why I helped her with homework. I don't think I balanced very well. That's what I regret. And she turned out to be fine, you know; in fact, she's very independent, so she learned from me I guess if your mom is so busy and divorced...you probably have to adjust things or else you fail. That's why she graduated when she was 23 from the university. She works at the University of Vermont, she is getting a master's and I don't know where she is going to go. She won't contact me because I re-married.

MAH: Oh, I am sorry.

ARIZONA: You know, her dad still...she thought I was going to re-marry her dad because of a misunderstanding, but I fell in love with this other guy, and I got married. Around that time, I probably shouldn't have I probably needed more time, but I wanted to, so I got married in July even though I had to work.

MAH: I think it is important not to forget your needs. I mean to be a professional in any scene implies sacrifices and to be a professional in the university scene you have to have something for yourself, you have to have some YOU time. I mean, I see your point, I am young but I do agree with you.

ARIZONA: You need someone to love you. Because you are a professional, you are already in a men's world doing the men's work. You come home and you need to relax, be a little bit softer-there's your husband that you love. You need to have a way to release and balance, you know. I really like to be married. I was not married for a long time. When I got divorced from my first husband, I spent 8 years single. As soon as I got a job, next year I start thinking about dating again. I couldn't before because I was at school and I wanted to have good grades. I like the married life, I think that if you only get your professional life you would end up all alone by yourself. That's part of failure, don't do that, get your balance,

get married, find somebody who loves and supports you, somebody whom you can talk with, like your husband. Somebody else, you can't, you will mess up. You cannot always talk to your parents. I don't have parents. Both my parents passed away, so I have to talk to my husband, to find a balance. You cannot talk to your colleagues just because they are professional and show your weakness, especially at work, you cannot do that. Everybody has weaknesses, women are supposed to be weak, so you come home and you can tell your husband. I enjoy married life. I encourage any professional woman that she should have a very balance life to have children, have a companion. I wish I had had more kids. You know, in China you can only have one, so when I came here I didn't get married right away until I got a job, then my job was so intense, plus my daughter, plus my husband it was too hard. Now it is too late. If I could I would love to have more kids, I love children, but those are choices in life. If you are a woman and you don't have that, you lose part of the joy of life. It's a delicate balance but you can do it.

MAH: Thank you so much.

Interview Transcription of 'Carolina' February 20, 2009

MAH: So, I guess my first question is tell me who you are and, what you do.

CAROLINA: Ok. Well, I am in the nursing profession and have been so for 35 years and I have been an educator for 28 years. Currently I am the Dean for the College of Health Sciences which is a new position. I've been in this position for two years and previous to that time I was the Associate Dean at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center for 25 years. I love nursing and I love academia. I love what I do. I love working with students but that was not my original quest.

MAH: What was your original quest?

CAROLINA: My original quest was... I never thought I was going to be in academia, in fact I always said I'd never teach. The only reason I am in academia is because in the mid 70's when I went back for my master's I was in an administrative role at the hospital, but way back in that period of time there were no evening classes, there were no weekend classes, you definitely didn't have anything online. So, in order to go back to school I had to give up my position so I could go Monday to Friday and take those classes during the day. So, I gave up the administrative role so I could achieve my master's. When I finished my master's my administrative position had already been filled so I had to go back and wait until something else opened, so I was back doing the rotational shifts 7 to 3, 3 to 11, 11 to 7 and waiting for something to open up that I could apply for. During that time one of the Nursing School's faculty members was on my floor and came and said how well I was interacting with students, that students loved me, you know, and everything else. 'We have a position opening for a year because one faculty members is taking a year off on maternity leave, why don't you come and apply for the position?' So, I told her initially no, and then I thought about it, and I said well you know, I had a small child at the time and I was a single parent and I said this rotating shift is killing me. For the 11 to 7 I have to find someone to keep her, so this will be at least a Monday to Friday position weekends off, holidays for this one year and maybe something would open up if not at the hospital where I was, then at another facility. So I went and interviewed for the position and the salary they offered me was much lower than what I was making. Still is, academics don't pay as well as practice. The payment

was so low compared to what I was making at the hospital at that time that I immediately told them no, I cannot survive, I am a single parent and I cannot do that. So I got back to my rotation and two weeks later I got a call from the director of the program and he asked, what are you making? So I told him and he said well, if we match what you are making would you come? We cannot give you more than what you are making, but if we match what you are making would you be interested in coming? I didn't care if I wasn't making more, I just I didn't want to make less, so I said sure I will come for that one year, so that's how I got in academia, and the initial thought was it was for one year. That one year has translated into 28 years now so I never really intended to be an academician; it was never my intention to be in academia, but that's how it got started and I love it.

MAH: Oh, ok. That's also what inspired you to get your PhD, too?

CAROLINA: That's right. And it was a personal thing, because, in academia in the university where I was, I was fortunate to get it before they stopped it. I had tenure without my PhD. I had already achieved it and I think some peers here at the university were also able to achieve tenure. I was always a very active person in my profession. I was always in leadership roles or a participant in organizational type of things. I've always loved writing so I was publishing and I was presenting, so I met all the requirements for tenure. I just didn't have the PhD and at that time the PhD was not a requirement for tenure. I had tenure so there was really no other reason but most people in university settings go back for their PhD in order to achieve tenure or some other things. I had achieved some of those things already. But I was not personally satisfied so I went back to get my PhD. It was not something that they had been pressuring me about at the university by any means but I did that. To tell you how committed I was doing so, I was still in New Orleans while I was going to school in Houston, Texas. I got my PhD from Texas Women's University, and I commuted on a weekly basis. I flew every week. Initially, I think it was the first semester, my classes were on Wednesdays, so I worked in the morning until noon to get the 1 o'clock flight, and I was in class on campus until 10 pm. Then I'd go back at around midnight and go to work the next morning. That was the first semester, so I did that and then started thinking-you know, if I do this...-I was taking two, three classes on a day but I said if I do this way, it's going to take me forever and cost me X amount of thousands, and I said that's too much money. The reason I flew was because I had a daughter. As I told you, I was a single parent and an extra consideration was would she be willing to move with me? She didn't want to leave her friends, and I didn't want to disrupt her life much more than being a single parent. So, I said, well that means that I would be the one disrupted. I would be the one flying back and forth so I didn't have to take her out of school and one day for the first semester my mom, or my sister, or somebody would pick her up from school and keep her and then at midnight I would go and pick her up and bring her home and I'll go to work and she'll go to school next morning. Then I decided that would take me forever so I needed to take at least 18 hours each semester. That's what I did. I finished my course work I think in 3 semesters. I did 18 to 19 hours per semester. But that required me to be there more than one day, so I had to take a leave of absence from my job.

I was in education at that time, so I took a leave of absence and went from Tuesday to Thursday and stayed on campus in a dormitory. But still I had to fly every week, fly in on Tuesday morning and fly back on Thursday afternoon. And I worked at the hospital 16 hours a day on Saturday and Sunday so I could continue to pay my mortgage, pay for my

daughter's private school, continue meeting my financial obligations. I had Mondays to study or whatever, prepare a paper or something. I also studied while I was in school, and when I got out of class, there was nothing to do, no one I knew, so I went to the dorm, to read and study. Consequently, because I was so focused. I did very well in graduate school. My professors would ask me, what do you do? Do you study on the plane all day? I said I studied on the plane I and studied at night.... This is costing me money so I need to get serious about it. I studied every opportunity I had because I knew that on Saturdays and Sundays there was no studying. I was 16 hours at work from 7 in the morning to 11:30 at night or sometimes I was going in at 3 in the evening 'till 7 in the morning next day. Many times I got out at 7 in the morning Monday, so I'd sleep for a while and then the time I was there Monday or Friday I had to interact with my daughter because Tuesdays through Thursdays I was out. I was gone.

MAH: Another question I had, how do you balance? I mean, I come from a single parent home and I can remember my mom, while earning her PhD, packing a lunch bag and loading up my sleeping bag, because I remember she was doing research for a professor so, every where she went I went with her. I mean...because you obviously did that too, how did you do that?

CAROLINA: Again, it was a commitment. I knew it was something I wanted to do, I didn't want to cause any more disruptions, that's why. The 18 hours were unheard of; in fact, when I went to talk to my advisor and said I was taking 18 hours she said there is no way you could be successful taking 18 hours, and I said, I am going to do it I have to do it. In fact, our provost here, as we were talking about graduate programs here and the maximum number of hours people could take, he said 9 and I said you will have people taking more than that. And he said no, and I said, I did -18 and 19 in graduate school, and he said you are unusual. But I did it. You do what you have to do. It was a balance because I needed to finish quickly but I also needed to maintain a relationship with my child but also because I had family support, because this could not be possible if I didn't have someone to pick her up and keep her Tuesdays through Thursdays. And it was like that for two semesters. Whenever I could I bring her with me, every now and then she would miss school, fly with me and sit with me in class and I was in Houston. What is the name of that amusement park they have there...Six Flags! So you know, she would fly with me, we would stay there, I would call my work and take the weekend off, she would go to class with me, and we would do things together in the evenings, and that weekend, after class on Thursday, we would take Friday, Saturday and Sunday and go to Six Flags. So, it was a juggle, and you gave up certain things but I always told myself this is an inconvenience for the short term but just think about the long term gain. And it was only after I got my PhD that I started being placed in those administrative roles at the academic level. You know, I was a coordinator, a team leader at that time even though I had tenure but it wasn't until I got the PhD that I became a Department Chair and from Department Chair to Associate Dean of Communications and Community Services, and Associate Dean of Academia. It has been a wonderful reward for me and my family, because with the higher ranking, of course there's more money.

MAH: Right, right, of course, exactly.

CAROLINA: It's difficult to do but you do what you have to do. I think that's what we need to get across to many of our young people. Even now when I go and speak to different classes, and when we have new classes that come in, I have found that those persons who are

not successful are those who don't want to give up anything. And I say, you have to give some things up. Your life has changed when you come to this curriculum, health care, and I am sure, all the areas... business and all those areas are difficult. I'll bet they also require commitment. I am sure that the degree program that you are studying requires you to study. There are certain times that you'd say well, I cannot go to this party because I have this paper due. I cannot do certain things but many people don't want to relinquish those things and I am not saying that lightly. I say that because just last semester we had a nursing student who missed an exam and you just don't miss exams, so when we didn't hear from her, I was worried that something had happened to her, because she didn't even call to give a reason. When she finally contacted us the reason was oh, my sister came in town last night so we were up late night partying so I figured I'd just take a make-up. Do you think there is something wrong with that?

MAH: I do think there's something wrong with that, especially in a nursing program because I know it is hard to get accepted into a nursing program. I am not going to say that what I and others in different programs of study are doing is not importantbut there are certain programs...that only take a certain number of students...you know that is hard.

CAROLINA: That's right. So again, people don't want to give up anything. I am not minimizing the importance of the sister or any other family member. But I think that the family member would probably understand if you cannot go out and party because you have an exam the next day or you'd allocate this certain portion of time and say I'm going to spend this hour with you but after that I really have to go and study because I have an exam tomorrow. But she just blew it off, and not to even call- I mean what was the guarantee that she was going to be given a make-up? So I think anybody can achieve their goals if they are committed to it but I think the key word is commitment. If you want it you can get it. So, I think that's what worked for me. When I said to people I flew every week, a lot of people find it hard to believe, and I said yes I did. I flew every week, but the cost of flying wasn't what it is today. When I tell people what I paid for a round trip ticket they don't believe it. I flew Southwestern and the cost of a round trip ticket, was \$35.00. I look back and I say oh, my goodness am I that old? (Laughs)

MAH: (laughs) But regardless of the age, you cannot do that now.

CAROLINA: No, you cannot. I don't think people would be able to fly every week now. But more people are able to get online and take courses. I just sent an e-mail to my faculty about a PhD program that's going to be offered on this campus through Cargill. It's totally online and the school is going to pay 60% of your tuition. I didn't have those types of things available to me. And that's what I was telling you: even when I got my master's there were no online programs, there was no evening coursework, there were no weekends, so anybody who wanted to go to school had to fit within the typical 8 to 4:30 framework. So, I just took off and worked on weekends. There are a lot more opportunities now. So really there is no reason for anyone not to achieve if they are committed to achieving.

MAH: Yes. I agree with you. I guess those must be challenges. What were some of your challenges after you graduated with your PhD? What have been some of your challenges in your professional life after that?

CAROLINA: The challenges I faced after I graduated with my PhD are the same ones I faced prior to graduating. They didn't change and they will probably continue to be the same ones I face in my future. You would probably face them too at some time or another

if you haven't done so already. The fact that you are a female is a challenge and the fact that you are Black, and I think that those two may have been my reason to encourage minorities, African-Americans, whether they are male and female, because even a male is facing great challenges.

MAH: Really, maybe I am naïve but sometimes we tend to think that men have it better.

CAROLINA: No. Not African-American men. Number one, most of them are not going to go where you and I are right now. Most of them don't get past high school if they get through there, so there are more minority females that have masters and doctorates than males. This is statistically proven, so they have those obstacles, but the same ones I faced before my master's, my bachelor's, whatever, are the ones I face now even now in this position in terms of female and being Black. I don't know that that would ever change. We have our first African-American president and that's shown some progress but we still have persons who wear the white sheets and the ropes and the KKK. I don't think that is ever going to go away. Those are challenges but that doesn't mean that should stop you. And you know, the thing is that people get bogged down, you know, in terms of "I can't do this, because they won't give me that." Excuse the expression, but that's a cop out. To me, looking at me personally, that just makes me more determined to succeed if you tell me I can't do something. I want to prove you wrong, that I can do it. So that makes me more determined. And so those are some of the challenges I faced, number one being female. Sometimes, I think people don't do it purposefully, the discrimination. I tell people all the time sometimes it's subtle, it's not even recognized by the person. The person doesn't realize that they are acting in that way themselves. Where I came from one of my colleagues in a meeting passed me in the hallway and she stopped and she was giving me a compliment. She was smiling and she was bright and you could tell that she had no idea that what she said could be construed in a different way. And she passed by and she says, "Carolina you never cease to amaze me; every time you open your mouth, something intelligent comes out."

MAH: Oh, my goodness...

CAROLINA: I know she didn't mean anything by it. And I thought maybe I took it the wrong way. But, how was that to take, you know?

MAH: Oh, my goodness that was not a compliment.

CAROLINA: No, but she thought it was. To me it implied that the expectation was- probably because of who I am and the color of my skin- that maybe I should not be intelligent, that maybe I should not speak intelligently and for her to say that every time I open my mouth something intelligent comes out. I mean how else you can take that? But I knew she didn't mean any harm, because you could tell from her face, her animation, and everything else that she was giving me a compliment. So, she had no clue about how she was coming across. And there may not have been a bitter intent but when positions came up, maybe knowing that perhaps you are more qualified than someone else, and someone else getting the position, those types of things still occur. Those are some of the challenges. The other challenge is maybe being accepted. If you are in an administrative role and there are other persons who have that problem relating to you and your position because of who you are, that can be a challenge.

MAH: What strategies do you use to deal with it or overcome those challenges?

CAROLINA: Number one you don't want to be confrontational and yet you cannot run away from it either. I think you have to address the behavior and not the person. When I first

came here I had to do something like that, believe it or not. In this college I had to do something like that. But you don't address it in terms of race, you address it in terms of behavior. For instance, if they have been rude to you, abrupt to you, then you address the behaviors and you do so immediately.

I believe, my personal philosophy in handling difficulties is to nip them in the bud right away, because if you fail to do so the problem only escalates. If there is animosity, and you to you don't address it face on, the animosity will just continue to grow and you will have more problems. And when you do address it, it may be more difficult to bring it to a close or to get some type of resolution. When I first came here I picked up some behaviors. You know, I came here as an Associate Dean initially, not as a Dean. I came here as an Associate Dean and I hadn't been in my role position more than six weeks when the Dean that was here went in to the Associate Provost's office and resigned; then they asked me to be the interim Dean. I did that for about a year and then they appointed me full Dean. So I came here in an Associate Dean role but this college never had an Associate Dean before; the people had always reported to the Dean. There were faculty that made the transition difficult and had difficulty in reporting to me, and there were others who would always bypass me to go to the Dean. So first I came and talked to the Dean, because I felt she was contributing to the problem. I spoke with her first and she did assure me that there were some persons that have difficulties with me so I said how did you handle that? She said she thought she was handling it right, but I said I don't think you are handling it right because you should have sent them to me. Since I am going to be here, they cannot go around me, or then I have no power, I have no purpose for being here if I cannot help you, if they are going to come to you and that's why she hired me. So, she said, I'll talk to them and I said no, I don't want you to talk to them. I'll talk to them. I said I need to handle this if they are going to respect me. Otherwise I don't want you fighting my battles for me. I need to deal with the behavior. And I can tell she was amazed and I said don't worry I came from the Deep South.

I've had to deal with these situations before and I know how to handle it. I haven't had any problems since. But I think it all deals with how you handle it. They didn't keep me down feeling sorry for myself, because I was confident who I was. I knew what I needed to achieve and what my goals were and I wasn't going to let anybody to stop me, so I met with them and it was not confrontational. I addressed their behavior. I shared their behaviors and my perceptions and we talked about it and we came to some agreement and like I said we had no difficulty since then. They are probably better persons for the College now, very supportive and amiable. I don't know if it was me addressing the behavior that pulled them in, versus me going the other way, I don't know.

MAH: Of course there are not a lot of women in Deanships. I did my research for this project and I know there are not a lot of women as Associate Deans, Deans, VPs, and Presidents. How do men respond to you? I don't know how many men are over nursing programs.

CAROLINA: There are not very many men in nursing programs, period, because nursing has widely been a female's profession. It's only within the last 20 years that we began to see some men in nursing, and that is increasing in number but still it's viewed primarily as a female profession, so we don't have a lot of men in that role. The male students relate very well to me. When I was in Louisiana in the Health Sciences Center, I was the only female in that particular role there, even as the Associate Dean, because all the other administrators

whether they were Deans, or Associate Deans, were men. And I think that my Dean over the nursing school was the only female Dean in the entire Health Sciences Center. So, you are right- there are not many females in those top level positions. Now, here we have several females in a Dean's role, but they are not in academia, for instance, the Dean of registrations and admissions, which is not strictly speaking academia. We have the Dean of Preparatory College, you know, remediation, but the others are men.

So far, I have not had any males who related to me. I have only had one confrontation with a male since I've been here. That was with a male Dean and it was in response to a course that he was trying to put forth. The course used some medical terminology and I could tell they didn't have a full understanding because of what they were saying. The idea was to have a course on Health, Safety and Nutrition and they wanted to recruit people from nurseries to come and take it but the course description and the class talked about teaching them how to do a health assessment, using medical terminology and I said I don't think this is what you want to do, I don't think this is something you want to teach. Because if you teach them assessment you have to teach precaution, resuscitation, and all this and I don't think your educator is qualified to teach that. So, they said well, that is why we have our accreditation manual.

I said I don't think so. I'm an A type person so I am going to back up what I said, I tell people all the time when I speak I know what I am speaking about because I've done research on what it's about. I am a very quiet person; people think I am an introverted person because I don't say anything unless I have something to say. So, if I say something it is because I know what I am saying. So, I said I don't think it is an accreditation criterion. But if they are saying it is, somebody has to alert them that they are practicing without a license, so to speak. I went online and I pulled the accreditation criterion and it did not say that, it did not use those terms and so I said you see they don't understand when you use those terms what it means, and what they could do. What I could get them to see is that if you use those terms you are falsely giving these nursery owners and everybody else the idea that they can perform and do things beyond what they actually do. And they would take that information and terminology and use it to advertise.

They would say bring your child to us because we can do X, Y, and Z and they cannot. But they may think they can. What would happen is when a child gets ill or something happens they may get sued for not performing or intervening correctly and then we will get sued because they will say that's what I was taught and they told me I would be able to do this. Oh, he blew up at me...he was upset. He said you got online and looked at this? I said, yes, because what you said didn't sound right. Ironically the very next week the National Nursing Organization sent me an email where a university in California had been sued and it lost for the very same thing. The university was teaching something that was beyond their scope of teaching and involved health care ... so I sent it to that Dean and I sent it all over. I think his ego was bruised and it came from me. (Laughs)

MAH: I think men tend to have fragile egos anyway. Another question that I have, is where do you see yourself in three or four years? Do you see yourself here, in a different university, in a different setting?

CAROLINA: I don't know. The Provost recently asked me, "How long does a person stay in a Dean's role?" And I said "At least five years." And the reason is because initially if you come in and you want to contribute to the university you will need at least two years to

implement and then you will want to at least see the outcome so minimum four years to five years. Most Deans want to see the outcome of whatever it is they have achieved. They do not want just to put it in place and then not know what the outcome is. If they leave there is no guarantee that it's going to continue as you have planned so the outcome may not be what you desired because you left but it will be on your name that this terrible outcome occurred. So, he says have you thought about being a Provost or a President, and I said not really. He says why not? And I said, "Because I don't know if I want that headache."

MAH: I can see that, because you have been a director, haven't you? But a Provost and a President; that's a lot of responsibility?

CAROLINA: Yes it is.

MAH: I am not trying to say that you could not handle it, but it would take attention away from the students and get you more into paper work.

CAROLINA: More administrative work, exactly right... that's what it does. So, he mentioned it to me and I thought about it and I said, "You know what? I still don't know if that's what I want to do," and it does not mean you won't change. That's what I tell students who are coming now: you don't envision that you are going any further than this Associate degree, and you don't envision that you are going any further than this bachelor's degree. I was in the same boat, when I finished my first bachelor's degree and somebody talked to me about a master's degree, and I am saying it literally because I actually said "Are you crazy?" I said, "I've just finished a Bachelor's degree and I am not going back to school, no way. I have been through enough. I am serious." That's what I said but then I didn't know what I know now. And at that time when I got my bachelor's I said I would never go back to school to get my master's. When I finished my master's I said I am not going back to school. And then I got my doctorate. And then I did a post doc. So I have been going back to school several times, so you'll never know. I am not saying I would never go for Provost or Presidency. I don't see myself doing it right now, but I don't say I won't eventually do it. Who knows if maybe in the last three years of my career I may choose to do it just to have that as a capstone in my career but right now I don't ambition it.

But it's ironic that she asked me that because I just came from the Dean's council meeting, and the Provost gave me this, he copied this for me and he asked me that again. He asked me, "Are you familiar with the Millennium?" and I said no. This is called the Millennium Leadership Initiative and it's for people that go for Provost and Presidency positions. He said, "We want to pay for you to go to this." And I said, "I don't know." And he said, "You need to go to this." So, I don't know if they have something for me in mind or what. I said I don't think I am going to be here for that because I am going to Greece. And he said, "I don't think you understand the importance of this." He said, "You need to be here." I mean I recognize it's an honor, but it shouldn't happen in June... (Laughs) and then I think why are they pushing me to do this? But again, I don't want to throw this down either at the same time, because I don't know where I want to be in the future.

MAH: Is not knowing want to do a bad thing?

CAROLINA: No. I know he sees something in me, but I am not sure that I want to be there. I don't think you should be pushed. It's like this committee that the governor appointed me to. Last week he called me to appoint me for another committee and I said I am not sure yet. So the Governor's office sent me an email this week again. I haven't responded because I am just too busy. I told the Provost that I think may say no to the second committee because

it's too much commitment and he said "Don't you dare! That would be the kiss to death. You don't want to try the governor that way. You do what you need to do. And you need to do this."

MAH: What are you doing?

CAROLINA: I'm working on the Arkansas Minority Health Commission, trying to improve the health status of minorities, African-Americans, Hispanics. I have to meet with a group of people which he has identified to go for these proposals and decide who gets the money. So it brings my health background in, but again it's time consuming. I recognize that it is an honor and I recognize the commitment, but at the same time I don't want to be stressed beyond. . .

MAH: How do you balance work and home?

CAROLINA: Right now, it's not very difficult for me because I am the only one here. I don't have any family here. But like you said, I need to take time away from work and devote it to me. I do that, I love going to my church, I love my church family, and I love my church home. You know, I am actively involved with them and every time that something's going on there I'll try to be there. Once a month all the Black faculty get together for lunch.

MAH: In all the interviews I have been doing I found that no matter if you are Latina, Asian, or African- American, you have to sacrifice and I see more single people, or they have been divorced, so how do you balance?

CAROLINA: You have to find someone at the same level as you. That's a problem, I am serious. Some men are strong in who they are, but it's all about who you are; if you are comfortable in your skin and with you as a person then you'll be fine but a lot of Black men are intimidated by educated women so you have to find someone who's at your level. When I said that, I mean at your same educational level who's comfortable with your education. Because, even in the single position whenever I would meet men, I had to stop saying when they asked what do you do? "I am a Dean. A Dean." And they pulled back. But I can't pretend to be another person. I can't try to be something just to please somebody else because they would eventually find out. So, I stopped trying to hide it. Once I said I was a nurse, and he felt comfortable but when I said that I got a PhD he got intimidated and pulled back. So, it's very difficult, because as I told you before you don't have many Black men at this educational level unfortunately.

MAH: It's just black men or men in general?

CAROLINA: If you look at men in general, Black men are going to be educationally lower; even Asian men have more advanced degrees. I don't know if it's that they don't believe they can do it, or they've been torn down, because again you can be. But I think it goes back to who you are as a person. Because even females, you know, when I first came here, the leadership asked me to share my life. And I said are you sure? Do you want me to do that, because it may be something that you don't want to hear...and they said, we want you to share your life. So I did. And I said some of you may be offended with what I am going to say but I was asked to share my life and this is my life. I cannot sugar coat anything. And I talked about the challenges of being female and I talked about obstacles to leadership. I said obstacles are going to vary depending on who you are. It's different for me because I am female and I am African-American. I talked about high school, integration and I said I know you all had you Little Rockbut each place had the same Little Rock... and I know I had mine. I was in the fifth grade...when I went to my first integrated school, so there were times when I was called the n...word. And then if you took a test and you got the highest

grade they accused you of cheating. You know, I was in the typing class, so we were typing for speed, and she said stop, and if you don't hear any typing going on then how can you accuse people of cheating? So I got 70 something words per minute and the rest got 30 and she said you cheated. And I said no, so I had to redo it in front of the whole class. Or when you have the highest grade on a test and they accuse you of cheating and you have to take another that is more difficult and you still do well on it. I think women had suffered in some sense so we were able to persevere whereas men on the other hand and young boys they got hot, they got angry and they just quit, and so they drop out, don't continue or whatever. I think some of that has to do with it, but overall you have to find someone who is equivalent to you, or who is so comfortable in their own skin that they won't be intimidated by you. Somebody who is going to support you and that is not going to feel threatened by you.

MAH: I think it all comes to a full circle, because to me even having a great career, can be only partial not full satisfaction. To me having the family around helps, you're going to miss your family, when they are not around.

CAROLINA: Oh, sure.

MAH: But family members can be obstacles too. Have you experienced some of your own?

CAROLINA: Most definitely, I have experienced that in my own family too. None of my parents, believe it or not, were fully educated. Neither one of them graduated from high school even. And the reason was my family, both my parents initially, lived in what they called a plantation. And they grew cotton, cut sugar cane... So they came from that area where education was not encouraged.

I don't how you learned years ago. Blacks weren't even called African Americans... they couldn't even read a book. If they were caught reading a book, they would get punished. So they were educated only to a certain level as a general rule. My parents, on the other hand, recognized the importance of education, even though they didn't have it. So they encouraged all of us to go back to school, to finish high school at least. To finish school so we can get a job, something better than what they have done. My parents even though without their education they were hard workers and they achieved certain things, they just were uneducated Black people. They encouraged us to finish high school and then we got our degrees; my brother got a degree in engineering and I got my bachelor's in Nursing. But again, still they didn't understand why we wanted to go on, like when I went on to get my master's, my mom was saying "why do you need a masters? You already have a degree, you don't need to get a master's." She didn't understand why, because her perception was that I already got more than what she had. I had my high school degree and I had even gone a step further, so why was I going on? And so, sometimes there are obstacles, but she eventually came around, because, as I told you, I couldn't have achieved my PhD if it hadn't been for them, because they... were very supportive and they eventually came around. So you were exactly right, your family can be an obstacle. And to be honest with you, that's why I'm divorced right now... because I was intimidating and my ex-husband was an obstacle to me achieving what I wanted to achieve. And as I said I have my mind set. If I want to do something, I do it. And nothing is going to stop me. And some people say 'I'm not going to

go on because he doesn't want me to do it' and that's okay too. If you can live with that and that's okay with you, then by all means. But I wasn't.

MAH: I don't blame you. What I'm doing is a little different; I have done research about this. I have to remind myself of this. When someone doesn't want you to continue on your studies, I guess after that you can learn from other people. And sometimes we don't want to look at the whole, big picture. I hope I am different.

CAROLINA: With some people I say "Be careful what you ask for because you may get it, but it may not work out either." I try to tell young people, and I say to my family, to the youngest even, "you got to be patient because you don't want to rush into something just because you want to say I have a companion and it's not the right person... because as you begin to grow, if that person doesn't want to grow, there's going to be some friction in that relationship. Even though that person may verbally tell you 'okay honey, it's okay if you do this' if there's anything from that person showing you that there's a gap growing... even if it's not real to you, it's real to them and they're going to do things to keep you from growing. And it could cause a problem in your relationship." That's why I'm saying 'meet someone who's where you are, someone who has the same aspirations or achievements, and they will encourage you, if you were able to do so for them.' Even if they say 'I'm not going back to school anymore, but you can go back if you want to'...

MAH: They may start trying to encourage you to stop going to school by telling you negative things like 'you study...

CAROLINA: 'You have to study all the time; you don't have time for me.'

MAH: I think that this also goes for other women. Have you experienced that?

CAROLINA: Not really, to be honest with you. The reason I haven't dealt with is because all my career education has always been with the majority, not the minority population. So there's so few of us that we bond, I think because all Black people are accustomed to working hard. Even in the white faculty, Black people would come and say "What do you need help with?" and they'll help. We have very few Black students, there's a minority of Black students.

I think people are more comfortable now that I'm around. I think the way I'm treated by Caucasian women is because of my skin color. They're jealous that I'm well educated. It's just that you are what you are, and, in my case, that threatens them. When I was in my doctorate program, I was the only Black there. I made the highest grades; I don't care what course it locked me in. There was one course I got a B in, and I think that was the only course I got a B in. But the students saw that. I think there was this theory course and they would come to me to help them and I don't care what I did, I got a B. My teacher said "how'd you get a B? You were the only one that understood what you were doing." I knew what it was. It was the same thing I experienced since my undergrad program. In my bachelor's program, my sociology teacher sat in front of the entire class, and didn't care. He

was very open. He said, “Blacks don’t get more than a C in my class, so if you want to change classes you have to do it now.”

MAH: That’s bold.

CAROLINA: Some of the white students said ‘you need to report him. You want us to go...’ and I said ‘no, because we need to get this class to graduate’. So it wasn’t like we had choices. We had to stay in that class. And we just did what we had to do. The only reason I went to nursing faculty was because a friend who is deceased now was in the biology pre-requisite course with me and we were applying for nursing school. I got a rejection, and the reason was there was a new curriculum and they were restricting it to 50 students instead of the usual 75 and then they said my GPA wasn’t in the top 50 that they selected. So this girl says ‘you have good grades, what’s wrong with your GPA? And so I tell her and then she says that’s interesting... such and such got lower GPA’s than you did and they got in’.

Well at that time they requested you that you put a picture on the application. And so she says ‘I’m going to talk to my husband about that’ who was a district attorney. About a week later I got a phone call: ‘oh, we made a mistake’... and so they accepted two more of us. There were now three of us. And we knew our stuff. They didn’t realize that by doing that, they made us smarter, studying twice as hard. And our classmates saw that, because we didn’t know they went to the dean. All we knew was that one morning the dean called the three black ones... And then she says ‘well, that’s interesting because your classmates, all of your class was in my office just a few moments ago and they said you were being discriminated against. Is that happening?’ I answered ‘yes’ and then she says ‘I don’t understand it. Why didn’t you all come to me? Now tell me about it.’ And my perception was ‘we just need to graduate.’ We didn’t know that coming to her and talking about him was going to do anything. We didn’t want it to count negatively against us, we wanted to get through, But my classmates went to the dean to complain. They saw, it was so obvious that even they saw it and so, you got to have those types of things that happen. I’ve been blessed; I had to deal with my own people. There’s so few of us. Maybe if there were more.

MAH: There are few African Americans that attend here, though quite a lot of African Americans live here and of course... I’m not like you and have never attended school where there have been a dominant number of African Americans. Since there were so few African Americans, you almost had to bond together. Has it been like that here? I just wondered.

CAROLINA: I haven’t had to deal with that. Like I said, the others are probably intimidated because of your position and because of who you are, like when I first came here. I think a lot has to do with you being comfortable with who you are, and so no one is going to intimidate you. They may try, but if you’re comfortable with who you are and you know that you know what you know, then no one is going to intimidate you. And the key to doing that is just to be comfortable. Like I said, when I speak I have something to say. And if I’m not sure about something I say ‘I’m not sure about that, let me check it’. I’m out to find the facts, but if I know you’re saying something incorrect then yeah, I’m going to speak. Because like I told the dean that one time ‘I feel obligated to speak because my failure to speak is a form of speaking’.

MAH: That's a good way to look at it.

CAROLINA: Because if I'm sitting here and I know that you don't know when something is wrong, my not identifying that mistake means that obviously what you just said is correct. Does that make sense to you?

MAH: Yes, it makes complete sense.

CAROLINA: You're always communicating; it's not all verbal communication. I tell people all the time. I say 'in fact, you speak non-verbally before you speak verbally'. I don't care how intelligent you are, if you don't present yourself in a certain way then you turn yourself out before you open your mouth. So you need to be cautious about how you present yourself in terms of appearance first and how you act because that's what gets you in first. You may have someone who is less educated but if they present themselves and then speak well too, they are going to get in over you. So if you're very intelligent yet you don't present yourself well, then you can forget it. You speak non-verbally before you speak verbally and that's how people are all the time. You've got to be careful how you carry yourself as well as how you dress. In fact, one time I think we had someone from high level administration who unexpectedly came for a visit on campus and they were looking for faculty to speak with this person and said, "we were trying to think about who we could ask to speak and you always dress nice and we don't have to worry about how you dress. You always dress nice, we don't have to worry about your appearance and meeting with them; we couldn't say that to everybody." So I always tell people 'you speak non-verbally before you even open your mouth' and it determines how people respect you.

MAH: I don't know what else to ask of you, you just were very thorough. I'll transcribe this and I'll give you more questions to follow if I have any. Have you ever had a mentor or a mentee?

CAROLINA: I never thought of her as a mentor or anything. I thought of her more as a friend. And a very good friend, she was Caucasian. She didn't have to. If it hadn't been for her, I don't know where I would've gotten. She had all these pictures of graduates and there have never been more than one black in that class. And in that particular class, they would accept only one. There were three of us that had applied, but only one would be accepted. And I really attribute being accepted to her. They didn't make any mistake. It was just a coincidence, it was a unique coincidence. But they didn't make a mistake; they were meeting the usual curriculum of one person.

MAH: Have you had anybody that you see as a mentor?

CAROLINA: Lots of people ask that and to be honest with you, years ago when I was coming up, we didn't even know what a mentor was. That was not something that was mentioned. We had no one who really took you into their arms. It was self motivation. It was aspiration, what you wanted. Your parents pushing you to do better than what they had done and that was just... I guess if you look at it as being a mentor then my parents were my mentors because they always said 'you can be whomever you want to be, don't let this

person tell you that you're such and such, you're just as good as they are. You go and you study and you do... but they always said you have to study, but you can achieve, you can do better than what we did'. And they had reasons for that, for not finishing.

My dad was the oldest of his siblings and he had to drop out to take care of his youngest siblings. There were reasons they didn't finish. Like I said, they recognized the importance of education. My mom, even though she didn't finish, she knew how to read and write. She taught us how to read; by the time we got to kindergarten we already knew how to read books. And they were talking about skipping us to first grade and everything, because we were so much more advanced than other kids. But she didn't want us to do that because she had watched her husband's sisters who taught their children and a cousin who graduated from the University at the age of 17 because they were bright and, they finished college. But what happened was they couldn't get jobs. You have these young kids who are bright graduated very early and so you might as well give them a job. And, a black person at the age of 17, with a college degree and trying to get job? That wasn't happening. So my mom said 'I don't want them skipped, I want them to go'. But we got in higher courses at the high school, and after integration we went into honors courses. Other people were just put in honors courses. But those of us who were black had to pass the test to qualify for an honors course. But we passed it. We got in. I don't know that I had a mentor. Like I said, then it was just my own person and desire to achieve, to know. I wanted to do more than some people, to have more than what my parents had. I don't want to struggle as much as they did. But I don't think I really and truly had a mentor.

MAH: This interview was so good. Thank you so much.