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A Phenomenological Study on the Leadership Development of African American Women Executives in Academia and Business

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN EXECUTIVES

IN ACADEMIA AND BUSINESS

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women through their lived experiences of how they developed into leaders. This research study was designed to determine how the intersection of race and gender identities contributed to the elements of leadership development as perceived by eight African American female executives in academia and business. The researcher sought to explore strategies future leaders might utilize to address leadership development and career ascendency for African American females who aspire to leadership roles. A phenomenological research method was most appropriate for this research study to capture the lived experiences of individuals from their perspectives and to develop themes that challenged structural or normative assumptions.

This research study examined leadership development of eight African American female leaders in two distinct enterprises: academia and business. In both sectors, changes prompted by economic challenges, competition, globalization, and demographic projections have significantly challenged the ability to develop leadership capabilities among African American women. While women have been entering the workforce in greater numbers and making progress into management and professional positions, access to senior leadership ranks remains limited for African American women. As evidenced by studies recorded in the literature, it is prudent to investigate the leadership development modalities required to identify and develop African American female leaders.

This qualitative, phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of how eight African American women developed as leaders. The exploration of factors that the participants' considered significant in their development as leaders provided the study data. A phenomenological research method fit the goal of understanding how race and gender informed the career development of African American women in senior level leadership positions in academia and business.

The phenomenological inquiry uncovered meaning from the lived experiences of these African American women. Their experiences, as evident through the interview data, encompassed their personal knowledge of how race and gender informed their leadership development. Scholarly literature reviewed for the study followed the theory of intersectionality as it related to the influence of race and gender on African American women in academia and business, as well as their underrepresentation in senior level positions. This perspective facilitated breaking through the glass ceilings surrounding African American women's advancement to leadership positions in these sectors. The method of inquiry included phenomenological reflection on data elicited by the investigation of the phenomenon of race and gender identities and the investigation of these women's development as leaders.

The significance of this study was to describe the personal and professional perceptions experienced by African American women in their accession to leadership positions. The data gathered was analyzed to develop themes for which potential African American females who aspire to become organizational leaders can learn from and apply. This exploration may provide information to individuals interested in the career paths of African American women leaders. Moreover, this research is vital given the increasing

demographic changes in society in which through which African American women will

have more leadership opportunities.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Lionel and Yvonne E. Davis. Daddy, I wish you were here with me but I know that you are smiling down from heaven as a proud father. Dad, you were always there for me throughout my education and always pushed me to excel academically. I vividly remember how proud you were of me as you drove me to college as an undergraduate and flew with me to the east coast for graduate school. Words cannot express how grateful I am to both of my parents for instilling in me the importance of education and teaching me to always put forth my best efforts. All of my accomplishments and the woman that I have become are all attributed to having the best parents.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

In the early 20$^{\text{th}}$ century, leadership traits were studied by scholars to determine what made certain people great leaders. The theories that were developed were called "great man" theories because they focused on identifying the innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great social, political and military leaders (Northouse, 2010). It was believed that people were born with these traits and only "great" people possessed these characteristics (Bass, 1990; Northouse, 2010; Ott, Parkes & Simpson, 2008). Thus, the traditional model of leadership arose from the study of White [1]men (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996, Bass, 1990; Northouse, 2010). Horsford (2012) states that "such theories have not similarly explored the natural, inborn or divine gifts and traits associated with the "great woman," and certainly not women of disadvantage and color (p. 13).

Traditional leadership theories focused on males who assumed positions of power and authority in dominant culture organizations (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). This predominant model was based on a White-male hierarchical model of control and competitive behavior (Loden, 1985). Since White men were the ones who managed organizations successfully, White women and women of color were not considered; they were invisible. Kanter (1977) postulated that women, who were viewed in terms of social category stereotypes, had to adapt to a stereotypical belief of leadership. Eagly (2005) posits when leadership is defined in masculine terms, "the leaders who emerge are

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[1] According to APA Manual 6$^{\text{th}}$ edition, language that essentializes or reifies race is strongly discouraged and is generally considered inappropriate. In the usage of racial and ethnic groups in this dissertation, the researcher does not want to be pejorative and will utilize unparalleled designations that are consistent with the terminology used in the literature (2010, p. 75).

disproportionately men, regardless of the sex composition of the community of followers" (p. 463).

There have been an increasing number of studies conducted on female managers and leaders that attempt identify key success factors or pitfalls (Morrison, White & Van Velsor, 1982). Most of the research has been done with women at lower levels or in small organizations. Research has also been conducted on how gender might influence leadership (Waring, 2003). While some scholars have studied African American female leaders from a sociological perspective, few studies have researched how race and gender interacts to inform their leadership development (Collins, 1990; Stanley, 2009; Byrd, 2009). Furthermore, rarely is intersectionality considered and even less frequently are discussions of how one's race and gender might influence one's conception of leadership in academia and business.

To capture the qualities of leaders that facilitate positive outcomes, leadership theorists are attempting to more fully delineate the qualities that constitute good leadership (Eagly, 2005). When the female gender role is inconsistent with a leader role, prejudice toward women as leaders is a common outcome. People are unaccustomed in many organizational contexts to women possessing substantial authority that encompasses decision-making power (Eagly, 2005). Eagly (2005) contends that "not only do people doubt that women possess the appropriate competencies, but also they may resent the overturning of the expected and usual hierarchical relation between the sexes" (p. 465).

Bell (1992) points out that in the research on women in management, women of color have been ignored. Research on the leadership development of women has often

been confined within studies of women's history or feminist literature (Waring, 2003). Moreover, the absence of research on the leadership development of African Americans has been due to a lack of understanding about how African American women develop as leaders in organizations (Parker, 2001). According to Waring (2003), "a review of the existing body of knowledge on women in management might lead to the observation that much of the scholarship addresses the experiences of only one group of women managers and does not address the effects of race and gender on African American women" (p. 1).

The purpose of this study was to explore the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women through their lived experiences of how they developed as leaders. This research study aimed to address the importance of studying the experiences of African American women to better understand the origins and conceptions of their development as leaders.

Background of the Problem

Traditionally, the dominant organizational culture in academia and business has conceptualized African American women as outsiders (Combs, 2003; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996; Collins, 2000). Thus, the pathway to leadership development in the workplace has been faced with unique challenges and risk for this population. Some African American women leaders may elect to diminish their personal identity or self-concept within the workplace in an effort to maximize their perceived leadership (Bell, 1990). As a result, African American female leaders may refrain from a full authentic expression of self in the workplace in order to achieve organizational acceptance and credibility. This guarded persona may stifle the ability of African American women to develop as leaders (Combs, 2003).

In the 1970s and 1980s, women of color began to theorize about their uniquely disadvantaged position (Almquist, 1979). For women of color, they experienced a double jeopardy of having a non-White ethnic background and being female. This fact proposed that women of color faced a double whammy of discrimination (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Beal, 1970). They were discriminated against due to the duality of being both a women and a minority. According to double jeopardy, "minority women are the primary targets of harassment and discrimination because they face both sexual and ethnic prejudice" (Berdahl & Moore, 2006, p. 427). For African American women, the dually subjugated positions play a pivotal role on their development as leaders.

In recent years, Collins (2000) suggests that there has been increasing interest among researchers to understand the experiences of African American women from their own perspectives. However, few studies have focused on the convergence of race and gender and how these spheres inform African American women's leadership development (Stanley, 2009; Byrd, 2009). Waring (2003) posits that to fully understand the plight of African American female leaders' experiences in organizations, we must understand the multiple forms of oppression they encounter. As African Americans, they are subject to both overt and covert racism. As women, they are subjected to the sexism that women face in larger society. However, much of the research that takes place on racism and sexism in the United States ignores the interaction of race and gender on the lives of African American women (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000; Byrd & Stanley, 2009).

According to a study conducted by Ransford & Miller (1983), African American women had a stronger tradition of autonomy and independence characteristics in the

workplace, but these proclivities did not grant them access to managerial positions. Women and minorities often face hostile receptions in traditionally male and White-dominated domains, which in turn discouraged them from entering and developing in these organizations (Berdahl & Moore, 2006). Waring (2003) states that the majority of literature on leadership, even the literature which seeks to explore the differences between male and female leaders, does not attend to the differences that race and gender may play in shaping one's leadership development. In addition, the literature is bereft of studies on understanding how double jeopardy for minority women might manifest in organizations (Berdahl & Moore, 2006). This omission has left a gap in our understanding of how African American women's racial and gendered identities influence their development as leaders.

Statement of the Problem

Barriers to leadership opportunities are a global phenomenon where women, when compared to men, are disproportionately concentrated in lower-level and lower-authoritative leadership positions (Northouse, 2010). These barriers are generally perceived to be against women, but to a larger extent are against African-American women executives (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). According to Parker (1994) and Talley-Ross (1992), African American women report that racism, rather than sexism, is the greatest barrier to opportunities in dominant culture organizations (as cited in Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). Furthermore, only a few studies have examined how race impacts leadership in dominant culture organizations (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996; hooks, 1984, Parker, 2005). Ransford & Miller (1983) suggested that attitudes towards women continue to be profoundly affected by past and current racial oppression.

5

Research has shown that women have made considerable progress in organizational representation including increased earning power, movement into managerial and executive-level positions, and increased presence in the boardroom (Combs, 2003; Catalyst, 2008; U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 1999). However, this picture may not reflect the career advancement and leadership development of African American women. African American women contend with the convergence of race and gender in improving their leadership development and career advancement opportunities (Combs, 2003). Due to the duality of race and gender, African American women in managerial and executive leadership positions have elected to minimize aspects of their personal identity within dominant culture organizations (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). The duality of race and gender for African American female leaders is critical to understanding the position and quality of their participation in the workplace.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women through their lived experiences of how they developed as leaders. The goal of the research was to understand how African American women executives made meaning out of their experiences and developed as leaders. A number of studies have addressed the challenges and obstacles African American women face in aspiring and obtaining leadership positions within organizations (Brinson, 2006; Scales, 2010; Collins, 2000, Parker, 2005). Byrd (2009) posits that "for African American women in predominantly white organizations, race, gender and social class may restrict the process of leadership (p. 1). Therefore, the thrust of this research was to examine the

relative leadership development of African American women based on the intersection of their racial and gendered identities.

Significance of the Study

There are a number of significant reasons for understanding the lived experiences that African American women encountered while ascending to leadership positions within academia and business. For example, it is not understood how African American leaders' heightened awareness of racism and sexism affects the way they exercise leadership (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996).   Research data has shown that in 2008, African Americans were approximately 13.9% of the total private labor force and held 3.3 percent of the total executive/senor level positions (League of Black Women, 2011). However, more recent data indicated that in 2010, only 2.4% of the U.S. Fortune 500 chief executives were female (Toegel, 2011). Out of the number of management positions in business, women held 49% of the jobs and 50% of all managerial positions (Toegel, 2011). Moreover in 2011, 6 percent of all college presidents were African American and African American women represented one-third of that percentage (American Council on Education, 2012).

The low representation of African American women in leadership positions serves to highlight the potential for unique leadership experiences for these women and should serve as an impetus for organizations to increase their representation. By doing so, organizations will fulfill the promise of equal opportunity by providing African American women with opportunities to assume leadership roles.

Promoting African American women and a richly diverse group of women into leadership roles will help academia and businesses to maximize their human capital and

become more inclusive. Indeed, research conducted by Catalyst (2004) showed a strong connection between gender diversity and organizational financial performance; as the number of women at the top increases, so does financial success. As more women occupy positions of leadership, questions as to whether they lead in a different manner from men will provide rich insight into their leadership abilities. Based on this inquiry, this research study focused on African American women who have broken through the glass ceiling, maneuvered the concrete wall and assumed positions of leadership and power within dominant enterprises.

The significance of this study was to describe the personal and professional perceptions experienced by African American women in their accession to leadership positions. The data gathered was analyzed to develop themes for African American women who aspire to become organizational leaders. In the future, this exploration may provide information to individuals interested in the career paths of these African American female leaders. This research is important given the increasing demographic changes in society in which more opportunities are available for African American women to ascend into leadership roles in professional organizations.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women through their lived experiences of how they developed as leaders. This qualitative study aimed to research racial and gendered implications of becoming a leader for African American women in academia and business. Exploring the factors that hinder or affect African American women's upward advancement in leadership positions in academia and business led to the following research question:

1. *In what ways did race and gender identities inform African American women*

    leadership development experiences?

The primary research question led to the following sub-questions:

a.   How has your race and gender shaped your development as a leader?

b.   How has your gender influenced or affected your career?

c.   How has your race influenced or affected your career?

Based on the research, a phenomenological research method was employed to capture the essence of the participants' stories and to fully understand their common experiences. According to Creswell (2009), the nature of a qualitative research design should capture the "what" and "how" of the collective experience. Thus, a phenomenological research method was best suited to identify the shared experiences of the study participants (Moustakas, 1994). To fully capture the experiences of select African American women in leadership positions in academia and business, a qualitative phenomenological study was most appropriate.

Theoretical Framework

Research in the 1980s and 1990s increasingly focused on uncovering connections among systems of oppression organized along constructs of social class, gender, race and nationalism (Collins, 2003). Social science research generally viewed social class as a descriptive, static system of individual classification (Collins, 2003; Eagly, 2005). Viewing social class through these lenses created a monolithic view of leadership development operating in a historic fashion according to its own natural laws and rules (Collins, 2003). These boundaries divided women from men who traditionally were given access to positions of substantial authority.

The theoretical framework for this study incorporated feminist and socio-cultural theories for contextualizing the epistemological worldview of a group of people who had experienced racism, discrimination and marginalization (Bernal, 2002). These theories challenge the dominant discourses in structures and processes that dialectically marginalize and emancipate (Bernal, 2002; Parker, 2005, hooks, 1984). The theoretical framework for this study drew on the following theories: feminist, Black feminist, socio-cultural and intersectionality. Each theory is presented to explain the importance of the experiences of African American women in relation to their race and gender identities and leadership development. A visual depiction of these theories is provided in Appendix B with a discussion of each theory presented in Chapter 2.

Feminist theories. Feminist scholarship has inspired fundamental changes in the ways individuals view social groups and processes. According to Collins (2003), feminist scholarship challenges several dimensions of leadership development by focusing on the centrality of gender. Feminist theories have focused on the oppression of women and aim to understand the nature of gender inequality. Feminism's narrow focus on gender equity has neglected to examine how both race and gender affect the oppression of women. Thus, the intersection of race and gender on leadership development has received little attention within the confines of traditional literature. Conversely, paradigms of Black feminist theories have identified new directions and frameworks for studies on African American female leaders.

Black Feminist theories. Black feminist theory provides African American women the opportunity to speak from an experience unbeknownst to other women. According to Collins (2000), Black feminist theory encompasses a place of

marginalization in which African American women are different from White and other minority women. African American women may have different experiences of power, growth, and development compared to other women. Thus, this research seeks to capture these lived experiences through the lenses of the participants in the study.

Socio-cultural theories. The dual and systematic discriminations of racism and sexism remain pervasive and permeate throughout many organizational sectors (Gaetane, Williams & Shermaine, 2009). Miller & Vaughn (1997) assert that, "the twin guise of racism and sexism still imposes great restraints on the utilization of the competence and talents of African American women" (p. 179). According to Merriam & Caffarella (1999), "socio-cultural refers to theoretical perspectives that consider race, gender, and social class in analyzing power dynamics within bureaucratic and other systems where power can be used to oppress (as cited in Byrd, 2009). Socio-cultural theories position African American women within an interlocking system of race, gender and social class, which in turn can create disempowering experiences as leaders in predominantly White organizations (Stanley, 2009).

Intersectionality. According to Parker (2005), intersectionality is a means for analyzing and interpreting the experiences that African American women encounter while holding positions of authority in predominantly White organizations. African American women have a connection through race and gender within society and can identify with other African American women from this perspective. Stanley (2009) surmised that through intersectionality, "the lived experiences of African American women are not located within separate spheres of race, gender and social class. Rather,

11

these spheres intersect and shape social realities that are not captured within traditional feminist discourse" (p. 552).

Due to the fact that there is a lack of research and literature on African American women's leadership and intersectionality of race and gender in predominantly White organizations, this study aims to address the gap. Furthermore, research on African American women as leaders is often subsumed within feminist literature (Stanley, 2009), and as such does not contribute to the understanding, or lack of understanding, of the intersectionality of race and gender that African American women face in their leadership development. Therefore, articulating how racial and gendered identities inform the leadership development experiences of African American women in academia and business is needed to challenge the traditional discourse. It is also useful for understanding the leadership experiences of this group.
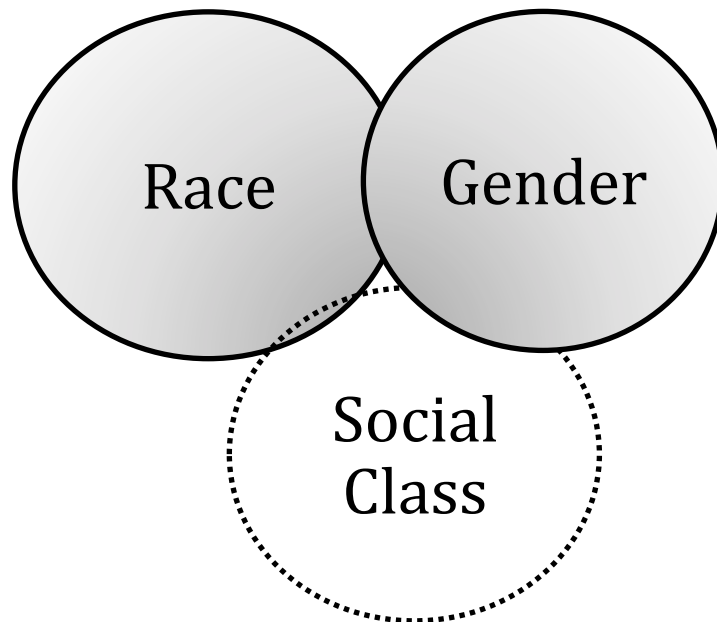
Figure 1. Intersectionality

Definition of Terms

This section contains key terms used within the dissertation to define a common understanding.

Academia. Institutions of higher education organized into a system, or several systems, of academic institutions, with governing boards elected or appointed for each system or for individual systems (Ehrenberg, 2004).

African-American/ Black. The terms African American and Black are synonymous in the current study to refer to Americans of African ancestry (Lloyd-Jones, 2009).

Business. Organizations engaged in trade of goods, services, or both to consumers (Morgan, 2006).

Double Jeopardy. The hypothesis that minority women are discriminated against both as women and as minorities (Berdahl & Moore, 2006).

Gender. The result of social and cultural forces rather than biology that operates at the level of the individual personality (Vannoy, 2001).

Glass Ceiling. The glass ceiling is defined as artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevents qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions (U. S. Department of Labor, 1991).

Intersectionality. Denotes the various ways in which race, gender and social class interact to shape the multiple dimensions of the everyday lived experiences of African American women (Crenshaw, 1989).

Leader. Individuals who inspire others to follow and cultivate an environment of teamwork, trust and collaboration (Bass, 1990).

Leadership. Leadership is conceived as the focus of group processes, as a matter of personality, as a matter of inducing compliance, as the exercise of influence, as particular behaviors, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument to achieve goals, and as many combinations of these definitions (Bass, 1990).

Leadership Development. Leadership developed in people over a lifetime and grounded in the leader's experiences, psychological qualities, self-awareness, moral perspective and ethics (Northouse, 2010).

Socio-cultural Theories. Theoretical perspectives that consider race, gender and social class in analyzing power dynamics within bureaucratic and other systems where power can be used to oppress (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Assumptions

In a phenomenological research study, it is assumed that the researcher will actively interact with his or her participants. The researcher uses oneself as an instrument that is granted privileged access to the subject's lived world (Creswell, 2009). Moustakas (1994) acknowledged the influence that human perceptions, recollection and interpretation of events on individual responses.

In conducting this study, the researcher had no control over the credibility or trustworthiness of the participants' responses to the interview questions. Therefore, one cannot assume that the participants will answer the questions correctly and honestly. Additionally, the researcher assumed that the participants would understand that their responses are confidential and that their responses would be open and candid.

14

Limitations

According to Creswell (1994), "defining limitations of a study establishes the boundaries, exceptions, reservations and qualifications inherent in every study" (p. 110). Research bias can be a limitation for this qualitative phenomenological study because the researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Another limitation was that the researcher only interviewed a small sample of African American women in leadership positions in academia and business. Therefore, the researcher cannot generalize these findings to all African American women's development as leaders.

Delimitations

Creswell (2003) defined "delimitations as parameters that narrow the scope of a study" (p. 147). For purposes of this study, the researcher was solely interested in understanding African American women's views on their experiences as leaders. The researcher assumed African American women had a unique story about their pathways to becoming a leader in White male dominated organizations. Therefore, this research solely focused on African American women to gain a better understanding of their trajectory into these positions. It was the intent of the researcher to acquire information in the study that could serve as baseline data for future studies on intersectionality and leadership development.

Chapter Summary

The first chapter introduced the proposed research study by describing the problem and need for such a study. The gap in the current literature was described as well as the purpose and significance of the study. Feminist and socio-cultural theories

were significant in discussing the theoretical framework of intersectionality that was employed in this qualitative phenomenological study. "Phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10). Through a phenomenological research methodology, the researcher hoped to discover the underlying meanings of the participants' shared lived experience to arrive at a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Van Manen, 1990).

Chapter 2 presents a detailed literature review, historical perspectives, and knowledge about challenges and obstacles of African American female leaders while seeking senior-level leadership positions in academia and business. It was the hope of the researcher that through this chapter, readers would begin the journey of understanding the literature and theoretical framework that describe leadership development, socio-cultural theories and intersectionality.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviewed literature in support of the current study on how racial and gendered identities informed the leadership development of African American female executives in academia and business. The research study explored challenges and barriers faced by African American women who had advanced their careers in these enterprises. Much of the research on leadership development of women and minorities often ignores the unique dualism and experiences of these women. A paucity of research resulted in a lack of scholarly inquiry on the leadership development of African American women as they ascended to top-level positions. One step in understanding African American women's ascendency to leadership was to understand their lived experiences.

In recent years, the amount of literature on women's leadership has increased; however, few studies explore leadership development of African American women in academia and business. Much of the literature has been limited to the traditionally defined views of leadership. That is, most of the research concentrated on leadership and managerial aspects adopted by White males in the corporate world. The literature was replete with studies on the differences between male and female characteristics and traits that are normally associated with leadership, such as individualism vs. collaboration (Loden, 1985; Helgesen, 1990; Cantor & Bernay, 1992). Modern discussions of leadership are based upon two concepts: transactional or transformational leadership (Fisher & Koch, 1996). According to Parker (2005), transformational leadership places an emphasis on social change and emancipation. For African American women,

17

transformational leadership has been closely aligned to their leadership style (Walker, 2009; Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Parker, 2005).

According to a 2007 Department of Labor Statistics report, women represent 46% of managerial positions across the United States (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). In fact, there are relatively few women who are leaders in corporate ranks. In Fortune 500 corporate office positions held by women in 2008, only 15.7% were held in senior level positions (Catalyst, 2008). In October 2010, the White House released a special report, *Jobs and Economic Security for America's Women,* written by the National Economic Council (NEC) (2010). The NEC noted that only 2.6 percent of Fortune 500 companies are led by a female CEO, and only 15.2 percent of those companies' board seats are occupied by women (Zeidman, 2011).

According to a report by the Center for American Women and Politics (2009), it was noted that there have been only 31 female governors in all of American history and none of them have been women of color. The first woman of color served as governor in the United States territory of Puerto Rico from 2001-2005. In 2006, only 23% of college presidents were women compared to 90.5% and 79% of White males in provost and presidential/chief executive officer positions respectively (Jaschik, 2008). Although 68% of nonprofit organizations' employees were women, only 16% of chief executives were women (Pynes, 2000).

Valian (1998) indicated that inequality for women existed in many professions, such as in business, sports, military, academia and politics. Currently, women constitute nearly half of the U.S. labor force, yet encounter discrimination concerning their positions, salaries, and possibilities for promotion (Beck & Davis, 2005). According to

the National Economic Council report, only 1 in 14 women earn more than $100,000 a year, as compared with 1in 7 men (Zeidman, 2011). Moreover, minority women are entering the labor market at an increasing rate but continue to lack the power and access to leadership positions at the executive level. In spite of having a college degree and work experience, this segment of the population continues to be passed over for promotions and are paid lower salaries than their counterparts (Gibelman, 2003).

Many explanations have been posited about prevents women from attaining executive-level leadership positions. Catalyst (2005) surveyed Fortune 1000 CEO's and women executives about the challenges they faced in advancing to the highest level of leadership positions within their organizations. Less than one-third of the 120 CEO's and the 705 female executives considered a lack of desire to advance to senior levels a barrier to women's advancement. Wellington, Kropf & Gerkovich (2003) noted that women may not be aspiring to these roles because they are not aware that leadership positions are open to them. Furthermore, female executives may be discouraged by superiors from pursuing these roles, or may not be in the talent pool when succession plans are made (Wellington et al., 2003).

Although some research has been conducted on African American women in leadership positions (Byrd, 2009), most studies have generally focused on topics such as barriers to equal opportunity and a lack of career advancement for African American women rather than focused on individual experiences. Furthermore, the literature is often subsumed with how minority women fare and lead within predominantly White organizations and as such, do not add to an understanding of their leadership development. As a result, there is a marked absence of research on how African

American women experience leadership and develop as leaders. Toward this end, it might help our understanding to recognize the changing faces of leadership in organizations and make theoretical frameworks that are applicable to these identified groups available to practitioners and professionals (Brinson, 2006).

Background on Leadership Development

According to Bass (1990), leadership has many definitions. Leaders inspire others to follow, and cultivate an environment of teamwork, trust and collaboration (Bass, 1990). Leaders shape the vision and strategy of an organization. The role of a leader involves creating a compelling vision, defining a competitive strategy and communicating the vision and strategy so that the organization's employees can carry out the process effectively (Argyris, 1998). All leadership theories have one element in common; leaders are identified as individuals who exert more influence within a group than any other member of the group (Collins, 2001; Northouse, 2010; Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Bass (1990) defined leadership as:

The focus of group processes, as a matter of personality, as a matter of inducing compliance, as the exercise of influence, as particular behaviors, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument to achieve goals, as an effect of interaction, as a differentiated role, and as initiation of structure. (p. 11)

Bass (1990) emphasized that leadership occurs when the interaction between two or more persons results in one group member's action affecting or modifying the actions of other members more than the opposite occurring. Leadership involves influence and is

20

concerned with how the leader affects followers. Without influence over others,

leadership does not exist (Northouse, 2010).

Historically, the traditionally defined model of leadership has been overshadowed

by the Great Man theories (Judge, Piccolo & Kosaika, 2009). Within these theories

mythical leaders were born, which ultimately led to the assumption that good leadership

is essentially masculine (Judge, et al., 2009). Such great men leaders like Julius Caesar,

Napoleon, Winston Churchill, Vladimir Lenin, and George Washington initiated

movement and prevented others from leading society in another direction (Bass, 1990).

In discussing leadership, the studies of leadership have presumably taken for granted

notions of White-middle class men as the defining group for studying leadership. This

male model has dominated leadership to the point that most leadership attributes are

masculine in nature (Blackmore, 1989). Based on these dominant prevailing notions of

who encompasses a leader, women and minorities have been excluded from this arena.

In studies about the leadership of women that surfaced in the 1970s and 1980s,

the focus was on the experiences of middle- to upper-class White women without

commensurate attention to women from other classes and women of color (Collins, 2000;

Delany & Rogers, 2004). Leadership style has been an area of research in the literature

that suggests women and men lead differently. Research by Eagly and Karau (1991)

concluded that men emerged more frequently as task-oriented leaders, whereas women

emerged as social leaders. The results concluded that "men's specialization relative to

women in strictly task-oriented behaviors is one key to their emergence as group leaders;

thus, ensuring that men would be seen as better 'fit' than women in the role of

leadership" (p. 705).

Most research on leadership has focused on men with less attention being given to the issues of female leadership or to the related issue of female leadership characteristics and development (Byham, 2000). Many of the images associated with leadership point to men who step forward and take control of a crisis. There has been a lot of debate on whether men and women leaders behave differently in leadership roles. According to Kabacoff (1998), "leadership styles of women and men are different, mainly along the lines of women exhibiting results oriented leadership behaviors and democratic leadership style while men are more strategic, innovative and conservative" (p. 4).

Much of what we understand about leadership theory is based on studies that occurred in the early 20th century and did not include women (Carter, 2002). The way of thinking about leadership has expanded to acknowledge women leaders, even as leadership theories remain closely aligned to male gendered identities. However, the research contends that rather than providing parity for women leaders, the literature has helped to perpetuate certain stereotypes of gender-specific roles by arguing that men and women have inherently different ways of leading (Jansen, Vera & Crossan, 2009). The inability to apply traditional leadership theories to African American women in predominantly white organizations may present a need to re-evaluate traditional theory in respect to practical application in these settings (Byrd, 2009).

Leadership Development in Women

Double standards for female and male leaders are still perpetuated in today's workplace. Oftentimes, women face challenges when working in male-dominated organizational cultures because to achieve success, women typically have to adapt to the organizational culture by taking on male attitudes and values (Carli & Eagly, 2001).

"Corporate policies and practices subtly maintain the status quo by keeping men in positions of corporate power" (Lockwood, 2004, p. 2). Sczesny (2003) indicated that holding leadership roles could be problematic for women because the schemas that people hold of leaders are different from those they hold of women.

Stereotypical assumptions about the gender differences between men and women make conditions difficult for women to obtain the opportunity to be placed in senior leadership positions (Heilman, 2001). The traditional defined model of leadership assumes that good leadership is essentially masculine. Such masculine characteristics as being a good decision-maker, organized, assertive and strategic, have been and continue to be associated with good leadership. On the other hand, women leaders have been described as sensitive, caring, compassionate, responsive, democratic, participative and nurturing (Fisher & Koch, 1996). Feminine leadership styles offer attributes such as being collaborative, inclusive, democratic and participative (Northouse, 2010). "Female leadership styles are also credited with effectively managing and inspiring performance and possessing high levels of cultural competence" (Traub, 2011, p. 36).

According to Traub (2011), "for too long, women have carried the water alone in the name of advancing themselves into leadership positions with limited success" (p. 36). Women are scarce in top leadership positions and the managerial parity between men and women continues on a downward trajectory. A September 28, 2010, Wall Street Journal article, "Slow Progress for Women in Management Positions" reported that at the rate women are moving into management – from 39 percent to only 40 percent of all management positions in the past 10 years – women won't realize managerial parity in the near future (Silverman, 2010).

Nevertheless, women are projected to account for 51.2 percent of the increase in total labor force growth between 2008 and 2018 (U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, 2009). The executive summary for the *Jobs and Economic Security for America's Women* report stated, "As the majority of college graduates and nearly 50 percent of the workforce, women are in a position to drive our 21st-century economy" (National Economic Council, 2010, p. 1). While women in the workforce on average constitute 47% of middle management positions in U.S. organizations, this figure drops substantially at the executive management level where women hold 17% of the positions (Guthrie & Roth, 1999).

As women ascend to leadership positions, the barriers to assure continuity and retention of top female executive talent become more complex. With the current pipeline already lacking female leaders, the issues of supply and demand have long-term effects for women breaking through the glass ceiling. On the supply side, women are increasingly outperforming men in college, and their sheer numbers outstrip men in gaining advanced degrees (Hackett, 2011). While on the demand side, organizations cannot continue to afford to squander female talent and the strategic capability it represents for businesses. The constructions of diversity-as-capital discourse suggest that the same common sense discussions of women's leadership may be taken up very differently depending on the nature of the field and institutional context in which it circulates (Wilkinson & Blackmore, 2008).

As women and minorities increase their representation in the labor pool, female leaders in corporate America still only hold middle management positions. While women have been entering the workforce in greater numbers and making progress into

management and professional positions, access to senior management remains limited (Catalyst, 2001). A review of the literature finds that few studies have explored the experiences of women who have assumed leadership positions and there has been less research that has addressed women's career advancement from the perspective of women who have transitioned into senior level positions (Lyness & Thompson, 1977). Moreover, there is a marked absence of research that focuses on the experiences of African American women who have ascended to leadership roles in academia and business (Parker, 2005; Stanley, 2009; Bell, 1990).

Due to the changing workplace demographics and shifts in the global environment, new leadership and ways of managing people will be required. According to Ready (2004), it is imperative for organizations to identify and develop female leaders who can work effectively across organizational and geographic boundaries. However, to be successful in the future, companies will need to select and develop leaders who are competent in managing organizations as a whole. Organizations need leaders that have some charisma and possess the ability to inspire followers to subordinate their own interest for the good of the organization. It is important that today's organizations have the ability to identify a diverse workforce which will include both women and women of color, to provide leadership skills that will transform these enterprises to meet the challenges of the new global marketplace.

Leadership Development in African American Women

The emergence of Black female leadership in the United States represents a struggle for liberation from oppression and a means to uplift the Black community out of racial, educational and economic subjugation (Rosser-Mims, 2010). Throughout history,

25

African American women have had to contend with sexism from African American men, as well as racism and class oppression from White females and males (Collins, 2000). Oftentimes, African American women had been denied access and opportunities to lead and perceived as better followers than leaders. According to Allen (1997), "Black women essentially have been forced to create safe havens from the hostile work environments that prohibited personal growth and community survival" (p. 64). In essence, Black female leaders emerged from and were largely shaped by external and internal forces that affected their everyday lived experiences.

An important issue for women and minorities is the perceived lack of opportunities for executive leadership positions. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics (1999), gender bias was a determinant when women and minorities were passed over for promotions. Carli and Eagly (2001) posit that leadership has been construed as a position with special challenges not suited for women. Stanley (2009) found evidence "that there is an absence of theories that explain and, more importantly, expose how the existence of race, gender, and social class may affect an individual's experience and therefore restrict the capacity to effectively learn and perform" (p. 554).

According to Linehan (2001), barriers exist because women and minorities have been, for the most part, excluded from the "good old boy" networks that usually are composed of individuals who hold power and status in an organization. Linehan further states that "for African American women who are educated and have the competencies to perform in leadership positions, the lack of power, status, race and gender oftentimes impedes their opportunities" (p. 825). Social stratification within organizations can

ultimately determine who moves up the career ladder. Oftentimes, African American women are excluded from stepping onto the ladder in the first place.

The underrepresentation of African American women in leadership positions can be attributed to sociological barriers and organizational structures. In the 1980s, there was a dramatic change occurring in the workplace due to global competition and technological advancements (Almquist, 1987). Corporate leaders had to prepare and adapt to these changes in their traditional management philosophies (Almquist, 1987). However, organizations did not embrace recruitment practices that emphasized recruitment of women and minorities for these newly created positions. Catalyst (2005) suggested that the primary barriers to the advancement of women and minorities were not their leadership competencies, but what could be done to overcome the cultural perceptions that had become obstacles for them.

The leadership competencies associated with African American women are traditionally perceived as incompatible with managerial decision-making roles. In one of the few studies on African American women's actual leadership styles, Jones (1992) administered the Multifactor Leadership Questionaire (MLQ) (as cited in Parker & Ogilive, 1996) to 17 African American women college presidents. The research found that their leadership was more transformational than transactional (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). Parker and Ogilvie (1996) suggested that "African-American women executives' leadership strategies and tactics may be conceptualized as a function of (a) their socialized traits, behaviors, and styles, and (b) their distinct social location within dominant culture organizations" (p. 192). Although there is a dearth of research on African American women's leadership styles and behaviors, Parker & Ogilvie (1996)

developed a culturally distinct model of African American female executives' leadership

styles, behaviors and strategies (see Figure 2).

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┌─────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  AAWE's Socialized Traits,  │        │ Leadership Context for AAWE's│
│     Behaviors & Styles      │        │                             │
├─────────────────────────────┤        ├─────────────────────────────┤
│ • Independent               │        │ • Racial Discrimination     │
│ • Assertive                 │        │ • Gender Discrimination     │
│ • Communicates Directly     │        │ • Interactive Effects       │
│ • Autonomous                │        │ • Complex Organizational    │
│ • Androgynous               │        │       Interactions          │
│ • Self-Confident            │        │ • Performance Attributes    │
│ • Strong                    │        │ • Devalued Leadership Ability│
└─────────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────────┘

          ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
          │  African American Women          │
          │  Executives Leadership Strategies │
          ├──────────────────────────────────┤
          │  • Biculturalism                 │
          │  • Avoidance                     │
          │  • Confrontational               │
          └──────────────────────────────────┘

          ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
          │  African American Women          │
          │  Executives Leadership Behaviors │
          ├──────────────────────────────────┤
          │  • Creativity                    │
          │  • Risk Taking                   │
          │  • Boundary Spanning             │
          │  • Divergent Thinking            │
          │  • Behavioral Complexity         │
          └──────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 2. A Culturally Distinct Model of African American Female Executives' Leadership

Compiled from "Gender, Culture, and Leadership: Towards a Culturally Distinct Model of African American Women Executives' Leadership Strategies," by S. Parker & D.T. Ogilvie, 1996, *The Leadership Quarterly,* 7(2), 189-214.

Black and multiracial feminist theory argues that race and gender are socially constructed categories that contain inherent power differences (Collins, 2000). Black feminist theory articulates a framework that argues race and gender cannot be separate (Beal, 1970). Furthermore, Beal posits that African American women's experiences are often characterized by "double barriers," which lead to disadvantages as a result of multiple marginalized identities. According to Glazer-Ramo (2001), as "more women earn professional degrees for entry into traditionally male professions, women experience isolation, exclusion from informal networks, and systemic discrimination" (p.145).

According to Meyerson and Fletcher (2000), the limited progress of minority female executives has also been attributed to a "glass ceiling," an invisible barrier to advancement based on attitudinal or organizational biases. In increasingly competitive global markets, firms are recognizing that barriers to the advancement of African American women can be detrimental to organizational effectiveness. Accordingly, the glass ceiling can be costly to an organization, not only in terms of lost productivity among women of color who feel stymied in the careers, but also in terms of turnover costs and annual salaries (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1990).

There have been a number of different views on the absence of women of color in executive leadership positions. One reason is due to overt and covert discrimination in employment. While this has become less acceptable in theory, in practice there is still an abundance of documentation that women and minorities still experience discrimination (Carli & Eagly, 2001). Another factor that has been reported that supports barriers for advancement of African American women has been referred to as the "pipeline problem" (Carli & Eagly, 2001). According to Carli and Eagly, the pipeline concept implies that

women with the appropriate education and background are not available; thus, they are not hired (2001). Oftentimes, organizations do not create environments that support the advancement of highly skilled and capable African American women to be developed to assume leadership roles. Lastly, the lack of access to informal networks maybe another reason that African American women are still underrepresented in upper management ranks (Combs, 2003).

As women and minorities increase their representation in the labor pool, it behooves organizations to compete to hire, utilize, and retain their best talent (Donahue, 1998). In order for African American women to be empowered, identifying the power structures that constrain their power and how these structures can be resisted or eliminated is critical for successful leadership (Collins, 1990).

Leadership Styles

Gender and leadership style often address the extent to which leaders are democratic or autocratic and the ways in which they communicate to subordinates and others (Parker & Ogilvie, 2005). Yet, there are often differences in the cultural traditions out of which certain groups develop as leaders. According to Bass (1990), the socialized traits associated with effective leadership are intelligence, self-confidence, autonomy, bureaucratic, and assertive. The leadership competencies most associated with women appears to be person-oriented, nurturing, non-competitive, and task oriented (Martin, Harrison & Dinitto, 1983). Parker and Ogilvie (1996) found that African American women leadership traits are described as participative; independent; self-confidence; nurturing; democratic; and transformational. Combs (2003) suggested that based on

leadership styles, women appear to encounter more barriers than men in obtaining

leadership opportunities and exposure that facilitate career advancement.

The Glass Ceiling

The glass ceiling is an invisible phenomenon that has been the subject of research

ever since the term was discussed in a "Wall Street Journal" article on executive women

(Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986). Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986) posited that the

biggest obstacle women faced was men at the top who felt uncomfortable with women

working beside them. Conversely, Gibelman (2000) refers to the glass ceiling as

"transparent but real barriers, based on discriminatory attitudes or organizational bias,

that impede or prevent qualified individuals, including but not limited to women, racial

and ethnic minorities, and disabled persons from advancing into management positions"

(p. 251). The glass ceiling has been defined, "as those intangible barriers based on

attitudinal or organizational bias that prevented qualified women from advancing upward

into management level positions" (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007).

Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1991, known as the Glass Ceiling Act of 1991,

specifically addressed concerns about the underrepresentation of women and minorities

in management and decision-making positions and the need to remove artificial barriers

that impede advancement (Gibelman, 2000). In 1991, the Federal Glass Ceiling

Commission (FGCC) was established to address the inequality in the workplace

experienced by women and minorities.

The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission discussed perspectives and experiences of

different racial and ethnic groups. According to the U.S. Federal Glass Ceiling

Commission, women held 46% of jobs in the United States and more than half of the

master's degrees being awarded, but 95% of senior managers were men (Sampson & Moore, 2008). In March 1995, the Department of Labor's Glass Ceiling Commission released the final results of its study on corporate America (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). The study examined the glass ceiling phenomenon as it related to five target groups – women of all races and ethnicities; African Americans; Asian Americans; Hispanic Americans; and American Indian men. Impediments were described as a "brick or concrete wall" for African Americans, "two-way mirror" for Hispanics, "more than glass" for Native Americans, and "impenetrable glass" for Asian and Pacific Islanders (FGCC, p. 57).

The glass ceiling presents an image whereby individuals have a conception of their position both above and below their status in the organization (Brinson, 2006). Schwartz (1989) presents an accurate representation of the glass ceiling metaphor as "the barriers to women's leadership which occur when potentially counterproductive layers of influence meet management strata pervaded by the largely unconscious perceptions, stereotypes and expectations of men" (p. 68). The glass ceiling runs wide and deep in corporate America, and African American women are confronted by the realities of racism, sexism and discrimination in their workplace (Brinson, 2006).

The limited progress of African American female executives in academia and business can be attributed to a glass ceiling. The barriers to these women's advancement in leadership have been broadly categorized as organizational obstacles, interpersonal difficulties and personal challenges all perpetuated through the effects of the glass ceiling barriers (Gibelman, 2000). Glass ceiling barriers continue to keep women and minorities from competing for and holding executive leadership positions in all sectors.

Feminist Theories

Research on feminism has examined feminist perspectives on the oppression and discrimination of women. Key researchers on feminist discourse include Liz Stanley, Mary Belenky, Gloria Bowles, and Sandra Harding (Wadsworth, 2001) who all focus on the rights of women. Feminist theories have focused on the oppression of women (hooks, 1984; Eisenstein, 2004). Feminism's presence has come about precisely because many women have rejected men's interpretation of their lives (Gottfried, 1996). Through feminist theory, women can centralize their experiences and the social predicaments that bear the brunt of sexist oppression as a way to understand the collective social status of women in the United States (hooks, 1984). "Feminist theory addresses among other things, the conditions for the actuality of men and women – historical, political, economical, and ontological along with the virtual forces this actuality contains and through which it can be transformed" (hooks, 1984, p. 101).

Feminist scholarship have all contributed to developments in qualitative inquiry since the 1970s. Feminist theories have focused on the oppression of women and address the possibility of considering the needs of women (Eisenstein, 2004). According to Harding and Norberg (2005), "feminist research principles and practices are inclusive of awareness and are sensitive towards underrepresented groups" (p. 2015). Grosz (2010) states that feminist theory and feminist philosophy share concern about a common subject of analysis –"woman, women, the feminine and their social, political, economic, cultural and conceptual relations – along with the need to understand how change is possible" (p. 102). Feminist theories aim to develop and use concepts to articulate those spaces whose

interference and elaboration may produce new alignment of forces, new relations of power and new concepts (Grosz, 2010).

A few scholars on feminism have identified the unique characteristics of women as leaders. Gottfried (1996), Vannoy (2001), Eagly and Karau (1991) found certain characteristic and management styles common among women. Van Velsor and Hughes (1990) "found that managerial women are more likely than men to engage in reflective learning about self and others in connection with others" (p. 37), a finding echoed by Cafferella and Olson's (1993) study on managers' transformative leadership experiences.

According to feminist perspectives on leadership, the traditional approaches to leadership have focused on serving and have included adaptive leadership and transformational leadership (Parker, 2005). Parker also posited that traditional masculine models of leadership are essentially "man stories" (p. 57). Mezirow (2000) and Parker (2005) suggested that servant leadership and some feminist perspectives are male-centered. According to Parker (2005), the servant leadership model may fit the gender-neutral stereotypes for African American women, but contradicts the difference in which gender relations differ between men and women. Traditional servant leadership and most feminist perspectives of leadership theories have originated in a male-centered, male-dominated view of leadership (Parker, 2005).

In feminism, there has been noted a direct correlation between feminist theory and the desires of women scholars to conduct gender identity and phenomenological research methods. Butler (1988) postulated:

Feminist theory has often been critical of naturalistic explanations of sex and sexuality that assume that the meaning of women's social existence can be

34

derived from some fact of their physiology. In distinguishing sex from gender,

feminist theories have disputed causal explanations that assume that sex dictates

or necessitates certain social meanings for women's experiences.

Phenomenological theories of human embodiment have also been concerned to

distinguish between the various physiological and biological causalities that

structure bodily existence and the meanings that embodied existence assumes in

the context of lived experience. (p. 520)

Feminist research has focused mainly on White women and a small number of

women of color (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1994; Parker, 2005). hooks (1994) suggests that

from the very onset, feminism defined a social equality with men.   hooks further

believed that feminism became a movement that would primarily affect the social

standing of White women in middle and upper class groups and only affecting the social

status of working class and poor women in a very marginal way. According to hooks

(1994), Black women's interests in the feminist movement are prone to a dualistic

thinking of being Black and feminist" which continually perpetuate the belief that the self

is formed in opposition to another" (p. 34). Given the fear of being misunderstood, it has

been difficult for Black women to give expression to their interest in feminist concerns.

Black Feminist Theories

Early feminist scholarship often theorized from the position of White, middle-

class women, yet generalized their experiences to be representative of all women

(Vannoy, 2001). Thus, a new set of feminist theories have emerged from the challenges

identified by women of color. Black feminist theories have recommended the

deconstruction of feminist theories according to the postmodern perspective (Parker,

35

2005). Black feminist research pioneers have developed and authored the concept of

empowerment for Black women, suggesting ways of communicating the oppression of

Black women (hooks, 1984; Collins, 2000). Lastly, hooks (1984) asserted that the goal

of Black feminists is to recognize the struggle of Black women against multiple

oppressions.

      According to Parker (2005), the silencing of some groups of women and men

while privileging others in the study of organizational leadership has resulted from the

theoretical perspectives that frame an understanding of gender, discourse and

organization. Black feminist theorizing is the understanding of race, class and gender as

simultaneous forces (Vannoy, 2001). Black feminist theories emphasize that in many

contexts, race and gender cannot be separated (hooks, 1984; Collins, 1990).

      African Americans have not been exempt from the effects of diminished

opportunities that accompany racial segregation and group discrimination. Historically,

the oppression and discrimination of African American women in the United States

began as slaves and domestic servants. The domesticated worker has been closely

attributed to African American women (Freeman, 1995).   The emphasis on participation

in the paid labor force and escape from the confines of the home seemed foreign to Black

women. Through their experiences of race and gender oppression, Black women were

strongly aware of their group identity, and consequently, more suspicious of White

women who defined much of their feminism in personal and individualistic terms (Dill,

1983).

      Gender, race, ethnicity, and social class comprise a complex hierarchical

stratification system in the United States, in which upper class White men and women

oppress men and women of disadvantaged races, ethnicities and religions (Vannoy, 2001). Race, gender and social class are intertwined and multiracial feminism has shown that gender is intertwined with race and ethnicity (Lorber, 1998). Black feminism or multiracial feminism focuses on the intersectionality of race, gender, ethnicity and social class. Researchers who study the concept of intersectionality argue that one cannot look at these social statutes alone, nor can one be added to another, but the synergy between them constructs a social location (Vannoy, 2001). Thus, the social location of men and women differ.

According to hooks (1984), Black women are in an unusual position in society. African American women not only are collectively at the bottom of the occupational ladder, but their overall social status is lower than that of any other group (hooks, 1984). Black women's lived experiences shape their consciousness in such a way that their worldview differs from those who have a degree of privilege (hooks, 1984). Thus, hooks asserts that in the "feminist struggle, Black women need to recognize the special vantage point their marginality has and make use of this perspective to criticize the dominant racist, classist, sexist hegemony as well as to envision and create a counter-hegemony" (hooks, 1984, p. 15).

Collins (1997) states the notion of standpoint refers to historically shared, group-based experiences. The notion of standpoint refers to groups having shared histories based on their shared location in relations of power. "Groups have a degree of permanence over time such that group realities transcend individual experiences" (Collins, 1997, p. 375). For African American women, standpoint theory places less emphasis on individual experiences within socially constructed groups than on the social

conditions that construct such groups. Standpoint theory negates the individual

experiences of sexism and racism, but collectively implies that the group will be

confronted with those issues as well (Collins, 1997).

Black feminism exists as a standpoint theory for African American women's

oppression. Earlier works of Black feminists determined that systems of oppression such

as race, class, and gender create different standpoints among women (hooks, 1984;

Collins, 2000). Black feminist standpoint theory provides an approach centered on

African American women's experiences. The standpoint theory provides a forum for

African American women to construct realities and an outlet for documentation of their

lived experiences.

Black feminist theories are ideologies that both aim to unveil the oppression

experienced by marginalized groups and present opportunities for those groups to share

about their experiences (Byrd & Stanley, 2009). A basic premise of Black feminist

theories is that African American women cannot be fully empowered unless intersecting

oppressions such as racism, sexism and classism are eliminated (Collins, 1990). In light

of this, the existence of race, gender and social realities and experiences of African

American women serves to minimize the existence of African American women as

leaders (Gostnell, 2006). Thus, research on African American women as leaders has

been subsumed with feminist literature and these studies have not adequately documented

the phenomenon of leadership development from the experiences of African American

women. Lastly, research on feminist and Black feminist theories is useful in articulating

African American women's leadership experience and how the intersection of race and

gender affect their leadership development.

Socio-cultural Theories

Socio-cultural refers to theoretical perspectives that consider race, gender, and social class in analyzing power dynamics within bureaucratic and other systems where power can be used to oppress (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Given that African American women are simultaneously situated within at least two groups that are subjected to broad subordinations, socio-cultural theories challenge the notion that problems can be viewed as mono-casual, or based on racial or gender discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). Furthermore, systems of oppression contain multiplier effects such as– racism, sexism and social classism. The marginality of African American women in predominantly White organizations experience multiplier effects in ways that cannot be understood from the experiences of other groups in these settings. Thus, from the ideology of history and culture, African American women have learned how to recognize, respond, and react to issues emerging from socio-cultural realities that have challenged their leadership experience (Stanley, 2009).

Socio-cultural theories are useful for understanding African American women's oppression and alienation within organizations for the purpose of emancipation and social change (Creswell, 1998). In addition, socio-cultural theories are important to provide a framework for understanding how African American women's construct and enact leadership within their professional contexts.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a socio-cultural theoretical framework that focuses on the interlocking system of race, gender and social class (Byrd & Stanley, 2009). While the term intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989, the concept's origin

can be traced to Maria Stewart in 1832 (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). Stewart, a Black female contemporary, articulated a critique of difference and challenged the functioning of race and gender which eventually evolved into the origin of intersectionality. Originally, intersectionality was conceptualized as a way to better represent those who have been left out or ignored (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). Intersectionality is a feminist sociological theory (see Figure 3) that holds that the classical conceptualizations of oppression within society, such as racism and sexism, do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989).

When race, gender and social class converge, they form a dynamic, interlocking system referred to as intersectionality (Stanley, 2009). The interlocking systems of race, gender and social class give voice to African American women on encounters with intersectionality in their leadership development. Intersectionality theories provide a framework for exploration of multi-dimensional research variables and present an approach that grew out of feminist and Black feminist standpoints (Witherspoon, 2009). Intersectionality refers to the ways in which social and cultural (i.e. race and gender) constructs interact and are useful in better understanding the complexities of the dual status that African American female leaders face in the workplace (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). Research on socio-cultural issues such as intersectionality is needed to provide a deeper understanding of ways that racism, sexism, classism, ethnicity and other social realities can affect an individual's lived experiences in the workplace (Jean-Marie, Williams & Sherman, 2009).

In intersectionality, gender differences coupled with race imbue perceptions and attitudes that contribute to the dearth of African American women at the executive level (Stanley, 2009). According to Lloyd-Jones (2009), when race converges with gender, a double standard dichotomy surfaces for African American women, thus reducing access to leadership positions and generating ambivalence about their ability to lead. Women and minorities may experience interrelated barriers that restrict advancement at the individual, group and organizational levels.

The theory of intersectionality articulates a framework for understanding the complexities of minority women's identities and experiences (Horsford & Tilman, 2011). Parker (2005) described intersectionality as a means of interpreting and analyzing the experiences that African American women encounter while holding positions of authority in predominantly White organizations. When the spheres of race, gender and social class intersect, they shape social realities and inform the multiple dimensions of the lived experiences of African American women (Parker, 2005). One's history, culture and values provide a frame of reference for making meaning of common experiences. Hence, African American women view the world from discrete perspectives based on their social positions, and within the confines of the larger social structures of race and gender (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003).

Although research literature exists on intersectionality (Stanley, 2009; Horsford, 2011; Alston, 2005; Byrd, 2009, Collins, 2003), few scholars have addressed leadership development for African American women from the perspective of intersectionality in academia and business. The lack of research in this discourse is critical to the professional development of leaders positioned at the intersection of race, gender and

social class. Examining intersectionality in the leadership experiences of African

American women offers opportunity for new perspectives of workplace values and

beliefs to be heard. Research from this paradigm seeks to explore the scientific study of

domination, oppression, alienation, and struggle within institutions, organizations, and

social groups for the purpose of emancipation, transformation and social change

(Creswell, 1998).
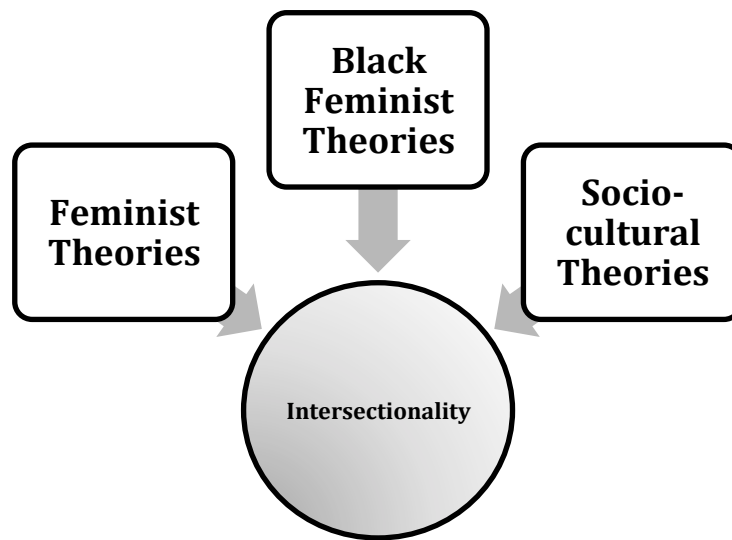
Figure 3. Study Framework

African American Women in Academia

Dr. Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander was the first African American to obtain a

Ph.D. in economics in 1921 from the University of Pennsylvania. Her dissertation was

titled, "Standards of Living among One Hundred Negro Families in Philadelphia, 1916-

1918" (Battle & Doswell, 2004). Dr. Alexander became a social and civic leader, yet

never had the opportunity to work in academia. Historically Black Colleges and

Universities were not necessarily women-friendly in her era, and predominantly White

institutions were not open to women of color faculty in the early part of the twentieth

century (Battle & Doswell, 2004). Thus, after abandoning her passion for the study of economics, Dr. Alexander went on to earn a law degree and build a distinguished practice as an attorney with her husband.

Historically, education has been the familiar ground for African American women since it was always one of the respectable professions for African Americans to pursue. In the nineteenth century, Black women were schoolteachers among free Blacks before and after emancipation; however few obtained positions higher than those employed in Black elementary and secondary schools (Benjamin, 1997). In 1993, Lucy Slowe published the "Higher Education of Negro Women" in the *Journal of Negro Education* and argued for the necessary preparation of Black women for the modern world (Cardwell, 2008).

Through racism and discrimination, Black men and women were remanded to historically Black colleges and universities. Furthermore, in the historically Black colleges, sexism consigned Black women to activities associated with the female arts including– teaching, home economics, or performing specific duties closely linked to the interest of students (Benjamin, 1997). From early on, African American women in the academy were faced with oppositional alienation from the center of authority in the intellectual walls of higher education.

During the past thirty years, African American women have entered the academy in greater numbers than ever before. However, although the number of African American women in the academy has increased, they still remain largely invisible (Benjamin, 1997). While women and minorities have enjoyed some gains, the majority of college presidents are still predominantly White males (Ross & Green, 2000).

As of fall 1997, there were 49 African American women serving as college and university presidents (Waring, 2003). By fall 2001, a total of 27 African American women led four-year institutions while a decade earlier, it had been fewer than half that number (Stewart, 2002). There were 4096 post-secondary institutions (public, nonprofit, and for-profit) during the same period (Waring, 2003). These women comprised 1.4% of all college presidents, about 8% of all women presidents, and about a quarter of all African American presidents (Waring, 2003). Nearly 55% headed junior and community colleges (Waring, 2003).

More recent data reveals that in 2006, 88% of college presidents were White males (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007). According to the results from the study, the "typical" American president was a married, White male who had an earned doctorate and had served as a president for an average of nine years. The report also stated that women of color saw consistent but small gains. Moreover, between 1986 and 2006, the percentage of African American women presidents rose from 3.9 percent to 8.1 percent (Association of American College and Universities, 2007). By 2011, two African American women led two prestigious, predominantly White institutions. In 1999, Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson became the 18th president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and in 2001, Dr. Ruth Simmons became the first Black president of Brown University, an Ivy League institution.

Despite substantial advancements toward gender equity and equality, evidence of substantial disparity still exists within senior level positions in academia for African American women. According to Dugger (2001) and Williams (2005), a small number of women and minorities progress up the academic career ladder to become institutional

leaders. Researchers have underscored significant concerns that are specific to minority women administrators at dominant-culture institutions of higher learning (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). "Such findings reveal that African American female administrators encounter significant barriers within academia itself that discourage them from becoming productive and satisfied members" (Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999, p. 28).

As of 2009, women had earned 57.2% of bachelor's degrees, 60.4% of master's degrees, and 52.3% of doctorates (Catalyst, 2012). While these statistics and other reports boast about the number of female graduates surpassing males in America, closer analysis reveals that women of color, specifically Latina's and African American women are still struggling. The number of women of color gaining entry into traditionally male subjects or earning doctoral degrees and positions within academia is candidly dismal. Compared to female African Americans and Hispanics in higher education, White non-Hispanic men and women continue to dominate administrative leadership positions in colleges and universities (Battle & Doswell, 2004).

Most of the research surrounding women in higher education postulated that universities have been and continue to be traditionally dominated and run by men (Cullen & Luna, 1993). For women of color, their dualistic roles of being both a women and minority continue to create role incongruity. Thus, they face perceptions of having to perform gender-stereotyped roles within academia and experience greater barriers than their male counterparts.

According to Benjamin (1997) during the 1980's, African American female administrators began increasing their share of positions in higher education. The American Council on Education reported that, "in 1989 African American women made

up 4.2 percent of full-time administrators, which represents a 87 percent change from the previous decade" (ACE, 1989, p. 26). For African American females, these numbers have not significantly changed in proportion to the number of women in educational administration (Gilroy, 2005). Nevertheless, African American women are still underrepresented in mid to upper-management level administrative positions.

The percentage of presidents who were women rose from 23 percent of the total in 2006 to 26 percent in 2011 (American Council on Education, 2012). However, the proportion of presidents who were racial or ethnic minorities, declined slightly from 14 percent in 2006 to 13 percent in 2011 (American Council on Education, 2012). The percentage of African American females appointed to administrative positions in higher education has remained significantly lower than that of their male counterparts.

An examination of statistics of African American women in higher education revealed that few have reached the highest level positions in the administration of colleges and universities in predominantly White institutions. While both African American men and women have become presidents of more than 90 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), in 2001 less than 6% of all college presidents were African American and less than 1% was headed by African American women (Fisher & Koch, 1996). Current data revealed that women increased their representation as college presidents to 26% in 2011, but only 4% of all presidents were women of color (American Council on Education, 2012). In 2011, six percent of all college presidents were African American and African American women represented 34% of the total proportion (American Council on Education, 2012).

According to Ross & Green (2000), African American women seeking high level administrative positions at predominantly White higher education institutions experience significant obstacles. Sturnick, Milley & Tisinger (1991) conclude that because of gender and strongly patriarchal institutions, African American women have been treated differently; have labored within unsupportive systems, and have perhaps been required to perform at a higher level than their male counterparts in order to achieve success. "This is a value problem and is one that through observation, discussion, and verification should be eradicated in a democratic society based on merit" (Ross & Green, 2000, p. 15). For African American women, cultural differences and stereotypes should not be barriers in presidential search and selection processes.

In the academy, an African American woman "work(s) to develop expertise and authority in her chosen field in order to balance her cultural values, beliefs, philosophies, and behaviors with those that are fundamentally different from her own" (Benjamin, 1997, p. 243). J. Nefta Baraka's "Collegiality in the Academy: Where Does the Black Woman Fit" states that different cultural orientations intertwine with racism and sexism, making it difficult for African American women to fit into the White academe (as cited in Benjamin, 1997). There is a consensus that African American women in general face a myriad of challenges in the academy that impede their professional growth and limits their ascendency to leadership participation in higher education (Battle & Doswell, 2004; Benjamin, 1997).

African American women in academia seek open access to the opportunities that their abilities, their interests, and their willingness to work entitle them. African American women in the academy "believe such equality of opportunity is their right and

should be granted to them willingly" (Furniss & Graham, 1974, p. 6). Giscombe (2007) asserts that while in pursuit of leadership positions, women still face social and cultural barriers pertaining to organizational norms, perceptions surrounding gender congruity, and stereotypes. By understanding these perceptions about gender roles and norms for African American women in the academia, existing barriers may be addressed and strategies developed to increase their representation in leadership positions within higher education.

African American Women in Business

Early research on gender in the corporate workplace has largely focused almost exclusively on White women (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1990). Women's presence in corporate America stemmed from the liberation movement after World War II. This movement was largely orchestrated through women's efforts to exclude men who they viewed as the source of the problem (Traub, 2011).

The roles for African American women in business during the early 19th century were different from those of other women and of African American men. Most African American women were subjugated to performing supportive and domestic roles while African American men were able to attain education and become financial contributors to the household (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Historical patterns of gender and racial discrimination in organizations of corporate America have been well documented, including the internal systems that promote sexism and inhibit change. In the mid-1990's, Catalyst (1999) conducted research on the barriers and opportunities related to the retention, development, and advancement of minority women in business. The research revealed that minority

women in professional and managerial positions in the private sector are an underrepresented and under-studied group. While minority women's leadership has been more widely accepted in corporate America, they still struggle to be fully accepted and respected as leaders.

According to Giscombe and Sims (1998), minority women represented nearly 23% of the United States workforce, but only 15% were in managerial-level positions in the private sector during 1994-1995. In comparison, African-American women comprised slightly more than 12% of the female workforce, but only 7% of the 2.9 million women managers in the private sector. Hispanics made up 7% of the female workforce, but only 5.2% of women managers (Giscombe & Sims, 1998). By the year 2016, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 68.3% of entrants into the labor force will be people of color and women (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). However, the current race and gender composition of corporate managers and senior executives does not reflect this trend (Cabrera & Thomas-Hunt, 2007).

Catalyst (2001) produced a study that examined the demographic factors of managers in private-sector corporations with respect to race, ethnicity, earnings, education and family composition. The study revealed that African American women were the most underrepresented among women of color in the managerial and professional category. Latinas are statistically the most underrepresented group in the workforce amongst minorities in the U.S. "Societal factors, including education and cultural traditions, often comprise the career objectives of high achieving Latina women, but the lack of research on Latina professionals makes it difficult to address these factors" (Vasquez, 2009, p. 1).

According to the just-released *2010 Catalyst Census: Financial Post 500 Women Senior Officers and Top Earners,* in both 2008 and 2010, more than 30 percent of companies had zero women senior officers (Mulligan-Ferry, Soares, Combopiano, Cullen & Ricker, 2010). In 2009, there were 12 female CEO's at Fortune 500 companies (Catalyst, 2010). Since nearly half of the U.S. workforce is female, one could assume that proportionately that number should be roughly 230 female CEO's (Hackett, 2011). However, less than 10 percent of executives in large publicly traded firms were women with a lower percentage being minority females. With these dismal numbers, business cannot reach its maximum potential without the full participation and engagement of all workers, including women (Traub, 2011). Furthermore, Traub posits that "when companies have gender equity as a top 10 strategic initiative, this benefits the company with profitable strategies such as flexible working options, programs supporting work-life integration, female networking and mentoring, and the use of role models" (p. 30).

Feminist scholars have described both the overt and the hidden societal and institutional reasons for the limited number of women of color in positions of leadership. Feminists within corporate America have suggested that keeping the focus on women, individually and collectively as the problem, allows the dominant discourses of management leadership to go unexamined for gender and racial biases (Brinson, 2006). Hackett (2011) stated that "problems that companies grapple with concerning the glass ceiling and the retention of female talent have less to do with overt discrimination in the corporate suite or dated ideas about limitations, but more to do with outdated succession planning and career development systems" (p. 17). Current practices in business not only disadvantage women collectively, but also disempower minority women

individually through the de facto reproduction of hierarchal patterns of power and White male privilege.

Bradsher's (1988) study suggests that statistics cited by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission found that since 1970, the number of women African American and Hispanics in management has increased. However, the gains made by these women and minorities have stalled out, hitting a glass ceiling with movement into advanced levels of management decreasing. As Bradsher suggested, this is "clear evidence of nothing less than abiding racism and sexism of the corporation" (p. 1).

At Fortune 500 companies, women hold only 15% of board seats, 16% of corporate officer positions, and a mere 3% of CEO positions, while women of color make up only 3% of board officers and 1.7% of corporate officer positions (Wilson, 2009). The U.S. Department of Labor revealed that women now represent 40% of all persons employed in administrative and management occupations (U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 2010). If interpreting the array of statistics is to prove meaningful, race and gender is not faring well in corporate management positions for African American women.

In a 1984 comparative study conducted by Almquist (1987), minority men and women and White women were sampled across 350 specific job categories in the U.S. workforce. The study on the effects of race and gender concluded that African American women in the labor force are faced with three significant disadvantages: 1) their unemployment rates are extremely high; 2) they have difficulty in securing high level positions; and 3) they experience wage discrimination (Almquist, 1987). Almquist

concluded the net impact of being a woman is stronger than the net impact of being in a minority group (1987).

The research group Korn Ferry International in their study of Fortune "1000" companies found that as of 1979, there were 1,708 senior executives, of whom three were Black, two Asian, two Hispanic, and eight female. Their 1985 survey of 1,362 executives found four Blacks, six Asians, three Hispanics and 29 women (Jones, 1986). By 1986, only 9% of all managers in the Fortune 1000 companies were identified as Black, Hispanic or Asian (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). Of the 14,840 minority women and men employed in advance positions, Black women comprise 3% of corporate managers and only .09% female corporate officers (U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1989). For Hispanic women, the number is just as limited. Hispanic women only represent 1.6% of all employed managers in 1988 (U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1989). Based on these studies from 1979-1988, very limited progress was made by women and minority women in the realms of leadership positions within corporate America.

In summary, there is empirical and theoretical support for the claim that African American women in leadership positions in business are subjected to racial, gender discrimination and social stereotypes. As these women advance in the corporation and the stakes get higher, they are prone to the possibility of derailment. This occurs as women and minorities tread in close proximity to the rule makers and leaders of the organization.

Gaps in the Literature

Although some research has been conducted on African American women in organizations, these studies have generally focused on topics such as the lack of career advancement opportunities, mentoring and role models, succession planning and pipeline problems, rather than focusing on their individual lived experiences. As a result, there is a marked absence of research on how African American women develop as leaders. Limited research exists on how race and gender identities inform African American women as leaders and their development as leaders in academia and business sectors. Most literature on female minority leaders is on women who work in primary and secondary educational systems. The reason for the abundance of research in this area of education may be that minority leaders, especially African American women leaders, are more visible and career oriented in the K-12 educational fields.

Chapter Summary

Based on the review of the literature, there is enough information to suggest that the leadership development experiences of African American women may be different from that of other minority men, minority women, White women and White men. As evidenced by the literature, it is prudent to investigate leadership development modalities required to identify and develop African American female leaders. The purpose of this research study is to explore the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women through their lived experiences of how they developed as leaders. Thus, the research examined leadership development of African American women leaders in two distinct enterprises: academia and business.

Chapter 2 reflects an examination of leadership roles and development of African American women. A discussion on the study's theoretical framework on intersectionality and socio-cultural theories was discussed to provide relevant literature on the influence of race and gender on leadership development. Several theories provided evidence of gender bias, racism and stereotypes of African American women. The research has consistently suggested that African American women experienced race and gender biases that have affected their ascendency to leadership positions. Chapter 3 will provide an in-depth discussion of the research design and will outline the research methodology and collection of data.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women through their lived experiences of how they developed as leaders. This research study examined the lived experiences of African American women's development as leaders in academia and business. The study focused on how race and gender informed the leadership development of these individuals. Through a qualitative research design, the study utilized a phenomenological research method that examined the lived experiences of African American women who obtained leadership positions within organizations. The participants of the study were individuals who were employed in academic and business sectors. The research was conducted through both telephone and in-person interviews.

In this chapter, the researcher will provide background on the philosophy and method of phenomenology and review key concepts of phenomenological research methodology. The researcher will then provide detailed information on the methodology that was utilized for this study. The goal of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the intersectionality of race and gender of eight African American women through their lived experiences of how they developed as leaders. The intent in conducting this research study was to gain a deeper understanding of the essence and experiences of how race and gendered informed the leadership development of African American women in academia and business.

This research study was designed to determine how the intersection of race and gender identities contributed to the elements of leadership development as perceived by

eight African American females who succeeded to leadership roles in academia and business. The researcher sought to explore strategies future leaders might use to address leadership development and ascendency of African American females to leadership roles. A phenomenological research method was most appropriate for this research study to capture the lived experiences of individuals from their perspectives and to develop themes that challenge structural or normative assumptions (Lester, 1999). Phenomenology is a method of qualitative research that allows researchers to unassumingly examine participants' lived experiences and steer clear of presuppositions, relying instead on the responses of the study participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Qualitative Research Design

Historically, quantitative approaches dominated the forms of research in the social sciences from the late 19th century until the mid-20th century (Creswell, 2009). During the latter half of the 20th century, interest in qualitative research increased and the value of qualitative work in addressing matters of equity and social justice (Creswell, 2009; Denzin, 2008). "Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). In qualitative research, meanings and interpretations are negotiated with human data sources because it is the subjects' realities that the researcher attempts to reconstruct (Merriam, 2009).

According to Glesne (2006), "qualitative researchers seek to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them" (p. 4). Glesne further posits that:

Qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomena from

the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-

cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions.

While quantitative research methods are designed with the intention of making

generalizations about some social phenomena, qualitative research methods create

predictions concerning those phenomena and provide causal explanations. (p. 4)

Qualitative research is used when we want to empower individuals to share their

stories. Investigators conduct qualitative research in order to understand the contexts in

which participants in a study address a problem or situation, minimize the power

relationships that exist between research and participants or to follow up on quantitative

research and help explain the mechanisms or linkages in causal theories (Creswell, 2007).

"Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their

experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their

experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Researchers are most interested in how humans

arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of

their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, and social roles (Berg,

2004). Van Manen (1990) contends that individuals develop a perspective or a

worldview that is determined by their environment, which includes the people

themselves, their culture, race and situation. According to Becker (1970), to understand

an individual's experiences, we must know how that individual perceives the situation,

the obstacles the individual believes he or she faces, and the alternatives that are

available.

Qualitative studies are appropriate when there is a lack of literature while quantitative studies evolve around a problem for which there is an abundance of literature (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative studies often derive information on why there is a lack of literature on a particular topic, whereas quantitative studies traditionally evolve around a problem for which there is an abundance of literature (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Since there is a dearth of literature on African American female leaders in academia and business, a qualitative research method would effectively capture the lived experiences of the participants in this study.

Phenomenological Research Methods

Phenomenology is an interpretive research methodology, designed to capture the essence or meaning of the lived experiences about a phenomenon as perceived by the participants (McMillian, 2004). Phenomenological research methods strive to discover the underlying meanings of shared lived experiences to arrive at a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Van Manen, 1997). Qualitative phenomenological methods capture the lived experiences of participants brought to life through insights by participants.

Historically, phenomenology arose as a philosophy in Germany before World War I and has since occupied a prominent position in modern philosophy (Dowling, 2007). Phenomenology grew out of a concern with scientific research which some felt did not consider the experiencing person and the connections between the human consciousness and objects that existed in the material world (Husserl as cited in Moustakas, 1994). A key epistemological strategy of phenomenology is the concept of phenomenological reduction. Reduction is the technical term that describes the

phenomenological device which permits us to discover the spontaneous surge of the life world (Van Manen, 1990). The reduction is a means to be able to return to the world as lived in an enriched and deepened fashion (Van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenology was founded as an epistemological philosophy by German mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) (Dahlberg, Drew & Nystrom, 2001). For Husserl, the aim of phenomenology is the rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear in order to arrive at an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience (Valle, King & Halling, 1989). Husserl emphasized that phenomenology studied how human phenomena are experienced in our consciousness and seeks to understand how people construct meaning (Kvale, 1996). Husserl argued that "phenomenology did not deny the existence of the real world, but sought instead to clarify the sense of this world as actually existing" (Husserl, 1962, p. 1). Whatever meaning we create has its roots in these human interactions (Kvale, 1996).

> Bernard & Ryan (2010) state that a phenomenological study involves six steps:
> (1) Identifying a thing, a phenomenon, whose essence you want to understand; (2) identifying your biases and doing as much as you can to put them aside; (3) collecting narratives about the phenomenon from people who are experiencing it by asking them a really good, open-ended question and then probing to let them run with it; (4) using your intuition to identify the essentials of the phenomenon; (5) laying out those essentials in writing with exemplary quotes from the narratives: and (6) repeating steps four and five until there is no more to learn about the lived experiences of the participants you are studying. (p. 259)

In order to understand phenomenology, "explanations are not to be imposed before the phenomena has been understood from within" (Moran, 2000, p. 4). The phenomenological qualitative study provides valuable insight into the phenomenon. The phenomenological approach provides "logical, systematic and coherent resources for carrying out the analysis and synthesizing information to arrive at essential descriptions of experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47).

The goal of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the information that emerges (Van Manen, 1997). In order to understand the meaning of the phenomenon, the researcher needs to be able to suspend or bracket any preconceived ideas for defining the phenomenon's basic elements and essential structure (Creswell, 2009, Berg, 2004; Van Manen, 1997). Through bracketing, investigators set aside their experiences and prior beliefs so as to prevent introducing biases or personal experiences into the study. Phenomenology requires at least some understanding of the broader philosophical assumptions, and these should be identified by the researcher (Creswell, 2007).

Moustaka (1994) captures many of the principle tenets of phenomenology in the following statement:

The challenge facing the human science research is to describe things in themselves, to permit what is before one to enter consciousness and be understood in its meanings and essences in the light of intuition and self-reflection. The process involves a blending of what is really present with what is imagined as

60

present from the vantage point of possible meanings; thus a unity of the real and

the ideal. (p. 27)

At the root of phenomenology, "the intent is to understand the phenomena in their

own terms – to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the

person personally" (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 96). Thus for this study, a

phenomenological approach is best suited to examine the lived experiences of African

American female leaders to understand their experiences and the meaning they derived

about how race and gender informed their development as leaders.

Research Question

According to Creswell (2007), drafting a central research question often takes

considerable work because of its breadth and the tendency of some to form specific

questions based on traditional training. Qualitative researchers should state the broadest

question they could possibly pose about the research problem. Glesne (2006) states, "the

central research question provides a focus for data collection and analysis" (p. 24). A

precise research question should evolve through review of the literature and with the

intent of creating specific and third level questions (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The

research question is intended to present the overall intent of your study.

Creswell (2003) acknowledged qualitative research questions are open-ended,

general questions, which the researcher seeks to answer and to guide the study.

Moustakas (1994) emphasized the importance of open-ended questions in a

phenomenological study. Typically, open-ended questions allow people to respond in

their own words and capture people's own ideas about how things work (Bernard &

61

Ryan, 2010). In phenomenology, the researcher collects narratives from participants by asking good, open-ended questions and probing to solicit response.

This research study examined the leadership development of several African American female leaders in two distinct enterprises: academia and business. The focus of the study was based on African American women who were able to achieve leadership positions despite the glass ceiling. The following research question guided this study: *In what ways did race and gender identities inform African American women leadership development experiences?*

The phenomenological method of inquiry had three sub-questions:

1. In what ways did race inform their development as leaders?

2. In what ways did gender inform their development as leaders?

3. In what ways did the intersection of race and gender inform their development as leaders?

Selection of Participants

This study focused its inquiry on a qualitative phenomenological study design that detailed eight African American female leaders' career trajectory in their ascendency to top leadership positions. This research applied a phenomenological approach to examine the lived experiences of African American female leaders and the meaning they derived from these experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Burns (2003) holds that there is a great deal to learn about leadership by relating the life and times of individual leaders and thus, is the mission of this inquiry. Phenomenology will make it possible to arrange the African American female leaders' experiences in a way to derive meaning from them.

According to Hycer (1985), "the phenomenon dictates the method including the type of participants" (p. 156). The researcher used purposeful sampling for selecting research participants. The purposive sample of participants was selected because their ascendency captured the lived experiences associated with the topic under investigation. In purposeful sampling, the researcher selects individuals and sites for study because they "can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Purposive sampling uses non-probability sampling based on criteria within the study (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). For this study, purposive sampling allowed for identifying participants who would give a rich description of the phenomenon.

Creswell (2007) posits that in a phenomenological study the participants must be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon being explored and can articulate their lived experience. In purposive sampling, a sample group is selected that is believed to be representative of a given population (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). Therefore, purposive sampling was utilized in the process of selecting individuals for the study. The sampling frame consisted of African American female leaders employed in academia and business as presidents, vice-presidents or equivalent positions. The researcher was able to interview eight participants that matched the selection criteria. Groenewald (2004) regarded 2 to 10 participants as sufficient to reach saturation for a qualitative study and Creswell (1998) recommended long interviews with up to 10 people for a qualitative study. Morse (1994) recommended a minimum of six interviews for phenomenological studies. Every sample represents something and the researcher must decide the purpose

of the informants and take what can be derived out of their experiences (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

The study involved conducting eight in-depth, semi-structured interviews with women in managerial and supervisory responsibility. The criteria included women who were in president, vice-presidents or equivalent positions in organizations in academia and corporate America. Senior-level positions consisted of Chief Executive Officers; presidents; senior vice-presidents; vice-presidents and deans. Each participant in the study met the following criteria:

- Five years or more experience in senior-level positions in either her current organization or a combination of positions;

- Organizational supervision responsibilities for over more than 20 individuals with at least 3 direct reports;

- Employed at a large organization or an institution that employs at least 500 employees; and

- Large fiduciary and budget management responsibility over their units.

See Table 1 regarding specific demographic information regarding each participant.

Participant Profiles

The primary thrust of the phenomenological researcher is to understand as much as possible the lived experiences of the participants. According to Creswell (2007), "at the core of phenomenology is the very deep respect for the uniqueness of human experience and that this ever present uniqueness will always make the attempt to develop a totally comprehensiveness theory of humans experiencing an ultimately futile one" (p.

156). The critical issue here is that the phenomenon dictates the method, including the

selection and types of participants (Hycner, 1985).

The following table includes a list of study participants that were purposefully

selected for the study. The sample represents African American female leaders who were

in leadership positions within their respective organizations. From the selected sample of

participants, five individuals were employed in academia and the remaining three

participants were employed in the corporate sector.

Table 1: Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Job Title	Years in Profession	Sector	Educational Level
Evelyn	College President	34	Academia	Ph.D.
Pamela	Vice President for Student Affairs	41	Academia	Ph.D.
Jackie	Vice President for Student Affairs	36	Academia	Ph.D.
Carol	Vice President for Student Affairs	30	Academia	Ed. D.
Sandra	College Dean	15	Academia	Ph.D.
Jennifer	Senior Vice President for Community Development	34	Corporate	Some College
Kelly	Senior Vice President of Public Affairs	38	Corporate	Ph.D.
Raquel	Vice President for Organizational Development	40	Corporate	MBA

Demographic Information

The participants were selected because they were African American women in

senior leadership positions in academia and business. Eight African American women

from five colleges and three businesses were selected as the study participants. At the

end of each interview, the participants provided demographical background about their marital status, number of children, years of employment and ages. Appendix A contains the demographic questions reflective of each participant's response. The age ranges of the participants studied were between 40-72 years of age with an average age of 45. The average years of employment were 15 to 41 years in their respective professions. Six (75%) out of the eight participants had children. The average number of children for the participants ranged from none to two children. Out of the study participants, four were married, one divorced and three were single.

Informed Consent

Seidman (1986) recommended that the consent form tell participants what they are being asked to do, for what purposes, and be informed of any risks they might be taking by participating in the research. Glesne (2006) states that through informed consent, potential study participants are made aware:

 1. That participation is voluntary;

 2. Of any aspects of the research that might affect their well-being; and

 3. That they may freely choose to stop participation at any point in the study

 (p. 132).

The informed consent form developed for this study was in congruence with these recommendations. The informed consent form included information on the purpose of the study, procedural steps requested by each participant, benefits and risks of participation, and measures that would be used to protect the participants' confidentiality. In addition, the consent form included a clause that informed participants that they could withdraw or refuse to participate at any time during the study. Approval of this study

was sought and approved by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Institutional Review Board (IRB). The researcher meticulously followed IRB protocol in obtaining approval for the Interview Protocol Questions (see Appendix A), Consent Form (see Appendix C), and Invitation to Participate in the Research Study (see Appendix D) forms.

Confidentiality

The standard assumption in research is that the participants' identity will remain anonymous in studies that involve in-depth interviews (Seidman, 1998). Each participant was given an informed consent form to sign before they engaged in the research. This form acknowledged the protection of the participants' rights during data collection (Creswell, 2009). Participants signed an informed consent form stating that they were aware of the recording of the interviews. Also included in the process for gaining consent was permission to be audio recorded. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were incorporated as a means of protecting confidentiality of participants. Pseudonyms ensured the protection of the participants' confidentiality and ensured anonymity by keeping the nature and quality of the participants' participation in the study confidential (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Interview Protocol Questions

To accurately describe the phenomena, asking the right questions is tantamount to eliciting an accurate description of the experience from the study participants (Phillips-Pula & Pickler, 2011). According to Willis (2005), in designing interview questions, it is important that the questions do not exhibit unacceptable vagueness in expressing the designer's intentions or the literal meaning of the question. The interview protocol

questions were designed to address how race and gender informed the leadership development of African American women.

The interview protocol questions were organized into five different parts that incorporated seven main questions and twelve probing questions. A total of 19 questions were developed in the interview protocol questionnaire. The five categorical sections were comprised of questions focused on each individual's life history; career path; leadership; identity/intersectionality; and life lessons. All of the questions were designed to frame the answer to the primary research question.

In each part of the interview protocol questions, there was a main question followed by several probing questions (see Appendix A). In Part I: Life History, the main question asked generally about the participants early childhood. This question was followed up with two probing questions about the role family played in the participants' leadership development and the influence of any role models. In Part II: Career Path, the main question asked about any person(s) who taught them the most during their career. The probing questions examined what made the person(s) unique and to describe any personal choices or career decisions that were made during their career.

In Part III of the questionnaire, participants were asked to discuss their leadership experiences. The main question inquired about any critical situations or incidents that influenced the way that they became a leader. This was followed up with probing questions that discussed why these incidents were important, challenges or obstacles in being a leader and lastly, what was learned during these experiences. In Part IV: Identity, the socio-cultural theory of intersectionality was discussed. The primary research question focused on how race and gender shaped their development as a leader. This

question was followed up with discussing how their race and gender influenced or affected their careers. The last part, Part V, was titled Life Lessons and solicited responses to lessons learned as a woman, African American, and African American woman in a leadership position.

Data Collection

Qualitative researchers typically rely on four methods for gathering information: (a) participating in the setting, (b) observing directly, (c) interviewing in depth, and (d) analyzing documents and material culture (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the researcher interviewed eight participants in order to develop emerging themes that transcended their development as leaders. The research focused on how race and gender informed the leadership development of African American female women that had ascended to leadership positions within academia and business.

The participants in the study responded to semi-structured, open-ended questions based on reflections of their lived experiences as African American female leaders. Moustakas (1994) explained the "method of reflection that occurs throughout the phenomenological approach provides a logical, systematic, and coherent resource for carrying out the analysis and synthesis needed to arrive at essential descriptions of experience" (p. 47).

For this phenomenological study, the researcher interviewed African American women in academia and business who were in top senior level executives. Interviews with each participant were conducted to develop themes and ceased when the interviewees refrained from introducing new perspectives on the topic. Kensit (2000) posits that researchers are cautioned to allow the data to emerge while conducting

69

phenomenological studies because engaging in phenomenology means capturing rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings (p. 104). The aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework but remaining true to the facts (Groenewald, 2004).

Through semi-structured, in-depth interviewing, the researcher was able to capture the true essence of each participant's experience with the phenomenon under study. The qualitative, in-depth interviews were more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The researcher anticipated that the phenomenon of interest would unfold as the participants relayed their views and experiences. Marshall and Rossman suggest that the most important aspect of the interviewer's approach is conveying the attitude that the participant's view is valuable and useful (2006).

The researcher selected the method of interviewing as the main means of data collection. "The method of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of a relatively few participants" (Seidman, 1998, p. 48). By focusing on interviewing to collect data, the researcher gave each participant the opportunity to reconstruct their experiences according to their own sense of what was important and relevant. During the interviews, the researcher also used memoing to indicate any key insights such as expressions, gestures, and impressions demonstrated by the interviewees.

Field notes were used as a secondary data storage method. Field notes may contain descriptions, observer comments, and questions about the process of collecting data (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Bernard and Ryan (2010) state in writing field notes,

information is filtered by choosing some things and ignoring others; observations and events are lumped into thematic categories. Researchers must remain disciplined to record subsequently after each interview. The longer you wait to write up your notes, the more errors the researcher is likely to make (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

In qualitative research, it is strongly recommended that all unstructured and semi-structured interviews be recorded (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2009). The data collection involved interviewing data from eight African American women in senior leadership positions in academia and business to capture their feelings, perceptions and lived experiences. For this research study, audio-recordings of interviews were facilitated to determine relevant themes. Audio recordings of interviews comprise verbatim transcription and raw data that will be analyzed several times to obtain a feel for the context and nuances they contain (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Each interview was recorded on a digital recorder, saved to a USB flash drive and labeled for transcription.

In the data collection process, Moustakas (1994) states that the researcher should engage in the Epoche or bracketing process as a way of creating an atmosphere and rapport for conducting the interview. The method of bracketing (ephoche) involves an attitude of openness to the phenomenon in its inherent meaningfulness (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2007; Given, 2008). The focus of bracketing is to approach the recordings and transcriptions with an openness to whatever meanings emerged. "Once the researcher has bracketed his/her interpretations and meaning as much as possible, s/he will want to get a sense of the whole interview, a gestalt by listening to the entire tape several times as well as reading the transcripts a number of times" (Hycner, 1985, p. 281).

71

Epoche/Bracketing

The term *Epoche*, a Greek word meaning to stay away from or abstain, was created by Husserl to be known as freedom from suppositions (Moustakas, 1994). In the Epoche, prejudgments, biases and preconceived ideas about things are set aside. Husserl uses eidetic phenomenological reduction as a deliberate and purposeful opening by the researcher to the phenomenon in its own right and meaning (Husserl, 1962).

Epoche or bracketing is the act of suspending judgment about the natural world. The inessential aspects of the symbolic meanings are removed to get to the core leaving only the essence of what constitutes the thing (Husserl, 1962). In phenomenology, "bracketing helps us to free ourselves from prejudices and secure the purity of our detachment as observers, so that we can encounter things as they are in themselves independently of any presuppositions" (Husserl, 1962, p. 163).

Researcher's Epoche

In practicing the Epoche, the researcher must focus on a specific situation, person or issue and set aside biases and prejudgments in order to return with a readiness to enter the experience with new hope and intentions (Moustakas, 1994). According to Creswell (2007), this is an attempt to set aside the researcher's personal experiences so that the focus can be directed to the participants in the study. For both the researcher and reader, the Epoche process provides an original vantage point to guide their understanding of the phenomenon experienced by the participants.

A good check on whether the researcher was able to bracket any presuppositions was to list all of the presuppositions or assumptions that she was consciously aware of prior to collecting the data. In this study, through reflection, the researcher set out to

72

identify any personal preconceptions based on any prior experiences with African American female leaders. Through interviews, the researcher bracketed her own beliefs and assumptions to accurately capture the phenomenon from the participants' own voices. Consciously being aware of bracketing, the researcher refrained from probing into statements that supported any preconceptions, choosing instead to probe in order to allow the participants' own meanings to emerge.

As the researcher, I began the Epoche process by reflecting and writing down any biases and preconceptions that I had about the research participants. Based on my presuppositions, there were three significant assumptions that I identified. The first assumption was that the participants were qualified to provide insight about their careers and would be forthcoming with their responses to the interview questions. The second assumption was that African American women do not receive the same opportunities for advancement in leadership positions as White men, Black men and White women. The third assumption was based on preconceived notions from my personal and professional experiences of being an African American woman in a leadership position. My assumptions and paradigm were largely influenced by my race (African American) and sex (female) and experience working in corporate America and higher education. I held these assumptions because I have been excluded from leadership positions due to my race and gender.

The Epoche process encouraged me to reflect on my thoughts until I was consciously ready to encounter the situation freely and be receptive to an open presence. As the researcher, it was important for me to identify my own experiences with the phenomenon in order to proceed with understanding the experiences of the participants.

Once any presuppositions were identified and bracketed, the interviews and transcriptions were approached with an openness to whatever meanings emerged.

Participant Interviews

In-depth interviews ask participants to reconstruct their life histories as they relate to the subject of inquiry (Seidman, 1998). Seidman further posits that the purpose of in-depth interviewing is to understand the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. Phenomenology recognizes the reality and truth of phenomena (Sokolowski, 2000) and thus, interviews provide access to understanding people's actions (Seidman, 1998). "Recording narratives of experiences has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experience" (Seidman, 1998, p. 2). According to Hycner (1985), interviewing should cease when data saturation occurs and no new information is obtained and additional information would provide minimal relevance to the phenomenon under study.

Scheduling the Interviews

Interviews were conducted between March through July 2012. The study participants were initially contacted via phone and then followed up with by a formal email. After an appointment had been scheduled, a confirmation email was sent that included the Interview Protocol Questions (see Appendix A), Informed Consent Form (see Appendix C), and Invitation to Participate Letter (see Appendix D). Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher reviewed the consent form and acquired signed permission from each of the study participants. During each in-person interview, the researcher obtained original signatures. Participants who were interviewed over the phone either faxed or scanned their consent to participate.

In-person and Telephone Interviews

In qualitative studies, researchers use a less structured or even non-directive interview to explore a much broader range of variables and the thoughts and feelings of the subjects (Northey, Tepperman & Russell, 2002). Thus, the researcher began each interview by articulating the purpose of the study as well as providing gratitude to each participant for her willingness to participate in the study. Each participant was informed that the interviews would be audio-recorded and the audio-tapes would be stored in a secured location. "By audio-recording participants' interviews, researchers are more assured that they are capturing the true essence of the interviewees' intents" (Given, 2008, p. 190).

The in-person interviews were conducted with three of the participants in their respective employment offices. During the in-person interviews, the researcher reviewed the consent form to provide clarity and secure acknowledgement from the participants. Prior to conducting the telephone interviews, the researcher obtained a signed consent form and reviewed any salient points for clarification. The researcher then solicited any emergent questions or resolved any concerns expressed by the participants. Once the purpose of the study was discussed and any questions answered from the participants, the researcher began the interview.

The interview questions were asked in sequential order and the participants were given sufficient time to reflect on their responses. The interview questions concluded with personal perceptions about the reasons for African American women's underrepresentation in senior level positions and any advice for future African American leaders. The participants provided insightful responses and valuable narrative

descriptions to each question. The study participants spoke candidly, relying on their experiences and wisdom learned as African American women in senior level positions. Their voices resonated with lived experiences and real accounts of how their race and gender informed their development as leaders.

Each interview lasted an average of 70 - 100 minutes. The average length of each interview was approximately 85 minutes. Almost all of the interviews were held in one session with the exception of one of the interviews which was conducted over two scheduled meetings due to the time constraint of the participant. In manifest content analysis, qualitative data examines the manifest content that is physically present and countable (Berg, 1995). The table represents the manifest content of the participant's responses. The total number of words, total transcription pages and interview durations are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Manifest Content Analysis

Participant	Interview Duration	Word Count	Total Transcription Pages
1	82 minutes	7,796	15
2	76 minutes	6,487	11
3	77 minutes	7,964	15
4	70 minutes	9,622	17
5	75 minutes	4,366	9
6	80 minutes	6,624	14
7	74 minutes	7,040	14
8	101 minutes	12,339	21

After each interview, the researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim from the digital recorder into a Microsoft Office Word document. The researcher methodically transcribed each transcript and reviewed the transcripts repeatedly for accuracy.

Trustworthiness/Reliability

Maxwell (2005) describes reliability as the degree to which the results are an accurate representation of the participants under study. In other words, if the study is repeated, what is the likelihood of obtaining the same data and results? Reliability in the research design is based on the assumption that there is a single reality and that studying it repeatedly will yield the same results (Merriam, 2009). Brew (1996) points out that revisiting one's experiences provides an opportunity to gain a better grasp or understanding of the experiences and allows the possibility of seeing them differently.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) were the first to conceptualize reliability in qualitative research as dependability or consistency. This means that as a researcher, the results of the data collected are dependable or consistent. Merriam (2009) notes "regardless of the type of research, validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented" (p. 210).

"The connection between reliability and internal validity from a traditional perspective rests for some on the assumption that a study is more valid if repeated observations in the same study or replications of the entire study produce the same results" (Merriam, 2009, p. 221). Conversely, this logic relies on repetition of an established truth. However, when dealing with people or objects, data can be repeated

incorrectly. As such, the emphasis on this research must be on the data collected that mark these leaders' experiences rather than the way that they make meaning of those experiences. In an effort to ensure reliability, the researcher utilized field notes throughout the data collection process to capture accounts and record what was observed during the interviews.

Validation Strategies

Creswell (2007) considers "validation in qualitative research to be an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants" (p. 207). In qualitative research, validity is defined as the extent to which the data is credible, trustworthy, authentic and dependable (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) used credibility and validity interchangeably, while Merriam (2009) perceives validity as determining how research findings match reality and suggests that validity must be assessed in terms of something other than reality.

Creswell (2007) recommends eight validation strategies that qualitative researchers should employ to document the accuracy of their studies. These validations strategies include: 1) prolonged engagement and persistent observations in the field; 2) the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators and theories to corroborate evidence; 3) peer review or debriefing; 4) refining working hypotheses as the inquiry advances; 5) clarifying researcher bias from the outset of the study; 6) member checking; 7) utilizing rich, thick descriptions to allow readers to make decisions regarding transferability; and 8) and external audits (p. 207).

Creswell (2007) emphasizes that qualitative researchers engage in at least two of these validation strategies in any given study. To ensure validity, the research utilized member checking to solicit the participants' views of the credibility of the data so that they could judge the accuracy of the account. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest member checks as a way of establishing validity. In member checks, the researcher solicits participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The second means of ensuring validity consisted of using rich, thick descriptions to describe in detail the participants under study. Detailed descriptions by the researchers allowed readers to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred because of shared characteristics (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Lastly, through the epoche process, the researcher set aside any presuppositions and opened the research interviews with an unbiased and receptive frame of mind.

A final measure for ensuring validity was based on Maxwell's (2005) suggestion that validity is a goal rather than a product; it is never something that can be proven or taken for granted and is assessed in relation to the purposes and circumstances of the research. Therefore, the researcher copiously read each transcript to uncover consistencies that suggest the participants' experiences were in fact valid. In phenomenological research, the first validity check is to return to the research participant with the written transcripts to validate their audio-tapes. Moustakas (1994) emphasized that in phenomenological research, data validity lies in the richness of the conversation.

Member Checking

Member checking was used to establish trustworthiness of the data in this study. Member checking provides respondents the opportunity to assess adequacy of data as well as to confirm particular aspects of the data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to member checking as a process that contributes to the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. After reviewing the transcripts, the participants should be able to recognize their interpretations or suggest some fine-tuning to better capture their responses (Merriam, 2009; Givens, 2008; Seidman, 1998). Member checks provide a means for participants to verify the truth in the data to judge the accuracy and credibility of the account.

Once the transcripts were complete, to ensure validation of their responses, each participant received a copy of their verbatim transcript in an email attachment. All participants were provided verbatim transcripts to ensure validation of their responses. The participants were then given two weeks to review the transcripts and provide any additional information or make changes.

Out of the eight transcripts sent, only three participants requested minor changes. The changes included placement of punctuation marks, changes in years cited, and correct spelling of proper names. The data checking concluded after the participants had reviewed and verified the transcripts.

Data Analysis

Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) posits that the qualitative researcher begins data analysis from the initial interaction with participants and continues that interaction and analysis throughout the entire study. Creswell (2007) proposes that "data analysis

consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables or a discussion" (p. 148). In phenomenological analysis, the "researcher approaches the texts with an open mind, seeking what meaning and structure emerges" (Rossman & Raliis, 1998, p. 184). In phenomenological research, participants tell their own story and how they experienced what they experienced.

Moustakas (1994) modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data was used as the method of data analysis for the study. Moustakas (1994) recommends that phenomenological inquiry should commence with a period of reflection in order to produce an initial phenomenological account. Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher listened to each participant's response to the research questions and transcribed the results from the digital recordings. The researcher analyzed transcriptions several times to capture meanings of the participants' experiences as they related to the phenomenon.

By following Moustakas (1994) modified Van Kaam method of analysis, the researcher began the process of analyzing, organizing, clustering and describing the data to capture the essence of the participants' shared experiences. The seven step Moustakas (1994) modified Van Kaam method of data analysis is described below.

Step 1 – Horizonalization

The first step in the data analysis process was horizonalization. In horizonalization, the researcher lists every expression relevant to the experience and performs preliminary grouping (Moustakas, 1994; Priest, 2002). According to Creswell (2007), "data analysts go through the data (i.e. interview transcripts) and highlight

significant statements sentences or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (p. 61). Moustakas (1994) proposes that horizonalization illustrates the importance of being receptive to every statement of the participants experience, granting each comment equal value and thus encouraging a rhythmical flow between the research participant and researcher. Every statement initially is treated as having equal value in horizonalization.

In horizonalization, the researcher finds statements in the interviews about how individuals are experiencing the topic, lists these significant statements and treats each statement as having equal worth, and works to develop a list of non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2007). Horizonalization is a never-ending process in data analysis. Through horizonalization, the researcher consciously viewed the data from various perspectives while applying equal value to each statement to derive at a full description of the phenomenon. Each horizon of the participant's interview added meaning and provided a clear portrayal of the phenomenon under study.

Step 2 - Phenomenological Reduction and Elimination

The second step in the data analysis process involved reduction or elimination of unrelated statements. In reduction, overlapping, repetitive and vague expressions are eliminated or presented in more exact descriptive terms (Moustakas, 1994). Keen (1975) states that the phenomenological reduction is a conscious, effortful opening of oneself to the phenomenon as a phenomenon. At this stage in data analysis, the researcher begins the very rigorous process of going over every word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, and noting significant non-verbal communication meanings which express a unique and

coherent meaning (Hycner, 1985). Statements that were irrelevant to the research

questions, as well as those that were repetitive or overlapping were deleted.

Phenomenological data analysis proceeds through the methodology of reduction,

the analysis of specific themes and statements, and a search for all relevant meanings

(Polkinghorne, 2005). For this study, the researcher did not just rely on the literal

content, but also relied on the number of times a meaning was mentioned and how it was

mentioned. To avoid analyzing data that was not important to the study, the researcher

had to contemplate the relevance of the data by focusing on the key aspects of the

participants' perspectives.

Once the units of general meaning were identified, the statements that were

clearly irrelevant to the phenomenon were eliminated. In phenomenological reduction,

each expression is tested to ascertain if it contains a necessary and sufficient moment of

the experience (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenological studies pursue essences about what

could be created in the moments of analysis. After reviewing each transcript, the

researcher interpreted the essential invariant constituent or essence of each participant's

responses for what they revealed and eliminated unrelated statements. Vague and

redundant responses not relevant to their lived experiences of the phenomenon were

removed.

Step 3 – Clustering of units of meanings to form themes

Once the researcher has a list of non-redundant units of relevant meanings, the

researcher then tries to determine if any of the units of relevant meaning naturally cluster

(Hycner, 1985). Hycner further defines a unit of general meaning "as those words,

phrases, non-verbal or para-linguistic communications which express a unique and

coherent meaning" (p. 286). After the researcher had the opportunity to delineate the

relevant meanings from the entire interview transcripts, it became much clearer as to

whether initially ambiguous units of general meaning were essential to the research

questions. By clustering the invariant constituents, the researcher attempted to determine

if any of the units of relevant meaning naturally clustered. Through this procedure, some

common themes or essences were identified that determined units of relevant meaning

essential to the structure of the experience.

In Step 3, the researcher grouped related experiences into common themes. After

carefully analyzing and reviewing the transcripts, the researcher was able to cluster the

participants' statements into core themes. According to Moustakas (1994), once the units

of general meaning have been noted, the researcher is ready to address the research

question to them. If the units of general meaning are relevant to the phenomenon being

studied, then the responses are relevant to the study and are noted.

NVivo 10© qualitative software was used to help analyze the data collected in

this study. NVivo enables a researcher to use multiple languages and easily manipulate

the data to conduct searches (Creswell, 2007). By using NVivo software, it became

possible to manage, access, and analyze the data without losing the essence of the data

that is critical for phenomenological research. The NVivo software was instrumental in

gaining a better understanding of the transcripts and extracting statements to develop

thematic labels.

In NVivo software, researchers can store concepts, ideas or categories as nodes

that can be explored, organized or changed (Bazeley & Richards, 2000). The coding of

study participants was expressed in nodes, which supported identification of codes and

themes. The nodes consisted of the participants' interviews extracted from the bracketed

transcripts expressed by the participants. Categorization and arrangement of the nodes

provided the clusters of meanings identified in the invariant constituents (see Table 3).

Step 4 – Validation

Clustering of relevant invariant constituents of each experience resulted in the

emergence of core themes (see Table 4). Recursive listening of the audio recordings

facilitated listing of key words and rich text from each participant's experience to form

clusters of themes.

According to Boyatzis (1998):

Clusters of themes may be important for the presentation of the finding or in the

formulation of further research or application. The method of forming clusters, or

organizing themes into larger categories, asks the researcher to choose from

primarily two different approaches: (a) organizing the themes on the basis of a

theory or conceptual framework or empirically and (b) organizing the themes in

the context of other themes, as independent clusters of themes, or in a hierarchy.

(p. 136)

At the validation stage of phenomenological analysis, the researcher interrogates

all the clusters of meaning to determine if there are one or more central themes which

expressed the essence of these clusters (Hycner, 1985). By comparing the invariant

constituents and their accompanying theme against the complete record of the

participants, the researcher will "determine (1) are they expressed explicitly in the

complete transcription; (2) are they compatible if not explicitly expressed" (Moustakas,

1994, p. 121). In identifying unique themes, the researcher can begin to look for themes common to most or all of the interviews as well as any individual variations.

Throughout the validation stage, there was a constant process of going back and forth from the transcripts to the invariant constituents in Step 3 and then to their cluster meanings. After thoroughly listening and reviewing the transcripts, themes began to emerge from the interviews. Invariant constituents that were not relevant or compatible to the participant's experiences were deleted.

Using NVivo10© qualitative analysis software also facilitated classification, and careful management of a vast amount of data extracted from the interviews. Coding of study participants' responses produced nodes that supported identification of patterns and emergent themes. The coding queries identified nodes from the bracketed textural descriptions of the participants' experiences. Clustering of the relevant nodes identified five major themes from the responses of the participants.

Step 5 – Textural Description

From the first three steps in phenomenological data analysis, the researcher writes about *what* was experienced, a description of the meaning individuals have experienced (Moustakas, 1994 as cited in Creswell, 2007). In Step 5, the data focuses on the individual's textural description of the participant's experience to the phenomenon. In this stage of phenomenological data analysis, the researcher writes a description of the "what" of the lived experiences of the participants. "In the textural description of an experience nothing is omitted, every dimension or phrase is granted equal attention and is included" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 78). From an extensive description of the textures of

86

what the participants described, the researcher was able to describe what the participants experienced in phenomenon under study.

Step 6 – Structural Description

In Step 6 of the data analysis, the researcher writes about *how* the phenomenon was experienced by individuals in the study (Moustakas, 1994). According to Creswell (2007), structural description focuses on "how" the experience happened and the inquirer reflects on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced. Structural description involves conscious acts of thinking and judging, imagining, and recollecting, in order to arrive at core structural meanings (Moustakas, 1994). Step 6 involved the researcher intuitively coming to an understanding of underlying meanings that may have been concealed from the participants. After analyzing the data, the researcher was able to synthesize the meanings in such a way to obtain true, accurate and complete descriptions.

To understand how the phenomenon came to be what it was, the researcher applied imaginative variation to obtain structural themes from the textural descriptions. In imaginative variation, "the universal structures that precipitate feelings and thoughts with reference to the phenomenon, such as the structure of time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality, relation to self, or relation to others are considered" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99). Polkinghorne (1989) noted the "aim of phenomenological inquiry is to reveal and unravel the structure, logic, and interrelationships that are obtained in the phenomenon under inspection" (p. 50). As a result, theme analysis can be a complex process. In theme analysis, Creswell (2007) notes that the "researcher analyzes the data for specific themes aggregating information into large clusters of ideas and providing details that support the themes" (p. 244).

87

Step 7 – Synthesis of Meanings and Essences

"The final step in the phenomenological research process is the intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural description into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). Creswell (2007) posits that the guiding direction of phenomenology is to reduce the textural (what) and structural (how) meanings of experiences to a brief description that typifies the experiences of all the participants in the study. The relationship of texture and structure is not that of object and subject, or concrete and abstract, but of the apparent and the hidden coming together to create an understanding of the essences of a phenomenon or experience (Creswell, 2007).

When gathering sub-themes to obtain a comprehensive view of the information, it is easy to see a pattern emerging. By examining the themes, the clustered and labeled constituents are the core themes of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Invariant constituents are words or phrases that are common among the participants' interviews. Clustering the invariant constituents and themes of the experience must be explicit and compatible (Moustakas, 1994). If the invariant constituents and themes are not "explicit or compatible, they are not considered relevant to the experience and should be deleted" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

Once the sub-themes have been collected and the literature has been studied, the researcher is ready to formulate theme statements to develop a story line (Aronson, 1994). When the literature is interwoven with the findings, the story that the interviewer constructs is one that stands with merit. The final step involves constructing a rich textural-structural description of each participant's interview based on the "meanings and

essences of experiences and incorporating the invariant constituents and themes"
(Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest that the researcher "should assert strengths of qualitative methods by showing how she will develop an in-depth understanding of, even empathy for, the research participants to better understand their worlds" (p. 203). The phenomenological research process begins by placing the focus on the research into brackets and setting everything else aside, allowing the whole process to remain focused on the research question (Moustakas, 1994).

The culminating step in Moustakas' (1994) modified Van Kaam method consisted of writing a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions. At this stage, the researcher synthesized the essence of the experience into a universal description of themes representing the participants as a whole. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information and focuses on identifiable themes (Aroson, 1994). After the general and unique themes were developed, the researcher elucidated five major themes from the data analysis. These themes provided insight on how African American women developed as leaders.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women through their lived experiences of how they developed as leaders. This research study sought to understand the experiences that African American female participants felt were critical as leaders in their trajectory to executive level ranks.

In analyzing these female leaders, the phenomenological approach was a particularly

suitable design to understand the intentional interpretation of the participants'

experiences (Sajama & Kamppinnen, 1987).   For the researcher, phenomenology offers a

means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential

importance in understanding the rich, holistic account of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

Chapter 3 included an introduction of the qualitative research methodology and

the rationale for a phenomenological research method for the study. The chapter

addressed the research method used, the approach to participant selection, data collection

and analysis. Lastly, the chapter outlined the strategies that were employed to ensure

reliability and validity of the research data and protection of the study participants. The

next chapter will provide a detailed narrative on each participant in the research study.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES

According to Creswell (2007), a phenomenological approach provides for the analysis of human phenomena and a search for essentials, essences or the central underlying themes of the experience. In order to gain insight into the participants' worlds and lived experiences, the interview questions were designed to reveal each individual's relevant insight to the phenomenon under investigation. The purpose of interviewing was to specifically find out what was in and on each participant's mind (Patton, 1990). In a phenomenological approach, participants tell their own story and on their own terms.

This chapter is designed to present some insight into the participants' backgrounds and career development as leaders. The hope is that by providing a context that situates each woman in her narrative, a portrait of her life will be unveiled and a more holistic portrayal of each research participant will materialize.

The information being presented occurred from the responses shared by each participant during the interviews. An amalgamation of the participants' stories is provided to describe the essence of how race and gender identities informed their leadership development experiences. They have all been assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality.

Evelyn

Evelyn is a 54-year old single woman with no children. She was born to a teenage mother that gave birth to her at the age of 13. From the age of five, her mother was abused both mentally and physically. Evelyn was the oldest child of two other male siblings that were from her biological mother. As a young single parent of three children, Evelyn's mother often ran away from home and the responsibility of being a parent.

Since her father was absent from her life, Evelyn was forced into the foster care system along with her siblings. She remembers being shifted around to at least six different foster care homes. Evelyn refers to herself as a "throw-away child" because of the lack of love that she received from others. Characteristics prevalent in Evelyn's psyche and early childhood experiences were feelings of abandonment, low self-esteem, and lack of self-worth.

While growing up in the custody of others, Evelyn was subjected to mental and physical abuse while in the hands of several foster care parents. Evelyn recalled learning how to develop coping skills to deal with the psychological trauma of being in foster care. She learned early on that if people wanted to cause her harm and were dismissive towards her that they were what she termed as "throw-away people," a term she often used. Evelyn felt that she had to use these people to her advantage in order to advance her life.

One of these people that had a profound impact on her life was a former foster mother. She described her as an extremely large woman with masculine attributes common to what you would see in a very strong man. Due to her large stature, she remembered how this woman commanded attention when she walked into a room. She had a huge garden in her backyard and cooked fresh food on a daily basis. Cooking, sewing and raising a household with 17 other foster care children demonstrated to Evelyn that she was an exceptional individual. Even though she was married to a husband who Evelyn claims never worked, she managed her household with tight control. This often led to her becoming physically, mentally and emotionally abusive towards the foster children under her care.

Evelyn remembered how her foster mother was extremely physically abusive to both of her brothers. Evelyn stated that, "…while there were things that I would not want anyone to experience, including me, I did learn from her." Terms like "ugly, worthless, useless, and you are going to end up just like your mother" were taunting comments that haunted Evelyn's childhood. She was constantly under the vestiges of negativity, pain and hatred because of her identity and misfortune in life. However, she refused to let pessimism resonate through her spirit. She did not pay attention to the unhealthy feedback and was determined to use it in constructive ways.

Evelyn ended up going to college after discovering that she could live in the dormitories and not be homeless. She went away to college and found out that there was a space for her in life and that she could have a voice through her education. For the first time in her life, she felt that adults could actually be vested in her intellectual and developmental growth as an individual. Through education, Evelyn realized that she wanted to help people find their voices within academia as she was able to do for herself. Education was the catalyst for finding her voice in life.

As an African American female, Evelyn expressed that she was often dismissed by others because of the color of her skin, gender, size and the way her facial features were figured. She developed coping skills to dismiss these negative individuals and referred to them as very dysfunctional and just not nice people. Yet, even with their negative behaviors towards her, they helped her to understand that she could become what they told her that she wasn't capable of becoming. The fact that Evelyn survived these adversities and was able to thrive suggested that she had internal fortitude and was determined to flourish in life.

It was critical for Evelyn to live her life in a way that is always giving. She stated that she has a passion for helping people to become better. In developing intrapersonal skills, she had to learn how to study people whom she considered less ideal, less effective, less productive and less supportive and try to figure out why they behaved this way. Conversely, by studying those who functioned in extremely effective ways, Evelyn began to learn how they functioned to identify the core of their motivation. She would then analyze how they acquired those sets of competencies, innate skills and abilities and how she could leverage what she observed to complement her skillset. Frankly, Evelyn believed that she learned how to use folks in the most productive ways for her safety and well-being as she did as a foster child. For her, it surmounted to surviving and thriving for her greater good.

There were several obstacles and challenges that were present in Evelyn's life and career trajectory. She reflected on an incident in which a White male faculty member did not want her to become a member of a research team. In that experience, she refrained from buying into the fact that he was probably a racist. Instead, she remained steadfast in her personal agenda to be exposed to the best and brightest research experience to advance her career. Despite her experiences, Evelyn refrains from taking the easy way out and becoming a victim. Her childhood experiences taught her to be strong and resilient and to overcome any adversities in her life.

As an African American female college president, Evelyn has been subjected to disbelief and curiosity regarding her current position. She expressed how she has experienced the dismay of others and surprised looks on people's faces when she walks into a room because they expected her to be a White female. While she tries not to

internalize these experiences, she felt that these negatives assumptions about Black folks and women continue to promote the idea that African Americans or other minorities cannot be in leadership roles. By insulating herself from these racist and sexist views, Evelyn has learned to respect and honor her identity and those of others. She stated, "because of what others bring to the table, what they bring to the learning conscious, I respect all of that by honoring and respecting all others by demonstrating the importance of all of us."

Even though Evelyn was raised in the foster care system as a child, she did not let her misfortune dictate her future. Through adversity and obstacles, Evelyn never let her misfortune in life hinder her success. She believed that her ascendency to becoming a college president was predestined and was guided by a higher source. Evelyn also expressed that the leader she is today was made possible through hard work and commitment. She did not let her race, gender nor experiences negate her development as a leader but used her identity for the advancement of her career (see Table 5).

Pamela

Pamela is in her mid-60's and has been employed in higher education for over 40 years. She was born in Los Angeles, but grew up in St. Louis, Missouri. While growing up, Pamela stated that she had a strong upbringing with a nurturing and supportive family. Her family, particularly women such as aunts and cousins, played a critical role in her development as a leader. Growing up during the civil rights era, she was one of the first African American students to integrate her elementary school. Her first leadership position was in high school when she served on the student council and in student government. Religion played an important role in her life as a child and she attended

church faithfully with her grandmother and siblings. She participated in many activities in her early childhood including singing in the church choir and being on the student council.

The importance of education was emphasized throughout Pamela's life. Most of the women in her family were educators; therefore, after graduating from high school, she decided to attend college in Los Angeles at the same university that her mother had received her college education. However, she did not meet the admission deadline and had to attend a community college until she was formally admitted. Pamela's goal was to become a doctor, in particular a pediatrician. She recalled how a class in physics was "whipping her you know what" and how she just could not handle those science classes. However, one of her aunts told her that there is more than one kind of doctor and that she could become a doctor of education. That advice struck a chord with Pamela and she realized that she just wanted to have the doctor title. So with that advice, she went on and pursued a master's degree and Ph.D. in education.

Upon graduating with her bachelor's degree, Pamela became a teacher in the public school systems. She did that for several years until she started working for the JobCorp in St. Louis, Missouri. Eventually, Pamela decided to pursue a master's degree in higher education. One of her earliest positions in academia was in residential life as a resident assistant. Important mentors in her life provided her with opportunities and career advancement in her career trajectory. Pamela stated that "all along I was fortunate enough to have mentors in my life."

A chance encounter with a Vice President of Student Affairs would alter her career advancement in higher education. After meeting with the vice-president, he

informed her that he was looking for an African American female to accept a role as the Assistant Director of Student Activities or Associate Director of Residential Life. As Pamela contemplated the two opportunities, she decided to choose the student activities position. Since she had a background in Greek Life she felt that it would be a better fit for her, coupled with the fact that student activities would keep her out of the office and interacting with students. In this capacity, she would be able to train future leaders and students of color. By the time she left the institution to pursue her doctorate, she had become the acting Dean of Students.

Pamela attests that one of the things that she is not driven by is the pursuit of money. She considers money to be the "green Jesus." In all that she has accomplished, she has prided herself on not compromising her integrity. There were many times when she was put into unethical situations, but based on her values and integrity, she always refrained from succumbing to bad decisions. Pamela is not driven by money and believes in standing for what she firmly believes. She realized that the decisions she has made were based on her value ethics and not monetary gains. As an administrator, she wants to set an example for others and encourage them to respect their values and not be a slave to the "green Jesus."

As an African American female in a leadership position, there were several challenges that Pamela had to face. One situation in particular that Pamela discussed was an incident when she became the Vice President of Student Affairs. The morale of the Student Affairs department was very low and was particularly the lowest on the totem pole in terms of the campus. Pamela felt that in her role, it was paramount that she brought the Student Affairs unit together as a team; therefore, she developed an internal

process of problem-solving that enabled each staff member, from the managers to the secretaries, to write down everything that they felt was wrong with the division. Based on the feedback, Pamela took the leadership team on a retreat to assess the information with a goal of fixing the problem. The key to Pamela's leadership approach was to be transparent and keep everyone informed. From this challenge, Pamela was successful in improving the morale of the division and fixing almost 90% of the problems in that year.

A major obstacle that Pamela has had to endure for many years was being the only female and person of color on the President's cabinet. She has faced obstacles in terms of being recognized due to her identity and administrative role. In her capacity as an African American female leader, it was important for Pamela to be effective and serve as an example for other women of color. Mentoring others is essential for opening the doors for others in providing opportunities. Thus, Pamela takes the time to serve as a role model for African American women. She stated that she has mentored many to make sure that women of color continue to serve in leadership positions. As an African-American woman, Pamela believes that we must always carry it forward and always stand on integrity (see Table 6).

Jackie

Jackie was born and raised on the east coast in a two family household. She credits her family as playing a major role in her career and educational pursuits. Her father was a hard-working provider for the family and made a profound impact on her work ethic. When Jackie described her childhood experience, she remembered a very nurturing and family oriented environment. Even though she came from modest means,

Jackie never knew that she was poor until she left home and realized that she had been brought up in the projects.

While attending school, Jackie professed that she always enjoyed learning and her parents vehemently reinforced the importance of education. In high school, she was very active in student organizations and was a student body president. Due to her strong academic abilities, she was selected as the salutatorian of her senior class and went on to receive a college scholarship to a prestigious private university.

During Jackie's first year in college, she was not prepared for the transition from high school to college. In addition, she had chosen to major in business commerce based on the belief that she would be financially secure in a business career. Unfortunately, the business major was not a good fit for Jackie and she performed poorly. To make matters worse, she was commuting back and forth between two states to attend college. Ultimately, Jackie ended up dropping out of college after her first year. This temporary setback forced Jackie to reassess both her professional and educational goals.

A fellow classmate of Jackie's who was involved in children's theater, invited her to watch him audition for an upcoming play. Jackie decided to attend the audition and upon arrival, she decided to audition as well. She had no formal training in the arts but felt that she wanted to try something new since she was no longer attending school. Fortunately for Jackie, she was chosen for a small role and began performing at local elementary schools in the city and in the Caribbean. After performing for a while and working at odd jobs, Jackie soon realized that it was time to make a career change so she went to see a former music director at her high school for advice. He recommended that she go back to college and that he would connect her with someone he knew at a

Historical Black College in Tennessee. Jackie ended up attending this college and graduated with a 4.0 grade point average in psychology.

Jackie's first full-time professional job was at a college in Tennessee where she was hired as an advisor. During this time, she also met her husband who worked at a nearby college. They were married a year later and both began working on their master's degrees in higher education. For several years after graduate school, Jackie worked in the financial aid office. As time went on, she realized that she was ready to grow professionally and that there weren't any career advancement opportunities in her current position. Jackie felt that the pipeline was not there for her to move up and she had to be mobile in order to advance. Therefore, she decided to accept a new position at a college in the northern part of the United States as the Director of Financial Aid. Jackie recalled that she was the only African American in management working in the financial aid office. As the Director, she knew that she had enormous responsibility and had to show confidence in performing the job. Jackie was determined to silence any naysayers who believed that she did not have the skillset to accomplish her managerial roles. She was quite successful in her position and eventually moved on to become an assistant vice president.

In terms of Jackie's development as a leader, she expressed that her mother was a major influence in shaping her leadership development. Her mother instilled in Jackie the importance of becoming an independent person by not relying on others. As she reflected on this, she felt that her mother had always wished that she could have done more with her life. Jackie felt that her mother did not devalue her own life; she wanted more for her daughter to succeed and achieve more than she had in life.

100

In her professional career, Jackie felt that she learned a great deal from a former supervisor who happened to be a White female. Jackie acknowledged that this individual served as a mentor and had a profound impact on her leadership skills. She was quickly promoted from the Director of Financial Aid to an Assistant Vice President. For Jackie, this promotion affirmed her trajectory to a career in higher education. In making this decision, Jackie realized that she had to have a "union card" which was a Ph.D. to endure in a career in academia; therefore, she returned to school, earned her Ph.D. in three years, and was promoted to an Associate Vice President.

When her former mentor became president of a university located out west, Jackie was offered a position in enrollment management. Jackie eventually held other senior administrative positions at this university including Vice President for Planning and Vice President for Administration. Jackie currently serves at the Vice President of Student Affairs.

One of the obstacles that Jackie faced in her career was adapting to the management style of a new college president. She expressed that this was a traumatic time in her life both personally and professionally. Jackie started to question her confidence in her abilities. During this experience, Jackie demonstrated professionalism, tenacity and resilience. She never wavered in her disposition nor compromised her character. Jackie expressed that enduring this situation made her a stronger leader in terms of knowing what she could withstand.

Jackie felt that as an African American female, she had to work harder than everyone else. Currently, she is the only female Vice President on the president's cabinet and feels that she is often overshadowed by other White males. She expressed that she

often has to speak out because if she doesn't, she would seem invisible. In being a leader, Jackie stated that it is important to understand other people's perspectives. She feels that most people are good and want to do what is right for the most part. Based on her leadership role, she felt that her leadership style closely aligned with a transformational leader.

For Jackie, a good leader is surrounded by strong people who are willing to challenge her when the need arises. As a leader, she realizes that she cannot and will not make everyone happy, but she is always conscious about making the best decisions. She wants people to respect her and to have confidence in what she stands for in her ethical beliefs. According to Jackie, whatever the issues are and whether they like it or not, what she hopes for is that people respect who she is as an African American female leader, and recognize her transparency as a leader (see Table 7).

Carol

Carol is 49-years old and has two children. She was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. She grew up in a non-traditional family household with two unmarried parents who were together for 25 years and had families outside of the relationship. Carol compared her upbringing to the "Brady Bunch" because she had a blended and open family. Her parents were from the south and her father was a light-skinned mulatto. Due to her mother's darker brown complexion, there were identity issues related to color complexions within the family. Carol expressed that these issues negatively affected her self-perception and personal views about skin color. Her mother instilled in her the importance of looking at the value and worth of a person rather than

judging individuals based on the color of their skin. For Carol, this would be her first exposure to the dynamics of race.

Carol grew up in the 1960's in southern California and remembers being the first family of color in her neighborhood. She strongly believed that the only reason that they were able to purchase the home was because they thought her father was White. She was the youngest of four children and felt that her family was extremely overprotective of her. While growing up in a segregated neighborhood, her older brothers were confronted with the daily vestiges of racism and dealt with many instances of overt discrimination. Carol recalled watching her older siblings fight in many racial riots (brawls) while attending school. She reflected on how deplorable it was that her brothers had to fight just to be able to attend school to receive an education.

While in school, Carol was considered gifted and talented. She was extremely bright and advanced rather quickly in her studies. The school she attended recommended that she be sent to another school for gifted and talented education. Since Carol had overprotective parents, her mother would not permit the school to send her to another school and only agreed to her skipping the third grade. In retrospect, Carol was very appreciative of what her mother did because the social adjustment of being younger than everyone would have been a daunting experience.

Carol's grandmother played a pivotal role in her childhood development. Married by the age of 14, her grandmother raised 10 children of whom two were not her biological children. Carol's grandmother's ethnicity was mixed with African American and Native American backgrounds. Carol indicated that her grandmother was considered the matriarch of the family. She was a farmer by trade and owned her own farm that

became the neighborhood sanctuary for providing food to feed needy families. Carol's grandmother's dream was to someday become an executive chef. However, because of her grandmother's ethnic background, she never became the chef that she had always wanted due to an era of racial inequalities that were prevalent in the 1960's. Therefore, she became a cook and ended up working in Beverly Hills for a wealthy family.

Carol spent considerable time living with her grandmother because of her mother's health-related issues. She remembered how her grandmother was always a warm and caring person. Under the guidance of her grandmother, Carol's work ethics, moral values and leadership skills were developed. Carol strongly believed that her grandmother had a profound impact on both her character and interpersonal skills.

In reflecting on her career path, Carol expressed that most of her empowerment came from people that did not look like her. Through her experiences, Carol has learned to not always expect someone who looks like her to be someone that reflects her identity or someone who is going to have her best interest at heart. Carol received advice from an African American male to always be careful of the people that she chose as mentors because some people just want followers or worshipers. When choosing a mentor, Carol expressed that she has had to step back and take a look at these individuals to ascertain the real reasons why they were vested in her.

Most of her mentors and sponsors have been White males who created opportunities throughout her career. As she reflected on this, Carol was not absolutely clear why this has been the case, but she did feel that society has set White males and people of color as adversaries. She affirmed that this had been the case in her career. Carol posited that an African American male might view her as a threat instead of

viewing her as another African American female that could break through the glass ceiling. She went on to recollect how a former White female supervisor stepped all over her for many years. When Carol accepted a promotion at another institution, the woman felt blindsided when she found out that the position offered was higher than hers. As Carol stated, "every dog has their day" and people should not undermine an individual's intelligence because of the color of their skin.

When Carol realized that she wanted to pursue a career in higher education, it was imperative that she obtained an advanced degree. She felt that she had hit a brick wall in her current position and wanted to move up the career ladder. While raising two children, Carol went back to school and earned a master's degree at a Catholic university on the west coast. Even though she was not supported by her spouse, she was determined to continue her college education.

As an African American female in a senior level position, Carol realized that there were some positions that she was hired for because of her race and gender. While, on the other hand, there were positions that she was not hired for due to her race and gender. Carol felt that being the wrong minority is a dynamic that only African Americans face. According to Carol, being an African American may not be the "in" minority; thus, you can be overlooked because people perceive you as having the wrong gender or being the wrong minority for the position. She felt this is a dichotomy only experienced by African Americans and African American women.

In her leadership development, Carol stated that her race and gender had shaped her leadership style because she is determined to lead people on the basis of their ability. In her experiences, she witnessed leaders who did not support or empower their staff.

105

Carol wanted people to feel that they did not have to emulate her to feel empowered to do their best. Building on people's strengths and helping the team become successful is what motivates Carol as a leader. As a Vice President of Student Affairs, it is important to Carol that she does not lead a team of clones. She values and is receptive to diverse experiences and thoughts from others. As a leader, Carol felt that her goal is to embrace uniqueness and interact with others in a positive manner.

When Carol reflected on her experiences as a woman in a leadership position, she expressed that females must remember how they come across because you can be seen as overtly assertive or too demanding. Personally, she has been told by others that she should be careful in how she relays information to male supervisors because it may be taken out of context. Carol emphatically did not agree with this assertion and refused to acquiesce to any male who was in authority. As Carol stated, "any man who has an issue with a woman asserting herself is his problem and basically needs to man up."

Oftentimes, Carol has been confronted with being the only woman of color at the table. She expressed that she often feels bothered by this fact even when there are other men of color present. As the only woman of color she still feels as though she is the anomaly or outlier. Carol felt that men of color can assimilate and be included in the ole boys' network. They seem to be accepted more because they are men. She professed that as an African American woman, there are many obstacles that she, and others like her, will have to endure in leadership positions. As Carol stated, as "African American women we have to develop a personal consciousness that helps us think about whether or not we want this; how this is going to fulfill our lives and whether or not this will be beneficial" (see Table 8).

106

Sandra

Sandra is 40-years old and married with two children. She was born on the east coast to parents of Haitian ancestry. As a child, she divided her time between Haiti and the United States. Her parents felt that she should have both a Haitian education, as well as an American educational background. She was the youngest child of four siblings and her parents were very influential in instilling values on the importance of an education. While her mother was not very vocal in the home, she ensured that things were taken care of and the family household ran efficiently. As Sandra reflected about her childhood, she felt that her mother created leaders in the home and developed her children to become leaders when they reached adulthood.

When Sandra was five years old, she went to live with her maternal aunt in Haiti. Sandra's aunt played a very pivotal role while growing up and throughout her life. Her aunt was the first woman to ever own a factory in Haiti. This was a big deal in her town because women did not own businesses in a male-dominated environment. The power that her aunt displayed as the owner of a business played a major role in Sandra's desire to become a leader. Sandra's aunt instilled in her the concept of leadership, as well as the ambition and drive to become successful.

In discussing individuals that helped shaped her career path, Sandra expressed that there were two African American males who were instrumental in guiding her path. One was her college advisor who served as a mentor in her desire to pursue a career in higher education. Sandra's advisor was influential in ensuring that she followed a career path that would lead to her career of choice. She also expressed that she learned much of her leadership style from a former supervisor who served as the provost at the institution

where she was employed. Sandra has a quiet and reserved nature about herself. However, her mentor was able to look beyond that and build upon her self-esteem; thus, empowering her to lead by empathizing and understanding the people that she supervised. After nearly 14 years in higher education, Sandra stated that she still enjoys academia and attributes that to the influences of both of these individuals.

Throughout her career development, Sandra experienced many challenges and dealt with several sacrifices. She has had to sacrifice her health and starting a family while pursuing her education and furthering her career. A challenge that Sandra faced was being demoted from a director to counselor level position when the college she worked at was facing a financial crisis. In addition, Sandra has made lateral moves in her career when conflicts with management have arisen. She confessed that these experiences built her skillset and competencies for her current dean position. When people questioned her career moves, she knew that the lateral moves and demotions would prepare her to successfully move up the career ladder. For Sandra, the goal was to gain the experience to become a well-rounded professional.

In her career mobility, she felt that her young age coupled with her race and gender negatively affected her career advancement. Sandra discussed one instance in which she was belittled, criticized and devalued by a former female supervisor. This individual felt that Sandra lacked experience and credibility due to her age and academic background. Sandra believed that this disparaging situation really influenced her to become a leader because she did not want anyone that she worked with to go through this same negative experience.

Sandra's leadership style was molded by her experiences with both a disparaging supervisor and an empowering one. She has crafted her leadership style in alignment with the leadership style of a servant leader. Sandra believed in being attentive to the growth and development of others and valuing them as individuals. As a leader, she wants to influence others in a positive manner and serve their needs in any way possible. For Sandra, she is always mindful that she does not use her role to belittle people nor empower them to a degree that would hinder her ability to carry out her decision making authority. The important aspect for Sandra is to find the middle ground and become the best leader that she strives can be.

When Sandra reflected on being an African American female, she felt that her gender had been a major detractor in her current position. She works at an institution on the east coast that employs a diverse population of individuals from African, African-American and Caribbean backgrounds. Even though the majority of the staff that Sandra works with are women, gender has been an issue at her institution. Sandra revealed that the men she works with who are in the minority, still occupy most of the senior level positions and have the most authority. On one particular instance, Sandra experienced bias when the mention of a note taker stirred looks in her direction and that of another woman in attendance at a meeting. She felt that this was a direct attack on her intelligence by the males present to think that she was only capable of taking notes because she was a woman.

As a Dean at the college, Sandra stated that she has faced pay inequities because of her gender. She oversees the largest college on the campus with the most direct reports and student body population, but receives less compensation than her male

counterparts who have less responsibility. Sandra has been told that this is due to a lack of experience and tenure. However, Sandra asserts that she in fact has seniority in terms of longevity at the institution compared to the other deans. Unfortunately, she feels the subtle, but covert rationale for the pay inequity is due to gender discrimination. She attests that she will continue to fight harder to prove that even as a woman, she has the competency to perform the job well and is entitled to being treated fairly in the workplace.

She attempts to work with and reach out to female colleagues as well as students to help them understand that their gender should not be a detriment to their careers. Sandra wants others to realize that as women of color, they will have to do more and work harder to be at the decision making table. Sandra's identity has prepared her for the struggle that she will continue to fight for in her career. She understands that she will have to constantly prove herself not only as a woman but as an African American woman to advance up the career ladder to someday become a university president.

As Sandra expressed, "one always has to remember that if you do not learn from your experiences that you are bound to repeat them again." Therefore, it is very important to try to assess when things are happening to ensure that you have learned from them in order to move ahead. The key is that you have to be in and stay in the game. Sandra felt that she has to continue the struggle to open the door for other Black women's entry into leadership positions. The sad truth, as Sandra reflected, was that there are not enough African American women in these leadership positions in the first place. Therefore, African American women have to champion the fight to ensure that more of us in leadership positions across the country in higher education showcase our work and voice

our struggles so that we can all be at the forefront and provide opportunities for others (see Table 9).

Jennifer

Jennifer is 56-years old and married with one child. She was born in the south to a teenage mother and was raised by grandparents who were sharecroppers. Jennifer humorously joked about being the illegitimate child of a 14-year old mother. Since her mother was too young to provide for Jennifer, she was raised by her maternal grandparents. Her grandparents could not read nor write, but worked hard as farmers in the rural south. Jennifer lived so far from the junior high school that her paternal grandfather had to pick her up every day to take her to school. Jennifer felt that she was fortunate to be raised by both of her grandparents until she went to live with her mother while in high school. At that time, her mother had a family of her own so Jennifer was responsible for taking care of her younger siblings.

Jennifer prospered academically in school and earned a college scholarship. However, she decided to marry immediately out of high school as her ticket out of the rural south. Before leaving home, Jennifer promised her mother that she would finish college someday. Her husband was in the military and they were stationed in New Mexico for several years. One of the first things that Jennifer did after relocating to New Mexico was to enroll in college; however, her husband's military salary was not sufficient enough to pay for her college education. Therefore, Jennifer had to start working full-time. Once the family was deployed to Alaska, Jennifer began working full-time as a bank teller while attending college in the evening.

While working and attending school, she became a mother and decided to focus on her family. Jennifer quickly advanced in the banking industry largely due to the prosperity from the Alaskan pipeline. There was a great deal of opportunity for Jennifer in the banking industry due to a robust state economy during the 1970's. She advanced from a teller to a management position within two years.

In the late nineties, after many years in Alaska, Jennifer and her family relocated to the west coast. When Jennifer first arrived in the west, the first job she took was at a state bank. While at the bank, she enrolled in the management program to secure a management position at the new bank. Unfortunately, because Jennifer was six work days short of the minimum requirement, she was denied admissions into the program. Thus, Jennifer moved onto another bank in which she was hired into a management position.

While working at the bank, Jennifer was mentored by a White male supervisor who was instrumental in providing her with career advancement opportunities. Jennifer recalled sitting in a meeting with him discussing management reassignment at several branches. In contemplating about one of the branches, Jennifer expressed to her supervisor that there was not an internal candidate for the position and they would have to look outside. She remembered her supervisor looking at her and informing her that he would like for her to take over as the branch manager. Jennifer remembered a lump forming in her throat as she pondered taking on that responsibility. After encouraging Jennifer that she could become the best banker by taking on this opportunity, she took on the challenge of running her own branch as an Assistant Vice-President.

For Jennifer, this was her first experience with a mentor who cared about her career and believed in her abilities. She stated that he was always there encouraging her and instilling the importance of civic responsibility. Jennifer felt that by working in the financial industry, she should be committed to teaching financial literacy to the African American community. For Jennifer, this sponsorship was instrumental in developing a passion for her desire to become a leader in corporate America.

As Jennifer discussed her leadership style, she felt that leaders were born. Jennifer stated, "You can't take someone that wasn't born a leader and make them a leader without them being born to lead." Based on her belief, Jennifer felt that she was born to lead since she had always had the desire to want to lead others. That desire was influenced by watching other leaders in her places of employment and modeling her leadership style on what she observed in others. Jennifer felt that if you are leading and no one is following you, that you are just going for a walk. In order to be a good leader, she believes that you have to lead unconditionally. In her 30 years in the industry, one of the accomplishments that Jennifer takes great pride in is the gratitude expressed from current and past staff members that pay homage to her leadership.

When Jennifer reflected on her race and gender, she stated that she wished that being a female and Black did not affect her career. Nevertheless, she has come to realize that her identity has negatively affected her career. Coming from the south, she never wanted anyone to promote or give her anything because of her race or gender. Jennifer tried very hard not to be the "token" when diversity became the jargon in corporate America. Often times, Jennifer expressed that she had been the only woman of color in an industry dominated by White males with blonde hair. Even though she is an executive

vice president, the people who are in charge are all White men. The reason she feels that the industry has less women is because as a female, you must be persistent and be at the right place at the right time. However, often times there aren't any women of color at the table to ascend the career ladder.

In 1994, Jennifer went to Washington D.C. and lobbied the Glass Ceiling Act with an international financial organization. She was invited to join the group by another White woman and was the only African American woman in the group. Jennifer participated in this opportunity to enhance her career and provide career advancement for other women of color. As an African American woman, she was determined to never compromise her identity or values while working in the industry. She saw an industry that had a lack of women of color and felt that she could be a catalyst for change for other African American women to follow.

Throughout her career, she was able to work with five banking companies and move from a teller to a Senior Vice President. Jennifer felt that as an African American woman, she has had to work harder than anyone else in order to advance. She has sacrificed and persevered by accepting increasingly challenging positions with a broader span of responsibility in different banks in the same banking industry. These opportunities enabled Jennifer to develop as a leader by increasing her competencies and building her character. She revealed that she has learned from both her mistakes and successes. In reflecting upon her career transitions and learning experiences, she strongly affirmed that she is dedicated to mentoring other women in the industry to continue to climb the corporate ladder (see Table 10).

Kelly

Kelly is 61-years old and a divorced mother of one child. She grew up in an urban area in a two-family household along with one sibling. Her mother was a public school teacher while her father worked in the factory at one of the auto plants. Even though her father did not have a college education, Kelly felt that he was a brilliant man and great father. She credited her parents in playing such a positive role in her life. She felt that she had a beautiful childhood with two parents who taught her everything about life and instilled values that have carried her to adulthood.

As a young child, Kelly's parents instilled in her the importance of being independent and responsible. Her parents set very high standards and as long as she did what she was told, she was given a great deal of autonomy. For Kelly, her parents set the foundation for building her character. She was expected to excel academically, respect others and refrain from causing her parents any problems. Kelly respected her parents and made sure that she obeyed and did what was expected of her. As she reflected on her family, she expressed that she had the best parents and childhood that a person could have. All of Kelly's aspirations and accomplishments were attributed to the love and confidence that she experienced by her parents.

Kelly recounted that early exposure to leadership roles was developed from working in her father's vegetable truck. Her father would take time off from working in the factory when the auto plant would change models to operate his vegetable truck. During the summers, she would work with her father in the vegetable truck selling vegetables in the neighborhood. When she was 10, her father made her obtain a work permit. Kelly stated that the only thing worse than working for her father would have

115

been slavery. Her father was relentless in teaching her how to operate a business through hard work. As Kelly reflected on this experience, she expressed that she was taught how to navigate corporate America from the back of her father's vegetable truck. One vital lesson that Kelly's father instilled in her was that in business, the goal is to separate people from their money. Kelly revealed that this ideology was tantamount in terms of showing her how to become successful through strong work ethics.

In discussing her career decisions, Kelly stated that college degree attainment was a decision that guided her career path. She expressed that formal education positively affected her promotions to senior-level positions. Kelly obtained a doctorate in urban planning and began working in urban planning for a major metropolitan city. After working in the public sector for many years, she realized that she was being excluded from the internal networks within the organization. She realized that she wasn't being promoted or moving up the ladder. In her words, "one of the things that I learned about life was that if you weren't being invited to the parties that you should be invited to then you need to start your own party." Thus, Kelly decided to leave the country. She moved to West Africa to become an international consultant for five years. She eventually got married and had a child while living abroad. After starting a family, she decided to return to the United States.

In regards to her leadership style, Kelly stated that she believes in being a servant and humble leader. She expressed that she has always prided herself in helping others along the way and pulling them along. Another aspect that Kelly has learned as a leader is that you have to make some changes and take some risks, but you have to do it in the confines of the organization that you are working. It is important to know and understand

the corporate culture in order to navigate yourself professionally. Even when faced with

adversity, Kelly expressed that she has never strayed in standing on integrity and

commanding respect. She discussed a situation where she had to deal with a difficult

supervisor. Kelly stated that he was a bully and would just throw tantrums and exert

authority over people. One day he decided to throw a tantrum and go off on Kelly. In

response, Kelly returned the tantrum and she did not have any more problems with this

male supervisor.

Kelly has been working in corporate America for over 18 years. In her leadership

role, Kelly's greatest challenge has been being taken seriously as an African American

woman. She has often experienced her credibility being questioned and her judgment

tested. While at the corporate table, she has not only been the sole African American

woman but the only woman on executive teams. Through growing up in the inner city

and values learned from childhood, she has been successful in navigating the inner circles

of the corporate world. Kelly stated that her "streets sense" has guided her through the

corporate maze. She has never shied away from being the only female in the group or

tried to fit in as one of the boys. Kelly proclaimed that she will never lower her standards

nor forsake her values to fit into the corporate culture. As Kelly stated, "by working in

the corporate America, you cannot turn yourself into someone that you are not just to be

accepted in the corporate culture."

In reflecting on her race and gender, Kelly revealed that she has always felt that

her strength relies in the fact that she is a woman and a person of African descent.

Kelly's experiences coupled with her identity have served as a strong foundation in

building her character. She believes that African American women should do the best

they can from their vantage points and stand firm on their beliefs. Even though she has a strong sense of self, Kelly felt that she had been subjected to racism and sexism. Oftentimes, Kelly has been the only African American female at the table. Furthermore, she had discovered that she had not been invited to the good ole boys network in corporate America. However, she has learned to navigate through corporate America to advance her career and promote her agenda. She believes in not playing or falling into office politics and fostering relationships that work to her advantage.

For Kelly, America is not a race-free or gender-neutral society, nor is the corporate world. She often reverts to the entrepreneurial spirit instilled by her father to deal with the idiosyncrasies of the business world. Kelly believes that one has to protect and advance one's personal brand through a work persona. It is essential for African American women to figure out how to market their identity brand to make them comfortable and successful. Kelly has also learned that a good natured attitude, being a team player and standing up for what is right are vital characteristics to possess. Since mostly all corporate jobs are dominated by White men, Kelly has learned that African American women must learn how to communicate in ways that will make them successful (see Table 11).

Raquel

Raquel was born in a working class family in the Midwest part of the United States. She was the youngest of four children and considered herself a tomboy. Sports played an integral part of her childhood and she was very active in athletics. Since Raquel's mother was a public school teacher, she did not want her children to be disadvantaged due to the lack of resources in public education; therefore, Raquel received

her elementary education in Catholic school. By the time she entered the fifth grade, she ended up participating in a desegregation program where she was bused to a public school in a wealthy neighborhood.

Raquel recounted that her earliest exposure to leadership was influenced by her family upbringing. Raquel's parents taught her to be inquisitive and to not believe everything that she was told. They instilled in her the importance of being a leader rather than a follower. In retrospect, Raquel could see that her parents were planting the seeds of her leadership qualities of self-reliance and assertiveness. In growing up, Raquel could not just get away with saying something that wasn't supported with evidence because her argument would get torn apart. As a result, she learned how to be able to speak her mind by defending everything that she said.

By being the youngest of four, she also had to learn how to assert herself amongst her siblings. Raquel revealed a situation where at age seven, she called a meeting amongst her older siblings. At the meeting, she displayed an organizational chart which in actuality was a family tree that put all of the children at the same level. She pointed out to them that even though they were older than her, they were all at the same and the only people she had to listen to were the two people at the top who were their parents. Raquel expressed that at an early stage she demonstrated a business mindset and an assertive nature.

While growing up, Raquel's parents were her role models. While her mother worked as a school teacher, her father was employed at the post office. They worked hard to provide for their family and to ensure that their children would be afforded better opportunities in life. Raquel revealed that her father experienced racial discrimination

119

from his employer. When a management position became available, her father was overlooked for the position and it was given to a White male co-worker that he had trained. Her father took his case to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and won the case. Even though her father was employed in the position for a year, he wanted to take a stand against being discriminated against because of his race. This had a profound impact on Raquel to take the same just stand against any employer who treated her unfairly based on her race and gender identities.

After obtaining a master's in business administration, Raquel obtained a job at a consulting firm. It was in this position, that she learned the difference between a mentor and sponsor by a Black male supervisor. He taught Raquel that a mentor gives you some advice and may walk you through issues, but a sponsor will actually give you a career opportunity and advocate for your promotion. Raquel quickly started to pay attention to the importance of sponsorship. There was a situation where she trained a White female colleague on project management, but later learned that she was three levels above Raquel. When Raquel brought this to her supervisor's attention who agreed that she should be promoted, she was told that she could not receive a promotion at that time; however, a sponsor went directly to human resources and advocated on her behalf. Ultimately, Raquel received a double promotion in the company.

Looking for better opportunities, Raquel eventually moved on to a Fortune 500 company. She aspired to become a director in the company even though there weren't any African American women currently holding that title. Raquel recalled how those director level positions were Holy Grail only reserved for White men and women. In the organizational chart of the company, Raquel stated that the pyramid got very narrow for

African Americans. With pressure from her sponsor, Raquel was eventually promoted to the director level; however, she received backlash from a White female supervisor who resented Raquel's promotion. Her supervisor approved the promotion without any additional compensation. For Raquel, this was absurd that she would be granted a promotion without a raise. Eventually, through steadfast persistence, she was able to secure a substantial increase in her salary. Raquel strongly believes that her race and gender were the main factors that attributed to the hostility she faced by her former supervisor.

As an African American woman, Raquel revealed that her race and gender are intertwined and cannot separate her dual identity. She expressed that there is a peculiar treatment that African American women are faced with that other women do not experience. In terms of her leadership development, Raquel stated that she is hyper-aware and very sensitive to others in relation to whether or not people are being treated fairly. Raquel's race and gender have molded her into possessing a heightened sensitivity to what could be underlying issues in a given situation. She asserts that this helps with her political astuteness to gather, sense and analyze the spoken and unspoken to figure out all angles of the situation. This becomes second nature for Raquel and she attributes this to being an African American woman.

Raquel expressed that she has experienced what she calls the "Kunta Kente" effect which is a conditioning of always wearing this dual mask in the workplace. In order to survive in corporate America and this country, she felt that African Americans experience a double consciousness of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. Raquel suggested that our viewpoints are relics from the vestiges of slavery days.

In Raquel's experiences, African Americans men and women seem to have a heightened sensitivity to racial issues and backlash.

As an African American woman, Raquel has been confronted with stereotypical assumptions that are associated with women of color. Her directness has been taken as aggressive, combative and even confrontational. Raquel posits that when pushed over the line, her response can be a bit harsh at times, but still maintains professionalism although others perceive her harshness as confrontational. She believes in being direct and honest. Raquel felt that if her employer and others cannot handle the truth, then they should not hire her. In being an African American woman, Raquel stated that she will never lower or compromise her values for anyone, even if it costs her the job (see Table 12).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided brief narratives of the eight participants to provide a glimpse into understanding each woman's background. Their stories are included as a way of introducing the reader to the multi-faceted and multi-dimensional lives of how race and gender informed these women's journeys to becoming a leader. The women in this study understood the importance of telling their stories of how they developed as leaders in institutions that have historically denied African American females access to the mechanisms of power. A total of five major themes were derived from the data analysis. A detailed discussion of each major theme will be discussed in Chapter 5. This chapter will present a thematic analysis of the data and composite description of the meanings and essences of the group experiences.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women through their lived experiences of how they developed as leaders. The exploration of factors that the participants considered significant to the phenomenon provided rich data for the study. A phenomenological research method was most appropriate in determining how race and gender informed the participant's development as leaders in academia and business.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within data to describe information set in rich detail (Braun & Clark, 2006). From thematic analysis, patterns or themes develop that should be combined and catalogued. Themes come from both the data (inductive approach) and from our prior theoretical understanding of whatever phenomenon we are studying (deductive approach) (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

Themes are defined as units derived from patterns such as "conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings, or folk sayings and proverbs" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p.131). Clusters of themes are typically formed by grouping units of meaning together (Creswell, 2007). Themes are identified by "bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences which often are meaningless when viewed alone" (as cited in Aronson, 1994, p. 1). It is critical that the researcher carefully examines the themes that emerge from the informants' stories. By carefully examining the data, themes are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of the participants' collective experiences. Constas (1992) reiterates this point and states that the "interpretative approach should be considered as a distinct point of origination" (p. 258).

The themes which emerged from the experiences of how these African American women developed as leaders were explicated from the text of the eight participants in the research study. The women in the study confirmed that race and gender informed their development as leaders in academia and business. Throughout the interviews, all of the participants made statements that described how the intersection of race and gender affected their leadership development and career trajectories. An effort was made to protect the participant's identity and confidential responses by modifying any identifying information.

The participants in this research were selected based on their shared experiences of being African American women in senior level positions in academia or corporate America. The following criteria determined the eligibility of the participants:

- Five years or more experience in senior-level positions in either her current organization or a combination of positions;

- Organizational supervision responsibilities for over more than 20 individuals with at least 3 direct reports;

- Employed at a large organization or an institution that employed at least 500 employees; and

- Large fiduciary and budget management responsibility over their units.

All of the women selected for the study met the selection criteria and provided candid responses germane to the phenomenon under study.

Theme 1 – Predestined for Success

The first theme that emerged from the interview data was the belief by these women believed that they were predestined for success. From early childhood, the participants were exposed to individuals who were instrumental in shaping their futures. The participants shared that certain people such as family members, teachers, and mentors played a pivotal role in instilling leadership values and attributes that were guiding factors in their career aspirations. The participants felt the desire to become a leader early in their lives from early childhood experiences. The women revealed that their relationships with families were supportive drivers in developing their leadership abilities. Their families also instilled in them the confidence to believe that they can achieve their goals as long as they worked hard and had strong self-confidence.

The following excerpts from the participants' narratives provide reflections on their early childhood experiences:

Pamela:

I can remember sitting on the edge of my aunt's bed and she said, 'well, you know that there is more than one kind of doctor. You can be a doctor of education which my family were all educators. The women in my family were teachers. At one of my family reunions, we had six women who had Ph.D.'s in that group. One of my cousins was a State Senator for California. So that really struck a chord in what she said and that stuck out that I really just wanted to have the title doctor. So then I went on and pursued my master's and Ph.D. in Education. Family was very important – women really.

Jackie:

In terms of my leadership development, I didn't learn this until later until I was an adult, but my mother really instilled in me to be independent, not to rely on others. It wasn't as if no one can help you but you have to take care of you. And I think as I look back on it, I think that she always wished that she had done more with her life.

Carol:

The women in my family were amazingly strong. My grandmother was a major role model and we are talking about being married at 14, born in the early 1900s. Having nine or 10 children and two of them were not her own and taking care of other children while taking care of us. She was a very wise person and there was a cultural dynamic as well for things that happened in her childhood that made her who she was. That's my dynamic and again the role models were my grandmother, aunts and some men who had virtue. They were now virtuous. But the female influence was so profound they were actually my role models since they were so independent and trailblazers.

Intense feelings of self-confidence and independence fueled by the participants' desire to control their destiny and were expressed in the participants' drive for success. While all of the participants came from different backgrounds and experiences, many felt that their family upbringing and life experiences had a profound impact on the choices they made, ability to become successful and their leadership styles.

Kelly stated,

Well, I think they always let us be very independent as children. As long as I
could remember, we were sent on errands to do things and given responsibility to
take care of the house. As young girls we were very independent and lived in the
city. There was no one babysitting us and all of that. We came home, you let
yourself in the house and my parents were cutting-edge type of parents. They
gave as a lot of autonomy and they set very high standards, but you had the
autonomy and independence that you wanted as long as you did the things that
were important to them. That was to be respectful and respectful of others, to
make very good grades, and to do all of your chores and not bother them with any
problems.

Raquel shared the following:

Well, I would say that we were all taught by our parents to not just believe
everything that we are told at an early age. That is why I have questioned what I
was told and what I read to really just think for myself and to not go with the
crowd. So looking back, I could see that as the seeds of me having my own
opinions even if they were different from others because it really didn't matter to
me. That could be seen as a leadership trait. Trying different things and being
open are some things as well. They helped me develop leadership skills as well as
being able to support whatever you asserted.

 Seven out of the eight study participants stated that they had a positive and
nurturing childhood experience. While two participants were born to teenage mothers,
one of those participants expressed that her negative childhood experiences prepared her

127

for her career path. Evelyn stated that she was born to a 13-year old, who had been abused since the age of 5.

My brothers came after me, and she ran away from home, so I grew up in foster homes, at least 6 of them that I am aware of, and I loosely call myself at times one of those throw away children. I did not belong to anyone and it was not clear if I was worth of much value to anyone. Yet even given that for whatever reasons I always felt that my circumstances did not define me and so what I focused on initially was that I was safe so I navigated being also abused physically, emotionally and otherwise and then was able to leverage some of those mean spirited adults to my advantage. I learned pretty early that if someone wants to cause you harm or is dismissive towards you that they are throw away people and you need to use their expertise and knowledge to your advantage to advance what it meant for you.

All of the participants had either family or professional mentors that guided their success. For those who had professional mentors, five participants expressed that these individuals provided opportunities for their career advancement. Pamela expressed that she was fortunate enough to have mentors who provided her with guidance and support. She stated,

The Vice President of Student Affairs at the college I was working at said that he needed an African American woman to take one of two positions. One was the Assistant Director of Student Activities and the other was an Associate Director of Residential Life. He said that you can take either one of those positions if you want to get your master's degree at this college. I chose the Student Activities

position because I liked that work and I get an opportunity to get a glimpse of what our country was going to be like because we train the leaders. So he served as a mentor particularly at that time along with several other people there.

Four out of the eight participants indicated that values, confidence and integrity were important factors in establishing credibility and sustaining their leadership positions. Kelly learned as a child the importance of believing in one's ability and talents. Kelly pointed out,

I had to do the work within the parameters and standards that my parents set. So we had a wonderful childhood and we always worked and never got an allowance. You had to figure it out how you were going to make money. My mother taught us how to sew. My father was very handy so we didn't have any of that plastic stuff. My father built us an entire workable kitchen with electricity and refrigeration and everything. They were just wonderful parents. But when it came time for school they would pay for half of our school clothes and would tell us to figure out how to pay for the rest. We would pick up jobs here and there and you always were busy.

In describing their leadership styles, four out of the eight participants indicated that their style closely aligned with servant leadership. Sandra expressed that being a serving leader is what best describes what she tries to exemplify in terms of her leadership. According to Sandra,

As a leader, you are really in a position to really influence individuals. So you are really in a position to try to serve them and meet their needs anyway possible. So you are serving in that capacity and as a leader in that capacity. Whatever you do

129

or don't do really influences other people's lives. Whether it is their professional or personal lives, you always have to be mindful of the position that you have to make sure that those influences whether good or bad that I may have had, that I don't use them as a way to belittle people and don't empower them too much either because you always have to find a middle ground. Serving as a leader, in that capacity and having those critical incidents and situations in my own career really helped to influence the person that I am now.

Five study participants acknowledged that being resilient was another quality that African American women should possess in order to remain successful in senior leadership positions. The women described setting as well as being confronted with challenging goals early in their lives and working relentlessly to achieve them. As the women achieved greater control, their destiny was further reinforced in the growth of their personal strength, assertiveness and self-confidence. Carol believed,

It doesn't matter how good you are, you are going to have challenges. You are going to fall at times and it's about how you learn from that. Do you get back up or wallow in it? So each negative experience has helped me to become stronger. I think having compassion for others and having that psychology background in human dynamics has helped me a lot in terms of my leadership.

Likewise, Kelly reflected on overcoming challenges as an African American woman,

Well, I think females have a harder time than males being taken seriously or their judgment trusted, and that's just the nature of the beast. Being an African American female you can spend time trying to figure it out if it's because you're

Black or is it because you're female, but it is just an obstacle. That is just the

bottom line and you have to figure out what to do about that because race and

gender are definitely always going to be challenges. I was never raised either

with this notion that as a person of color that you had to work twice as hard as

someone else or be twice as good as someone else to get ahead. My parents hated

that notion. You had to do well because that is what we expect from you. I am

not sure what they expect but this is what we say. If you do that then you should

be pretty good. So I was not raised that way, they didn't believe in that and I

don't believe in that. You have to set your own goals and your own ethics about

how you do things and not work from something that you have to do this or that

to be successful.

In describing their early childhood and life experiences, these women revealed

how family, formal education, career choices and challenges were contributors to their

destiny for success. For the participants, their desire and drive to become leaders was

further impacted by meaningful developmental experiences. These experiences provided

an opportunity to broaden their self-confidence, career choices and leadership styles.

Theme 2 – Sponsorship from the Unexpected

The second theme outlined the role mentors and sponsors played in the

participants' lives that were outside of their race and gender identities. These women

described their experiences with mentors, sponsors, positive and negative bosses that

contributed to their development as leaders. Most of the participants referenced the lack

of access to informal networks dominated largely by White males. However, since White

males occupied the majority of the leadership positions, the participants expressed that

the opportunities afforded to them by White and other males provided access to moving up the career ladder. These men who served as sponsors, opened doors for them and had the power within the organization to advocate and provide leadership opportunities. The women who received sponsorship from the unexpected were strategically able to advance their careers within their organizations. In reflecting upon their career experiences, the participants described how relationships with sponsors influenced their career advancement.

Raquel describes her experience as follows:

A mentor gives you some advice and talks to you about some issues and walks you through something, but they never give you anything in terms of a position or opportunity. A sponsor sticks their neck out for you and advocates in a way that a mentor does not. A sponsor will actually give you a career opportunity and advocate for your promotion and create a position for you. Whatever the case may be. I started to pay attention to that. This guy started creating opportunities for my boss as the president of this business unit. The business's HR leader was trying to fight him over his growth. In the end, this sponsorship impacted me indirectly and directly in a positive fashion because my boss's boss was trying to block my double promotion. He agreed that I should be promoted three levels because you really don't have a sense when you come into an organization, what grade level you should be at. You just know that you should be a manager, but you don't know their multiple tiers of management and you know what money that you feel that you should get so that is what you go for.

Kelly shared,

I had a chance when I worked in city government as Chief of Research and I was able to meet the Mayor at the time who was one of the smartest people I had ever met besides my mom and dad. I learned a lot from him. There are probably three people that I learned a lot from and they were all men. They were pivotal. No women career wise. They were all men. These three men I would say were the most influential in my career and not any women. They had a passion for what they did. They had enthusiasm and passion and they were not afraid to share that information. I could learn from watching them handle situations. They were teaching moments and I appreciated those.

Carol explained,

Sadly, most of my empowerment has not come from people that look like me and that is something that I tell people of color is that don't always look to, and this is a bad thing to say in a way, but don't always look into this someone that looks like you and think that they have your best interest at heart. Professionally, promotions have come from White males for whatever reason. I have had time to look at that and step back and say okay there has to be one. But, as far as the large milestones in my life, I must be blind to this as reverse racism. That's just the way it's been I don't know why, I don't know why society sets us up as adversaries and so a male of color may see me as a threat rather than thinking that this is one more person that will get through the ceiling, that kind of thing.

Jennifer offered,

Again, it goes back to another mentor who happened to be a White man. So from the day I arrived, he was constantly coaching and mentoring me with the management part of it. I can remember being a district service manager and he was the district manager and we were managing 18 branches. Between he and myself, we would decide which managers to place where. I remember sitting in his office one day, and we had an opening because someone had moved on and then I said, 'What are we going to do about that office?' There is no one to promote so we probably will have to hire from outside. So he looked at me and said that, 'I would like for you to take it.' I remember getting a lump in my throat because I am thinking that you and I are managing 18 branches together. So I packed up my bags. My next question to him was, 'When do I report?'

Almost all of the participants expressed that they were the only African American woman at the leadership table predominantly occupied by males. Due to a paucity of African American in leadership positions, the participants did not indicate that they were supported or mentored by other African American women. In realizing that they were oftentimes the only African American woman at the table, all of the participants developed an internal insight for how they handled situations and enacted decision-making authority. The women have learned to adapt and understand that there were the outliers in an environment dominated by predominantly White men. Oftentimes, they were forced to become assertive about having their voices heard so they would not seem invisible. For these African American women, the ability to use their voices was empowering, as well as a means of protection. If they felt silenced, it was as though they had no power.

Raquel was sponsored by a Black male from a previous organization where they both worked. When her supervisor was moved to another company, he recruited Raquel to the new organization in a senior level position. However, even though Raquel was chosen for this position by a Black male supervisor, her race and gender came into question in the selection process. Raquel described her experience in this particular situation:

> When I was hired at the company, my former boss told me that when I got hired he went to his boss, a Black guy and he was a Black guy, so you have two Black bosses' and they wanted to hire me. They went to the head of HR and told him that I was the best candidate for the position but we were concerned about how this might look. The HR director said what do you mean? Well my boss said I hired him and now we want to hire another Black female. The HR director asked if I was the best candidate. They both were like yep and then he said that was all he was concerned about and I don't care what they think about that. My boss told me that and they are independent, strong willed Black men but they felt that way. That was so surprising to me. He said that is just how we felt and I responded that it was sad. Nobody White goes to another White person and asks to hire another White person. They don't think like that. He told me that they really do a number on us even when we feel that we are not succumbing to this stuff. If the HR Director said that no I don't think that looks good, then I would not have had a job. So I think that this happens as well. I don't want to look like I am helping too many of my people because it might be taken the wrong way.

The participants established and leveraged high-quality sponsorships and mentorships as a career advancement strategy. The ability to cultivate strong professional relationships enabled these women to grow and to propel their ascendency to leadership opportunities. Five of the participants viewed these relationships as strategic partnerships that were beneficial for enhancing their careers and achieving advancement. While discussing an experience with a White male on a research team, Evelyn expressed,

> I could have said that this particular faculty member does not want me here and I am not going to be a part of his research because he is trying to get me out of here. I could have bought everyone's story including White folks saying that he is racist and all the others suggestions that he was. He might have been and still be, but that is not relevant to my agenda. My agenda was being exposed to the best and brightest. He was among the best and the brightest. My agenda was understanding research and to conduct very high level research. I was exposed to that and I learned a lot to leverage my career.

Theme 3 – Double Jeopardy of Race and Gender

The third core theme emphasized how race and gender affected the participants in their careers. The term "double jeopardy" proposes that minority women face a double whammy of discrimination because they are discriminated both as women and minorities (Berdahl & Moore, 2006). Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality and argued that race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences. Being an African American woman was something that the research participants experienced on a daily basis. Particularly, they were confronted with the assumptions and stereotypes associated with their race and gender.

136

The women in this research share some common and typical experiences when confronted with their race and gender identities. The participants were linked together in the sameness of their gender, racial classification, and the leadership prowess for which they were recognized. Listening to the eight African American women's stories made it possible to gain insight into how race and gender informed their leadership development in the workplace. Their responses made it possible to get a glimpse of the different lenses they used to synthesize and interpret their experiences. One thing that should be noted is that these women were very comfortable in using *Black* and *African American* interchangeably and with reverence.

When Rachel reflected on a situation that she encountered with a White male colleague, she discussed how she felt disrespected by this experience. As Rachel stated,

The only overt thing that I have experienced as a woman as far as the work environment was being talked over a couple of times by White men. I was talking in the middle of a sentence and he just started talking. I was so surprised that it happened that I had to check myself and ask did that really happen. The next time he does it, it is going to be a problem. So we get into a meeting several months later, now I am being nice and I got a very good memory. So we are in this meeting and we are talking about something and I am in the middle of a sentence and then he starts talking. So the guy starts talking and I continue to talk. He got slightly louder and I got louder. I have a deep voice so I got louder and drowned him out. Then when he stopped talking, I said, 'Yes I thought I was still talking.' Then he says, 'Well, I'm sorry I didn't realize.' So, I said, 'As I was saying.' He never did that to me again.

In describing her experience as being the only African American woman in senior leadership, Jackie shared how she dealt with the situation.

Now getting back to that intersectionality, I don't know if it's personality, my personality because I told you I was pretty anal and compulsive, or if it's my gender, race or all of the above. But, I do think for whatever reason that I have to work harder than everyone as a cabinet member sitting at the table because some of the things that they do as my colleagues and they get away with, I wonder how do they get away with that. For a long time, I was the only female vice president on the cabinet. I have to be conscious of that because when I'm in that room, if I don't speak out then I won't get a word in edgewise.

Based on the participants' conversations about their race and gender, they all overwhelmingly expressed that both social constructs impacted their development as leaders. Almost all of the participants felt that being Black, as well as a woman, were not two mutually exclusive categories, but two social constructs merged together to form who they were. Through their lenses, they were African American women. From their vantage point, they were, first and foremost, an African American women. Below are excerpts of the leaders' experiences within the dichotomy of being both African American/Black and a female.

Pamela stated,

You can't blend in. You are going to, no matter what, be an African-American woman forever. You are going to be viewed as African-American woman forever. So don't be diluted in thinking that you are not. That's important. That you walk around being the last Black person on earth. Never forget who you are.

138

In my office right now the room is purple and is painted purple wherever I go. And it's a deep purple. I have African masks and things. So when you walk in you are going to know, but that makes me feel comfortable and it reminds me of who and whose I am. But that doesn't necessarily mean that I'm walking around like I am the mad Black person. No. I'm not going to be anything other than African-American. I think that it's important. The picture that I always had behind my desk is a picture of Malcolm X and not Dr. King. They (White colleagues) could not get it and you could see it and I just laughed. When they saw Malcolm looking down on me, they thought, oh heck, what do we have here? Evelyn said,

But the point is that when I walk into a room, people are surprised because they thought I was White because of the way that I talk on the phone. They are quite curious and it is not a bad thing. I have White family members, White friends, and White colleagues. It wasn't negative towards me; however, what it says is that there is an assumption about Black folks, assumption about females, about Native Americans, etc., assumptions about Latinos, that the only way that you can communicate or behave in certain ways and in positions that you can hold and those assumptions for me and others who are not White, to help dispel and eliminate. Sure enough, people say, 'Oh how did you become a college president as a female, and beyond that you are Black female, how is it that you did it?' Sandra responded,

For me, having those two things serving as obstacles for me has really made me have some extremely bad experiences with my supervisor, or the people that I

work with, even with the people who report to my direct reports. I mean the environment is such that they really look for more senior like individuals. Not just in terms of age but also appearance, men and gender. So, I go through those types of challenges but I try to brush them off as much as I can. Through all of this, I learned through these experiences. They have made me a better person and I have been able to connect more so with my students and colleagues and individuals that report to me. I have been able to learn that it doesn't last forever. Things will change eventually and so you just do your work and do the best you can to forge ahead.

Raquel shared,

But with the Black female piece, the stereotypes that are associated with us, I am sure that you have come across this in your research. The directness is taken as aggressive and combative, confrontational. If you push me and cross the line, like you would have to be disrespectful for me to come back at you and say that you are not going to talk to me in anyway. But in general, I am just a wreck and even when it is with no harshness. But even when I don't and am just being direct, I believe that it is perceived differently by a White woman versus a White man than a Black woman versus a Black man. I think that plays out all of the time in meetings or whatever. A couple of people that I know at X company now, they are in HR and they keep getting assigned these difficult White guys. They are all Black women. Another friend at X company got assigned this difficult Indian guy. I am hearing this a little too often. The reason that Black women keep getting these horrible White guys is because they think that the Black woman is

going to check them and not take the crap and put that person in line. That may

or may not be true. I know that plays a role because I am direct and I am always

hearing that I am.

When asked the question about how has race and gender shaped their

development as a leader, the participants confessed that being a Black woman meant they

would always be challenged, rendered invisible, and confronted with the realization that

things are different for them than for others. For Evelyn, a college president,

It has ensured that I am who I am. Sure enough, people say, oh how did you

become a college president as a female, and beyond that you are Black female,

how is it that you did it? Wow- is usually the response. It is not supposed to

happen. Well, if I believe that it was not supposed to happen, it would not have

happened for me. It happened because it was supposed to happen. It happened

because it was supposed to happen.

However, by being the leader it also meant that Evelyn had to take some

responsibility in the signals or messages that she would send to others. She had to be

cognizant not to show favoritism or level the playing field for other minorities in hiring

decisions. Evelyn stated that she was once told by a supervisor not to hire people who

were Black females for certain positions.

I have been told that by my supervisor, I have been told what not to do because

politically it would be not ok. In the face of being told that, I have done just the

contrary. I have done exactly what I have been told not to do. Not because I am

defiant by nature but I did it because those individuals were the best and I needed

the best compliment.

141

The following excerpts depicted how the participants' race and gender shaped their development as leaders.

Pamela:

I'm sure I had as many issues as others. Again, it's my values, my ethics so where I stand in the stance that I take have much less to do with my being a woman than what is right. Do you see what I'm saying? So if one sees me as a woman then they get over it quickly because I don't want a battle about what is right. But, I think that it's important in these positions in higher education that we do bring around the table policymaking issues. As women, we need to bring sensitivity to the table and a nurturing side to the table. That is very, very important when you work in higher education.

Jackie:

Now getting back to that intersectionality, I think that over time I learned who I am and what I am willing to compromise and what I'm not willing to compromise and that varies in different parts of your life depending on the situation and other factors that affect your life as well. But yeah I think race and gender has had a lot to do with it. I do think as women, that this is unique to African-American women but I think that is more of a challenge for us in terms of appearance.

Carol:

I would like to think that my accomplishments have been based on my abilities, expertise and so on, but in this world, I recognize that there are some jobs that I got because I was a person of color, because I was a woman. There are things that I did not get because of my race and that I was a woman of the wrong color.

142

That is a dynamic that only we face. I am sorry that is just the way I feel about it.

You don't see our White counterparts worrying about why didn't I get that job

because I was White. They may say it, but they can look around and see that 80-

90% of them are already White. How can you say, 'Oh I didn't get the job

because I was White and not a person of color?' Excuse me, 95% of the people

are White so they can slide another one in if they really, really want you. So you

need to look at some other reasons because it was not that. But it can be a double

–edged sword. I know that there are certain positions that I did not get because I

was the wrong ethnicity, race, whatever else and that is another dynamic that

grates at me right now. You have the powers that be deciding who you are and

what you are. And I have a problem with that. I am not going to play the race or

culture card to make people happy.

Sandra:

What has affected me the most and been the most prominent is my gender.

Working in an environment with African American males or Black males, African

or Caribbean males, it changes the dynamics. Gender has been an issue at my

institution. The majority of the staff members here are women; however, the

voices of the institution have been the voices of men who are so much louder,

more pronounced and more respected. At times we talk about these things to find

out how this is even possible. So I don't know if it is how we grew up or how we

were brought up, society influences or any of that. Regardless of where you go,

the majority, somehow their voices are always more pronounced. So gender has

more so shaped my development as a leader.

Jennifer:

I wish I could tell you that being a female and Black has not affected my career. One of the things and this is personal, I started out and I told you where I came from. I have never wanted someone to promote me or give me anything or even let me go to the head of the class because I was female or Black. Because I was in my career when diversity was the word and everyone needed one, I tried very hard not to be that person. I always wanted to be me. I can remember taking all the classes on dressing for success in our industry as women managers. We needed to wear the dark suits and White blouses and those little ties because we needed to look like them. I would say that through my career that I was able to do some of those things but not lose who I am. I went to Washington D.C. in 1994 and lobbied the Glass Ceiling Act with one of my financial and international groups. I was the only African American female in the group. We were an international group and I didn't have a problem with it.

Kelly:

Well I always knew who I was. I am a person of African descent and I am a woman and I don't shy away from any of those things. I think you have to when you have corporate life, especially for Black females. You are hired because they are looking for someone who is of color. So that is the first thing that you need to understand. Other people who are not of color might be in front of you in the line but somebody in that organization made a conscious effort to look for someone of color, I believe in most instances. I always felt that my strength lies in the fact that I was a woman and that I was a person of African descent and I play those

144

things out. I never tried to be anything but that. If it is the boy's club, which it is, I always worked on many executive teams and I have been the only woman and not just the only Black woman, but woman period. But, you have to learn how to deal with the boys and I think that has a lot to do with how I was raised.

Raquel:

I see your probing question and I have a hard time separating them unless something specific to my gender happens. You know because it is so intertwined as far as I am concerned. I think there is a peculiar treatment that we get as Black women versus just women. Anyway, in terms of shaping me as a leader, I think that it makes me hyper-aware and very sensitive to others in terms of whether or not people are being treated fairly and I mean people period. I just am very observant and sensitive and I am sure that it has to deal with my experiences as a Black woman. I just have a heightened sensitivity to what is going on in a situation and whether or not there is something else going on. This helps with my political astuteness because you are always gathering, sensing and analyzing the spoken and the unspoken to figure out all of the angles of the situation. It just becomes second nature and I think that is due to who I am. I have some of that awareness. I am really good about netting out the situation and making sure that things are fair. I have a huge sense of right and wrong. It is just my values anyway. I know that it is also personality driven. It is always this huge Black and White piece of me. I am sure that it is complemented by my experience as a Black woman. I just keep looking for the angle to see what is really going on here.

145

Sandra candidly discussed the issue of pay inequities that she experienced as a college dean. She noted disparities in salary when she spoke out about being compensated less than colleagues of equal or lesser talent. Sandra expressed,

I will talk about this in terms of my salary. I am leading a school with more direct reports, more individuals in the school but yet I get paid less than my counterparts. I am told that it is the experience. Okay, if you want to talk like that, I have been here longer and doing this longer, so what is the justification? So you get the excuses all of the time but the elephant is still in the room. We really don't talk about why it is happening but it still is. I am hoping that my daughter may not have to go through all of this. So I struggle with ensuring that I do my part as much as possible to ensure that I do my job and do it well. That means I work harder and more hours and have to struggle and fight more. It is unfair at all levels but it happens.

The leadership experiences of African American female executives are entrenched in a landscape that is often characterized by experiences of perplexity, disparities, and discrimination. While the African American female leaders in this study have developed their leadership competencies and are confident in their leadership abilities, they still lead under a weighted canopy of scrutiny and predictions of failure. Even among adversity, these women demonstrated resiliency and did not rely solely on the scrutiny of others.

When questioned on what they perceived as some of the reasons for African American women's underrepresentation in senior level positions, Pamela expressed,

I am aware that I'm the only African-American woman and do not have to be

beaten down or anything. I do have to temper that by saying that I think that it is

just fear and it goes with the White women and even some Black women. We

know each other's strengths. The Black woman is so strong and it takes a strong

person to hire and be comfortable with the leadership of an African American

woman. White male, Black male, anybody, because we are strong and we will be

opinionated. So that is a little different than what you will get answers from the

others because we are used to being feared. Everybody says that about the Black

woman.

Evelyn felt that African American women should not give into the naysayers and

actively pursue leadership opportunities. As Evelyn stated,

At the end of the day, we are not aggressively pursuing these positions. Let's just

be clear. We are not aggressively pursuing them successfully. We can't say that

it is because we can never take on leadership positions at executive leadership.

Or we can't say that someone said that we could not have that job. Well, how

many jobs are there? There are universal jobs and opportunities to a presidential

position. There were 3, 4, 5, or even 10 positions that we can apply for. Don't

stop, keep applying. Or it is because we didn't have the right education,

competence and experience. Engage in the education, pursue it. There is no

rational reason in which we cannot obtain a bachelor's degree, Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.

We need to do whatever is required. There is no reason that we cannot gain

experience. From my humble perspectives, it is not all about the research

findings, it is ultimately down to the individual. Do we want these roles? Then we create a space for ourselves.

This constant questioning among African American women to aspire to become leaders is born out of self-doubt or a belief that they may fail. As Carol suggested,

> Well, I am not going to say that it is racism or sexism. That is a part of it. I don't believe that it is the majority. I think that we as African American woman are developing a personal consciousness that helps us think about whether or not we want this and this is going to fulfill our lives. We all must go through that path and cycle. The important thing is that we find home. That is so important for us as women of color because society has distorted us, who we are and what we stand for.

For Jackie, the lack of African American women in leadership positions can be attributed to a pipeline issues. Jackie believed that is the responsibility of African American at the table to deliberately make efforts to ensure that other African American women experience greater support and access. Jackie responded by saying,

> I think that it is a pipeline issue. That is it in terms of being ready. I can see future leaders as the next generation of people that are going to take over the ranks and move into leadership positions. Anything that I can to promote that, I want to do it. I think that one of the roles for a leader is to prepare other leaders to move into those roles and to be a model and mentor for other individuals. So, yes, so I think that being in the pipeline and being ready and having the credentials and experience to be able to move into those roles.

Jennifer, who was mindful of the lack of mentors in her chosen field, likens her role as an executive to that of being a mentor for others. She remarked that

We just don't choose banking as a career. We have seen it as someone else's career. We don't pursue it. In accounting, we may take finance in college, but we go and do something else. Banking is one of those careers and it is traditional and will always be there. We have always seen it as belonging to someone else. It is almost like being like the President of the United States. If there is so few of us, then there aren't enough of us to mentor those who are coming into the career.

Although women have recently begun to move into upper rank levels in corporate America, only 1.9 % of African American women still account for executive positions (Kirby, 2012). The resistance to equality for women can still be attributed to an unwillingness or resistance for companies to provide access to underrepresented group.

Kelly, who has over 30 years of experience in corporate America, expressed that companies have to make a concerted effort through legal enforcement or corporate policies to increase the number of minority women in the corporate ranks. Kelly has learned that in order to break through the corporate glass ceiling, companies have to foster a climate inclusive of diversity. This reality embodies the experiences of African American women, who lead under the mantle of diversity. Kelly felt,

Some of it is just how it is. Some of it is gender issues and race. You know companies have to make a decision that they want to have a diverse environment. If they don't make that decision, then there won't be that opportunity. It is as simple that. I don't care how many degrees you have or how much experience you have. If they aren't interested in having a diverse environment, then you

won't have opportunities presented to you the same way for other people who are male and who are not Black. Access is the main thing.

When Raquel reflected on the lack of African American women representation in senior level positions, she attributed the disparity to pervasive organizational myths that African American women are not in the talent pool or available pipeline for these roles. As Raquel pondered on this question, she revealed that,

We just don't have enough of us up there, that is why. I mean basically you have to have some White power structure shift where all of a sudden our value is seen. That is the idea across the board. Or you can get lucky enough to have an open-minded White male or White female who is up there. In most cases, it will be a White male. There is often times some weird little competitive dynamic between White and Black women because some people want to feel as though they are more of a favored pet. Let me get mines and then I might help you come up. Quite frankly, the prevailing perception that I see among leadership is the stuff around that we cannot find the talent or they are not in the pipeline or not even on the playing field. They are not going to right schools or they can't find the right kind of educated person. All of that crap that they have been saying for years which is just bunk. Until those perceptions change, I don't see the numbers changing.

The study participants' experiences with race and gender conveyed some of the subtle undercurrents that are present in the workplace for African American female leaders. These women perform skillfully in an environment where inequities, negative assumptions and doubts are prevalent. Even through adversity, they carry out their

150

responsibilities but often in an atmosphere where they constantly have to prove themselves. Yet, these African American female leaders have persevered and continue to demonstrate their ability to rise above and perform with tenacity.

Theme 4 – Learn How to Play the Game

The fourth core theme that emerged from the interview responses was the realization that participants had to learn how to play the game in the workplace. Shambaugh (2008) posits, "While women have a knack for developing trust and supportive relationships, they sometimes lack the broader network within or outside of their organization that can help them achieve their goals and objectives" (p. 107). The ultimate winner in the game is not necessarily the person with the most power or the most money in the organization, whether it's the person who knows the prevailing rules that men play in order to eventually choose to make up your own game (Evans, 2000).

As African American women in the workplace, the participants understood the difference between how the "man" played the game and how they should play it. The participants expressed that the playing field was not level; however, they need to sit and remain at the table in order to make their presence known.

Jackie:

I am the only female vice president on the cabinet but now we have another woman who is general counsel. There is also the senior advisor to the president, but that is a rotating position, but I am the only female vice president. And it's funny because my husband will say to me you always talking on top of me and you never let me finish. I have to be conscious of that because when I'm in that room, if I don't speak out then I won't get a word in edgewise.

151

Sandra:

They often need to come forward with professionalism and that they have to do more and be at the table and to have those discussions and to take on those roles sometimes. One bias that I have experienced in a meeting because I may be the only one or two woman in the room, but when it is asked to take notes, somehow the looks always come to me or the other woman like we are the only ones in the room who are capable of taking notes. It is those little subtle things that happen. Even if you are the leader in the room and happen to be a woman, it is amazing how this type of thing continues to happen. And for me, my gender has been the critical piece in my career. It has caused me to think that I am not just a Black woman. I am Black woman serving in a certain position in a college. Your responsibility changes because it is not just about me. It is also ensuring that they see other women like me who can do the work and to better, improve, and be a leader in all of that. You try to fight the struggle for other women as well.

Carol:

As an African American woman in a leadership position, we need to recognize that there is a game. There is the same old game being played, just with different pieces. We are victims of the race card. Just like we have benefited from the race card we are also victims of it. People who have these -isms ideas, really move from one group to the next. It is like okay, we are tired of y'all. We are going to empower a different group of people and this is going to be disadvantageous to you.

Kelly:

If it is the boy's club in which it is, I always worked on many executive teams and I have been the only woman and not just the only Black woman but woman period. But you have to learn how to deal with the boys and I think that has a lot to do with how I was raised. I wasn't sheltered in the ways of men and their attitudes. That was not a mystery to me and so I always relied on that. I had a strong street sense and still do because I grew up in an urban area and I know the streets and that street sense has guided me into the corporate maze. I use my street sense to get through the corporate maze. I use my street sense to get from point A to point B.

Raquel:

…also, to recognize that this is a game but you have to decide how you are going to play it and what you want to get out of it. This is something else that I have learned. There are just certain sacrifices that I am not willing to make. I am not sacrificing me to get a job or a promotion. A lot of this comes from the fact that I feel organizations are just microcosms of a larger society. Until we address these issues, structural and the broader American institutions, none of this stuff is going to change.

Theme 5 – Pay It Forward

The final major theme that emerged from the interview responses was the importance of paying it forward and mentoring others. The participants referred to mentoring as a significant factor for future African American women's leadership experience in academia and corporate America. The respondents suggested that women

153

need to help others get ahead in order to increase their representations in key roles. The findings revealed that these women embrace and support the importance of increasing the number of African American women in senior level positions by paying it forward and serving as sponsors. Paying it forward not only develops others, but also helps build a strong talent pipeline of future African American female leaders.

Pamela expressed that she has mentored many women in various positions on her college campus. She thought that it was important that she served as a role model for African American women. She has mentored many to make sure that they all keep going on. Pamela stated that African Americans have had so many dynamic leaders throughout our history that we have to carry it forward. It is very, very important.

Other participants emphasized the need for African American women to serve as mentors for other women. Below are several excerpts discussing the importance of paying it forward:

Sandra:

Mentoring is crucial to how we can sustain and increase the number of women in these positions. These women should not be only at Historically Black Institutions either. They need to be at the predominantly White institutions, at the White house, or all segments of society and not be pigeon holed to working in one specific environment.

Jennifer:

Three weeks ago, Mrs. Obama was in town and I attended the breakfast. One of the things that she talked about during the breakfast was equal opportunity for women. She talked about her husband's grandmother being a banker. She started

154

as a teller and worked her way up to vice president, but even when she retired she wasn't making the same money as her counterparts were making. She spent a long time talking about equal pay and equal rights for everyone. It just so happens that I had a front row seat. So when she walked around to shake hands, I told her that by the way, I am a banker. She and I carried on a conversation about women in banking and how important it was that I mentor other woman into the industry to climb that corporate ladder. If there is so few of us, then there aren't enough of us to mentor those who are coming into the career.

Kelly:

Well, I have learned that a lot of women do not help each other. That's always a disappointing part of my career because you would always think that would be the opposite but it is not the case because a lot of the women want to be in the boy's club. So if there are other women around, they want to be the biggest boy in the club. They don't want you to be in it. I have run into that and women need to stop that. They need to mentor women and share with other women. They need to be on each other's team just like the boys are.

When asked what advice they would give to future African American females who aspire to become leaders, all eight participants provided information that related to being successful, showing determination and demonstrating a positive attitude. Recognizing the importance of providing wisdom to others, Evelyn posited that African American women will need to be proactive and take the initiative to become successful. As Evelyn stated,

Just do it. Don't waste time analyzing or thinking about it. Do not overanalyze.

155

Make a decision, act on it and get it done. Keep it moving. Be aware that all of

your decisions have consequences. Never second guess oneself. One may have

to experience failure to prepare oneself for success. Bill Gates and all these good

ole boys who are acknowledged for their extraordinary achievements, they have

many more failures than successes. Engage with integrity and do the work well.

Question one to assure quality. Do not settle. Be less concerned about chasing

the job.

Pamela's placed emphasis about the importance of standing on integrity. Pamela

asserted that African Americans should stand on integrity no matter what it is. She

stated,

For example, we are going to be African-American and that is not going to

change you. You are a woman and that's not going to change. You need to figure

who you are before anything else. What your weaknesses and your strengths are

and how you are going to be in situations. You have to have a strategy as to

finding out who we are in certain situations. What images do I want to project

based on who I am? This is important. Again the issue is for me the value

system. The ethics system has been important. To me, that is the bottom line.

Everything stems from your value system and your ethical being. You have to

know who you are in those situations.

Summary

This chapter reported the themes which emerged from the interviews with eight

women, who were African American leaders in academia and business. This qualitative,

phenomenological research study utilized interview questions to understand the ways in

156

which race and gender identities informed African American women leadership development experiences. The exploration of lived experiences of eight African American women resulted in descriptions of how the intersections of race and gender shaped and influenced their development as leaders. Based on the data obtained from the interviews, five themes emerged (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. Thematic Analysis

The following Chapter 6 provides a summary of the findings, including conclusions derived from the literature reviewed. The outcomes of the data analysis, along with the results will also be discussed. The chapter will end with conclusions and implications for future research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women through their lived experiences of how they developed as leaders. This chapter discusses the relationship between the findings and the theoretical framework and connects the findings to the relevant literature. Lastly, this final chapter provides an interpretation of the findings, and emphasizes key emergent themes and their relationship to the primary research question, "In what ways did race and gender identities inform African American women leadership development experiences?"

While women have increased their representation in senior-level positions, African American women are still underrepresented in leadership positions within academia and business. Even in an era in which African American women such as Ursula Burns and Ruth Simmons are leading Fortune 500 companies like Xerox, and elite universities of higher education like Brown University, there is still a paucity of African American females in leadership roles. When it comes to the progressive world of academia or the for-profit world of business, the glass ceiling has become a concrete wall for many African American women.

Data analysis through this study revealed five major themes experienced by the eight research participants. The five core themes that emerged from the interview data revealed that collectively, the African American women studied were: (1) *Predestined for Success*, (2) received *Sponsorship from the Unexpected*, (3) experienced a *Double Jeopardy of Race and Gender*, (4) *Learned How to Play the Game*, and (5), believed in the importance of *Paying It Forward*. Exploration of the participant's lived experiences

159

revealed themes that formed a basis for understanding the phenomenon studied. The five

themes found in the study contributed to an understanding of how race and gender

identities informed the development of African American female leaders who were

predestined for success, received sponsorship from the unexpected, and who were

subjected to dual biases due to their race and gender. However, these women learned how

to play the game and believed in paying it forward to help build a strong talent pipeline

for others to follow.

Findings and Theoretical Framework

As originally termed by Maria Stewart in 1832, intersectionality articulated a

critique of difference and challenged the functioning of race and gender (Bilige, 2010).

Shields (2008) posited that intersectionality evolved as a theoretical framework traced to

Black feminist responses to the limitations of the accumulated disadvantage model.

Kimberly Crenshaw introduced the term to avoid the pitfalls inherent to identity politics

in the workplace and the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the

multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences (Crenshaw, 1989).

Intersectionality was the theoretical framework used for this study to frame the

social constructs of how race and gender affected the lives of African American women

in leadership positions. Warner (2008) states that intersectionality is the idea that social

identities such as race, gender and class interact to form qualitatively different meanings

and experiences. Depending on one's intersecting identity, a person can experience

advantages or disadvantages. The majority of the African American women in the study

expressed negative experiences of stereotypical race and gender treatment throughout

their careers.

Still apparent after 100 years, is the fact that African American women are still invisible in leadership roles. Intersectionality invisibilty denotes the phenomenon in which individuals with intersecting subordinate identities are made invisible (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Results of the study confirmed that African American women still experienced the notion of intersectionality invisibility which led to feelings of disempowerment and marginalization that permeated throughout their experiences.

Intersectionality reflects the reality of the lived experiences of the African American women in this study. The study's findings revealed that the participants' race and gender identities informed how they responded to their social environment and how they were responded to by others. It was apparent that through their experiences, the women interviewed understood the process of enacting and understanding their race and gender identities. According to Collins (1990), "to do so requires understanding identities within cultural, historical and other social structural context in order to formulate the most fruitful way of investigating how they inform, predict or determine experience" (p. 28).

The eight African American women in this study represent a unique group of women who have successfully achieved positions of senior leadership in higher education and corporate America. Thus, the phenomenal women in this research study are nothing short of a phenomenon, given the obstacles and hurdles they have had to overcome in their career paths.

Interpretation of the Results

Theme 1: Predestined for Success. The importance of family resonated with the early childhood experiences of most of the participants in this study. Most of the African

161

American women hailed from a tradition where family and extended family were extremely valued and influential in their lives. The women in the study commonly referred to parents and family members who provided strong guidance and support that profoundly impacted their development as leaders. Williams and Stockton (1973) states that it is in the family where personality is developed, identity is formed, status is assigned, and basic values and norms are learned. It became apparent that these African American women possessed certain qualities that can be attributed to their childhood rearing. Many of the women expressed that their ability to become successful, maintain integrity, demonstrate confidence and remain resilient were developed by a strong foundation from family members.

Through their early experiences, these women expressed that they had the tenacity to forge ahead and become successful. There was something remarkable in the minds of these African American women that they knew they had to succeed and beat the odds. Family and early experiences were integral in planting the seeds for cultivating their desire to become leaders. The women learned that the role their parents and families played in instilling confidence in them at an early age, was integral in laying a foundation for them to achieve and believe in themselves. Even when they were faced with adversity, their early exposure to self-pride and self- reliance enabled them to succeed in difficult situations. By growing up in environments that had a strong legacy of survival, determination and discipline, these African American women had been instilled with the characteristics that predestined them for success.

Theme 2: Sponsorship from the Unexpected. The research participants acknowledged that sponsors significantly contributed to their career ascension to

leadership. A unique irony encountered by these women was that many of them received sponsorship from White men. White males are often sponsors for women of color by virtue of their predominance and access to senior level positions. Since White males occupy the majority of leadership positions in organizations, they are in the position to have the decision-making authority to provide opportunities for these women. The significant relevance underlying this relationship is that since White men occupy the seats of power in academia and corporate America, the participants found themselves developing strategic mechanisms to navigate career advancement. Scholars note that having a White male as a sponsor had an obvious advantage since White men have greater access to networks of power (Giscombe, 2007). Some of the women received sponsorship from Black males who had a direct connection to White male supervisors or had the power to advance their careers.

Mentoring and sponsorship by males was prominent in the experiences of the African American women studied. As African American women, they learned that sponsorship was vital to career advancement and provided support in their professional growth and development. The participants expressed that the sponsors often provided guidance, professional mentoring and upward career mobility. Sponsorship from unexpected individuals was heralded as a key element of the success that these women attained.

Theme 3: Double Jeopardy of Race and Gender. Intersectionality denotes the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). For the African American women in the study, almost of all of them felt the impact of both race and gender

163

discrimination in their careers. The combination of race and gender for African

American women still hinders the potential for their ascension to senior-level positions.

Race and gender are interlocking social constructs and are not separate entities

that intersect, but are completely bound to one another, incapable of being separated

(Collins, 1990). Through the lenses of the study participants, their race and gender

converged as one, and thus, could not be separated. Feelings of race and gender bias

resonated with all of the participants as they discussed intersectionality in the workplace.

For these women, race did not trump their gender, nor did gender trump their race. In

their development as leaders, they faced a double jeopardy despite their leadership

abilities.

African American women in leadership positions experience a profusion of race

and gender stereotypes. For the African American participants in the study, their race

and gender has negatively affected their careers. Some of the participants reported

experiences of being invisible, voiceless, discriminated, isolated, undermined, treated

unfairly, oppressed, challenged and demoted. These negative experiences of race and

gender discrimination seemed to dominate the conversation when the participants

reflected on their past experiences.

Cooper (1998) argued that "Black women, restricted from directly participating in

many facets of political, economic and social life, and ignored by White men, but also by

Black men and White women, have a unique perspective that, if heard, would benefit not

just Black women but all of society" (p. 117). The strength, fortitude and determination

that defined these African American women demonstrated their ability to rise above

adversity and forge ahead into leadership roles.

Theme 4: Learn How to Play the Game. bell hooks (1994) argued that "Black

women must recognize the special vantage point our marginality gives us and make use

of this perspective to criticize the dominant racist, classist and sexist hegemony"(p. 15).

The influential networks in almost all organizations are usually composed solely of men

and access to these networks is often difficult to penetrate. The study's findings

reinforced that African American women faced exclusion from informal social networks

and did not have card-carrying memberships to the "good old boys" club. However, the

study participants confirmed that securing sponsors who were willing to advance their

careers, provided opportunities for their career advancements. These sponsors were often

White men who were the decision makers and had positions of authority in the

organization.

Women regard work more holistically, but must be aware that many times our

decisions are not going to be compatible with the male dominated business culture

(Evans, 2000). Thus, women must know and understand the rules and leverage the

playing field to their advantage. Study findings showed that African American women

learned to identify how the internal politics operated and developed strategies to decipher

the organizational bureaucracy. By learning how to play the game skillfully, these

women learned how to become politically savvy and navigate around potential

organizational landmines. All of the African American female leaders felt that while

playing the game they would never lower their standards, would always maintain

integrity and never compromise their ethics.

Theme 5: Pay It Forward. According to Catalyst (2010), research shows that a

lack of mentoring opportunities is a frequent barrier to advancement for women and

people of color. This research study showed that African American women recognize the

vital role of mentoring other African American females, but not enough mentoring

relationships are established to prepare African women for leadership roles. By paying it

forward, the experiences of African American women senior leaders could provide a

roadmap for African American women aspiring to advance to senior leadership roles in

academia and business. Participants emphasized the importance of providing guidance to

other African American females to add value to the growth and success of future African

American women leaders. The experience of each participant could serve as a basis for

programs designed to help young African American women starting their careers to have

a smoother journey up the career ladder.

Relevance of the Results

The results of the study will be significant to the study of leadership development

because the study involved understanding the lived experiences of African American

women who advanced to senior leadership roles. Furthermore, the themes that surfaced

from this study will advise aspiring African American women on how to obtain and

sustain leadership positions which may prove valuable for increasing the representation

of minority women in senior level positions in academia and corporate America.

The facts still remain the same that African American women are not represented

in leadership positions in academia and corporate America. According to the American

Council on Education's (2012) national data in 2012, 87% of U.S. college presidents both

male and female were White. Out of that number, women made up 26% of all college

presidents. Of the women college presidents across the nation in 2011, 81% were White

and only 8 percent were African American (ACE, 2012). For higher education, the

results from the current study can be viewed as a cornerstone to validate the need for more women of color in academia and the barriers that these women face.

Of the more than 35,000 senior executive positions within most Fortune 500 companies, it is estimated that only 3.2% or fewer than 800 are African American (St. Louis American, 2012). Even worse, the number of Fortune 100 board seats held by African Americans has actually declined. In 2012, there were only six African American CEO's, roughly one percent of the chief executive officers in Fortune 500 companies, and out of those six, only one was an African American woman (The St. Louis American, 2012). Thus, the outcomes of this study might also provide an understanding of the experience of African American women and the contributions of these women as a collective group in executive positions.

Implications for Practice

The significance of this research for understanding the leadership development experiences of African American women is necessary for improving leadership development opportunities for these women as emerging leaders in academia and business. Research on the impact of race and gender on African American women's leadership development in academia and business is understudied. Therefore, this study could provide a framework for African American women who aspire to leadership positions in academia and business, and a reference point for academic and business sectors who seek to eliminate cultural barriers and obstacles that stunt the upward mobilization of African American women in their organizations.

For one, through this research, the African American women who demonstrated resilience, integrity, intrapersonal characteristics, and social skills were more likely to

167

climb the career leader within their respective organizations. In particular, sponsorship stood out as the type of leadership development that highly influenced the participants' career advancement to senior level positions. Thus, African American women who aspire to become leaders must be willing to step outside their comfort zones to establish a network of people who are different from them and who hold higher rank or positions. Establishing strategic relationships in the academic or corporate structure is a valuable tool for African American women to gain access to higher-level promotions and career opportunities.

In addition, African American women who seek to attain high-level positions often need support. To this end, the researcher recommends that African American women, who have succeeded at moving up the ladder in academia and business, establish mentoring and leadership programs that apply the five major themes discussed in the study. These programs should target African American women who are in the early stages of their careers by, providing guidance in developing personal characteristics and professional attributes (predestined for success); exploring topics focused on sponsorship and networking (sponsorship from the unexpected); engaging discussions dealing with race and gender (double jeopardy of race and gender); increasing understanding of organizational culture (learning how to play the game); and sharing the importance of providing opportunities for others (pay it forward).

Next, based on the results of this study, academia and corporate America can partner with African American women leaders to create a corporate culture that encourages more opportunities for African American women to advance. Organizational leaders must make concerted efforts to identify and recruit talented African American

168

women into senior-level positions. Furthermore, academia and business must go beyond viewing African American women as a means to satisfy quotas and enforce diversity goals through human resource practices or training and development that focus on retaining their talents. Most importantly, organizations must be willing to create policies and environments for African American women to establish positive relationships with mentors and sponsors at higher levels who can be influential in their professional success.

Finally, through this study, the experiences of African American women were explored in an attempt to understand what fuels these individuals to strive to overcome obstacles and successfully secure leadership positions. This research could also be replicated for other women of color (i.e. Hispanics/Latinas or Native Americans, etc.) to address how race and gender inform their leadership development in organizations.

Conclusion

Organizations, researchers, scholars and practitioners may use the findings of the study by focusing on the intersectionality theoretical framework that addresses race and gender in organizations and leadership practices (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). The study of intersectionality is urgent because it allows researchers to go beyond the individually informed perspective that they inevitably bring to scholarship and science (Shields, 2008). Walker (2003) points out that "the attempt to understand intersectionality is, in fact, an effort to see things from the worldview of others and not simply from our own unique standpoints" (p. 991). In essence, intersectionality articulates a politics of survival for African American women.

All of the African American female leaders in the current study believed that differential treatment based on their race and gender in their specific organizations

169

influenced their leadership development. Each of the participants expressed their confidence and leadership prowess as African American female leaders within dominant culture organizational environments. Research that describes how marginalized groups operate or function in the face of their oppression can be helpful in the formulation of a political framework of liberation.

Recommendations for Future Research

The focus on the inquiry process is on understanding how individuals construct and interpret their own personal experiences (Ken, 2007). This research study adds to the body of literature on the leadership development experiences of African American women executives who ascended to senior level leadership roles in academia and business. Through a phenomenological approach, this research study illustrated their career experiences through the duality of their race and gender identities. Even though extensive knowledge was obtained from the women's stories, there is still much more research left to be discovered. Specifically, research into how social class and socio-economic backgrounds of African American women could be a variable in ascendency to leadership positions.

Since this study only focused on African American women in academia and business, another study on African American women in government and non-profit organizations would be beneficial for other woman who aspire to leadership positions in those sectors. Their experiences would also provide rich data and compelling information about the nuances of ascending to leadership roles within those industries for other African American females. In conclusion, this dissertation has implications for

170

organizations who wish to retain and provide an equal playing field for high-potential

African American women, who have historically been excluded from these sectors.

Researcher's Reflection on the Study

This research sought to explore the leadership development experiences of

African American women as they ascended to senior leadership roles in academia and

business. The significance of this study originated from the premise that the literature

was bereft of how race and gender informed their leadership developmental experiences.

For me, the goal of the study was two-fold. My objective was to uncover the leadership

development experiences that helped catapult the women into senior leadership roles, as

well as determine what they learned from these experiences in order to replicate them for

myself and the next generation of African American women who aspire to become

leaders.

From the vantage point of these women, they had to temper through experiences

and hardship to become successful individuals in their respective careers. The women I

interviewed possessed so much strength and vigor than I originally anticipated. They

spoke of their joys and triumphs as well as personal pain and grief. I felt as though I had

a kindred spirit with these eight women. Each of them was authentic and candid about

their journeys. We laughed and even cried through some of their stories. They described

many sacrifices, such as relocations, decisions not to marry, to divorce, to have children

or remain single. Their personal sacrifices coupled with professional sacrifices made

them the strong Black women they exemplified.

As a researcher, I must acknowledge my own standpoint of being an African

American woman. One of the reasons that I selected intersectionality as my theoretical

framework was because of my personal experiences with my race and gender. When you look at me, what do you see: a woman who is Black or a Black woman? In my eyes, I am an African American woman. My race: African American/Black cannot be separated from my female gender. I do not want people to separate my Blackness from my femaleness. What I do want is for individuals to not use these social constructs to marginalize or dismiss me from the structures of society or practices of equal opportunity. For the Black women in the study, the context of their lived experiences provided me with a deeper understanding of both an ideological and political perspective on how the convergence of their race and gender influenced their lives. This research study allowed me to better understand how these women experienced the intersection of being African American and female in their development as leaders.

My own application of these results and journey of writing this dissertation can be summed up with a poem by one of my favorite African American female trailblazers, Sojourner Truth:

> Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that 'twixt the negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the White men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all this here talking about?
>
> That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?
>
> Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? [member of audience whispers, "intellect"] That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yours

holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full? Then that little man in Black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them. Obliged to you for hearing me, and now old Sojourner ain't got nothing more to say.

Sojourner Truth (1797-1883): Ain't I A Woman?
Delivered 1851
Women's Convention, Akron, Ohio

Appendix A: Interview Protocol Questions

	Part I: Life History
Main Question	1. Tell me generally about your early childhood?
Probing Questions	• What role did family play in helping you develop as a leader?
	• What role models influenced you as you were growing up?

	Part II: Career Path
Main Question	2. Please describe the person(s) who taught you the most during your career
Probing Questions	• What made this person(s) unique?
	• What kinds of personal choices or career decisions have you made to get to your current career level?

	Part III: Leadership
Main Question	3. What were two or three critical situations or incidents that influenced the way you are as a leader?
Probing Questions	• Why were these incidents important?
	• What episodes in being a leader have been your biggest challenges or obstacles?
	• What did you learn about yourself from this experience?

	Part IV: Identity (Intersectionality)
Main Question	4. How has your race and gender shaped your development as a leader?
Probing Questions	• How has your gender influenced or affected your career?
	• How has your race influenced or affected your career?

	Part V: Life Lessons
Main Questions	5. What lessons have you learned as a woman in a leadership position?
	6. What lessons have you learned as an African American in a leadership position?

Probing Questions	7. **What lessons have you learned as an African American woman in a leadership position?** • **What do you perceive as some of the reasons for African American women's underrepresentation in senior level positions?**
	• **What advice do you have for future African American female leaders?**
Closing Question	8. **Is there anything else that you would like to add?**

Appendix B: Study Framework

Theoretical Framework

Feminist Theories
- Address the oppression of women
- Focuses on analyzing gender equality adn the promotion of women's rights
- Emphasis on social equality

Black Feminist Theories
- Empowerment for Black women
- Understanding of race, gender and class
- Focus on oppression of race and gender

Intersectionality
- Considers race, gender and social class
- Focuses on understanding of the complexities of Black women's identity and employment experiences

Socio-cultural theories
- Focuses on the ways social (race) & cultural (gender) constructs interact
- Emphasis on race, class and gender as social locations that structure life changes

Leadership Development

176

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

UNLV
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

INFORMED CONSENT

Department of <u>School of Environmental and Public Affairs</u>

TITLE OF STUDY: <u>The Development of Leaders: A Phenomenological Study on the Leadership Development of African American Women.</u>

INVESTIGATOR(S): <u>Dr. Cecilia Maldonado & Deanna R. Davis</u>

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: (702) <u>895-3410 or (702) 895-4776</u>

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the intersectionality of gender and race for African American women through their lived experiences on how they developed as leaders.

Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you are an African American woman in a senior-level executive position with five or more years of experience. You are one of a small number of African American women who is a CEO in academia or business.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Choose an interview format of either in person or by phone.
2. Select a time and date for the interview.
3. The consent form will be fully explained to you and you will be asked to initial and sign it prior to the interview. If you select to participate in person, you will receive a signed copy of this form at the interview. Should you choose to participate by phone, a faxed copy will be sent to you for review, initialing and signature and you will be required to fax this form to the researcher. A copy of the signed form will be mailed to you.
4. An interview protocol will be shared with you prior to the initial interview.
5. The initial interview will take place. Approximately 1-2 hours will be required.
6. If more time is needed to complete the interview, a second interview will be scheduled by phone.
7. The tape will be transcribed by an approved transcriber. All information will remain confidential.
8. A copy of the transcribed document will be sent to you via email for member checking. You will be provided two weeks to add, change, and check for accuracy in the transcripts.
9. You will be provided a final copy of the dissertation.

Participant Initials _____

1 of 3

Benefits of Participation

There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn from your experiences in your ascendency to a leadership position. Taking part in this research may not help you directly, however you may benefit from the opportunity to provide guidance for future African American women who aspire to leadership positions.

Risks of Participation

There are risks involved in all research studies. However, this study may include only minimal risks. While there may be questions that deals with sensitive issues, you may at any time refrain from answering any questions that you feel are invasive. Every effort will be made to keep your information confidential and your identity anonymous. At any time during the interviews, you can refuse to answer any of the questions asked. In addition, you may withdraw from this study at any time, either during or after the interview.

Cost /Compensation

There will not be a financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take approximately 1-2 hours of your time and you will not be compensated for your time. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas may not provide compensation or free medical care for an unanticipated injury sustained as a result of participating in this research study.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Cecilia Maldonado at **(702) 895-3410.** For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact **the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794 or toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.**

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Confidentiality

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for 5 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be shredded and the audio tapes destroyed. A digital copy of the data will be kept in the Principal Investigator's office in a locked cabinet.

Participant Initials _____

2 of 3

Approved by the UNLV IRB. Protocol 1111-3972
Received: 11-21-11 Approved: 02-06-12 Expiration: 02-05-13

<u>Participant Consent:</u>
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 30 years of age.
A copy of this form has been given to me.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Participant Name (Please Print)

By signing below, you agree to be audio-taped.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Participant Name (Please Print)

Appendix D: Invitation to Participate in Research Study

My name is Deanna R. Davis and I am a student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas working on a Ph.D. in Workforce Development and Organizational Leadership. I am conducting a research study tentatively titled, *The Development of Leaders: A Phenomenological Study on the Leadership Development of African American Women.* I am writing to request an interview with you and would be honored if you would agree to participate.

The purpose of this study was to explore the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women through their lived experiences on how they developed as leaders. This study will help develop an understanding of the lived experiences of African American women in an effort to provide information to future individuals interested in becoming a leader.

You have been selected to participate because you are an African American woman with five or more years in a leadership position in a corporation or in academia. In order to obtain the data needed for this study, an initial interview must be scheduled at a time that is most convenient for you. This interview can occur in person or by phone and should last approximately 1-2 hours. An additional interview may be needed.

The interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed and you will be provided an opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy, as well as make any additional changes. Participation in the study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, I will share the interview questions with you prior to the interview. Please note that the results will be reported in the dissertation and all information you provide will remain confidential.

The benefit of your participation is that the discoveries from this study may be helpful in furthering knowledge for those individuals who aspire to become leaders. It is my hope that you will agree to participate in my study, as I am anxious to learn about your experiences in becoming a leader. I am available to meet with you in person or by phone at your convenience.

Please call me at (702) XXX-XXXX or my faculty advisor, whose information is listed below, if you are interested in participating. However, should you have more questions or concerns regarding participation in this study, please do not hesitate to contact my faculty advisor or myself.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Table 3: Invariant Constituents

Life History	Invariant Constituent	Responses	Percentage
	Strong Family Bonds	7	88%
	Hard -work ethics	8	100%
	Experienced racism	4	50%
	Importance of Church & Spirituality	3	37%
	Community involvement	5	63%
	Independence	8	100%
	Academically driven	8	100%
Career Choices	Good mentors	7	88%
	Focused-driven	8	100%
	Sought Opportunities	4	50%
	Male Sponsors	7	88%
	Learned from others	8	100%
	Ambitious	8	100%
	Demonstrated Commitment	8	100%
Leadership	Servant Leadership	7	88%
	Predestined to succeed	8	100%
	Assertive	5	63%
	Confident in their abilities	7	88%
	Learned from experiences	8	100%

	Strong value/ethics	8	100%
	Maintained integrity	5	63%
	Stood up for what is right	8	100%
Identity/Intersectionality	Be true to yourself	7	88%
	Stand firm on your values	6	75%
	Never show emotions	4	50%
	Accept who you are	8	100%
	Believe in yourself	7	88%
	Learn how to play the game	6	75%
Life Lessons	Mentor others	7	88%
	Stand by your values	8	100%
	Do not compromise or give up	5	63%
	Pay it Forward	6	75%
	Stay committed	8	100%
	Build your own brand	3	37%

Table 4: Clusters of Meanings

Clusters of Meanings	
Strong Family Bonds	**Predestined For Success**
Hard work ethics	
Importance of church & family	
Academically driven	
Become independent and autonomous	
Overcame obstacles	
Resiliency	
Learn from others to move your agenda	
Male sponsors	**Sponsorship from the Unexpected**
Good mentors	
Sought opportunities	
Importance of education	
White/Black males provided opportunities	
Servant Leadership	**Double Jeopardy of Race and Gender**
Gender issues	
Know who you are	
Never show emotions	
Compassionate/Caring	
Assertiveness	
Race issues	
Show Integrity and honesty	

Strong Values/Ethics	
Stand by your values	**Learn How to Play the Game**
Do not compromise or give up	
Build your own brand	
Stay at the Table	
Network both inside and outside of the organization	
Understand that it is a game and use it to your advantage	
Mentor others	**Pay It Forward**
Stay committed	
Open the door and provide opportunities	
Serve as a sponsor for others	
Give back to others	

Table 5: Evelyn's Profile

Life History
• Grew up in foster care system with an abusive foster mother
• Born to a teenage mother who had been abused since the age of 5
• Leveraged her abusive upbringing to succeed
• Realized that college was a way out and an opportunity for a better life
• Adults encouraged her to become somebody
Career Path
• Believed in maintaining good health and positive well-being
• Looked at negative influences as an inspiration
• Values constructive feedback and collaboration
• Always has been passionate about education
• Does not pay attention to negativity and relies on her internal drivers
Leadership
• Follow her intuition and inner voice
• Obtained two Ph.D.'s to prepare herself for leadership positions
• Connected with individuals who could provide opportunities
• Believed that she was destined to become a leader
• Experienced racism in her career
Identity
• Believes she is a part of the human race
• Understands that people will question her abilities because of her race and gender
• Her race and gender affirms her identity
• Told not to hire people that look like her
• Felt that identity and life is an illusion of our own creation
Life Lessons
• Learned to believe in who she was
• Sought out the opinions and insight of others
• Felt that leaders must have clarity in their roles and expectations
• Power is understanding one's values and leveraging your strengths
• Believed in not taking anything for granted

Table 6: Pamela's Profile

Life History
• Born in southern California but raised in the mid-west
• Integrated her elementary school
• Family played a big role in her development
• Mother and aunts all graduated from college and earned graduate degrees
• Active in student government and church while in school
Career Paths
• Fortunate to have mentors that guided her career path
• Male mentors were very influential in providing opportunities
• Decided to take 5-year breaks between each degree
• Not driven by the "green Jesus" which she considered money
• Prides herself on integrity
• Believes in standing firm on her values
Leadership
• As a college administrator, felt that she is an advocate for students
• Values open communication and being transparent
• Faces the dichotomy of being an advocate for students and administration
• Believes in valuing her employees
• Has had conflicts with the president due to her directness
Identity
• Only African American woman in senior leadership
• Faced many obstacles because of her race and gender
• Understands that she is perceived inferior
• Believes in mentoring and serving as a role model for other minority women
• Expressed the importance of stand firm in your convictions
Life Lessons
• Never show emotion on the job
• One has to be cognizant that you are a minority
• Believed that we must carry it forward
• As Student Affairs administrators, felt that we should bring sensitivity and nurturing to the leadership table
• Always remember that you are African American woman and be proud of your identity

Table 7: Carol's Profile

Life History
• Grew up on the east coast
• Raised in a two parent working household
• Salutatorian of her senior class and received an academic college scholarship
• Father and brother played an important role in her work ethics and academic career
Career Path
• Attended a predominantly White institution but ended up dropping out of school after her first year of college
• Transferred to a Historically Black College in the south
• Met her husband after college and had one child
• Original goal was to become a clinical psychologist but ended up working in higher education
• White female and males served as mentors and provided career opportunities
Leadership
• Challenged by a supervisor who did not believe in her abilities
• Learned to stand firm and not to give up when faced with adversity
• Important to have compassion for others
• Negative experiences helped her to become a stronger leader
• Believed leaders should practice humility and surround themselves with strong individuals
Identity
• Believed that race and gender have affected her in a positive way
• Felt that due to her identity, she has to outperform White male colleagues
• Felt that our appearance is very important as African American women
• Important to have confidence in your ability
• As minority women, expressed that we must possess the talent and ability to do the job
Life Lessons
• Exemplifies strength and fortitude to overcome difficult situations
• One must physically and mentally be able to perform the job
• Believed that leadership is about self-development
• Never let them see you sweat – fake it until you make it!
• Felt that White women have a White privilege what African American women do not have

Table 8: Jackie's Profile

Life History
• **Born to a single mother and the youngest of four children**
• **Grew up in a Brady Bunch environment with two blended families**
• **Identified as gifted in elementary school and skipped a grade**
• **Grew up in the 1960s during racial unrest in southern California**
• **Grandmother and aunts served as role models**
Career Path
• **Learned a great deal from watching others lead**
• **Empowerment and mentoring has come from White males**
• **Felt that obtaining a terminal degree would help advance her career**
• **Expressed that she is a totalitarian and focuses on results**
• **Extremely focused and goal-oriented in her work ethics**
Leadership
• **Stands firm in her values and ethics**
• **As a leader, believes in her career and credibility**
• **Often has had to challenge authority and has been seen as assertive**
• **Strong distaste for the politics and games played**
• **Believes in being genuine and transparent**
• **Known for cleaning up other peoples mess**
Identity
• **Realized that her race and gender has afforded and hindered her opportunities**
• **Often the only woman of color in senior leadership**
• **Determined not to play the race or cultural card to make those in power happy**
• **Her goal is be her best self and find common ground with others**
• **People often perceive her as aggressive and demanding**
• **Race and gender has shaped her leadership style to lead people on the basis of their ability**
Life Lessons
• **Women should not try to emulate men**
• **Women will always be seen as a mother, wife or female roles**
• **Recognize that this is a game and decipher if you really want to play it**
• **Know when you are the "in or out" group**

Table 9: Sandra's Profile

Life History
• Grew up on the east coast to parents from the Caribbean
• Spent her childhood in her parent's native country to have both a Caribbean and American education
• Youngest child out of four siblings
• Aunt was the first women to own a factory and served as her role model for success
• Education was very important in her family
Career Path
• Males served as role models and mentors
• Realized that females may not always connect with you and provide opportunities
• Former supervisor assisted in her career advancement
• Sacrificed starting a family in order to earn her advanced degrees
• Took demotions and lateral moves in her career
Leadership
• Learned leadership style from watching others
• Felt that she was a servant leader and really wanted to influence others
• Challenges shaped her leadership development
• Her biggest challenge in being a leader is her age and gender
• Felt that she should always develop a plan when dealing with difficult situations
Identity
• Has been overlooked and silenced due to her racial and gendered identity
• Oftentimes had to vocalize louder than her colleagues to get her voice heard
• Constantly had to prove herself and abilities
• Experienced more challenges that her male colleagues
Life Lessons
• As women, we don't always have to respond
• Know your worth and never devalue yourself
• It is important to persevere and never give up
• We must struggle now so that we can pave the way for others
• Always put your best foot forward and be the best that you can be

Table 10: Jennifer's Profile

Life History
• Grew up in the rural south to a teenage mother
• Raised by grandparents who were sharecroppers
• Grandparents could not read or write
• Graduated from high school and earned an academic scholarship
• Married a man in the military in order to leave the south
Career Path
• Stationed in Alaska for many years
• Worked at a bank in the evenings while attending college during the day
• Dropped out of college due to family commitments
• Enrolled in many continuing education courses paid by her employer
• Advanced rather quickly in the banking industry
• Experienced many company mergers; acquisitions and job changes
Leadership
• Supervisor encouraged her to take on management positions
• Realized that she had to change banks in order to advance her career
• Leadership style developed from observing others
• Believes that leaders are born and not made
• She had the desire and inspiration to lead
• Values interaction and communicating with people
Identity
• Being a female has negatively affected her career in a male dominated industry
• Felt she was fortunate not to lose her values or identity
• As an African American woman, she has felt obstacles and challenges
• Believes that she has to be assertive in her career
• Lobbied to Congress for the Glass Ceiling Act
Life Lessons
• As an African American woman, you have to work harder
• Important to have an active role in the community
• Stay focused and committed
• Minority women need to mentors others and provide opportunities
• Continually build your skill set and be open to strengthening your competencies

Table 11: Kelly's Profile

Life History
• Grew up in the north and was the youngest of two children
• Raised in a middle class family, two-parent household
• Parents emphasized self-reliance and independence
• Respect oneself and others were values instilled by her parents
• Learned how to become a leader from her father
Career Path
• Her first job was working in her father's vegetable truck
• Learned that business is about separating people from their money
• Worked in city government for 20 years
• Lived in west Africa for several years as a consultant
• Retired from city government and transitioned to corporate America
• Males served as role models in her career
Leadership
• Believed in helping others and being a servant leader
• Realized that it was important to take chances and risks
• Felt that the key to being a leader is understanding corporate culture in order to manage it
• She was often not taken seriously because of her race and gender
• When faced with adversity, felt that you have to stand up for yourself
Identity
• Embraces her African American female identity
• Believes that her strengths lie in the fact that she is a woman of African descent
• Experienced being the only women of color in senior leadership
• Utilized her street sense to guide her in the corporate maze
• Does not believe that you have to work harder just because of your race and gender
Life Lessons
• You have to possess an entrepreneurial spirit and confidence
• Important to brand yourself and work it outside of your personality
• Demonstrate a good attitude and be a team player
• Learn how to communicate with men
• Don't expect women to open doors for other women

Table 12: Raquel's Profile

Life History
• Grew up in a working class family in the Midwest
• Was a tomboy growing up and attended Catholic school
• Mother was a school teacher and father worked for the postal service
• Parents shaped her leadership skills and help build her character
• Learned how to be assertive as the youngest of four children
• Experienced race and gender bias in school
Career Path
• Observed her father being treated unfairly because of his race
• Mentored by a female mentor who was instrumental in building her confidence
• Males served as sponsors and provided opportunities for advancement
• Believed in working long hours and demonstrated hard work ethics
• Experienced racism from a White female supervisor
Leadership
• Through observing others, she was able to build her leadership style
• She remains cognizant about how she treats others
• Leadership style focused on being sensitive and understanding towards others
• Felt that credibility and ethics are important as a leader
• Holds staff and supervisors accountable for their actions – no one gets a pass
Identity
• Through her identity, she has a heightened sensitivity and awareness of how she and others are treated
• Demonstrates political astuteness and culturally aware of the business environment
• Often wears a "dual mask" in the corporate environment
• Experienced overt race and gender bias in the workplace
• Perceived as assertive and confrontational because she is a Black woman
Life Lessons
• Believes in not internalizing your experiences
• Important to mitigate and manage and not eliminate and eradicate
• Be authentic and never lower your standards
• Know when to speak up and advocate for yourself
• Recognize that this is a game and what you want to get out of it

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