Transformational leadership and resilience, African-American women nonprofit leaders: A mixed-methods study

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TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND RESILIENCE, AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE NONPROFIT LEADERS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Strategic Leadership Studies

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the family and friends who showered me with support, love and humor along the way.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank God above all who gave me the strength and perseverance to keep marching towards my goal. I thank Maureen Wellen who saw something in me years ago and encouraged me to reach for a higher prize. To my children, Colin and Christiaan, this work is proof that you never have to settle and anything is possible. To my husband Godfrey, thank you for showing me that I can overcome any obstacle placed in my way and that I will shine brightly. To my dear Grandma Gussie, in your own way you inspired me and showed me the power of a strong black woman.
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Abstract

African-American women represent an untapped resource and bring with them transformational characteristics and resilience that are vital to the increasingly complex world of nonprofit leadership. The black feminist standpoint argues that black women have experienced years of oppression via sexism, racism, and classism. Despite this, many have endured and excelled. The nonprofit sector operates for the public good and accounts for about 5.5% of the United State’s gross domestic product. This important sector will lose about 75% of its leaders in the next few years due to the retirement of baby boomers. It is crucial that nonprofits consider the next chapter in leadership. This dissertation is a mixed-methods study on the leadership styles and resilience of African-American women leaders in nonprofit organizations. Including these women in the leadership pool not only makes sense to nonprofits but also to increasing the social and human capital of the United States.
CHAPTER 1 Introduction

This paper examines one portion of society often left out of leadership literature, the African-American woman. Leadership is a complex phenomenon that has been defined and redefined. The common thread in most leadership definitions is influence. Pierce and Newstrom (2008) put forth a comprehensive definition of leadership when they say that it is a sociological phenomenon involving the intentional exercise of influence to guide others toward some mutual attainment of goals (p. 10). The word sociological implies a societal link. The portrait of American society is more diverse than it has ever been yet most leadership studies have focused only on one part of society as the yardstick to measure all other leaders- white males. A smaller number of studies of leadership have included women but studies of both male and females in leadership have assumed that all males and all females are the same. Parker (2005) says that leadership literature is presented as race neutral and generalized to all people and grounded within perspectives that privilege White middle-class norms and values through gender symbolism that operates as the universal depiction of men and women across cultural and class boundaries (p. xi). Most of the leadership literature that includes African-American women typically looks at their accomplishments in the civil rights era, their roles in churches and also educational settings. From a geographic standpoint, most literature that includes African-American women is set in an urban environment or inner city. However, African-American women leaders are in every town and suburb of the United States. These women go to church but sometimes they do not. Some pursue an academic career but others are in the corporations, the nonprofits, the public sector and serving the community in quiet ways.
If you do a Google Scholar search on cultural differences and leadership, there are 932,000 items that have been published since 2000. These items include books, articles and presentations and demonstrate much attention is paid to culture and the need to have diverse voices for organizational effectiveness and accountability. The one size fits all models of leadership are no longer relevant. According to Chin, Lott, Rice, and Sanchez-Hucles (2007), interpretation of the behaviors of diverse women leaders may vary depending on the different ethnic and contextual perspectives from which it is viewed (p. 11). The illustration of African-American women leadership is not an attempt to bring about a competing model of leadership, instead it attempts to show that existing models need to be more inclusive. It serves to broaden the lens of feminine leadership studies.

The U.S. nonprofit sector continues to grow and the amount of money that nonprofits manage is a significant portion of the national economy. Roeger, Blackwood, and Pettijohn (2011) report, “In 2010, nonprofits contributed products and services that added $779 billion to the nation’s gross domestic product; 5.4 percent of GDP. Nonprofits are also a major employer, accounting for 9 percent of the economy’s wages, and over 10 percent of jobs in 2009” (p. 2). According to the Center for American Progress, today’s workforce is more diverse than ever (http://www.americanprogress.org). This site shows a myriad of statistics on how many ethnicities are included in today’s workforce. The punch line is that ethnic minorities are not equally represented in leadership roles. Among the sectors, the nonprofit and public sectors are lacking the most in diverse leaders (Cardenas, Ajinkya, and Legar, 2011, p. 5). This is startling given the fact that both the nonprofit sector and the public exist to promote the common good.
Kunreuther and Corvington (2007) say that roughly 75% of executive directors and CEOs plan to leave their jobs in the next few years. This has been called the crisis of nonprofit leadership. Their solution to this problem is to look to the younger generation for leadership recruitment in the nonprofit sector. They suggest that these younger leaders will have different perspectives on race and gender than the current leaders. They do not suggest looking to other races and genders as potential sources of nonprofit leaders. It furthers the conversation of acceptance and tolerance but still suggests in a subtle way that looking to the future, African-American women who have barriers of race and gender will still be left out of dominant picture of leadership. The conversation needs to shift from acceptance and tolerance to respect. Tierney (2006) on the leadership crisis of nonprofits, says that “by changing their assumptions about recruiting, and by experimenting with part-time positions, flexible career paths, job sharing, and training and mentoring, nonprofits can open up substantial new streams of leaders. They could also increase the diversity of their workforces” (p. 34). The last sentence in the quote suggests diversity as an afterthought and not as a normal part of business.

Organizations in the 21st century have to deal with rapid change, competing demands and diversity of need both internal and external. Resilience and determination is needed to move organizations along the cycle of success, failure, and back to success. Parker (2005) notes that contemporary African-American women’s organizational leadership is grounded in a tradition of survival, resistance, and change that historically has been ignored or devalued (p. 31). No longer should the experience of the African-American woman be ignored in leadership study, instead the unique resilience of these
individuals should be included as a demonstration of its necessity to individual survival and organizational sustainability.

**Theoretical Framework**

Warren Bennis (2009) said “Leaders, whatever their field, are made up as much of their experiences as their skills, like everyone else. Unlike everyone else, they use their experiences rather than be used by it” (p. 64). What Mr. Bennis is describing is standpoint theory. Standpoint theory focuses on the idea that unique life experiences influence everyday actions. African-American women have an intersection of life experiences based on gender, race, and class. Intersectionality is the basic premise of black feminist standpoint theory and serves as the theoretical framework for this analysis.

The black feminist thought framework, according to Howard-Hamilton (2003), is made up of three themes: it is shaped and produced by the experiences black women have encountered in their lives, there are intersections of experiences between and among black women, and although there are commonalities there are multiple contexts to be revealed and explored.

**Importance**

A more inclusive picture of leadership is important on the macro level because it is the right thing to do but there are other reasons for including African-American women. There should be a focus on leadership diversity in both academic and practical terms. On the academic level, Eagly and Chin (2010) say:

Scholars of leadership have infrequently addressed the diversity of leaders and followers in terms of culture, gender, race and ethnicity, or sexual orientation. This omission has weakened the ability of research and theory
to address some of the most provocative aspects of contemporary leadership, including (a) the limited access of individuals from diverse identity groups to leadership roles; (b) the shaping of leaders’ behaviors by their dual identities; and (c) the potential of individuals from groups formerly excluded from leadership roles to provide excellent leadership because of their differences from traditional leaders (p. 216).

On the practical level, the multiplicity of voices in today’s organizational environment can serve to offer unique ways of problem solving and strategic planning. In addition, Sanchez-Hucles (2010), says that America is not able to keep up with the need for leaders to meet current organizational demands and the demand for leaders is likely to become more acute with the upcoming retirement of baby boomers (p. 172).

Practically speaking it would make sense to look to qualified persons who have been underrepresented in leadership to fill the demand. Hwang (2012) says that diversity is good economics (www.forbes.com). Cardenas, Ajinkya and Leger (2011), further this by explaining, “If we do not ensure the success of the most vulnerable among us moving forward, then we will prevent the United States from fully capitalizing on the global economic advantages we can derive from our increasingly diverse population” (p. 1). Looking to these groups is equivalent to tapping into a whole culture of resources that have been previously overlooked.

Two elements are increasingly important in effective leadership and organizational success. These are transformational leadership styles and resilience. Studies show that women typically are more transformational in their leadership styles while men are generally more transactional (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen
Transformational leadership is a relationship theory characterized by influence, motivation, stimulation and consideration. African-American women experience life from the standpoint of gender, race, and class. They use multiple strategies to navigate their environments and have historically used creativity and risk-taking to survive in the challenging world of oppression. Because of this, they will probably be transformational in their leadership styles.

Transformational leaders, according to Givens (2008), are important to organizations because of their impact on follower satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and commitment to organizational change (p. 5). Givens found that transformational leadership is positively linked to organizational outcomes such as: organizational citizenship behavior/performance, organizational culture, and organizational vision (p. 10). She found that transformational leadership is also positively linked to personal outcomes such as: empowerment, job satisfaction, commitment, trust, self-efficacy, and motivation (p. 15).

Resilience has been shown to be an important aspect of leadership and organizational success. Everly (2011) says that a culture of organizational resilience is dependent largely on leadership. He says that leaders are the key ability to tip the organization in the direction of resilience and to serve as a catalyst to increase group cohesion and dedication to the mission. Everly (2011) says that leaders do this by demonstrating four core attributes of optimism, decisiveness, integrity, and open communications while serving as conduits and gatekeepers of formal and informal information flows throughout the organization and enjoying high source credibility. Osula and NG (2014) suggest that the nonprofit sector needs to look at a more resilient
model of leadership. They argue that the extraordinary challenges that nonprofits face signals a need for new and fresh perspectives.

**Summary of the issue**

Baby boomers are retiring from the nonprofit sector and there are not enough people to fill leadership positions. This is known as the nonprofit leadership crisis. The United States is increasingly losing its position as the dominant force in the global economy. We need leaders that are creative, adaptive, and resilient to usher us through the changing times. This is especially true in the nonprofit sector because of the many competing forces of accountability, financial stewardship, and operational ideal of public good. Traditionally, the white male has been the group that has been of interest in academic literature and is the one that is looked to in the workforce. We need to look beyond traditional model of leadership and recognize the value of diversity in problem solving and creating new ideas for the new world. Recognizing the value of African-American women in leadership roles is a step towards solving the leadership crisis of the nonprofit sector.

**Research aims and objectives**

This study has a two-fold purpose. One purpose is to offer a solution to the leadership crisis of the nonprofit sector. The other is to recognize the strengths of current African-American women leaders, thereby promoting the leadership potential of others. This was done by answering the question, What are the leadership styles of African-American women who lead nonprofit organizations?
CHAPTER 2 Literature Review

The literature review for this study begins with a discussion of leadership and the timeline for the development of various leadership theories. Transformational leadership is a focus of this study and is highlighted in more detail. After a discussion of resilience the reader will see how resilience and transformational leadership are important to nonprofit organizations and the change management efforts that are undertaken. The literature review then moves on to illuminate the concepts of black feminism and womanism before delving into historical information about African-American women in America. The final portion of the literature review highlights African-American women and their leadership contributions.

Leadership

James MacGregor Burns said that leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth (Burns, 1978, p.2). This is evident in the multiple theories of leadership that have emerged since the 1940s. Among these are the great man theory, behavioral theory, situational theory, contingency theory, and relational theory. The very first theory of leadership was Thomas Carlyle’s Great Man theory. This theory is a school of thought that says leaders are born or inherited with a set of qualities that enabled them to emerge and be effective leaders. Leaders were not made. It was a way for the upper class to remain upper class. People began to question this early in the 20th century. As an extension of the hypothesis that great men were born, trait theory emerged.

Ralph Stogdill (1948) tried to determine or measure the traits of the great men who were born leaders. Trait theory was an extension of the Great Man theory in that it
was still built on the supposition that leaders were born with certain traits. The traits that emerged in his study of leadership were: capacity (intelligence, alertness, verbal facility, originality, judgment); achievement (scholarship, knowledge, athletic accomplishment); responsibility (dependability, initiative, persistence, aggressiveness, self-confidence, desire to excel); participation (activity, sociability, cooperation, adaptability, humor); and status (socioeconomic position, popularity). Stogill (1974) later found that mere possession of these traits does not lead to successful leadership because many people who had these traits never became leaders.

Behavior theory changed the way we looked at leaders. This theory assumes that leaders can be made. Important contributions to the behavioral theory of leadership were the Ohio State Studies. The Ohio State Studies found two leadership behaviors that effective leaders have to achieve – consideration (people-oriented) and initiating structure (task-oriented). Judge, Piccolo and Ilies (2004), defines consideration as the degree to which a leader shows concern and respect for followers, looks out for their welfare, and expresses appreciation and support (p. 36). Judge, Piccolo, and Ilies (2004), defines initiating structure as the degree to which a leader defines and organizes his role and the roles of followers, is oriented toward goal attainment, and establishes well-defined patterns and channels of communication (p. 36). Since the theory assumes that leaders can be made, it opened the door to the many leadership development programs that are in existence today.

During the 1960s and 1970s, leadership studies were further developed. Contingency theories and situational theories were introduced. These theories are an extension of the earlier behavioral studies of leadership. Peretomode (2012) says that
although these theories are similar there are also differences. The author says that both theories suggest that there is no best way to successfully lead and the effectiveness of leadership styles are determined by factors both internal and external to the organization. He says, however, situational theories tend to focus more on the behaviors that the leader should adopt given the followers’ behavior, whereas contingency theories take a broader perspective that include situational factors about leader skills and capability and other variables within the given situation.

Up until the 1970s leadership studies were based on the transactional nature of leadership. Transactional leadership is understood to have three categories: contingent reward, management by exception (active) and management by exception (passive). Howell & Avolio (1993) further define these categories as:

**Contingent reward leadership** is viewed as an active and positive exchange between leaders and followers whereby followers are rewarded or recognized for accomplishing agreed-upon objectives. Rewards may involve recognition from the leader for work accomplished, bonuses, or merit increases. Leaders can also transact with followers by focusing on mistakes, delaying decisions, or avoiding intervening until something has gone wrong. Such transactions are referred to as management by exception, which can be distinguished as either an active or passive transaction between the leader and follower.

The distinction between active and passive management by exception is primarily based on the timing of the leader's intervention. In the more active form of management by exception, the leader...
continuously monitors followers’ performance to anticipate mistakes before they become a problem and immediately takes corrective action when required. The leader actively searches for problems or any deviations from what is expected. In active management by exception, the leader clarifies the standards at the outset that he or she is using to monitor deviations. In passive management by exception, the leader intervenes with criticism and reproof only after mistakes are made and standards are not met. The leader waits until the task is completed before determining that a problem exists and then brings the problem to the awareness of followers. The leader only clarifies standards after a mistake has occurred (p. 891).

James MacGregor Burns published *Leadership* in 1978. This book is where we are first introduced the concept of transformational leadership. Perry e.d (2010) said Burns’ book on leadership dramatically changed the study of leadership because prior studies were focused on the notion of transactional leadership and the larger than life image of leadership and largely ignored transformational leadership (p. 81). Burns defines transformational leadership as “occurring when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p. 20). He was the first to talk about the relational nature of leadership and highlighted the importance of followers in leader efficacy. Perry says the transformational school emphasized vision and overarching organizational change (p. 81). Goertzen (2012) says “the power in transforming leadership comes by recognizing the varying needs and motives of potential followers and elevating them to transcend
personal self interests” (p. 83). The categories of transformational leadership include: idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation.

Idealized Influence (also known as Charismatic Leadership) - Transformational leaders act in ways that make them role models. They are respected, admired and trusted. Followers identify with them and describe them in terms that imply extraordinary capabilities, persistence and determination. These leaders are willing to take risk. They can consistently be relied upon to do the right thing, displaying high moral and ethical standards.

Inspirational Motivation - These leaders embody the term “team spirit”. They show enthusiasm and optimism, providing both meaning and challenge to the work at hand. They create an atmosphere of commitment to goals and a shared vision.

Intellectual Stimulation - A Transformational Leader encourages creativity and fosters an atmosphere in which followers feel compelled to think about old problems in a new way. Public criticism is avoided.

Individualized Consideration - Transformational leaders act as mentors and coaches. Individual desires and needs are respected. Differences are accepted and two-way communication is common. These leaders are considered to be good listeners and along with this comes personalized interaction. Followers of these leaders move continually toward development of higher levels of potential (Bass, 2006, p.7).
Transformational leadership is one style of leadership, however, Bass (2006) notes that the full range of leadership includes three categories: transformational, transactional and laissez-faire. Laissez-faire leadership is essentially no leadership at all. In leadership research it is understood that these styles are not necessarily mutually exclusive and effective leaders use all types of leadership. However, Uhl-bien, Maslin and Opsina (2012) write that the quality of the leader-follower relationships that are developed in the transformational leadership style has proven to be most desired.

The examination of leaders and leadership will no doubt continue to grow and shift as we try to make sense of cross-cultural leadership and global acceptance. The nature of leadership took a dramatic shift in the post-industrial paradigm. The great man theories were no longer relevant and many situations required more than a transactional style of leadership. The new leadership focuses on relationships, inclusiveness, and higher order needs.

Resilience

An important body of research has been building on resilience and its connection to transformational leadership. A quick search of Google Scholar using keywords “transformational leadership” and “resilience” reveals that in the decade of 1980-1990 there were 89 citations with these keywords, 1990-2000 reveals that that were 751, 2000-2010 shows 8720 and from 2010 to present (2013) there have been 8460 citations. This could be the result of the economic recession that plagued the world starting in 2007. Many organizations went through turmoil as they struggled to stay afloat in a volatile environment and the need for leaders who could help them survive the storm became urgent.
According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, resilience is “the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress” (www.merriam-webster.com). Richardson (2002) defines resilience as “the motivational force within everyone that drives them to grow through adversity and disruption” (p. 307). Resilience according to Whitney (2007) is the “ability to be flexible when approaching the unknown as well as the ability to overcome adversity” (p. 5).

Transformational leadership according to Bass and Avolio (2000) has four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Peterson and Walumba (2008) say that resilience is an antecedent of these four dimensions. They further explain this by saying resilient leaders cultivate positive emotions in themselves and are likely to be higher in inspirational motivation because this will likely increase followers’ confidence in their ability. They say that more resilient leaders’ confidence and demonstrated capabilities in rebounding from setbacks will likely lead followers to hold them in high regard. Peterson and Walumba posit that since the intellectual stimulation dimension refers to the leaders’ ability to motivate followers and resilient leaders are more confident in their ability to deal with failure, they may be more likely to encourage employees to take risks and to pursue innovative and creative activities. Lastly, they say that resilient individuals have a more flexible repertoire of coping responses and therefore should be able to guide employees in coping with setbacks and failures. This flexibility allows them to adaptively respond to their followers and thus demonstrating individualized consideration.
Consulting firms and leadership programs working with for-profit as well as nonprofit organizations have acknowledged the importance of resilience in leadership. Patel (n.d.) says that the key quality to absorb pressure and not let it defeat you is the mark of resilience and that it is a key quality of leaders and managers of all sectors (p. 6). Reid (2008) echoes this sentiment when she says in today’s environment of rapid and disruptive change, leaders need to be agile and resilient (p. 1). Resilience has become the watchword in today’s leadership.

There are two schools of thought on the source of resilience. Some scholars say that resilience is a trait that is learned by experiencing disruptive life events. Kaminsky (2006) studied resilience in mid-career leaders. She found that the process by which these leaders either flourished or floundered in response to adversity was resilience. Moreover, she says that resilient people view life disruptions as turning points and opportunities for growth and resolve dilemmas with a transformative process rather than a transition process (p.8). Sahgal and Pathak (2007) found that “life’s challenges make transformational leaders more resilient” and “they play a significant role in building capabilities that make it possible for an individual to achieve professional success in addition to leading and inspiring others” (p. 274).

In addition to learning resilience through life experiences or disruptions, some say that resilience can be learned through leadership development instruction. Bill George (2013) lists several examples of companies who have created leadership programs aimed at building resilience. Among these are: Google, General Mills, Aetna, Target, Ford Motor Company, and West Point Military Academy (www.huffingtonpost.com). These two schools are not mutually exclusive. It is probably true that some people are born
with a quality that makes them fighters. Like early leadership conversation around the born-not-made phenomenon, perhaps we can further isolate the qualities of resilience and thereby further improve leadership development programs.

The study of leadership will continue to evolve but context and situation of the organization will remain a factor in leader effectiveness. Contingency theory suggests that there is no one best way to lead and that leader action should be based on the internal and external factors of an organization. Bunch (2012) says that the definitions and levels of importance for leadership competencies differ from industry to industry (p. 30). Although there is no one best way to lead, resilience is a leadership phenomenon that seems to be needed in both the private and nonprofit sectors.

At first glance, it would appear that for-profit and nonprofit organizations are very different, this is not entirely true. Epstein and McFarlan (2011) list six similarities of for-profits and nonprofits:

1. Both types of organizations can grow, transform, merge, or die.

2. Cash is king.

3. Good management and leadership really matter. Delivery of service, motivating and inspiring staff, and conceiving new directions for growth are vitally important.

4. Planning, budgeting, and performance measurements are vital.

5. Both face the challenges of integrating subject matter specialists into a generalist framework.

6. Both add value to society but in two different ways.
There are critical differences between a for-profit and nonprofit operational model. A for-profit organization has a main focus of increasing their bottom line profit. This profit is distributed to shareholders and stakeholders. A nonprofit organization, according to Powell and Steinburg (2006), is precluded in distributing, in financial form, its surplus resources to those in control of the organization (p. 118). Instead a nonprofit organization must use all profits for the operation of the organization. The mission is the primary driving force of a nonprofit organization. They seek to operate for the public good while a for-profit does not necessarily have the public good as a primary focus. In a for-profit, funds come from efficient operation and capital markets but in a nonprofit individual giving, institutional philanthropy government funding, fee income and commercial ventures, membership income, investment income, collaboration and barter, gifts in kind and borrowing are all sources of income.

Bunch (2012) conducted a study to ascertain the differences between for-profit and nonprofit leader competencies. The results of her study showed that the differences were minimal (p. 106). Resilience is needed in the nonprofit sector just as much as in the for-profit sector because each are reconciling the competing forces of economic, social, and political demands while struggling to keep their organization relevant and conducting the business at hand.

**Change Management**

Transformational and resilient leaders are an important aspect of change management. Nonprofit organizations must change and grow to stay relevant and successful. Factors that necessitate change include shifts in funding, changing demographics, increasingly global markets, and stakeholder priorities. Sarros, Cooper
and Santora (2008) say that organizations need to be more flexible, adaptive, entrepreneurial and innovative in meeting the changing demands of today’s environment. They write that appropriate leadership is needed to effect such change. Most, of the theories and models of change management hinge on leadership. Leadership is probably the single most important factor in organizational change. However, Mackenzie (n.d.) says leadership may unknowingly create barriers to change. If strategies are installed that undermine embedded guiding corporate values without providing the visionary support for the transition, “the force of the old culture can neutralize and emasculate a proposed change” (p. 3). At the same time leadership can inspire a culture of change. Oreg and Berson (2011) say that many of the qualities of leaders who encourage change are viewed as transformational where charisma is used to stimulate an environment of learning and risk as well as a supportive environment of change (p. 631). John Kotter (2000) detailed eight stages of successful change:

1. Establishing a sense of urgency
2. Forming a powerful guiding coalition
3. Creating a vision
4. Communicating the vision
5. Empowering others to act on the vision
6. Planning for and creating short-term wins
7. Consolidating improvements and producing still more change, and
8. Institutionalizing new approaches.

It is easy to see that transformational leadership plays a vital role in ushering in an era of change in an organization. According to Garcia-Morales, Jimenez-Barrionuevo and
Gutierrez-Gutierrez (2010), transformational leaders influence, motivate, and stimulate others; these qualities are needed on all stages of Kotter’s model. Innovation is an important aspect of organizational change and transformational leadership has been shown to improve innovation and positively affect organizational performance.

The very nature of change management calls on leaders to be resilient and to create a culture of resilience. Many times organizations must go through change because of an impending crisis or a crisis that has already happened. In the 1940s Kurt Lewin, an organizational psychologist, put forth a theory of organizational change involving three practices—unfreezing, moving, and refreezing (Lewin, 1947). He said that practices need to be released or unfrozen to be changed or moved then newly adopted practices refrozen. This means that leaders and organizations need to take on challenges by thinking differently to either confront obstacles or sidestep obstacles. Resilient leaders act as catalysts to resilience on an organizational level by being the exemplars. The black feminist standpoint says that African-American women had to constantly change, innovate, and adapt to their environment. Coincidentally, these traits are necessary for leaders in successful organizations. Black feminism is situated in the third wave of feminism. Feminism is thought to have three distinct waves.

**Black feminism and Womanism**

The first wave of feminism occurred during the late 19th century and early 20th century. The main concern of feminists during the first wave was suffrage. The second wave of feminism was concerned with equal rights on a broader level. According to Snyder (2008), the third wave feminists rejected the notion of a universal feminine experience. The terms black feminism and womanism became popular in the 1980s and
1990s. These terms represent the African-American woman’s desire to be recognized as part of the overall woman struggle against sexism and also part of the African-American struggle against racism. These terms also represent the uniqueness that African-American women face being a part of but separate from both groups. The two terms have similar meanings and many scholars use them interchangeably. Interestingly, each term also has several meanings depending on what is most comfortable or who is asked. Anderson and Collins (2001) say that debates about whether the black woman’s standpoint should be named womanism or black feminism reflect the challenge of accommodating the diversity of black women (p. 9). Alice Walker (1983) introduced four meanings of the term womanist. She is thought to be the first person to use the phrase. Walker’s definition is one of poetic melody. One of her meanings is an analogy that says womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender. Interestingly, Walker’s womanist definition includes sexuality as part of the dimension. Walker’s meaning also includes a more holistic view that is inclusive of all women not just African-Americans. Collins (2001) says that Walker’s meaning of womanist creates a conceptual space that reflect bona fide differences among African-American women but cautions that the use of the word to describe historical responses to racial and gender oppression is very different than using it to say that the black woman has arrived at a liberated ideal. By this she suggests that we should celebrate the victories of the African-American woman but recognize that the battle is ongoing. Phillips (2006) says:

Womanism is a social change perspective rooted in Black women's and other women of color's everyday experiences and everyday methods of problem solving in everyday spaces, extended to the problem of ending all
forms of oppression for all people, restoring the balance between people
and the environment/nature, and reconciling human life with the spiritual
dimension for it has been uniquely these moments of discrimination where
I have found myself to be a woman who is seen and heard (p. 6).

Attention has been given to establishing who can be a black feminist and depending on
who you talk to this can be all black women, men, or any other person concerned with the
black feminist standpoint. Collins (1990) cautions placing biological criteria on the term
because it implies that race or gender produces a certain consciousness. She suggests that
black feminist thought consists of specialized knowledge created by African-American
women which clarifies a standpoint of black women. The very purpose of clarifying and
voicing the standpoint is empowerment. Collins (1990) says replacing the denigrating
images of black womanhood with self-defined images, black women’s activism as
mothers, teachers, and black community leaders, and sensitivity to sexual politics are all
core themes advanced by black feminist intellectuals (p. 23). Collins says that voicing a
standpoint can stimulate resistance and that thought and action are both desirable and a
catalyst for social change. Although the terms feminism and womanism are very much
the discourse of scholars, the black feminist standpoint is often advanced at the “street
level.” Phillips, Reddic-Morgan and Stephens (2005) say that the hip hop culture in
general and rap music in particular provide a platform for African-American women to
process and produce feminist and womanist ideas.

Black feminist standpoint is about telling the story of the suffering of African-
American women. It is about empowerment, triumph, hope, and resilience despite the
oppressive experiences that black women face. Parker and Ogilvie (1996), says that
living in a racially divided society causes African-American women to use divergent thinking, creativity, risk-taking, and boundary spanning to develop effective strategies of leadership that allow them to adapt to their bicultural world (p.193). This adaptivity and resilience is what makes African-American women suitable for leadership roles. This standpoint adds a new dimension to the picture of black women that is often perpetuated by the media and society. In *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins (1991) says that race, class, and gender oppression could not continue without powerful ideological justifications for their existence (p. 67). These images such as mammy, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas, according to Collins, control how society sees black women and challenging them are a core theme in Black feminist thought. These images also impact leadership opportunities for black women because they are contradictory to most definitions of leadership. Pierce and Newstrom (2008) say that people develop a prototype, a mental image that reflects or defines for them what a leader is and what leadership entails. They define leadership as the process of being perceived by others as leaders. (p. 257). Knippenberg (2012) writes that group identity plays an important role in the leadership process and that followers are more likely to favor leaders who are perceived to be group prototypical. This is especially important in understanding how the negative images of black women would preclude them for leadership selection.

**African-American Women**

African-Americans began arriving in the United States in the 1600s as slaves. The main purpose of the female slave was to breed for the profit of her master. She was to serve at the sexual whim of the master as well as to endure other crimes against nature
such as exploitation of family. Beal (2008) says that the black female slave can be described as a “slave of a slave”:

By reducing the black man in America to such abject oppression, the black woman had no protector and was used, and is still being used in some cases, as the scapegoat for the evils that this horrendous system has perpetrated on black men. Her physical image has been maliciously maligned; she has been sexually molested and abused by the white colonizer; she has suffered the worst kind of economic exploitation, having been forced to serve as the white woman’s maid and wet nurse for white offspring while her own children were, more often than not, starving and neglected. It is the depth of degradation to be socially manipulated, physically raped, used to undermine your own household, and to be powerless to reverse this syndrome (p. 166).

This exploitation, according to some, served as the framing of the image of the African-American woman for many generations. bell hooks (1981) says:

The significance of the rape of the enslaved black woman was not simply that it deliberately crushed their sexual integrity for economic ends but that it led to a devaluation of black womanhood that permeated the psyches of all Americans and shaped the social status of all black women once slavery ended (p. 52).

Black women resisted this image through both passive and active resistance. Davis (1981) said that black women used abortion as an act of resistance to the world of forced labor, chains, floggings, and sexual abuse (p.204). They took control over an
uncontrollable system the only way they could. Dujon (2010) talks about Harriet Tubman’s Underground Railroad, Sojourner Truth’s famous writing titled, *Aint I A Woman,* and the women’s rights speeches of Maria Stewart that served as the springboard for today’s black feminist movement.

When slavery ended, the struggle for civil rights continued because although slavery had ended equality was still a dream. Fry-Brown (2012), says that early black women leadership was asserted through Black women’s clubs (p. 23). These clubs served to educate and lift the black person in America to a place of empowerment. These clubs were also a vehicle to bring awareness of the African-American situation to the citizens of America as a whole.

The late 1950s and into the early 1970s was a period that defied the notion that America was the ”Land of the Free.” White women were dissatisfied with their position as subordinates to white men and black men were organizing to secure their rights in the same white male dominated society. This left the black woman in a peculiar position. There was a psychological struggle over which cause to focus. Fry-Brown (2012) says that black women focused their energies on issues of race because the enemy of racism as defined by the Civil Rights organizations was much more relevant to their lives than the enemies of sexism as defined by the Women’s Rights movement (p. 22). However, men dominated the Civil Rights movement and black women were relegated to positions of support. Any effort made by the black woman to take on a leadership position was viewed as efforts to rob the African-American male of his manhood and taking away from the cause as a whole. Fry-Brown (2012), says, ”thus for many African-American women, racial contentions overpowered and in many cases muted feminist reactions” (p.
23). Fry-Brown says the peculiarity that race and gender were separate issues did not hold up for the African-American female. Because of this, black feminist and womanist theories emerged.

**African-American Women and Leadership**

African-American women have shown their leadership capacity since arriving in the United States. This leadership emerged as a result of the hardships that all African-Americans faced from slavery to the subtle discrimination at play today. Their leadership techniques, according to Rosser-Mims (2010), exemplify survival techniques in family, church, and community organizations that encompass the creativity and commitment for group well-being (p. 7). This type of leadership fits into all four factors of transformational leadership because of their embedded characteristics of survival, motivation, challenge, and creativity. Bass (1990) describes African-American leadership as transformational:

> The needs and experiences of the black population may dictate a great emphasis on transformational leadership. Jesse Jackson illustrated these charismatic and transformational tendencies in the 1984 and 1988 presidential election campaigns. Leaders of black movements are characterized by their satisfaction of mutual problems and the resulting injustices. They focus much on group identity and the need for a sense of community. While leaders in the white mainstream more often direct their attention to conserving resources and the status quo, leaders of minorities, such as the blacks, must more often be transformational in their concern
for social change, as well as for unmet social needs for inequalities in the
distribution of opportunities (p. 745).

Not only do African-American women exhibit transformational leadership qualities but
also have a background of resilience. Wormer, Sudduth, and Jackson (2011) conducted a
narrative study with 6 older African-American women who were born between 1920 and
1940 in segregated Mississippi and Arkansas. They found that resilience was learned in
early life and this lesson continued through the rest of their lives in the face of inevitable
physical vulnerability and personal loss (p. 421). In addition African-Americans,
especially women, tend to grow up hearing messages that help them survive in a society
where there are barriers and portrayals of their racial group tend to be largely negative.
These messages resonate because Brown and Tylka (2011) found that college students
who were raised in an environment that received a high amount of racial socialization
messages had higher resilience than those who received a low amount of racial
socialization messages (p. 275).

African-American women tend to take these embedded and socialized skills with
them to work. Parker (2005) observed African-American women executives and their
coworkers and reported that these women exhibited five qualities: interactive
communications, empowerment through the challenge to produce results, openness in
communication, participative decision-making, and leadership through boundary
spanning (p. 66). Similarly, Ritchie, Fassinger, Linn, and Johnson (1997) observed that
the women in their study (both white and African-American) tended to tackle difficult
problems directly and reframe obstacles as challenges (p. 146).
Summary

There has been a historic struggle to provide a definition of leadership that has resulted in many prominent theories. A well-known theory of effective leadership is transformational leadership. This theory asserts that leaders who influence their followers by being role models, inspire others to work towards a common goal, stimulate others to problem solve and strategize on new initiatives, and consider the needs of others are more effective. One aspect of leadership that is becoming prominent in today’s organization is resilience. Resilience helps individuals bounce back from adversity and these resilient individuals have the effect of transforming a stagnant organization into a resilient one. As organizations undergo change management initiatives, resilience has become important aspect in unfreezing, moving and refreezing new habits. The black feminist standpoint recognizes the challenges that African-American women have endured since their arrival in the United States. It is about illuminating these challenges to create a vehicle for social change. The challenges of the African-American women have shaped their leadership behaviors by causing them to be creative risk-takers that focus on group well-being and advancement. These behaviors are found in all categories of transformational leadership.

Hypotheses

African-American women have been slaves and housekeepers, desexualized and dehumanized. Through it all they have extraordinary stories of survival and adaption. This study looks at one way this adaption has manifested- their leadership styles. The overarching research question for this study is:
What are the leadership characteristics of African-American female leaders in nonprofit organizations? Other research questions include:

1. What are contributing factors to the success of African-American female leaders in nonprofit organizations?
2. Is there a relationship between transformational leadership style and resilience of African-American women leaders in nonprofit organizations?

The first phase of this dissertation is a quantitative phase and will be guided by the following hypotheses:

H1: African-American women leaders in nonprofit organizations will exhibit more transformational leadership style traits than transactional or laissez-faire leadership style traits as measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ).

H2: African-American women leaders in nonprofit organizations will be moderately high to highly resilient as measured by the Resilience Scale for Adults.

H3: There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and resilience of African-American Women leaders in nonprofit organizations.

Phase 2 of this dissertation is a qualitative inquiry to explore any themes that may be present in the experiences of African-American women nonprofit leaders. The following questions were asked.

*Semi-Structured Phone Interview Questions*

1. What are your leadership characteristics?
2. Were there specific motivating factors for your success?
3. Did you experience gender or race bias on your ascension to success? If so, how did you get past it? If not, do you think that this sort of bias exists in the nonprofit sector?

4. Can you describe a time when your organization was going through challenges and the strategies you used to move past these challenges?

5. Is there anything you would like to add regarding the experience of being an African-American female leader in the nonprofit sector?
CHAPTER 3 Methodology

The focus of this study was to examine the self-perceived leadership styles of African-American women in nonprofit organizations. Specifically, this study was a mixed methods study with a focus on the leadership of board members, directors, and executive directors. This chapter explains the methods used to uncover the self-perceived leadership styles. The study uses both quantitative and qualitative inquiry to explore the leadership styles and experiences of participants. Using both of these methods of inquiry is called mixed methods design. Mixed methods design, according to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), does not constrain or limit the researcher but rather allows the researcher to be more creative. “Quantitative methods can give an overview about the domain under study and can describe its heterogeneity on a macro-level, whereas qualitative methods can be used to gain access to local knowledge of the field in order to develop theoretical concepts and explanations that cover phenomena relevant for the research domain” (Kelle, 2006, p. 309).

Combining these methods should provide a better picture of the resilience and leadership styles of African-American women leaders of nonprofits in nonprofit organizations. This study used a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. This widely used method, according to Creswell (2002), requires a two-phase approach in which the first phase is quantitative and the second is qualitative. Creswell says that the quantitative data provides a general understanding of the research problem while the quantitative analysis refines and explains the results by exploring the participant views more in depth. Figure 1 is a simple diagram of this procedure.
Figure 1. Overview of Mixed-Methods Design

Adapted from Creswell 2015.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) say that using a mixed methods design provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research. They say that quantitative research alone is weak in understanding the context or setting in which people talk and qualitative research alone makes up for these weaknesses but is filled with personal interpretations made by the researcher thereby creating bias (p.12).

The nature of this study is appropriate to the mixed methods design because in the first phase the leadership styles of the sample are analyzed via strict quantitative protocols. The second phase gives voice to the results by adding first-hand information.

**Study type and sample**

The population of interest for this study was female African-American executive directors, directors, or board members in nonprofit organizations. To obtain participants, the researcher used a non-probability purposive sampling method. Teddlie and Yu (2007) say that this method is appropriate when you are targeting a specific group.

Purposive sampling is “a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research” (Oliver and Jupp, 2006, p. 244-245).

Permission to conduct this study was granted by the James Madison University
Office of Research Integrity - protocol 14-0386 (Appendix A). The survey was constructed and administered via Qualtrics survey software. The online survey also included a section at the beginning for participants to consent to participate in the research (Appendix B). Since there is no known database of African-American women leaders in nonprofit organizations, the researcher started with organizations that were known to have leadership by individuals that fit the criteria. The researcher focused on nonprofits in Virginia and the District of Columbia because of known contacts in these areas. The link to the survey was emailed to participants and they were also asked if they knew of any other people who fit the criteria for the study. In addition, the researcher cold called various nonprofit organizations and asked if there were African-American women leaders at the particular organization. In some instances there were, and in others there were not but they knew of organizations that fit the criteria. This led to the addition of three participants who reside in the state of Georgia. This is a purposive sampling technique called snowball sampling. Goodman (1961) says that snowball sampling is effective to gather enough data for research from a population that is often hidden or difficult to access.

**Phase 1 Quantitative**

Phase 1 of this study utilized a survey that combined demographic questions (Appendix C) with the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), Form 5X-Short (Bass and Avolio, 1995) (Appendix D), and Resilience Scale (Wagnild, 2011) (Appendix E).

The MLQ is a 45 item leader questionnaire that measures 9 leadership factors on 3 dimensions - transformational (attitudes, behaviors, motivation, stimulation,
consideration); transactional (contingent reward, management by exception [active], passive avoidant (management by exception [passive], and laissez faire). Four items on the survey measure each factor. Tables 1 below shows how each of these subscales or latent factors relate to the three leadership styles of transformational, transactional, or passive avoidant and their corresponding survey items. Campbell (2010) breaks down the nine factors measured by the MLQ:

1. **Idealized Influence (Attributed)** – Followers’ perception of the leader’s power, confidence, and inspirational ideals.

2. **Idealized Influence (Behavior)** – Behaviors that reveal the leader’s values and beliefs, ethical, and moral values, and vision. This type of leader models appropriate behavior for followers.

3. **Inspirational Motivation** – Followers have a clear sense of purpose that is energizing.

4. **Intellectual Stimulation** – Encourages followers to question what has always been done to solve problems and persuades them to question methods they use to develop such skills.

5. **Individualized consideration** - Leaders act as mentors and pay attention to individual needs for growth and focus on understanding the follower needs and work with them to develop their full potential.

6. **Contingent Reward** – Clarifies what is expected from followers and what they will receive if they meet expected levels of performance.

7. **Management-by-Exception (Active)** - The corrective, or negative transaction occurs when the follower deviates from the norm. The leader
actively monitors performance and takes corrective action when a follower makes a mistake.

8. Management by exception (Passive) – Inactive monitoring of performance. The leader waits until deviations occur then implements a corrective action.

9. Passive Avoidant – Reacts only after problems have become serious. Avoidance of corrective action and limited decision-making ability. (p. 57-58).

Additionally, the MLQ contains items that measure the outcome of leadership - extra effort, satisfaction, and effectiveness.

Table 1. Subscale items for leadership styles (L1-L45)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Idealized Influence (Attribute)</td>
<td>10, 18, 21, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Idealized Influence (Behavior)</td>
<td>6, 14, 23, 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Inspirational motivation</td>
<td>9, 13, 26, 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>2, 8, 30, 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>15, 19, 29, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>1, 11, 16, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Management by Exception (active)</td>
<td>4, 22, 24, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Avoidant</td>
<td>Management by Exception (passive)</td>
<td>3, 12, 17, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Avoidant</td>
<td>Laissez-Faire</td>
<td>5, 7, 28, 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Extra Effort</td>
<td>39, 42, 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>37, 40, 43, 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>38, 41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items are rated via a 5-point Likert scale. The items are statements in which leaders judge how frequently it fits them by selecting 0- not at all, 1- once in a while, 2- sometimes, 3- fairly often, 4- frequently if not always. Avolio and Bass have produced
several iterations of the MLQ all designed to improve the validity and thereby reduce criticism of the MLQ. They concluded that this latest version, the MLQ 5x, has strong validity and has been used commercially worldwide (Avolio and Bass, 2004). The authors of the survey provide comprehensive detail of the construct validity process in the manual provided with the questionnaire. Antonakis (2003) confirmed the validity of the MLQ 5x and said that there is “strong and consistent evidence that the nine-factor model best represented the factor structure underlying the MLQ (Form 5X) instrument” (p. 282).

The Resilience Scale developed by Gail Wagnild in 2009 is a 25 item survey reflecting five characteristics of resilience - self-reliance, purposeful life, equanimity, perseverance and existential aloneness. Each characteristic is measured by five survey items. Wignold (2009) defines the five characteristics as:

**Self-reliance**- A belief in oneself and one’s capabilities

**Purposeful life**- The realization that life has purpose and the valuation of one’s contributions

**Equanamity**- A balanced perspective of one’s life experiences and the ability to moderate extreme responses to adversity.

**Perseverance**- Persistence despite adversity or discouragement and a willingness to continue the struggle to reconstruct one’s life.

**Existential aloneness**- The realization that each person’s life path is unique; confers a feeling of freedom and sense of uniqueness (p. 21).

Table 2 illustrates which items relate to the five resilience characteristics.
Table 2. Resilience Characteristic and Item Match (R1-R25).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
<td>2, 9, 13, 18, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>4, 6, 11, 15, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equanimity</td>
<td>7, 12, 16, 19, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>1, 10, 14, 20, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential Aloneness</td>
<td>2, 8, 17, 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This scale utilizes a 7-point Likert rating in which participants rate their agreement with the statements based on 1- strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree. The scores are summed to reflect higher or lower resilience. Wignold (2011) explains that the Resilience Scale scores range from 25-175. Scores greater than 145 indicate moderately high to-high resilience, scores from 116 to 144 indicate moderately-low to moderate resilience and scores of 115 and below indicate very low resilience (p. 76). The author presents evidence that the instrument is high in internal consistency and likewise validity has been established.

Hypothesis 1 states that African-American women leaders in nonprofit organizations will exhibit more transformational leadership style traits than transactional or passive avoidant leadership style traits as measured by the MLQ. Descriptive statistics, specifically the mean scale score for each item, show which leadership factor is the highest. Also, the mean of the means for each leadership style shows where the sample is highest with respect to transformational, transactional, or passive avoidant leadership styles. Paired sample t-tests were performed to assess whether the obtained
means were higher on the transformational leadership style. Paired samples t-tests are used when you want to compare two means from the same sample to assess whether they are significantly different from each other.

Hypothesis 2 states that African-American women leaders in nonprofit organizations will be moderately-high to highly resilient as measured by the RSA. Again, descriptive statistics were analyzed to look at the frequencies of moderately-low to low, moderate, and moderately-high to high resilience. The overall mean of the sample was analyzed to note where the overall sample fell on the resilience scale.

Hypothesis 3 states that there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and resilience. A linear regression was performed to determine the nature of this relationship. Linear regression models the relationship between two variables with the slope of the line equaling the correlation. Hypothesis 3 is only interested in transformational leadership so the independent variable is resilience and the dependent variable is transformational leadership.

**Phase 2 Qualitative**

After participants completed the online survey, the data was analyzed according to the process above. The qualitative phase of this study is a phenomenological exploration. Waters (n.d.) says the goal of qualitative phenomenological research is to describe the "lived experience" of a phenomenon. She says that there are two types of themes that can be collected: individual and collective. Individual themes are unique to each participant and collective themes are those that occur across the group of participants. This study is concerned with the overall sample and abstractive of group themes were utilized for the phenomenological research. Creswell (2007) said that a
narrative study is about individual lived experiences and a phenomenological study is about the lived experiences of several individuals. Creswell, Hanson, Plano, and Morales (2007) say that this method describes what participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon rather than generate a theoretical model. They say that the researcher identifies a phenomenon and then collects data from people who have experienced the phenomenon. This type of study was chosen versus a narrative inquiry because the phenomenon of interest is nonprofit leadership by women of African-American descent.

Qualitative research, like quantitative research, is a systematic approach to uncovering meaning. Stein and Mankowski (2004) say that qualitative research has the ability to empower groups of people who have been marginalized by society. Their premise is that qualitative research gives voice to the participants and they link qualitative research to social change initiatives (p. 21). They present a framework for qualitative research that is made up of a series of acts. A description of this framework is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Qualitative Research: A process in four acts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Act</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act of Asking</td>
<td>Asking, identifying, and enlisting the people who will be the focus of qualitative inquiry. Requires reflection about assumptions and goals that motivate selection of qualitative methods. Can choose to enlist disenfranchised groups in qualitative research to support empowerment aims or enlist dominant groups to support power sharing or other transformations designed to end oppression.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Act of Witnessing

Listening to and affirming the experiences of research participants. A witness is an open, totally present, passionate listener, who is affected and responsible for what is heard. Focus of witnessing is on acceptance of what is heard and accountability for acting upon it, not on the personal needs of the researcher or a desire of mutuality between researcher and participant.

Act of Interpreting

Making sense of the collective experience of participants by transforming “participant stories” into “research stories” based on the experiences and knowledge of the researcher. Researcher recognizes his or her interpretive authority in working with qualitative material. A critical point of departure in the experience of researcher and participant.

Act of Knowing

Creating publicly accessible representations of knowledge gained by conducting qualitative research. Embodies the reflections and understandings of the researcher about the social context and lives of research participants. Knowing can be represented through variety of activities such as writing, teaching, speaking, organizing, depending on research, and action goals.

In the art of asking, the researcher selects participants that further their social agenda. This study enlists African-American women who are currently leaders in the nonprofit field in order to highlight success stories, inspire action by decision makers, and motivate like women to strive for leadership positions. In this way, the complementary qualitative portion of this study serves as an empowerment vehicle and enlists the help of dominant groups in recognizing the strengths of African-American women in nonprofit leadership positions.

The art of witnessing involves direct contact with the participant. It also involves
active listening that allows the researcher to form a symbiotic relationship with the participant. The researcher in this study allowed participants stories to unfold and added follow-up questions to help them expand upon the themes presented.

The art of interpreting involves acknowledgement that stories told can have a direct effect on the personal needs of the researcher. The researcher must accept this symbiotic relationship and recognize the dilemmas in analysis and interpretation. This researcher has a direct connection with the participants because she is an African-American woman. This potential for bias was acknowledged and the researcher remained cognizant during the interpretation phase.

The act of knowing involves translation of the stores presented. Stein and Mankowski (2004) say that it is about more than writing up and presenting the results and that in the act of knowing, we as researchers present our own voice. The researcher’s voice in this study is present in the type of questions that were asked of the participants and the explication of themes from the data analysis.

By providing their contact information at the end of the study, participants agreed to be contacted via phone to answer five brief questions. The phone interview was recorded, transcribed, and subsequently grouped into themes according to the explication process as defined by Thomas Groenewald. Groenewald (2004) refrains from using the term data analysis because it implies breaking into parts rather than being concerned with the whole as in phenomenological research. The five steps in the explication process are:

1. Bracketing and phenomenological reduction
2. Delineating units of meaning
3. Clustering of units of meaning to form themes
4. Summarizing each interview, validating it, and where necessary modifying it

5. Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary.

Bracketing and phenomenological reduction according to Groenewald refers to separating the researcher’s opinions and preconceptions. He says that to delineate units of meaning the researcher identifies statements that provide relevant information to the phenomenon of interest. The researcher must then group the statements together to provide a holistic context for the phenomenon. After steps 1-3 have been performed the researcher must validate to make sure that the themes have been captured correctly. The researcher should also examine whether there are any themes that are common across all interviews.

**Ethical Considerations**

The researcher utilized living human subjects. There were no psychological discomfort and participation was completely voluntary. All interaction was either written, email, or by phone. Each participant was assigned a number in order to track responses. Identifiable information was stored on a database that was separate from the analysis. All information was stored on a secure laptop and thumb drive. Identifiable information was destroyed at the end of the study. There was no more than minimal risk anticipated in the proposed research.

**Strengths and Weaknesses of Study**

A weakness of this study is that it require a significant amount of time to recruit subjects and to collect and analyze the data. Another weakness is that it is a self-reported
survey and thus this study could be biased because the participants are aware of what the researcher is exploring. Also, the participant may rate herself differently than a subordinate on any of the leadership style items. This study utilized snowball sampling, which could increase potential error. This is because participants may be most likely to refer people in their own networks and therefore the population may be more homogenous. Although it is a weakness, snowball sampling as previously discussed is necessary for identifying the hidden population.

A strength of this study is that provides broader information rather than information from a single source of evaluation. The two-phase approach of evaluation may offer its own self-validation. The methodology is strength because it provides a holistic understanding the leadership styles of participants. Another strength of this study is that it may increase policymaker, nonprofit boards, and community leaders’ awareness of an underutilized and undervalued resource. This study contributes to the literature on leadership by offering a view of another type of leader that is not normally included in the picture of leadership and to black feminist theory scholarship by adding more voices and experiences to the ongoing conversation. In the spirit of black feminism this is a celebration of the stories. This research also demonstrates how the unique intersectionality of African-American women contributes to effective leadership styles. And finally it provides another source of validation that leader behaviors are shaped by their life experiences.
CHAPTER 4 Analysis

Phase 1 Quantitative Analysis

There were 33 African-American women leaders who participated in this study. The first part of the quantitative analysis collected demographic information from the participants. There was representation on all demographic measures. Participants were of varying ages and backgrounds and worked for many different types of organizations. These results are displayed in table 4.

Table 4. Demographic Summary of Participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters’</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional (JD, MD, etc.)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing Up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Director</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Culture, Humanities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and Animals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The survey was examined to determine that all questions were answered. Avolio and Bass (2000) note if MLQ items are blank, the subscale should be scored based on the number of answers. Subsequently, the subscale score was calculated using only answered questions. None of the items that were left blank on the Resilience Scale portion of the survey exceeded the 5% missing values threshold. Mertler and Vanatta (2005) suggest that variables that have less than 5 percent missing can be replaced with the mean. For the resilience scale items all missing variables were replaced with the series mean.

Mean scores measured by the MLQ 5X are presented in Table 5. Means for each of the scale and style scores have a possible range of zero to four (0- not at all, 1- once in a while, 2- sometimes, 3- fairly often, 4- frequently if not always). Of the nine scale scores, the highest mean score was reported for inspirational motivation, a subscale of transformational leadership (M=3.51 SD=.47) and the lowest mean score was reported for the passive avoidant leadership style (M=.66, SD=.58). Higher numbers represent higher congruence on that particular scale.

Note: n=33
Table 5. Mean Scale Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Score</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Attributes)</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (Behavior)</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational motivation</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Consideration</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Reward</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (active)</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management by Exception (passive)</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Avoidant</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* n=33

The resilience scores for the participants are shown in Table 4. Scores greater than 145 indicate moderately-high to high resilience, scores from 116 to 144 indicate moderately-low to moderate resilience and scores of 115 and below indicate very low resilience. Of the 33 participants, 61% (n=20) had scores greater than 145, which indicates moderately-high to high resilience and 39% (n=13) had scores between 116-144, indicating moderately-low to moderate resilience. Table 6 indicates the frequencies of the resilience scale scores for the sample.
Table 6. Participant Resilience Scale Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Low to Moderate</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately High to High</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking at the total sample, we see a mean of 3.32 for the transformational leadership style, 2.42 for the transactional leadership style and .72 for the passive avoidant leadership style. The sample’s mean resilience score is 151.71. These results are summarized in table 7.

Table 7. Whole Sample Mean Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>3.318</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>2.415</td>
<td>.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Avoidant</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>151.710</td>
<td>15.972</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multiple paired samples t-tests were conducted to evaluate whether the sample was more transformational, transactional or passive avoidant. A Bonferroni correction was applied to the critical $P$ value of .05 to adjust for the multiple tests. The resulting critical $P$ value was 0.0167. T-Tests allow the researcher to test whether the mean differences are significant. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare transformational leadership style and passive avoidant leadership style. There was a significant difference in the scores for transformational leadership ($M=3.32$, $SD=.44$) and
passive avoidant (M=.72, SD=.51); t(32)= -26.11, p< 0.001. Pair 2 shows that there was a significant difference in the scores for transformational leadership (M=3.32, SD=.44) and transactional leadership (M=2.41, SD=.45; t(32)=13.03, p<0.001. Pair 3 shows that there was a significant difference in the scores for transactional leadership (M=2.21, SD=.45) and passive avoidant (M=.72, SD=.51), t(32)=15.05, p<0.001. These results suggest that all of the means are statistically different from one another and the sample was highest on the transformational leadership style.

Before assessing the nature of the relationship between transformational leadership and resilience the data was analyzed for normality, skewness, kurtosis, and range. Figures 2 and 3 show the histograms for transformational leadership and resilience scores and Figure 4 is the scatterplot that illustrates the relationship.

Figure 2. Resilience Score Histogram
Figure 3. Transformational Leadership Histogram

Figure 4. Scatterplot of Resilience and Transformational Relationship.
The histogram for resilience shows that the data is non-normal and bimodal distribution. This violates the assumption of normality used in linear regression. Likewise, the histogram for transformational leadership shows a non-normal distribution and data that is negatively skewed. Additionally, the data for transformational leadership shows that there is a restriction of range (2.25-4). This may negatively affect results of a linear regression analysis. To further analyze the data a scatterplot diagram was generated that gives a preliminary picture of the relationship between transformational leadership and resilience.

The results of a simple linear regression suggest that there was no significant relationship between the sample’s transformational leadership means as predicted by the sample’s resilience scale scores. The scatterplot as shown in Figure 3 revealed that the two variables are not linearly related such that as resilience scale score increases the transformational mean score increases. The regression equation for predicting transformational mean score is:

\[ \text{Transformational mean score} = 0.007(\text{resilience}) + 2.254 \] (Note: \( n=33 \))

Resilience was not a statistically significant predictor of transformational leadership, \( t(31) = 1.464, p = .153 \). These results suggest that accuracy in predicting transformational leadership from resilience was low. The correlation between transformational mean score and resilience scale score is .25. The resilience scale score only accounted for approximately 6.5% of the variance in transformational mean score.
Quantitative Discussion

The overall research question for this study was what are the leadership styles of African-American female leaders in nonprofit organizations. This study evaluated the leadership styles of 33 African-American women in all types of nonprofit organizations.

Hypothesis 1 stated that African-American women leaders in nonprofit organizations would exhibit more transformational leadership style traits than transactional or passive avoidant. Based on the literature review, these women have been shown to be transformational due to their concern for social change and unmet social needs in the distribution of opportunity. Additionally, African-American women have demonstrated leadership characteristics of survival, motivation, challenge and creativity. These characteristics have proven to be vital for living in a world that is often in conflict with their womanness and blackness. These characteristics are also part of the domain of transformational leadership. There is support for hypothesis 1 as the sample was highest on the inspirational motivation scale. Inspirational motivation is a subscale of transformational leadership. An analysis of the mean scores for each type of leadership showed that the mean score for transformational leadership was higher than for transactional or passive avoidant leadership styles as supported by the paired samples t-tests.

Hypothesis 2 stated that African-American women leaders in nonprofit organizations would be moderately-high to highly resilient as measured by the resilience scale. The literature demonstrated that African-American women endure setbacks and upsets their entire lives and despite it all continue on. Bouncing back from adversity is
something that these women have been conditioned to do from an early age. This
frequency statistics in this study demonstrated support for hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 stated that there is a positive relationship between transformational
leadership and resilience of African-American women leaders in nonprofit organizations.
The literature review demonstrated that resilience is an antecedent of the four dimensions
of transformational leadership. However, hypothesis 3 was not supported in this study.

There are multiple reasons why this particular study may have failed to support
the third hypothesis. The most prevalent reason is the restriction of range. The responses
for the transformational leadership did not span the whole scale of 0-4. Instead the range
of scores was 2.5 to 4 with a SD of .441. Because of the restriction of range, the analysis
failed to produce a linear relationship. DeCoster (2006) notes that correlations will be
reduced if you have a restriction of range in either of your variables. The correlation
between resilience and transformational leadership is .25 indicating a very low
correlation. As indicated by the scatter plot, there is no correlation the data does not
show a linear relationship. You can get a better estimate of the relation between a pair of
variables when you examine them across a broader range (p. 20). Restriction of range
makes it difficult to extrapolate beyond the data set. Another possibility for the
clustering of scores around a small range could be because the sample was chosen via the
purposive sampling technique. This, while necessary to the research, could be a source
of bias as the participants may be very similar in their behaviors.

The restriction of range can also be related to the small sample size. A larger
sample size will more closely mirror the population and therefore a normal distribution.
Although hypothesis 3 is unsupported it may not untrue; there were not enough cases to correctly infer whether there is a relationship or not.

**Phase 2 Qualitative Analysis**

Of the 33 women in this study, 18 agreed to a phone interview to assist in the qualitative portion of this study by entering their contact information at the end of the survey. Two respondents had left their position and were no longer reachable, one respondent provided the wrong phone number, and one respondent did not have voicemail and was therefore unreachable. One participant was in the middle of a grant cycle and no longer felt that she had the time to dedicate to an interview. A total of 13 women were interviewed for this study. The phone interview featured five semi-structured questions with follow up to get more detail on the participant’s story. Table 8 shows the relationship of interview questions to research questions.

Table 8. Relationship of Interview Questions to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the leadership characteristics of African-American female leaders in nonprofit organizations?</td>
<td>What are your leadership characteristics?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the contributing factors to the success of African-American women leaders in nonprofit organizations?</td>
<td>Where there specific motivating factors for your success? Did you experience race or gender bias on your ascension to success? If so, how did you get past it? If not, do you think that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One overarching research question for this study was, “What are the leadership characteristics of African-American female leaders in nonprofit organizations?” This question set the stage for the entire study. By asking interview question 1, participants were given a chance to explain in words, their perception of how they lead. The other overarching researching question asked, “What are the contributing factors for the success of African-American female leaders in nonprofit organizations?” This question was designed to get at any underlying factors or situations that may have contributed to the participant’s journey to a leadership position in nonprofit organizations. Interview questions 2-4 asked about specific motivating factors, if and how they dealt with gender- or race-based bias as a leader, and how they may have moved their organizations past a challenging time. These questions were designed to flesh out any resilience characteristics and any other factors that may contribute to the way they lead. Interview
question 5 was designed to capture anything the participant may want to add that the previous questions did not cover.

The 13 participants in the qualitative portion of this study covered a range of ages, organizations, and job positions. Demographics are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Demographics of interview participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Position</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Director</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Culture,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Services</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Societal Benefit</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: n=13*
At the beginning of each interview, participants were reminded of the informed consent that was signed during the quantitative portion of the study. Participants were reminded that their names and identifiable information would be kept confidential and that they could opt out at any time during the interview. Additionally, the researcher informed the participants that the interview would be recorded in order to more fully capture the essence of the interview. The researcher took notes during the interviews and after the interview was complete, the researcher listened to each recording several times to analyze themes, key words and concepts. Four themes emerged from the qualitative portion of the study: community, higher purpose, mentorship, and perseverance.

Question 1 asked: “What are your leadership characteristics?” Several participants responded that they try to empower their employees to make decisions. One participant noted:

I encourage my employees to make mistakes and not be afraid of speaking up. So many people are scared that they are going to look stupid in front of other people that they don’t say anything. I don’t have time for that type of employee. There is too much to be done.

Participant:

I treat everything as a learning opportunity. I realize that I’m getting older and will be retiring soon. My program managers and to a large extent staff are involved with everything from coming up with new fundraising and community involvement ideas to helping develop the budget for the next year.
Participant:

I always remind staff of the reason we are in the business we are in- to help people. Sometimes we get weighed down in the daily issues because we are such a small organization but everything for a reason. I remind them that if it weren’t for them we could not help people.

Participant:

At our weekly staff meeting, I ask for inspiring stories from the past week. These stories can be about other staff, clients or even personal. This inspires them to keep going. In this business, you don’t get paid much and sometimes you don’t get thanked, so all you have is the desire to keep on marching.

Participant:

I try to be fair to all because I know that this is hard and unthankful work. My employees see suffering everyday. Several have taken personal time to pick up a client and used personal money to take a client shopping. I’ve got to give them something to encourage them to come through that door everyday to try help just one more person.

Several key words were repeated when participants were asked question 1. These include: fair, motivation, teaching, learning and demanding. Themes in question 1 were connected to the transformational leadership factors of idealized influence behaviors, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Most leaders took on an almost maternal role and had the desire for their employees to succeed so the organization could succeed. They took on a mentor role with their employees. Many of
the leaders saw their staff as family and their organizations as an integral part of the
community. Themes also related to the resilience factor of existential aloneness because
in many instances the leader felt it was their duty or life path to be in the business of
helping people and they encouraged their employees to tap into this notion.

Question 2 asked, “Were there specific motivating factors for your success?”
Nine of 13 participants answered this question with stories from their childhood. Themes
of community were the strongest in the answers to this question. Several participants
spoke of family influence for their decision to lead in the nonprofit field.

Participant:

My father is one of the men who worked towards making the 100 Black
Men a national chapter. His focus was always on improving the
community. He was also a Mason and did a lot of charitable work. He
was always telling me and my other siblings that the only way we as a
people can rise is to help each other up. I think this message was
engrained in us from the time we could understand words. It felt natural
for me to start my own nonprofit when I graduated college. It is small but
I think we are doing our part.

Participant:

Both of my parents are pastors, growing up we were always visiting,
praying or doing for people who were in need. We visited hospitals and
families in Southeast (DC). In the 90s that area was really bad with drugs
and crime. There were so many parentless children. Our church made it
our mission to break the cycle.
Participant:

I was a teenager in the late 50s and early 60s. Times were not good for people like you and me. My family situation was fairly comfortable and my parents were convinced that blessing only came to us because we were always ‘paying it forward.’ They used to always say, you get what you give.

While family contributed to some participants drive for success, other participants cited different reasons.

Participant:

I had the wonderful opportunity to be a Peace Corps Volunteer directly after college. I still had no idea what I wanted to do with my life and this seemed a good idea. I taught English to school age students in Africa. That experience showed me that I could make a difference in people’s lives and I knew that I could never go into the corporate world.

Another participant said:

I’m on the board of (name withheld). I’m a community advisor. I don’t know much about the business side of a nonprofit but I do know how to talk to my fellow community members. I care because I want my neighbors to know that you don’t have to let your situation rule you.

Sometimes all it takes is that one person to be a good example.

Key words mentioned in interview question 2 included: parents, family, community, difference and duty. Themes that were uncovered in question 2 were connected to the transformational leadership factors of idealized influence behaviors and individualized
consideration. The results showed that these women felt called to help others. They felt like they had to take an active role in their either because of examples set by their families or out of their personal desire to move their communities forward. Many of these women modeled their behavior after their parents. They were raised with a drive to help others. Themes also related to the resilience factor of existential aloneness, purposeful life, equanimity and perseverance. Not only did they have a drive to help others, they felt that they could help others help themselves. Some acknowledged that came from a difficult background and that they could be instrumental in working with others who had experienced adversity in their lives.

Question 3 asked, “Did you experience race or gender bias on your ascension to success? If so, how did you get past it? If not, do you think that this bias exists in the nonprofit sector?” These responses showed that most of these women stated they had not personally experienced bias, however, reflective listening to their answers showed that the bias was present. The results showed that most were in small organizations or had started the organization themselves. Two of the participants mentioned the paternalistic feel of the decision making process.

One participant said:

I wouldn’t say that there is outright gender bias in my organization but I do get the feeling that some of the founding board members, who are all male, feel like they are the saviors and many times they think ideas are theirs when it is something that I or staff has come up with.

Another participant said:
As you know, I am the Executive Director of an organization that you would not expect to see an African-American woman leading. I’m co-COO with a white gentleman. The board recognizes that I am well qualified for this position and I have held it for several years. I did not experience race or gender bias, only shocked faces when not only a black person but a black woman would show up to fundraising events. When I get those looks, I give the ‘guess whose coming to dinner look’ right back.

One participant noted:

I don’t have this at the organization that I am currently heading. However, I was passed up for a position in a larger, well-known organization. Those types of organizations seem to follow a different standard than the small grassroots type. That particular organization felt more like corporate America with the old boys sitting around the boardroom. I actually had person say to me in the interview, “Can you cook”? I’m sure that they would not have asked a male the same thing. Perhaps my lack of kitchen skills is why I didn’t get the job.

One woman on a new hire:

I was working with my board to hire a new person to be in charge of volunteer recruitment. One board member said that we can’t hire another woman because we have enough drama in the organization already. While reviewing applications, another member asked why can’t black people have normal names like everyone else. This didn’t have anything to do with my success but many times over my career with more than one
organization, I’ve had to bite my tongue at passive aggressive insults. I didn’t want to further the stereotype. There is definitely an added pressure on black women, especially black women in leadership.

Transformational themes were not directly prevalent in the answers to this question. However, the fact that these women continued to pursue their goals as nonprofit leaders shows behaviors that exemplify their values, beliefs, moral values and vision despite the fact they acknowledged that their actions were examined more closely than others. From this, the extrapolation of the transformational leadership theme of idealized influence behavior can be found. Themes that were uncovered in question 3 were connected to the resilience factors of existential aloneness, self-reliance and perseverance. Participants seemed to have an innate belief in their ability to make a difference and consequently continued to move on because of the uniqueness of their position. When they were judged on their ability to cook or heard remarks about the type of names that black people have, they did not get discouraged. The results of question 3 showed that participants learned to accept that they are scrutinized because of how they appear. There seemed to be a consensus that their mistakes would be reflective of the entire black race or woman’s inability to perform the duty.

Interview question 4 was designed to delve into any resilience factors that may be present in the participant’s leadership behavior. Question 4 asked, “Can you describe a time when your organization was going through challenges and the strategies you used to move past these challenges?” Participants showed gave a variety of responses that showed creativity and problem solving abilities. The prevalent theme in the answers is
that these women cared for and listened to the people around them to get through adversity.

One participant said:

A few years ago, we lost a major grant. This grant was 60% of our budget. We were about to shut our doors. I was upset about the loss to the community but I think I was more upset about having to tell staff. I decided to scale back our operations and keep what staff I could on a part-time basis. We were able to stay afloat until the next budget season. As part of this process, I realized that some of our operations were not as useful as I thought anyway. Sometimes, it takes a shakeup to understand what is important. We received the grant the next year but now we are not so dependent. We’ve come up with new ways to raise money- one of the biggest moneymakers is our annual step show.

Participant:

When I came here, there were several unfilled positions and services that weren’t getting delivered. Everybody had an all for themselves type of attitude. No one was putting in any extra effort. The first thing I did was to require staff to be cross-trained. I even had the cleaning lady answering phones.

Participant:

In the past we relied heavily on college students as volunteers in our organization. For some reason our volunteer pool started drying up and the ones that we did weren’t as committed as in the past. One of my staff
members suggested using neighbors as volunteers. I was hesitant at first but decided to go along. The staff member became the new volunteer coordinator and had so many ideas for this new venture that we now have a waiting list of neighbors and students.

Participant:

I only have a paid staff of 6 and 3 volunteers. When your organization is that small, you tend to notice when there are issues in morale. I saw that people were coming in late or calling in sick fairly often. I asked around to see what was going on but nothing was revealed. Everyone said that everything was OK. I knew that I had to get to the bottom of the situation. We didn’t have money or time for a full-scale employee survey that larger organizations might do so I decided to take it old school and have a barbecue. While we were all sitting around breaking bread, I posed the question once again. Slowly but surely they started to reveal the reason. It was me. They felt unappreciated and tired. I was so busy trying to get the work done, I forgot about the people who were doing it.

Themes that were uncovered in Question 4 were connected to the transformational leadership factors of idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation. The participants showed creativity in problem solving, they had faith in their staff members to help in the problem solving process they encouraged staff to be involved in all areas, and they presented examples of really caring for their employee needs. Themes were also connected to the resilience factors of self-reliance, equanimity, and existential aloneness. There were
times these women had to act quickly and rely on their intuition to solve problems of funding, staffing and morale. Question 4 revealed that when these leaders experienced adversity they had to move quickly and solicit the help of others to get past it. Trust and respect of staff and people around them was a driving force in shepherding the organization out of the bad times.

The final question in the interview asked, “Is there anything you would like to add regarding the experience of being an African-American female leader in the nonprofit sector?” Most of the participants said that they did not have anything to add about their particular experience, however, there was great appreciation for this work.

Participant:

I have nothing more to add but thank you for showing that black women can be successful too. Perhaps, there will be an article that comes from this that will make people finally notice our stories.

Participant:

No, nothing more except that I’m so happy that a different picture of us is finally out there. The media tries its damndest to keep us down and to play us as second fiddle to everyone else.

Participant:

Our people just like every other people have good seeds and bad seeds. For some reason, we only hear about the bad seeds when it pertains to us. We need more people like you showing the good. I wish you luck and success.
Themes that were prevalent in the answers to question 5 were related to the resilience factors of existential aloneness and equanimity. Themes revealed that these women knew that they were worthy but they wanted the whole world to know. They understood that the life that they were born into put them into a unique position and they used this position to help others and encourage the next generation of leaders. The tone of their answers demonstrated transformational leadership characteristics of inspirational motivation and individualized consideration because they encouraged the researcher, who is also a black woman to continue to tell their stories.

**Qualitative Discussion**

The thirteen interviews yielded data that exemplified all of the characteristics represented by transformational leadership on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and resilience factors on the Resilience Scale. The themes of community, empowerment, higher purpose, mentorship, and perseverance presented over and over again. Family was a key word/concept that appeared at some point in all 13 of the interviews. These ladies not only had biological definitions of family but also included coworkers and community members.

Another overwhelming theme was pride. Ten of the 13 women expressed that they knew that leadership among African-American women is “an elite concept” and they were proud that their hard work had been recognized. Three of the ten above made their own way by starting their own nonprofits. Two of these three stated that they saw a problem and felt the need to solve it.
The second qualitative portion of this study reinforced ideas that were conceptualized in the first quantitative phase. Next is a brief description of how these two phases complemented each other in this study.

**Integration**

The quantitative results showed evidence that the African-American women leaders in this study were higher on the transformational leadership scale than on the transactional and passive avoidant scales. The transformational leadership characteristic of inspirational motivation appeared to be the strongest.

The qualitative portion of this study sought to provide real world first hand stories that might support the quantitative results. Several questions were designed to solicit information regarding what participants thought were their leadership styles and any underlying factor that may have contributed to their way of leading. The 13 women that were interviewed presented real world stories that exemplified behaviors that conveyed their values and vision, how they inspired their followers to continue on despite the difficulties that they encounter, how they encouraged followers to take a role in problem solving and program improvement, and how they acted as mentors and inspired a sense of community with their followers.

The quantitative portion of this study revealed that the women demonstrated high levels of resilience or response to adversity. The stories told to support this bespeak the belief that they have the worth to run a nonprofit organization and the ability to strategically solve problems. In addition these women told stories that showed they did not give up when presented with a difficult situation and they felt that it was their duty or purpose to be in the business of charity.
CHAPTER 5 Conclusion

The nonprofit sector has been a necessity and a value to the United States since the settling of the country. It has filled the social void between the public and private sectors. Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier (2000) described the nonprofit sector as, “integral part of the social system embedded in a complex set of historical forces” (p. 21). The United States has a long history of local groups of volunteers coming together to address social, cultural, education and human needs. Nonprofit organizations have highlighted societal concerns and provided innovative ways of addressing them.

The leadership crisis for nonprofits has not progressed as quickly as predicted by Thomas Tierney, however, there is still concern. Simms, Milway and Trager (2009) said the trend might have slowed with the economic downturn. The downtown has resulted in loss of government services and loss of income by individuals that preclude them from buying the services in the private sector. This has resulted in a renewed need for nonprofits. Simms et.al. say that the current vacancies in nonprofit organizations are due both new to the organization positions as well as vacancies due to baby boomer retirements (p. 2).

Because this sector fills an important void, finding the right leaders should be at the forefront. Nonprofit organizations need leaders who are strategic in their decision-making, transformational in their behaviors and have the ability to bounce back from adversity. It is no secret that women, especially, minority women are relatively absent in the leadership arena across sectors. Given that the nonprofit sector is an integral part of the social system, it makes sense to have leaders that reflect the social fabric of the United States. It makes sense for nonprofits to once again be innovators.
Looking to a broader pool of potential leaders is one way that nonprofit organizations can set the tone in leadership selection. The Bridgespan Group (2009), recommends that to find leaders, nonprofits need to reexamine the notion of cultural fit. They say that cultural fit too often means “like us” and that leaders should be selected based on their aptitude and transferable experience.

The focus of this study was on African-American women because black feminism is about sharing the voices of these women that defy the classic injustices bought about because of their unique standpoint in American history. These injustices have not necessarily stifled African-American women. The intersection of gender, race, and class, the black feminist standpoint, has been said to contribute to the leadership styles of African-American women.

This study examined the leadership style traits and resilience levels of 33 African-American female leaders in nonprofit organizations. The results showed that these were transformational in their leadership styles and that their resilience was high. These characteristics have shown to be valuable to the nonprofit sector as they grapple with an uncertain political and economic environment. In addition, the participants in this study told real-life stories that exemplify all of the characteristics of transformational leadership and resilience as measured by their respective scales. The literature showed that leaders are made up of their experiences and skills. The literature also showed that African-American women have traditionally focused on family, community, and group identity as a way to bring about change and to solve problems. The stories told by these women serve as support for these theses.
Implications

This study is an important contribution in many areas. First, it suggests another avenue for solving the leadership crisis in nonprofit organizations. African-American women represent a resource that has been previously overlooked for leadership positions. Second, it expands current leadership theory by showing how life situations influence leadership behaviors. Third, it furthers black feminist literature by adding celebratory voices despite the oppressive forces that operate in the American social system. Reynolds (2002) says that the black women’s standpoint literature focuses on developing knowledge and understanding of the black women’s experiences but it reflects a tension between academic/theoretical account and actual perspectives (p. 603). This paper eases that tension by showing a practical application of the theory. Norris (2012) says that black feminist discussion needs to go beyond discussions of diversity to emancipatory possibilities enabled through the building of alliances between the researcher and local actors (p. 459). Lastly, this study presents examples of success stories that can serve to empower other women to become leaders.

Future research

Although this research has many implications, there are still areas to be explored. This research presents one way to solve the leadership crisis facing nonprofits but more work is to be done to solve this important issue. Future research should look at more real-life applications of the black feminist standpoint. This will help to contribute to the denigration of negative images of the black woman that are instilled into the minds of many. Future research should also look to other ways to expand the existing leadership literature by examining how the leadership behaviors of any marginalized group is
shaped by their standpoint. Another important opportunity for research is assessing how leadership opportunity would strengthen the social capital of marginalized groups and consequently American civil society.
Appendices

Appendix A: Protocol Approval

Appendix B: Informed Consent Web Snapshot

Appendix C: Sample Demographic Questions

Appendix D: Sample Questions from Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire

Appendix E: Questions from Resilience Scale
Appendix A: Protocol Approval

Protocol Approval

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

ACTION OF THE BOARD

Date: March 21, 2014
ID Number: 14-0386

Title of Study:  *Exploratory study of African-American female leaders of nonprofits*

Principal Investigator(s):  Ms. Donovan Branch

The Institutional Review Board took the following action on the human subjects study cited above:

- [X] Approved
- Disapproved

Approval of the study is for the period from 3/21/2014 through 3/20/2015.

The Investigator(s) shall immediately bring to the attention of the Institutional Review Board any changes proposed for the approved study as they relate to the care or use of human subjects. The IRB will decide whether the extent or type of changes proposed warrants formal committee review. If such a review is deemed necessary, the chairperson shall schedule the review for the earliest feasible time.

*FOR EXTERNALLY FUNDED PROJECTS, INVESTIGATOR(S) ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CONVEYING A COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT TO THE OFFICE OF SPONSORED PROGRAMS TO BE FORWARDED TO THE APPROPRIATE FUNDING AGENCY.*

\[Signature\]  \(3/25/14\)

David Cockley, Dr. PHA (Chairperson)

*Your Close-Out Form must be submitted within 30 days of the project end date listed above.

**If you wish to continue your study past the approved project end date above, you must submit an Extension Request Form, along with supporting information.

Although the IRB office sends reminders, it is ultimately your responsibility to submit the continuing review report in a timely fashion to ensure there is no lapse in IRB approval.*

Please return IRB Close-Out Form to the Office of Research Integrity: Campus Mail MSC 5738.
Appendix B: Informed Consent Web Snapshot

**Consent to Participate in Research**

**Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study**
You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Donovan Branche from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership styles and resilience levels of African-American female leaders of nonprofit organizations. This study will contribute to the researcher’s completion of her doctoral degree.

**Research Procedures**
Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a survey that will be administered to individual participants. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to transformational and transactional leadership and resilience levels.

**Time Required**
Participation in this study will require 10-15 minutes of your time.

**Risks**
The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

**Benefits**
There are no direct benefits to participating in this study. Participation will contribute to broader knowledge of women leaders of African descent.

**Confidentiality**
The results of this research will be presented to the School of Strategic Leadership Studies and possibly to an academic publication. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent’s identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed.

**Participation & Withdrawal**
Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

**Questions about the Study**
If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Donovan Branche  
School of Strategic Leadership Studies  
James Madison University  
branchdd@jmu.edu

Dr. Karen Ford  
School of Strategic Leadership Studies  
James Madison University  
Telephone: (540) 568-7020  
fordka@jmu.edu

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject
Dr. David Cockley  
Chair, Institutional Review Board  
James Madison University  
(540) 568-2834  
cocklede@jmu.edu

Giving of Consent
I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

I have read and understood the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

- ✔ yes
- ☐ no
Appendix C: Sample Demographic Questions

Date: ____________________

ID

Please answer the following questions if you are: 1. African-American 2. Female 3. Executive Director, Director, Board Member of other leader of a nonprofit organization.

Demographic Questions

The following are questions about you personally.

1. What is your age:
   - □ 20-29
   - □ 30-39
   - □ 40-49
   - □ 50-59
   - □ 60-69
   - □ 70 and above

2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   - □ High School or GED
   - □ Some College
   - □ Bachelor’s Degree
   - □ Master’s Degree
   - □ Doctoral Degree
   - □ Professional Degree (MD, JD, Etc)
   - □ Other
Appendix D: Sample Questions from Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire

This questionnaire is to describe your leadership style as you perceive it. Please answer all items on this answer sheet. If an item is irrelevant, or if you are unsure or do not know the answer, leave the answer blank.

Forty-five descriptive statements are listed on the following pages. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word others may mean your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

Use the following rating scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Once in a while</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Fairly Often</th>
<th>Frequently, if not always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

L1. I provide others with assistance in exchange for their efforts.............................................. 0 1 2 3 4
L2. I re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate.........................................................0 1 2 3 4
L3. I fail to interfere until problems become serious..................................................................................................................0 1 2 3 4
L4. I focus attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards...........................................0 1 2 3 4
L5. I avoid getting involved when important issues arise.......................................................................................................................0 1 2 3 4

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Appendix E: Questions from Resilience Scale

Use the following rating scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

R1. When I make plans, I follow through with them  
R2. I usually manage one way or another  
R3. I am able to depend on myself more than anyone else  
R4. Keeping interested in things is important to me  
R5. I can be on my own if I have to  
R6. I feel proud that I have accomplished things in life  
R7. I usually take things in stride  
R8. I am friends with myself  
R9. I feel that I can handle many things at a time  
R10. I am determined  
R11. I seldom wonder what the point of it all is  
R12. I take things one day at a time  
R13. I can get through difficult times because I’ve experienced difficulty before  
R14. I have self-discipline  

R15. I keep interested in things  
R16. I can usually find something to laugh about  
R17. My belief in myself gets me through hard times  
R18. In an emergency, I’m someone people can generally rely on  
R19. I can usually look at a situation in a number of ways  
R20. Sometimes I make myself do things whether I want to or not  
R21. My life has meaning  
R22. I don’t dwell on things that I can’t do anything about  
R23. When I’m in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it  
R24. I have enough energy to do what I have to do  
R25. It’s okay if there are people who don’t like me

References


