

TO ENTER AND LEAD: RENEGOTIATING MEANINGS OF LEADERSHIP AND
EXAMINING LEADERSHIP THEORY OF SOCIAL POWER FROM THE
PERSPECTIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN LEADERS IN
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE ORGANIZATIONS

A Dissertation

by

MARILYN YVONNE BYRD

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2008

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

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Co-Chairs of Committee,	Susan Lynham
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ABSTRACT

To Enter and Lead: Renegotiating Meanings of Leadership and Examining Leadership Theory of Social Power from the Perspectives of African American Women Leaders in Predominantly White Organizations. (May 2008)

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Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. Susan Lynham
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This qualitative, phenomenological study examined the leadership experiences of 10 African American women (AAW)--current or former leaders in predominantly white organizations--to gain an understanding of how well, or not, AAW's leadership is represented by traditional and dominant leadership theory. The purpose of this study was to bring the interlocking system of race, gender, and social class (intersectionality) to the conversation on leadership by adding the perspectives of AAW and challenging the traditional and dominant assumptions about the phenomenon of leadership.

The data were collected using in-depth interviews and analyzed using a form of narrative analysis. This study confirmed findings from prior research that AAW in positions of leadership: 1) often encounter disempowering experiences whereby their authority is questioned or challenged, 2) experience exclusion from the good ole boy social networks, 3) experience being an outsider-within--feelings of alienation as the only African American person in group settings, 4) express needing to have their

qualifications validated before being accepted in their roles, and 5) are challenged to demyth the stereotypical images that society has sanctioned upon AAW. The most salient encounters the women in this study had were disempowering experiences whereby their race, gender, and/or social class were perceived as creating a challenge to their positions of leadership.

Based on the experiences of the participants in this study, traditional and dominant leadership theories, such as French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power that have generally represented the perspectives of white, middle class men, are inadequate for explaining the experiences of AAW. On the other hand socio-cultural theories such as black feminist thought and critical race theory (CRT) offer a wealth of knowledge for explaining how social systems such as race, gender, and social class can be used to maintain a status of marginalization.

This study contributes to the fields of HRD and Higher Education (HE). First, leadership development programs should emphasize the socio-cultural challenges to leadership. Second, researchers should broaden the theories that inform the study of leadership. Finally, both fields should begin introducing and utilizing culturally inclusive terms, such as intersectionality, that are not generally associated with the study of leadership.

DEDICATION

With all my love to:

my son, Shannon Kyle Byrd

my mother, Dorothy Scott Smither

my sister, Vickie Smither Williams

in loving memory of:

my father, Luby Leroy Smither

and

my sister, Carolyn Ann Moore

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This physical journey began August 2004 when I entered the Human Resource Development (HRD) program at Texas A & M University, although the dream of becoming a scholar and entering the world of academia was a spiritual revelation that began long before August 2004. Now that dream has become a reality. There are so many people that I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to pursue my dream and for preparing me for the new journey that lies ahead.

First, I was blessed to be one of the first recipients of the Diversity Fellowship awards to be awarded by TAMU and to be offered an assistantship with the Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development. Second, I am blessed to have selected a team of scholars that supported me, inspired me, and changed my life forever. Special thanks to Dr. Sue Lynham, co-chairperson, who was also a mentor that coached me throughout the conception, implementation, and presentation of this project. It was an honor to study under one of the most highly respected scholars in the field of HRD. And to Dr. Christine Stanley, co-chairperson, who pushed me from the beginning to be courageous and purposeful in my research. It was her book, *Faculty of Color*, which inspired me with a vision for this study. And finally to Dr. Dominique Chlup and Dr. Joseph Jewell who provided expertise and a wealth of specialized knowledge in their respective fields of adult education and sociology.

This study could not have been possible without the ten African American women who told their stories. I am deeply grateful for their time, support, and

encouragement in furthering the scholarship of African American women in positions of leadership.

Thank you to the First Missionary Baptist Church (FMBC) family whose prayers were a source of inspiration and encouragement. Being part of the FMBC Christian family fueled me with the faith I needed to endure the rigorous and demanding process of completing a doctoral program.

Finally, I am blessed with the support and prayers of a loving family. Thank you to my mother, Dorothy Smither, for instilling in me a Christian foundation. It is that foundation that enabled me to “do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Although my father, Luby Smither, passed on many years ago, I know he would be so proud of me. He always made me feel like the smartest person on earth when I brought my report card home from school. To my son, Shannon, thank you for taking care of things for me while I traveled the highway daily to College Station. To my sister, Vickie, thank you for your love and belief in me and the insight you provided me in all phases of my coursework and research.

Above all, thank you to my Father in heaven. It is to Him I give all the glory and the praise for bringing me thus far. And it is to Him that I ask to “order my steps” as my journey continues--to not only make a difference but also BE a difference.

How can I say thanks

For the things You have done for me.

Things so undeserved,

Yet You gave to prove Your love for me...

All that I am and ever hope to be,

I owe it all to Thee.

To God be the glory...

For the things He has done.

...Andrae Crouch

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The notion that African American women leaders are an invisible group relegated to the sidelines and easily combined with other groups is a convenient fiction that conceals the power and importance of their exercise of leadership.
... Etter-Lewis (1993, p. xv)

Although there is not a generally agreed upon definition of leadership, leadership is a social phenomenon that is most often defined in terms of men. As Northouse (2004) points out “there have been as many as 65 different classification systems developed to define the dimension of leadership” (p. 2). Most of these definitions reflect leadership as a socially constructed process whereby the leader exerts influence over activities or relationships within a group or organization (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). “Defining leadership as a process means that it is not a trait or characteristic that resides in the leader, but it is an event that occurs between the leader and his or her followers” (Northouse, 2004, pp. 2-3). Smircich and Morgan (1982) define leadership as a process whereby an individual or certain individuals assume an obligation to frame the reality of others.

In the United States, the term “leader” of a group or an organization conveys an invisible image of white, middle class men as the norm. But when the leader of a group or an organization happens to be an African American woman, that image is disrupted as another set of social constructs is introduced into the perceptions of leadership: race,

This dissertation follows the style of *Human Resource Development Quarterly*.

gender, and social class.

For the purposes of this study, an African American woman is one who self-identifies as black and whose national origin of birth is the United States of America. The word race has undergone a variety of meanings, but is generally understood as a socially constructed category to denote differences among people and is politically sustained to assign people to categories (Banton, 2000). Gender is not only a social construct, it is a “set of assumptions and beliefs on both individual and societal levels that affect the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, resources, and treatment of women and men” (Bell & Nkomo, 2001, p. 16). Social class distinguishes the powerful from the powerless. In light of such distinctions, social class determines one’s access to economic resources and social networks that influence economic success and social privilege (Bell & Nkomo, 2001). Similar to the broader society, social class can be one way of asserting power, maintaining exclusion, and sustaining oppression. Social class creates multiple layers of realities, relations, and experiences that differ according to race, gender and one’s stage in the life cycle. Race, gender, and social class converge to form an interdependent, interactive, dynamic, and interlocking system referred to as intersectionality. According to Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality denotes the various ways in which race, gender, and social class interact to shape the multiple dimensions of African American women’s leadership experiences. King (1988) describes this system as an interlocking system of oppression containing a multiplier effect; that is racism multiplied by sexism multiplied by classism. African American women (AAW) in

leadership positions experience the multiplier effect in ways that traditional leadership theory offer no explanation.

Race, gender, and social class are social constructs that have tended to marginalize certain individuals and groups rather than grant them privilege (Collins, 1990). Hence, because the perceptions and definitions of leadership that have accumulated over the past century have been from the perspective of white men, AAW leaders may find it difficult to identify with these perspectives of leadership (Parker, 2001; Rost, 1991); particularly when leadership is defined in terms of the leader having a position of power and influence. Therefore, as more AAW move into roles of leadership within white, dominant culture organizations, their realities for defining leadership become grounded in socially constructed phenomena that are yet to be captured in the plethora of leadership definitions.

According to Sternweis and Wells (1992), excluding women from a definition of leadership is “part of a larger problem of male gender bias in which both men and women tend to accept male categorizations of social phenomena” (p. 42). Although feminists’ perspectives of leadership challenge the persistence of male dominance, and as such, offer some promise for advocating change to the status quo (Calas & Smirich, 1996), the prevailing vision of leadership being advanced by feminists is one that “reinforces symbolic images of White, middle-class American women, which in effect, silences women of different ethnicities, races, and class statuses” (Parker, 2005, p. 9).

Similarly, white men have generally developed the theories that have constructed and defined knowledge on the study of leadership and have had their theories accepted

as legitimate (Sternweis & Wells, 1992). As a result, these perspectives of leadership have become commonly accepted as traditional and dominant leadership theories. Since the traditional and dominant leadership theories are, for the most part, constructed from the realities, experiences, and perceptions of white men, these theories are rarely generalizable to women and minorities (Allen, 1995).

Parker (2005) poses the questions, “Whom should we study to learn about leadership in organizations of the 21st century” (p. xi)? In particular, what can we learn about leadership from the perspective of leaders with an assumed privilege (white men) to learn about leaders who are positioned within an interlocking system of race, gender, and social class--an oppressive system sustained by society. If the defining group for conceptualizing definitions and theories of leadership has been white middle class men, participation by AAW in the discourse and meaning making process of leadership is limited.

Women leaders not only experience a different reality than the dominant group, but also provide a different interpretation of reality” (Gosetti & Rusch, 1995, p. 15). In general, “women’s perspectives and experiences often challenge current theories, knowledge, and assumptions about leadership, replacing them with dialogues and ideas that are more inclusive, open and democratic” (Fennell, 2005, p. 149). Gosetti and Rusch (1995) point out how the traditional leadership theories fail to recognize multiple viewpoints such as those that represent people of color.

We argue that the texts, conversations, writings and professional activities that construct our knowing and understanding of leadership come from an embedded privileged perspective which largely ignore issues of status, gender, and race, and

insidiously perpetuates a view of leadership that encourages diversity and equity.
(p.12)

By re-articulating the phenomenon of leadership from the perspectives of AAW and challenging traditional, dominant leadership theory, a leadership perspective that spans gender, race, social class, and position can be conceptualized (Gostnell, 1996). In this spirit, this study will examine the mainstream theories of leadership for possible exclusion of AAW's leadership perspectives and explore implications of AAW's leadership experiences for expanding mainstream leadership theory.

Beginning the Conversation: A Personal Story

We have stories to tell. Stories are our experiences. Experience is our knowing. Knowing is our struggle. Struggle is our survival. Survival is our strength. Strength is our center.

...Olga Idiss Davis (2002, p. 49)

The conception for this study is born from my own experience as an African American woman and former leader in a pre-dominantly white organization. As such my perception of leadership is grounded in my experience as a woman, who self-identifies as a middle-class African American. Quite often during my professional career I found myself torn between two distinct experiences of self-identity. On the one hand, I identified myself with pride as being a woman holding a position that is typically associated with power, authority, and influence. On the other hand, I was constantly aware that others' perceptions of me was in terms of my identity as a member from a marginalized group (AAW) first and my presumed position of power last.

I recall several instances from which I base my assumptions. Over a period of time, I observed how (white) employees under my administration circumvented,

challenged, questioned, and often sought to overrule my authority. My administrative assistant, a white woman, on several occasions changed my instructions to my staff or issued other instructions without my knowledge. When I attempted to correct her or even to document her insubordination, she simply went to my superior (a white male) and the situation was turned to her favor. This woman was on a social level with my superior. She was hired without my input, although according to her job description she reported directly to me. From the beginning she demonstrated no real loyalty to me. Since she moved within the same social group as my superior, I felt as if I were an *outsider-within*-a term coined by Collins (1998) referring to the disempowerment of AAW within interactive systems of power, race, gender, and social class. In many instances, my authority was in name only and as such afforded me limited voice even in areas within the domain of my leadership position and role.

As administrator for business affairs within the department, I was expected to meet with external constituents and stakeholders. Often these meetings would take place in my office and I would request my assistant to sit in to document the meetings. On more than one occasion, I found these individuals addressing my assistant rather than myself. Even though these individuals were well aware of my higher position, it was quite noticeable how my presence was somehow not qualified or recognized as a symbol of authority.

After my last promotion in that organization, my boss told me I needed to separate myself from the black colleagues I had previously associated with in the office. His exact words were, "You are one of us now." As I was the only AAW at that level,

this designation placed me among a group of about 15 administrators--three white women, one African American male, and the remainder white men. I assumed “they” did not favor association with lower level blacks in the office. To do likewise meant I was one of “them.”

On one particular occasion, my boss told me “they” did not see me as black. He was referring to a conversation with another administrator in which a rather racially demeaning comment was made. He was quite humored when he acted as if he suddenly remembered I too was black. He offered the excuse, “Marilyn we don’t really see you as being black.” In some strange way, I was left with the impression he thought he had paid me a compliment.

These types of dynamics were confusing to me. Looking back I see the irony of it all. While power should have been within my realm to exert influence and authority, it was actually power that restricted me from realizing my position power. In the realities of my leadership, my authority was only as much (or little) as “the powers that be” would allow.

Statement of the Problem

Much of the research that has been conducted on leadership has used white males as the leadership model (Parker, 2005). While some studies have addressed AAW in educational leadership, few have addressed AAW’s leadership in organizations outside the realm of education. Therefore, limited research, if any, has examined how traditional and dominant leadership theories have, or have not, addressed AAW’s leadership in

terms of race, gender, and social class in predominantly white organizations (Yancey-Bragg, 2005).

Mitchell (1988) argues that the issue for AAW and people of color is whether we adapt to the established leadership norms or whether we adapt them to us “infusing in them new options and greater perceptions” (p. 9) based on our professional experiences.

For this reason, we need to know whether adding the voices of AAW leaders in predominantly white organizations represents a more inclusive analysis of leadership theory in terms of race, gender, and social class.

Problem Statement #1

While some discussion has been given to the obstacles AAW encounter in reaching positions of leadership in predominantly white organizations, less conversation has taken place concerning how AAW are empowered to lead in predominantly white organizations. For example, ways in which AAW’s leadership influences organizations or whether they have support and access to power structures given their position within an intersecting system of race, gender, and social class has received little discussion (Parker, 2005; Allen, 1995).

Problem Statement #2

The ways in which AAW experience leadership in terms of traditional and dominant leadership theories has received little scholarly focus. As a result, there is little understanding of how AAW’s awareness of racism, sexism, and classism affects their leadership (Parker & ogilvie, 1996; Bell & Nkomo, 1992). In order to have a better understanding of the realities of AAW as leaders, the discourse on leadership should

reflect the social, cultural, and perhaps economic realities of the leader (Gostnell, 1996). As a beginning, articulating leadership from the perspectives of AAW in predominantly white organizations might shift the focus of research towards more cross-cultural and multi-cultural leadership frameworks. Therefore, bringing the leadership perspectives of AAW into the discourse on leadership might also be the beginning of conceptualizing new and more inclusive theories of leadership.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how well, or not, AAW's leadership is represented by traditional and dominant leadership theory. According to Parker (2005), the silencing of some groups of women and men from the study of leadership while privileging others is a product of the theoretical perspective that frames our understanding of what is accepted as the norm. By bringing the interlocking system of race, gender, and class to the conversation on leadership theory, this study seeks to add a perspective of leadership that challenges the traditional and dominant assumptions about the phenomenon of leadership.

Research Questions

The following overarching question will guide this study:

1. What are the lived experiences of African American women in positions of leadership in predominantly white organizations?

From this main question, the sub-questions are:

1a. What traditional and dominant leadership theories appear to inform the lived experiences of African American women in positions of leadership in predominantly white organizations?

1b. How do implications that AAW in positions of leadership encounter intersectionality (race, gender, and social class) in their lived experiences in predominantly white organizations appear to inform traditional and dominant leadership theories?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The new African American woman as she has been identified in the media, represents a small, yet steadily growing number of women who have successfully entered occupational spheres that were traditionally open mainly to white men.
...Bell, 1990, p. 459

This review of literature consists of two parts. In Part One, I review research on leadership theory. The review of leadership theory is relevant to understanding the basic assumptions of traditional, dominant leadership theories and how these theories might apply to, or be limited to, the race, gender, and social class of the leader. In Part Two, I review literature on African American women's (AAW) leadership which includes: socio-historical perspectives, traditional feminist perspectives, and organizational perspectives. These perspectives of AAW's leadership are germane to this study because:

- 1) locating the individual experience of AAW within the broader context of a common, social history is relevant to exploring the experiences of ordinary women whose leadership has enabled the race to survive (Gostnell, 1996; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982),
- 2) researching AAW's leadership within the broader study of feminist research is relevant to explaining how feminist research has included, or not included, the interaction of race, gender, and social class in leadership experiences, and
- 3) surveying what has been published on AAW leaders in predominantly white organizations is relevant for identifying research that has focused on race, gender, and social class.

Judging the Soundness of Theory

Patterson (1983) advanced the following criteria for judging good theory: importance, preciseness and clarity, parsimony and simplicity, comprehensiveness, operationality, empirical validity or verification, fruitfulness, and practicality. According to Lincoln and Lynham (2006) elements for judging theory are generally represented from an empirical-analytical perspective and are not representative of applied fields. For this reason, these scholars offer the following criteria for judging theory from an interpretive perspective: compellingness (creates a response), saturation (explanations have reached a point of exhaustion), prompt to action (drives the next steps), and fittingness (suitable to the context).

Brookfield (1992) proposes three categories of criteria for analyzing the central proposition of formal theory: epistemological, communicative, and critically analytic. Epistemological criteria refers to the discreteness (not susceptible to explanation by other theories); empirical grounding (extent to which grounded in observation or experience); researchability (can be validated by those other than the original theorist); and comprehensiveness (extent to which all aspects of the phenomenon are considered) of the theory. Communicative criteria (clarity, tone, connectedness, and prescriptive policing) are ways that theories are clearly understood by those for whom they are intended. Critically analytic criteria refer to the ways that theories are subjected to “constant critical analysis by its own proponents” (p. 87). According to Brookfield (1992) theory building should consider the gender, social class, ethnicity, and age.

Furthermore, consideration should be given to the ways that theory changes over time in response to the emergent nature of research and the changing dynamics in society.

Part One: Traditional and Dominant Leadership Theories

Since the study of leadership is so broad, the review of leadership theories considers the theoretical leadership perspectives of Northouse (2004), Yukl and Van Fleet, (1992), and Bass (1990) which were used to inform studies such as Parker's (1997) study of an inclusive, multi-voice perspective of leadership and Lynham's (2000) developmental study of a general theory of leadership.

Northouse (2004), Yukl and Van Fleet, (1992), and Bass' (1990) comprehensive reviews of leadership theory are categorizations compiling major theories on leadership effectiveness and leadership influences. Synthesizing these categorizations produced the following key theoretical approaches to leadership: trait, behavioral, contingency/situational, power/influence, and transformational theories. Table 1 represents an overview of the major perspectives of leadership theories presented by Northouse (2004), Yukl and Van Fleet (1992), and Bass (1990):

Table 1. Categorizations of Leadership Theories and Selected Theorists

Category	Assumes	Explains
Trait (Stogdill, 1974)	leaders are born	strengths and weaknesses
Behavioral (McGregor, 1960)	leadership can be learned	actions and manners
Contingency/situational (Fiedler, 1974)	situation determines leadership	situational factors and nature of tasks being performed

Table 1 Continued

Category	Assumes	Explains
Power (Graen, 1976; French & Raven, 1960)	access to power structures	formal power and access to others; ability to influence
Transformational Burns (1978)	existence of a leader-follower relationship	leader/follower relationship which can lead to increased performance and achievement

Trait Theory

Trait theory (Stogdill, 1974) emphasizes the character and personal attributes of the leader and is based on the belief that people are born with special qualities that make them great leaders (Northouse, 2004). From the trait perspective, leadership is perceived as a phenomenon of individuals and assumes the selection of the right people will lead to organizational effectiveness (Lynham, 2000). The focus of trait theory has shifted from leader traits to leader behavior as a means of discovering specific skills that relate to leader effectiveness (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). According to Bass (1990), trait theory recognizes that leaders have certain superior and identifiable qualities that are distinguishable from followers. Further, trait theory assumes that an organization will function better with certain people in leadership positions (Northouse, 2004).

The Great Man theory is generally associated with the trait categorization of leadership (Northouse, 2004). The Great Man theory can be traced to nineteenth century aristocracy and holds the basic premise that leaders are born. This theory also holds the belief that great leaders were men who had inherited qualities critical to leadership such

as ambition, dependability, dominance, and self-confidence (Stogdill, 1974). The great man is responsible for creating history, and includes individuals such as Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, and Winston Churchill. Notions of leaders being men evolved *a priori* to the emergence of gender issues in leadership. Gender issues in leadership emerged in conjunction with feminist movements, which are discussed under a separate heading.

Behavioral Theory

Behavioral theory (McGregor, 1960) focuses on what leaders and managers actually do and identifying behaviors that account for effectiveness and ineffectiveness of those activities (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). Behavioral theory, with roots in psychology, recognizes the behavior of the leader as influential to changing the behavior of the subordinates (Lynham, 2000; Bass, 1990). Behavioral theory assumes that leaders will adapt their behavior according to a task focus or a relationship focus. A major shift in this approach from the trait approach is that behavioral theorists believe leadership can be learned rather than inherited.

In the late 1940s, researchers at Ohio State University designed the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire, which suggests that leaders demonstrate behaviors that provide structure for the work context and nurture followers through relationship behaviors (Northouse, 2004). The results from the Ohio State study and a subsequent study by the University of Michigan in the 1950s were advanced by Blake and Mouton's (1964) Leadership Grid. According to Blake and Mouton, the most effective leadership behavior is a combination of high concern for people and high concern for production.

Contingency Theory

Contingency theory (Fielder, 1964) is based on the assumption that group performance is contingent on the leader's effective motivational strategies and the degree to which the leader controls the situation. This theory is further based on the assumption that the leader's ability is contingent upon factors, such as the leader's preferred style, the capabilities and behaviors of followers and also various other situational factors. A basic premise of contingency theory is that a leadership style that works in some situations may not be effective in others. A situation is favorable to a leader if the leader has "legitimacy and power due to position" (Bass, 1990, p. 32). In addition, group performance is contingent on the leader's effective motivational strategies and the degree to which the leader controls the situation (Fielder, 1964).

Contingency theory and situational theory are often used in relation to one another, except situational theory emphasizes the behaviors that the leader should adopt, given the situation (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). The premise of situational theory follows that the situation determines the type of leadership (Northouse, 2004). Different situations will therefore command different types of leadership. A high regard for contextual factors is key to the situational leadership approach (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). Effective leaders from this perspective are cognizant to the situation and are therefore able to adapt to the needs of the employees and the organization. According to Hersey and Blanchard (1984), leaders should adapt their style to the maturity or their followers, based on the followers' preparedness and willingness to perform a required task.

Power and Influence Theories

The basic assumption of power and influence theories is that “the power possessed by a leader is important not only for influencing subordinates, but also for influencing peers, superiors, and people outside the organization” (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992, p. 160). Davis and Proctor (1989) found that the race/ethnicity of the leader is believed to have a crucial influence on group processes and outcomes. Therefore, effective leadership is based upon the successful use of power and influencing processes to achieve certain goals, whether those of the leader or shared by the group (Lynham, 2000). An important aspect of the power and influence approach is the development of leader-follower relationships as the output of the leadership process (Northouse, 2004; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). The leader-member exchange (LMX) theory is an example of power and influence theories. The LMX theory (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975) challenges the leader’s use of power as a form of control. Rather, LMX is based on the assumption that leadership is a dyadic relationship between the leader and certain members of the organization to whom high levels of responsibility, decision-making influence, and access to resources are delegated (Northouse, 2004; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992).

French and Raven (1959) proposed five bases of a leader’s power: legitimate, referent, expert, reward, and coercive. Legitimate power is regarded as a form of power frequently exerted within formal organizations. This form of power is traditionally assumed and generally accepted from the leadership of white men in dominant culture organizations (Gostnell, 1996). According to French and Raven (1959), legitimate power

is contingent upon the willingness of subordinates to accept the authority of the power holder. Furthermore, the power and influence of a leader is “dependent upon acknowledgement of the leader’s authority by followers and in some circumstances superiors and peers” (Bass, 1990, p. 233).

Transformational Theory

Finally, transformational leadership is concerned with ethics, emotions, values, and standards, including satisfying followers’ needs and treating them as human beings (Northouse, 2004). Transformational leadership theory emerged from the work of Burns (1978), who viewed leadership as a shared process that requires followers to “transcend their own self-interest for the good of the group, organization, or society” (p. 53).

According to Burns (1978), transformational leaders seek to raise the consciousness of their followers by instilling values and ideals such as liberty, justice, equality, and humanitarianism. The basic premise of this theory is that the leader starts with development of a vision or a picture of the future to transform the organization, which may excite, energize, and motivate followers. The leader’s passion for this vision may create an inner belief in followers that they, too, will be transformed in some way.

Transformational leaders influence the process of mobilizing power to change social systems and reform institutions (Yukl, 1989). In light of such, transformational leaders are recognized as change agents within organizations who empower others to accomplish great things (Northouse, 2004). The emergence of the transformational approach to leadership represented a new paradigm in leadership theory (Bass, 1990).

The Focus of Leadership Theory in This Study

While the aforementioned perspectives are all relevant to successful leadership, this study focuses on the theories of power and influence. Drawing upon my own professional experience, access to power (or the lack of) and the ability to exert authority and influence are fruitful areas to begin examining the applicability of leadership theory to AAW's leadership. According to Parker (2005), power is a necessary tool for leaders to communicate authority. On the other hand, power can be a tool used to oppress and dominate those from marginalized groups. Examining the ways that socially constructed phenomena (leadership, race, gender, and social class) interact with power structures in organizations may support the need for more inclusive perspectives of leadership. Although this study will focus on theories of power and influence, the possibility that the findings may implicate other perspectives of leadership as described in Table 1 is noted.

The Role of Theory in the Study of Leadership

According to Lynham (2002), the application of a theory to a problem, issue, or phenomenon links the theory to the world of practice. The application of theory guides further inquiry and understanding of the theory in action. In organizations, leaders use different perspectives, or frames, to help understand situations, problems, and daily activities in the workplace. A drawback may be that when theories refer to people they are not necessarily universal nor can they be generalized to all situations and circumstances. Further, the application of theory to real world context becomes a fundamental source of knowledge for ongoing development of theory (Ruona & Lynham, 1999).

The ability (or inability) to apply leadership theory to AAW leaders might present a need to re-evaluate the leadership theory in respect to practical application. Lynham (2002) refers to the ongoing refinement and development of a theory to ensure it continues to be relevant and useful in the workplace. When the theory is no longer valid or useful in action, it should be adapted or discontinued. In light of this, we might ponder whether existing theories of leadership are applicable to all or only a portion of those engaging in the practice of leadership.

Gioia and Pitre (1990) describe theory as “a coherent description, explanation and representation of observed or experience phenomena” (p. 587). As such, theories have a practical role in our organizations, just as they do in our everyday lives. In the organizational context theories inform the practice of leadership. According to Lynham (2000), the study of theory is undertaken for producing new knowledge about the world. Theories help leaders “to understand, explain, anticipate, know, and act in the world in better and more informed ways and to better ends and outcomes” (p. 222). Torraco (1997) identified several ways theory is useful in developing an organization’s human resources. Among these are: 1) responding to new problems which have no previously identified solution, 2) reinterpreting old data and giving it new meaning, 3) identifying new issues and research questions that need to be answered, and 4) guiding and informing research and improving professional practice.

Bell and Nkomo (1992) argue that merely questioning the applicability of leadership theory to the race, gender, and social class of the leader undermines the assumption that universal organization and management theories exist. By bringing to

the conversation new and previously silenced voices, we can move beyond questioning and begin to challenge orthodox theories of this social phenomena, shifting leadership knowledge from a deterministic-individualistic paradigm to a more reflexive, non-deterministic and collective one, pushing the notion of leadership to new heights of understanding and bringing us closer to an alternative worldview of leadership (Allen, 1995).

Part Two: Perspectives of African American Women's Leadership

This section of the literature review is a survey of what has been published and researched in respect to three perspectives of AAW's leadership. First, I reviewed the socio-historical perspectives of AAW's leadership emerging from a legacy rooted in struggle and survival. Second, I examined traditional feminist perspectives of leadership which rarely illuminate the socio-historical perspectives of AAW. Finally, I reviewed studies of AAW in predominantly white organizations for research that has centered on the intersection of race, gender, and social class.

The study of AAW's leadership is an investigation of a social phenomenon within organizations (leadership) using a sociological lens (race, gender, and social class). For this reason, I consulted journals, books, and electronic databases from multi-disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, management, education, feminist studies, cultural studies, and organization behavior.

To find studies in electronic databases of African American women's leadership in the context of organizations, I searched EBSCOhost, ProQuest, ProQuest Digital Dissertation, and Wiley Interscience databases indexed in ABI/Inform, Academic Search

Premier, Business Source Premier, ERIC, Professional Development Collection, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, and Sociological Collection. The keywords used to search were African American women or black women and leadership. I then narrowed my search using the keywords race, gender, and class. I report my findings in the following sections.

Socio-historical Perspectives

Black feminist literature speaks to the obstacles and barriers that AAW encounter in leadership roles within organizational contexts (Grimes, 2003). Yet AAW in roles of leadership can be traced back to slavery. The circumstances of the historical struggle of the African American community in general created a form of resistance to which AAW responded by organizing efforts to survive. The oppression of AAW emerging from this legacy of struggle (Allen, 1996; Robnett, 1996) has centered around five themes: survival, resistance, social activism, community uplift, and transformation (Parker, 2005). Based on this insight, it might be fruitful to examine the leadership of AAW from a historical perspective because, as Dilthey (1976) points out, a historical perspective is necessary to discover the interrelatedness of the part to the whole.

The landscape of a woman's life is shaped and designed by history, opening new arenas for growth while erecting barriers to opportunity (Bell & Nkomo, 2001). According to Dilthey (1976), history adds richness to human experience. For this reason, in order to study human experience, we should consider the historical foundations for a more holistic perspective. Meux (2002) followed this approach by studying the cultural and social background of AAW's leadership. The purpose of that study was to

investigate AAW's leadership from the perspective of ancestral roots in Africa. According to Meux, involvement in the church and community were found to be influential sources that nurtured, shaped, and empowered AAW's leadership. Hence, AAW's leadership is supported by a cultural and social epistemology based on the determination for liberation and social change.

Historically, AAW have been portrayed in subordinate or subservient roles. As a result, the anomalous presence of AAW in leadership roles challenges society's perceptions of who leads (Gostnell, 1996) and what makes for successful leadership, although pioneer AAW leaders such as Harriet Tubman, Mary McLeod Bethune, Coretta Scott King, and Rosa Parks, to name a few, have passed on an innate sense of leadership (Catalyst, 2004) to the contemporary AAW leader. In light of such, it is useful to the present study to recognize AAW's leadership as a product of group survival and community empowerment.

Jean-Marie (2002) identified a social justice model of leadership grounded in community uplift. Considering leadership from this perspective constructs the notion that the social justice model is one aspect of AAW's leadership. Following this same notion, Taylor (2004) describes AAW leadership as visionary. Visionary leadership favors democracy and social justice, and empowers all members of an organization. The tendency for AAW to practice visionary leadership may be partially due to the need to advocate democracy and social justice stemming from oppression and dominance. The image of AAW as leaders in organizations may be distorted by the historical images and

stereotypes that continue to oppress the realities and experiences of leadership.

According to Collins (1990):

Ideology represents the process by which certain assumed qualities are attached to Black women and how those qualities are used to justify oppression. From the mummies, Jezebels, and breeder women of slavery to the smiling Aunt Jemimas on pancake mix boxes, ubiquitous Black prostitutes, and ever-present welfare mothers of contemporary popular culture, the nexus of negative stereotypical images applied to African-American women has been fundamental to Black women's oppression. (p. 7)

Therefore, the socio-historical leadership experiences of AAW, grounded in a culture of oppression and dominance, is in sharp contrast to traditional and dominant leadership theory based on control and competitive behavior and written from the perspectives of white men (Parker, 2005). On the other hand, being forced to assume an existence of “dissemblance and self-reliance in order to survive...and having embarked upon the heroic task of re-imagining themselves” (Hine, 1992, p. 14), AAW have emerged as today’s new leader.

The statement that the survival of an organization rests largely on effective leadership is not likely to be challenged, but neither is it likely that the image conjured from that statement is that of an AAW as the leader. Historically, research on the phenomenon of leadership has used white men as the model. Consequently there appears to be little research on how race, gender, and social class touches the lived experiences of the AAW leader.

Traditional Feminist Perspectives

Review of the literature indicates a feminist perspective of leadership that challenges the traditional, dominant leadership theories. This feminist perspective is

represented as a “race-neutral, universal representation of all women, based on the socialized experiences of white, middle-class women” (Parker, 2005, p. 10). In order for the leadership experiences of women in general to become incorporated into the mainstream body of leadership literature and theories, they must be studied from their perspectives and on their own terms rather than in relation to the experiences and perspectives of predominantly white, male leaders (Fennell, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1989).

According to Bensimon (1989), because women experience the world from a different epistemology than men therefore gender must be taken into consideration in discourse relating to leadership. However, notably absent from Bensimon’s argument is the possibility that race and social class are constructs that differentiate men and women’s experiences.

Helgesen (1990) observed and interviewed four executive women in large organizations for the purpose of defining feminine principles of leadership and capturing how women think and act in leadership roles. In the *Feminine Advantage*, Helgesen points to the caring nature of women and the ability to be intuitive thinkers as the primary differences between men and women’s leadership. According to Helgesen, women can use these differences to their advantage and thereby become successful as leaders. Helgesen compares her observations of women’s leadership to Mintzberg’s (1970) study, *The Nature of Managerial Work*. Mintzberg’s study of five male executives found that men are less willing to share information, rely more on the organizational hierarchy, are more immersed in the daily functions of the organization with little time for reflection, and are more likely to derive pleasure from their status

within the organization. Helgesen (1990) argues that women place less importance on the hierarchy, use more personal experience, focus more on how actions will affect others, and how the business process will affect the organization's bottom line. However, Helgesen's study is problematic, in that it speaks from a white female perspective and does not include the voice or perspectives of AAW.

Parker (2005) argues against the notion of the feminist advantage model in organizational leadership because it represents a universal, race-neutral model of leadership based on the experiences of middle-class white women. Race neutral models fail to recognize that organizations are not neutral settings where all leaders are the same and are subjected to the same type of historical and cultural experience.

Instead, Parker (2005) advances an inclusive framework of leadership, which supports intersectionality as a means of interpreting and analyzing leadership. Intersectionality suggests that the lived leadership experiences of AAW in predominantly white organizations are not located within separate spheres of race, gender or social class. Rather these spheres intersect and shape structural and political aspects that are not captured within traditional feminist discourse. Given the fact that women of color are simultaneously situated within at least two groups that are subjected to broad subordinations, intersectionality challenges the notion that problems can be viewed as mono-causal, or based on racial or gender discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989).

Consistent with Parker's (2005) argument hooks (1984) wrote, "White women who dominate feminist discourse, who for the most part make and articulate feminist theory, have little or no understanding of white supremacy as a racial politic, of the

psychological impact of class, of their political status within a racist, sexist, capitalist state” (p. 3). As a result, the distinct leadership experiences of AAW in predominantly white organizations are not effectively captured from the perspective of leadership discussions led by white women. According to hooks (1984), feminist perspectives offer a universal, collective representation of women’s experiences and do not effectively capture the lived experiences of AAW.

It should be noted that Northouse’s (2004) research on traditional leadership theory has been revised and now provides some insights on women as leaders, although insight on ways that race and social class, in combination with gender, influences one’s leadership perspectives and models of leadership effectiveness, is not addressed. Bass’ (1990) survey of leadership research and theory addresses special conditions of leadership: women and leadership and blacks and leadership. However, women in leadership is not addressed in respect to race and blacks in leadership is not addressed in respect to women. Yukl and Van Fleet (1992) do not explicitly address leadership in terms of race, gender, or social class, but rather allude to the “growing recognition that new theories and methods are needed to describe leadership processes that unfold over time in social systems” (p. 186).

Although the feminist movement advanced the issue of gender equality, the movement did not make an issue for equality in terms of racial oppression. The feminist movement focused more on equalizing women’s rights with men, while AAW added emancipation and overcoming oppression to the quest the for equality.

Organizational Perspectives of AAW's Leadership

In formal organizations, AAW are caught in the dilemma of trying to operate within an organizational system without adequate authority or support and only symbolic power (Dumas, 1980). According to Dumas distancing AAW from the base of real power and denying her access to leadership development that is essential for operating within a dominant culture organization is one way of keeping her at a safe distance.

Organizational leadership refers to the practice of leadership within a context where individuals are held to norms, values, and beliefs of the organization's culture (Parker, 2001). An organization's culture is justified through norms and values, and perceived through underlying assumptions of people within the organization (Schein, 1992). One underlying assumption of members within an organization is that leaders look, act, and think in ways that reflect the culture of the organization (Parker, 2001). However, this expectation may be in conflict with the stereotypical assumptions about African American women when "white, middle-class cultural values and beliefs are the norm to which organizational members are expected to adapt" (p. 45). The resulting issue then is how African American women negotiate the process of leadership within a dominant organization's culture--by adapting to the norm or by offering new meanings and greater options based on the multiple perspectives they bring to the leadership experience.

Although few in number, I found that most of the studies that have investigated AAW in roles of leadership have been from dissertation studies. In many of these studies, the researcher has introduced a phenomenal piece or a concept that could

possibly be a conceptual development phase towards theory building (Lynham, 2002). Most unsettling to me is when trying to locate further work by these researchers, I was unsuccessful with the exception of Parker (2005) and Bell and Nkomo (2001) who continue to research African American women executives' communication and bicultural organizational experiences, respectfully. While many will agree that the study of AAW in roles of leadership is an understudied topic, many researchers do not pursue their own ideas, which means initial studies do not necessarily contribute to or further the study of AAW and leadership, but rather serves the purpose of satisfying requirements for the doctorate.

I have found that the handful of studies that have investigated the study of AAW in positions of leadership in terms of their struggle against oppressive systems have been dissertation topics, with the exception of Parker who continues to research AAW. While these researchers established a promising foundation, they often disappear after completing the doctorate without continuing to advance their work. Good theory building requires persistent inquiry, continually pushing an idea until it ignites, encouraging others to take up the torch.

Ten studies within the last 12 years have investigated AAW's leadership in organizations, nine of these were dissertations, and five examined some aspect of AAW's leadership and theory. Table 2 synthesizes and categorizes the findings from these studies.

**Table 2. Selected Studies of African American Women's Leadership
1995-2005**

	Studies that Address Race, Gender, Social Class	Studies that Address Leadership Theory
Allen (1995)	√	√
Gostnell (1996)	√	√
Stokes (1996)	√	√
Parker (1997)	√	√
DeLany (1999)	x	√
Strickling-Bullock (2001)	x	x
Bell & Nkomo (2001)	√	x
Matthews (2001)	√	x
Porter (2002)	x	x
Lanier (2005)	x	x
Yancey-Bragg (2005)	√	√

Allen (1995) was the earliest study located that recommended an alternative theory of leadership based on the experiences of African American women. Using a sociological lens, Allen (1995) argues that the previously silenced voices of African American women challenge the traditional and dominant leadership, representing the move toward a more comprehensive analysis of leadership. According to Allen (1995), because models and theories of leadership focus on elite, white men, there is a lack of understanding of ways that social power, dominance, and control interacts with AAWs'

leadership. From Allen's study emerged a concept of black female leadership as a dynamic and fluid process in the web of relations. These relations change within a structure of domination. Allen, a sociologist, argues that viewing leadership through a sociological lens brings culture into focus for advancing leadership theory.

By connecting the social and the cultural in leadership thought, we better understand the processes by which black female leadership emerges. Only through understanding the action processes in all of their dimensions can we come to understand the meaning, content, and form of leadership as experienced by diverse groups. (p. 36)

The findings from this qualitative study support a preliminary model of leadership centered around the black woman's leadership for community empowerment.

Gostnell (1996) points out the absence of research and theory on the impact of race, gender, and class on the everyday realities and experiences of AAW's leadership serves to minimize the existence of AAW as leaders. Gostnell reviewed the leadership literature for models of leadership that underscore the relationship between human interaction and the symbiotic nature of leadership. According to Gostnell (1996), the traditional leadership literature lacks a contextual viewpoint that explores "the social, environmental, and personal conditions of leadership and that addresses the question of 'who leads'" (p. 204). Taken for granted assumptions about "who leads promotes a privileged view of leadership that suggests that legitimate leaders are white and male and that leadership by others is incidental and inconsequential" (p. 28). Because the terms "white male" and "leader" are strongly wedded to definitions of leadership, our definitions of leadership and the image that is evoked must somehow be renegotiated to accommodate the emergence of leaders that do not fit this perception of leader.

Furthermore, Gostnell (1996) argues that the body of literature on leadership does not contain a perspective of leaders as individuals who simultaneously juggle multiple dimensions of personal, social, cultural, and political realities. Rather the perspective most commonly portrayed is that of separateness, which conveys the illusion that leadership takes place in a vacuum.

Using black feminist and critical race theory as the theoretical framework, Gostnell (1996) conceptualizes a black woman's leadership paradigm describing leadership as an interwoven aspect of one's daily life, based upon a connectedness and responsibility for each other. Gostnell theorizes AAW's leadership from a Paradigm of Connected Leadership. The Paradigm of Connected Leadership challenges the assumptions that: 1) leaders are born or taught; 2) leadership is the exercise of formal or informal power; and 3) leadership is a set of discrete skills and competencies situated within a hierarchical organization. Rather, Gostnell asserts that leadership is "diverse, contextual, interdependent, and situational" and is practiced through "a paradigm built upon the concepts of connectedness, and service" (p. 205). Gostnell's Paradigm of Connected Leadership proposes that leadership is:

- ordinary and situational, an expression of self in action. It is based on multiple realities and wisdom gained at the juncture of race, gender, and class,
- socially constructed; AAW's social construction of leadership is influenced by historical and cultural roots,

- an interdependent, shared, and collective effort; empowering rather than controlling,
- representative of a culturally pluralistic society,
- purposeful; provides clarity and a sense of direction during tumultuous times or when it is not possible to provide an instant solution,
- responsive to controversial issues; African American women in positions of leadership must be prepared to speak out and stand alone,
- often contradicts AAW's historical upbringing to "tread cautiously," as leadership many times involves risk-taking and stepping outside the circle of what is known and secure.

Although the Paradigm of Connected Leadership challenges traditional theories as the norm and suggests a beginning theory of black women's leadership, the problem here is the inference that a paradigm of leadership exists exclusively for black women, which creates further separatism. On the other hand we might look to include theories that can supplement the classical theories of leadership.

The question, "How do African American women experience leadership?" was the focus of a study by Stokes (1996). Using an ethno-science methodology, Stokes found that the participants experienced negative leadership experiences attributed to their gender and race. The participants described their marginalized leadership experiences in terms of not living up to or measuring up to the Eurocentric standards, values, beliefs, and expectations that dominate American society. Consensus among the group was a process of validating and revalidating their competency to lead. The process

of validation and revalidation involved recognizing how the political and power games are played, not succumbing to the system, and having a reservoir of strength.

Parker (1997) conducted a qualitative study of 15 African American women executives' communication strategies for managing barriers and opportunities within dominant culture organizations in the U. S. According to the findings, AAW demonstrate a communication-based leadership that emphasizes openness in communication, interactive leadership, employee empowerment, and participative decision-making. A major focus of Parker's research has been to address the ways AAW executives encounter racism and sexism and the interactive effects of power. Like Allen (1995), Parker's research has sought to advance leadership models and theories that are more inclusive of all perspectives and experiences of leadership. To this end, Parker envisions and conceptualizes leadership from the standpoint of AAW. The assertion being that leadership:

- emerges from a particular way of viewing complex, often contradictory, life experiences;
- provides an exemplar of meaning-centered approach to leadership in twenty-first century organizations that deconstructs traditional notions of masculine and feminine leadership;
- theorizing should reflect the interplay and struggle between the multiple discourses by which society is characterized and defined, and
- is an interactive process through which multi-vocality is the central process. In other words, a process by which the leader views herself or

himself as a conduit through which a diversity of viewpoints can be brought together, negotiated and enacted.

Yancey-Bragg's (2005) quantitative study on leadership effectiveness was based on Goleman's (1998) theory that the most effective leaders have a high degree of emotional intelligence. Findings from this study report that AAW's emotional competencies were highest in areas of self-confidence, empathy, adaptability, and conflict management. This finding is consistent with DeLany's (1999) report that AAW leaders utilize a transformational type of leadership as demonstrated by an attitude of nurturing and caring and a sense of assertiveness, independence, and personal confidence in advocating social change in organizations. DeLany (1999) investigated AAW's leadership and learning in a health-care industry. The purpose of the study was to examine how AAW in positions of leadership learned throughout their life spans. A significant finding from this study was that AAW's interconnected social and educational networks enabled them to develop skills needed to fulfill leadership roles. While this study did not directly study leadership theory, emerging as a finding was leadership for social advocacy rather than personal gain, strongly suggesting the presence of transformational leadership effectiveness.

Matthews (2001) studied the experiences of four African American women in mid-management positions in white male-dominated corporations. The qualitative study focused on the intersection of race, gender, and personal/professional relationships with the women's roles within their organizations. The findings of this study revealed relationships with same race and/or gender colleagues were regenerative. The

participants in this study indicated their leadership success was based on looking beyond boundaries of hierarchical power structures. This study did not examine leadership theory.

Porter's (2002) case study of successful senior-level executive status AAW within corporate America sought to determine barriers to advancement and to identify leadership similarities among the participants. This study used a multi-case study, emancipatory research design. The findings from this study indicated AAW prefer participatory leadership and recognize collaboration and teamwork as necessary tools for developing one's leadership in a corporate environment. The participants in this study agreed AAW must prove their leadership abilities by their interactions with those in positions of power.

To understand the leadership preparation of African American women seeking to advance to the corporate ranks, Strickling-Bullock (2001) conducted an ethnographic study to examine the role of the Human Resource Development specialists in facilitating the mentoring process of AAW. Consistent with the findings from the literature, this study found that African American women managers, specifically, are the least mentored group in corporate management. This study did not examine leadership theory.

Lanier (2005) studied the phenomenon of isolation in the experiences of 15 professional AAW in corporate America. This qualitative study revealed AAW experience isolation in the workplace in three significant ways: communication problems, negative feelings, and disrespectful treatment. Leadership theory was not considered in the conduct of this study.

Other studies have investigated the lived experiences of AAW in organizational settings, although these studies have not specifically investigated the phenomenon of leadership and the interactive effects of race, gender, and social class. For instance, James-Hughes (2003) used a phenomenological approach to explore the communicative strategies that African American female executives use to negotiate their lived experiences in an organizational setting. This study used a multidisciplinary theoretical framework combining cultural, standpoint, and black feminist thought to ground the everyday realities of the participants. Several salient themes emerged from this study. However, the unifying theme that emerged indicated that AAW “tend to know how to walk across layers and levels” (p. 139).

Dawson (2001) used a phenomenological, qualitative study to examine the lived experiences of AAW in predominately white organizations in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. The findings provide insight into survival techniques AAW used to succeed in often hostile work environments during that period. The author used the concept of partial inclusion to characterize the failure of organizations to provide a sense of belonging, acceptance, trust, and adequate communication for AAW.

Bell and Nkomo (2001, 1992) have made significant contributions to studies of AAW’s career advancement and describing “separate” doors that open to corporate America for white women and black women. Bell (1990) suggests African American women professionals exist simultaneously in two socialized worlds--the dominant society and the African American community. Theorizing this bicultural experience may be useful in explaining how successful AAW manage opposing expectations and still

maintain identity within both cultures. According to Bell, Denton, and Nkomo (1993), until we broaden our understanding of the ways that race and gender affect the experiences of AAW leaders in organizations, we will hold no solution to removing the barriers that prevent their advancement in the workplace.

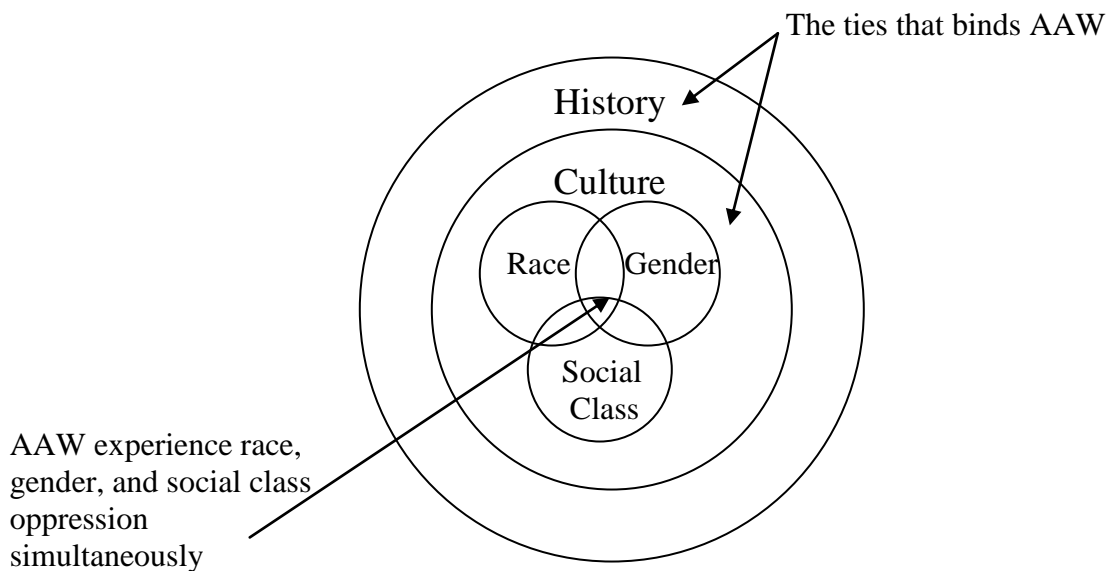
In *Our Separate Ways*, Bell and Nkomo (2001) investigate the separate paths that black and white women take to the doors of corporate America. These authors found that AAW work from an understanding that they will never fit into the organizational culture because the double-edged sword of race and gender bias cuts deeply. Generally women managers and leaders confront a process of organization socialization, a process of coping, adjusting, learning, and fitting in to an organizational culture that has been largely determined by white men. While white men dominate the organizational culture in United States organizations, this group has been slow to acknowledge the possibility that racist and sexist structures are intentionally maintained for the purpose of power and privilege (Ross-Gordon & Brooks, 2004).

According to Bell and Nkomo (2001) significant differences existed in how quickly fit was achieved for white women who must cross the lines of gender and social class and AAW who are uniquely situated within the interlocking system of race, gender, and social class. Although Bell and Nkomo's study focused on corporate America, their research produced a conceptual framework for understanding the career and organizational experiences of black and white women. Their resulting conceptual framework depicts race, gender, and social class as interdependent, interactive, and dynamic. Figure 1 gives a visualization of this framework situated within two concentric

circles. These circles represent the cultural and historical aspect of an AAW, which may shape her identity within larger society:

Culture encompasses shared meanings between people, shared cultural practices, and the everyday effects of such practices in terms of power and social regulation. Women raised in the same culture have a common heritage with shared norms, values, and worldviews. They also have a frame of reference in which their feminine identity is grounded, a sense of group identity and affiliation and a sense of society and how to behave within it...History shapes the landscape of a woman's life. It can open new avenues for growth and development or conversely, erect roadblocks to opportunity. (Bell & Nkomo, 2001, p. 18)

**Figure 1. The Interactive Relational Model:
External Forces That Bind, Internal Forces That Oppress**



Allen (1995) used a similar model referred to as an interactive model of relations. In that model, history and culture creates an ideology or tie that binds AAW. The tie that binds works as a force that resists the oppressive forces created by simultaneous encounters with race, gender, and social class.

Other Research Related to AAW's Leadership Experiences

Other research on AAW's leadership has focused on the barriers encountered by African American women executives in reaching top levels in corporate America. Research conducted by Catalyst (2004), a non-profit research advisory organization that promotes the advancement of women of color in corporate America, indicates a small number of AAW have successfully navigated barriers such as lack of mentors, lack of access to formal and informal networking systems, and lack of high visibility to advance into positions traditionally open mainly to white men.

Kanter's (1977) book *Men and Women of the Corporation* is seminal work in the literature on leadership in organizations. Kanter articulates how power is centrally located in organizations. Power is gained through location in the informal and formal power structures and connection to others, a position that is primarily beneficial to white men. According to Kanter's (1977) theory of organizational behavior, leaders with access to these sources become empowered and successful. However, Kanter's theory is problematic when the leader is an AAW and the interactive effects of race, gender, and social class limit the access to these power structures. As Bell and Nkomo (2001) point out, during the time of Kanter's study, AAW in leadership roles was an anomaly in most

corporations in the United States. This being the case, one might question the usefulness of Kanter's theory to an AAW leader in a predominantly white organization today.

Because studies of AAW's leadership in organizations and the interactive effects of race, gender, and social class have been few, the informing basis of theory of AAW organizational leadership is limited. However, the literature review indicated a bulk of studies of AAW's leadership has been in the area of educational leadership. For this reason, further insight on AAW's organizational leadership might be gained by discussing selected studies from educational leadership research. Furthermore, the study of AAW in educational leadership may be significant to the leadership of AAW in organizations because both groups are similarly situated and regularly confront double biased discrimination. For example, Taylor (2004) examined issues of race, gender, and power on the leadership influence of an AAW principal. In this study Taylor found that in order for an AAW to be successful in leadership positions in a predominantly white environment, she must play by the rules of traditional patriarchy.

In a similar context Stanley (2006) presents a collection of narratives in her book, *Faculty of Color*, representing a diverse faculty from predominantly white institutions. The purpose of these narratives is to describe "how social and cultural identities such as race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status influence worldviews, as well as dimensions of oppression that are still apparent in our society and in our world" (p. xiii). According to Stanley (2006), for women of color in academia, racism and sexism have been referred to as the double blind syndrome, subjecting women faculty of color to an invisible and hidden form of

marginalization. As a result, the experiences of faculty women of color may be embedded and subsumed within studies that report on the experiences of women faculty in general and faculty of color in academia (Stanley, 2006; Turner, 2006).

Stanley, Porter, Simpson, and Ouellett (2003) conducted a study of African American faculty in two predominantly white research universities as a critical step toward understanding how the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender affect teaching experiences. Participants in that study attributed students' questioning of authority to their perceptions of a faculty member's race and/or gender. Further, participants reported that students demonstrate greater tendencies to challenge faculty of color as opposed to white faculty and in some instances ignore or fail to acknowledge the educational status of the faculty member of color altogether.

Grimes (2003) studied the leadership of African American women in higher education using the integrated leadership framework of Astin and Leland (1991). The Astin-Leland framework is based on the idea of collective action rather than the leader-follower notion, and the commitment to improving women's lives. Using this integrated framework, Grimes (2003) suggests that race-based, gender-based, and institutional-based issues created the lens through which the women in the study processed the actions and culture of their institutions.

Jean-Marie (2002) studied educational leadership from the perspective of twelve African American women in higher education. The aim of this study was to bring into the conversation of leadership a group of leaders that have been excluded from much of the leadership literature in higher education. The perspectives of AAW women

administrators in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) have received less attention than their counterparts in major research universities.

The participants were grouped according to a social justice project rooted in community, a career project rooted in individual achievement, and a visionary project rooted in economic success. Jean-Marie found the social justice group interpreted leadership in the context of the spiritual and community commitment. The career project group placed emphasis on the individual leader who articulated a top-down and authoritarian way of leading. Finally, the visionary group viewed leadership on a corporate mindset operating within educational institutions. This study resulted in a new term - educational leaders as transformative intellectuals. From the results of this study Jean-Marie (2002) proposed a Social Justice Model of Leadership. The foundation for this model is based on Foster's (1986) critical perspective of leadership that asserts:

The ability of humans to relate deeply to each other in the search for a more perfect union. Leadership is a consensual task, a sharing of ideas and a sharing of responsibilities, where a leader is a leader for the moment only, where the leadership exerted must be validated by the consent of the followers, and where leadership lies in the struggles of a community to find meaning for itself. (p. 61)

Based on this perspective, the women in Foster's (1986) study articulated a leadership for promoting a democratic process towards creating social change in their organizations--leadership that includes transformative and ethical qualities. They envisioned the role of a leader is:

...to always create other leaders. Followers can assume leadership and leaders can become followers when the situation calls for communal exchange...the spiritual dimension ...promotes building and creating communities, addressing social change, empowering others, articulating possibilities, engaging in critical reflections and practices, and committed to democracy. (p. 139)

Discussion of the Literature Review

This literature review indicates that although AAW's leadership in organizations has been studied to some extent, these studies have not fully examined AAW's leadership experiences in relation to dominant leadership theories, nor have they investigated how traditional, dominant leadership theories address, or do not address, the intersection of race, gender, and social class in the practice of leadership. Leadership theorizing in the twenty-first century should be reflective of the interplay and struggle of the multiple perspectives that characterize society (Parker, 2005). In that regard, "We should continue to explicate theories of leadership that acknowledge the facilitation of these multiple perspectives" (p. 93). By embracing race, class, and gender and bringing AAW leaders from the margins to the center of analysis, a new dimension is added to conceptualizing leadership theory, taking the analysis of leadership to new arenas (Parker, 2005; Allen, 1995).

As my selected group of AAW leaders speaks, I suspect they will find some sense of communal exchange with participants in the previous studies. For this reason, I am cognizant of the work that has already been done in the area of AAW in positions of leadership. Recognizing that the work of researchers should also be a collaborative effort, I seek to contribute to previous studies by adding a few more perspectives and advancing the study of the leadership phenomenon, particularly that of AAW in positions of leadership.

This study differs from previous studies on AAW and leadership in that I examine specific traditional leadership theory (social power) to explain the experiences

of these women, particularly as they encounter issues relating to race, gender, and social class. The goal is not to find a solution to these issues, rather to enter our world. In doing so, to view our world and try to understand how the phenomenon of leadership is experienced when race, gender, and social class enter into the experience. By adding the voices of the AAW in this study to those that have already been represented, we begin moving towards integrating AAW's meaning making experiences into the body of knowledge on leadership.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study is an interpretative, qualitative investigation of African American women's (AAW) leadership experiences within predominantly white organizations at the intersection of race, gender, and social class. In a phenomenological study, the researcher poses a question that is intended to capture the meaning of an experience (Creswell, 1998). Patton (2002) agrees and says that the foundational question for a phenomenological study is: What is the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people? Therefore, the overarching research question in this study is:

1. What are the lived experiences of African American women in positions of leadership in predominantly white organizations?

The researcher may also ask topical sub-questions that suggest or anticipate the need for information (Creswell, 1998). The topical sub-questions in this study are:

- 1a. What traditional and dominant leadership theories appear to inform the lived experiences of AAW in positions of leadership in predominantly white organizations?
- 1b. How do implications that AAW in positions of leadership encounter intersectionality (race, gender, and social class) in their lived experiences in predominantly white organizations appear to inform traditional and dominant leadership theories?

According to Creswell (1998), qualitative researchers approach their inquiry with a basic set of philosophical assumptions. These assumptions relate to ontological (nature of reality) epistemological (relationship of the researcher to that being researched), axiological (the process of the research), rhetorical (the use of metaphors and specific literary forms), and methodological (the use of inductive logic) beliefs. These assumptions guide how the researcher conceptualizes the research process and situates the researcher in a certain paradigm or worldview. The interpretative paradigm seeks to understand the subjective ways that people interpret the social world (Van Manen, 1997). In addition to a philosophical framework, a theoretical framework using a critical analysis perspective was used to explain the phenomenon of AAW's leadership experiences, interpret meanings from their lived experiences, and unveil the social construction of knowledge that might emerge from these leadership experiences.

In the following sections, I discuss the philosophical and theoretical frameworks of my study. I then describe, in some detail, how the study was designed within the philosophical and theoretical frameworks.

Philosophical Framework

The philosophical framework is comprised of four basic concepts: epistemology (how we know the world); ontology (the nature of reality); methodology (the process of inquiring), and axiology (ethics) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Using a philosophical approach to study AAW's leadership is a process of inquiry that involves thinking about questions, making interpretations, and trying to make sense of the essence of people's experiences. However, the goal is not "to get an answer, but rather to gain understanding

and wisdom in the process” (Ruona, 2000, p. 5). As such, the philosophical framework of this study aims to serve as the foundation by which the phenomenon of leadership in the lived experiences of AAW is understood. For example, philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) posed the following questions:

- What can I know?
- What ought I to do?
- What may I hope?

Roth (2000) explains these questions represent the limits of our knowledge about a phenomenon, but at the same time acknowledges there is something that we can participate in bringing to knowledge through our own coming to know. In view of this explanation and from the foregoing review of the literature, I acknowledge there is something more I can know about the leadership experiences of AAW in respect to race, gender, and social class within predominantly white organizations. Because leadership research and theory should be a systematic study of leadership that includes the perspectives of AAW (Parker, 1997), I consider what I might do to contribute to what is already known. Then, through “personal reflection and visioning, I can learn what it is that I may hope” (Roth, 2000, p. vii) for a more informed study of leadership.

Phenomenological Inquiry

Phenomenology is a “philosophical approach that aims to identify and describe the intuitive experience of phenomena (what presents itself to us in conscious experience) as its starting point and tries to extract from it the essential features of everyday experiences and the essence of what we experience from the point of view of

the subject”(Schwandt, 2001, p. 191). According to Moustakas (1994), a phenomenological study seeks to determine what an experience means for the person who has had the experience and from the individual’s explanation, extract the essence of that experience. Understanding the lived experience of the respondent by the researcher produces the ability to move toward positive change and more informed practice (Lincoln & Lynham, 2006).

The phenomenological process involves three stages: the collection, reduction and interpretation of lived experiences; each stage a spiraling, interdependent form where each stage informs the other stages (Orbe, Drummond, & Camara, 2002; Nelson, 1989; Lanigan, 1979). A phenomenological study describes the lived experiences for a group of individuals about a concept and explores the structures of consciousness in these experiences (Creswell, 1998; Polkinghorne, 1989). From this explanation, a phenomenological mode of inquiry will help explain how AAW experience the phenomenon of leadership, the meanings derived from the experience, the knowledge produced, and “how the phenomenon works in practice” (Lincoln & Lynham, 2006, p. 3).

Phenomenology, a methodology based on the philosophy of Husserl, insists that the phenomena we encounter in sensory perceptions are the ultimate source of all knowledge (Schütz, 1970). This type of qualitative inquiry seeks to recognize a single unifying meaning from the set of experiences being studied (Creswell, 1998). From Husserl’s philosophy, a variety of phenomenological methodologies have emerged.

Hermeneutic phenomenology, based on the philosophy of Heidegger, focuses on the ways people are situated in the world. A basic tenet of hermeneutic phenomenology is that “all experience is originally connected, and given validity by our consciousness” (Dilthey, 1976, p. 161). Hence, Heidegger’s approach to phenomenology is that “consciousness is not separate from the world, but is a formation of historically lived experiences”...and as such...“one’s background cannot be made completely explicit” (Lavery, 2003, p. 8). To understand one’s experiences, we should reflect upon the historical as well as the cultural and social contexts of a person’s world. According to Moustakas (1994), the “direct conscious description of an experience and the underlying dynamics or structures that account for that experience” (p. 9) are central to understanding the essence of the experience. Lavery (2003) poignantly points out we are constructed by a world in which, at the same time, we construct the world from our own experiences and background.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is consistent with the socio-historical perspectives of AAW’s leadership identified through the literature review. A hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry contends that social, cultural, and historical experiences are central to knowledge (Orbe, Drummond, & Camara, 2002). Furthermore, a hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry creates a “discursive space where AAW can give voice to the circumstances that are central to the ways in which they experience life” (p. 125). Hence, hermeneutic phenomenology is emerging as a fundamental methodology to the scholarship of AAW.

Theoretical Frameworks

French and Raven's (1959) legitimate power theory (one of five bases of social power), black feminist thought (Collins, 1990), and critical race theory (CRT) (Bell, 1993; Delgado, 1995) serve as theoretical frameworks for this study.

Social power theory is associated with a positivistic paradigm. Researchers from this paradigm support the belief that theory is universal and can deductively describe social phenomenon (Wardlow, 1989). Furthermore, research from this paradigm uses hypotheses that are tested by observations and utilizes statistical models. Positivistic researchers search for the ultimate truths by "building theory through generalizations which are the result of experimental or mathematical controls" (p. 2). French and Raven's (1959) research that theorized the five bases of social power is associated with the positivistic paradigm.

Black feminist thought and CRT are associated with the critical theory paradigm. Research from this paradigm typically seeks to explore the scientific study of domination, oppression, alienation, and struggle within institutions, organizations, and social groups for the purpose of transformation and social change (Creswell, 1998). According to Howard-Hamilton (2003), black feminist thought and CRT are appropriate frameworks for studying AAW in predominantly white organizations because many traditional theories are general and do not consider multiple identities and roles. In addition, these theories are useful for articulating AAW's leadership experiences and explaining encounters with race, gender, and social class in these experiences.

Furthermore, Creswell (1998) suggests that researchers can use social science theories as a means of understanding, describing, and explaining how people experience the world.

Social Power Theory

French and Raven's (1959) classic theory of power evolved during the late 1950s. This period of time was pre-Civil rights. AAW would not be considered a model group for defining leadership in even a miniscule capacity. Leadership is typically equated with power, which is typically equated with authority and influence. It is possible however when introducing race (African American), gender (women), and class (social) into leadership, power becomes a contradiction because leadership is now defined in terms of being an AAW. In other words, does power contribute to maintaining a state of oppression, which, regardless of her role, limits an AAW's legitimate power?

French and Snyder (1959) offer the following definition of leadership in terms of power:

Leadership is the potential social influence of one part of the group over another... In a formal organization, the influence of the followers and of the leader is partly determined by the legitimate authority of the positions they occupy... Thus the part of a group, which has leadership, may be in a super-ordinate position or role regardless of the person who occupies it. In this case the study of leadership involves the study of role relationships as well as interpersonal relations. (p. 118)

From this definition, French and Snyder (1959), imply that group relations have greater influence in leadership than the individual in the position. French and Snyder's hypothesis that a leader will attempt to exert influence based on a probability of success and that a leader's effectiveness to influence a follower increases with acceptance of the leader by the follower was confirmed.

French and Raven's (1959) bases of legitimate power holds that "acceptance of the social structure is another basis for legitimate power" (p. 160). For instance, if a follower accepts the social structure in an organization, particularly if there is a hierarchy of authority, the follower will accept the legitimate authority of the one who holds the position of authority. Legitimate power is power that has been sanctioned by a particular group based on a social contract between members of the group, organization or broader society (Lundstedt, 1965). Traditions and norms are the roots of legitimate power. In light of this, if white men have been considered the norm in terms of leadership, then AAW disrupt that norm in the process of exerting legitimate power. Consequently, the practical and theoretical foundation for leadership is established, defined, and applied to the leadership of white men.

Black Feminist Thought

Black feminist thought (Collins, 1990) explains the collective, lived experiences of AAW, the commonalities of these experiences, and the multiple contexts from which these experiences can be understood. This theory is based upon specialized knowledge created by AAW, which signifies reality from the perspective of those who live it. In this light, AAW may generate specialized leadership knowledge from their discrete perspectives within the larger confines of race, gender, and class (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003).

Black feminist thought supports phenomenological inquiry in several ways (Orbe, Drummond & Camara, 2002). First, participants are regarded as co-researchers and are experts of their experiences. The knowledge that emerges, grounded in

consciousness, is “considered solid evidence” (p.125). Second, black feminist thought and phenomenology acknowledge the social or cultural positions of the participants’ are established in the perceptions of society. Third, dialogue and narratives are regarded as a valuable source of knowledge in both approaches. Finally, similar to AAW epistemology, phenomenological inquiry contends, “personal expressiveness and emotion are central (as are logic and reason) to knowledge, theory, and research” (p.125).

Collins (1990) points out how scholars and others that contribute to the study of AAW are situated knowers. In other words, rather than the researcher being distanced and using third person pronouns such as “they” or “their,” the researcher identifies as being among those studied and replaces third person pronouns with “we” -- “us” -- or “our.” This technique is consistent with the rhetorical philosophical assumption of qualitative research that was explained at the beginning of this chapter.

Black feminist thought promotes AAW’s empowerment. This empowerment requires “specifying the domains of power that constrain AAW, as well as how such domination can be resisted “(Collins, 1990, p. 19). As a critical social theory, black feminist thought seeks to empower AAW within the context of social justice. This is because AAW cannot be fully empowered unless intersecting oppressions such as race, gender, and social class are eliminated. Collins writes,

Historically, black women’s group location in intersecting oppressions produced commonalities among individual AAW. At the same time, common experiences may predispose black women to develop a distinctive group consciousness; they guarantee neither that such a consciousness will develop among all women nor that it will be articulated as such by the group. As historical conditions change, so do the links among the types of experiences black women will have and any

ensuing group consciousness concerning those experiences. Because group standpoints are situated in, reflect, and help shape unjust power relations, standpoints are not static. (p. 208)

According to Collins (1990), AAW have centrality in church and family. In general, AAW may “find it easier than others to recognize connectedness as a primary way of knowing, simply because we have more opportunities to do so and must rely upon it more heavily than others” (p. 260).

As a critical social theory, black feminist thought “encompasses bodies of knowledge and sets of institutional practices that actively grapple with the central questions facing U. S. black women as a collectivity” (Collins, 1990, p. 9) and reflects social justice as its foundation.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT), with roots in legal scholarship, is based on the notion of social construction and reality of race (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Delgado, 1995; Bell, 1993). CRT provides a means for people of color to communicate experiences and realities through narratives and storytelling and consequently, critically examine racial issues within the context of the workplace. CRT recognizes the experiential knowledge of people of color and their communities of origin in analyzing society. According to Taylor (2004), CRT posits, “issues of race, class, and gender are inextricably bound by economic, social, and political hegemonic power structures” (p. 35). Therefore, using counter stories based on experiences are useful for challenging the discourse and beliefs of the dominant group that have been reinforced through traditional research and theories.

Similar to black feminist thought, CRT supports a phenomenological methodology. The goal of CRT is emancipation of the individual. Emancipation occurs through the conscious experiences of self, which can be realized through the discourse and praxis of phenomenological inquiry. Phenomenology provides the means for discourse to take place as it relates to the lived experiences of an individual. CRT provides the means to dismantle the social structures and power dynamics that are exposed during discourse. Emancipation can lead to transformation, which could result in self-definition. Self-definition is the point in a woman's life where she overcomes societal stereotypes, becomes empowered, and begins a journey towards self-expression, defining her life in her own terms (Collins, 1990).

Overview of Research Paradigms

Based on the philosophical and theoretical frameworks described and my beliefs and assumptions as an African American woman who has experienced the phenomenon of leadership, I position myself as a researcher within the interpretivist and critical theory paradigms. From this position, I seek to bring to light how universal theories such as French and Raven's (1959) social power theory, is situated within a positivist paradigm, is narrowly focused, and is not generalizable to the lived experiences of AAW.

Table 3 is adapted from Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) basic beliefs of alternative inquiry paradigms and explains the characteristics of the paradigms in which the theoretical frameworks for this study are situated.

Table 3. Relevant Research Paradigms

What are the lived leadership experiences of African American women in predominantly white organizations?

<i>Paradigm</i>	<i>Philosophical Framework</i>		
	<u>Epistemology</u>	<u>Ontology</u>	<u>Methodology</u>
Positivist	Objective	Realism	Experimental
Critical theory	Subjective	Historical	Dialogic realism
Interpretivist	Subjective	Constructed reality	Hermeneutic phenomenology

Note: Adapted from *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed.,(p. 168), by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 2000, Thousand Oaks, CA,: Sage.

Research Design

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000) qualitative research is multi-method in focus involving an interpretive, naturalistic study of things by attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. A qualitative methodology rather than a quantitative methodology is preferred for my research because a qualitative method enables researchers to study social and cultural phenomena (Yin, 1999). Further, a qualitative methodology is useful in learning how to more effectively comprehend the meaning people make of their experiences and how their interpretations influence their reactions (Seidman, 1991). According to Becker (1970), to understand an individual's behavior, we must know how that individual perceives the situation, the obstacles the individual believes he or she faces, and the alternatives available. It is not the goal of qualitative research to generalize the discoveries made to other settings; rather, it is the goal to understand the experience. The researcher's

responsibility is to present evidence, make the appropriate arguments, and allow the reader to judge the soundness of the claims (Creswell, 1998).

Polkinghorne (1989) suggests there are general guidelines suited to understanding the phenomenon that is being studied. To understand the phenomenon as the individual experiences it, the researcher brackets his or her preconceived ideas about the phenomenon (Field & Morse, 1985). Moustakas (1984) describes this process as *epoché*, the theoretical moment where prejudgments, beliefs, and biases about a phenomenon are set aside.

On the contrary, Etter Lewis (1993) writes, “it is humanly impossible for an interviewer and any other researcher to be *totally* [emphasis in original] objective and entirely removed from the narrative” (p. xiii); although scholars and researchers have supported the notion of bracketing. Therefore, Etter-Lewis’ contention is a departure from the phenomenological process of bracketing where the researcher is described as bracketing his or her experience by setting aside prejudgments and “relying on intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a picture of the experience” (Creswell, 1998, p. 52).

In this study, my personal story appears in the introduction and is the stimulus for the study. Therefore, my personal encounter with the phenomenon contributes to the richness of the data that emerged and is very much a part of rather than separate from the leadership experiences of the participants. Furthermore, my personal encounter with the phenomenon allowed me to collaborate with the participants on a more profound level.

Data Sources

After being approved to conduct this study through Texas A & M University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I began the process of identifying possible participants by using a purposeful sampling technique (Creswell, 1998). This type of sampling makes the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned. Miles and Huberman (1994) advanced 16 strategies for purposeful sampling. The strategy recommended for a phenomenological study is criterion sampling (Creswell, 1998). Criterion sampling means the participants meet some criterion for study, allowing for more useful quality assurance. This type of purposeful sampling works well "when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon" (p. 118).

Sample Size

This study consisted of 10 AAW holding executive or senior-level management positions in a predominantly white organization. For the purposes of this study, "executive" refers to chief operating officers, vice presidents and the heads of business units with responsibilities such as change initiatives, innovation, and business performance (Noe, 2002). Senior-level management refers to a level of authority that manages or has administrative authority over several groups or departments.

For a phenomenological study Creswell (1998) suggests interviewing a sample of up to 10 participants. This sample size is consistent with similar studies (Parker, 1997; Gostnell, 1996, Allen, 1995). Furthermore, research studies that have used the narrative

storytelling approach typically use samples of 3-4, as this type of data collection can be quite in depth. Parker (1997) points out how the adequacy of sample size is frequently a point of contention among qualitative researchers. Minzberg (1979) argues,

What, for example, is wrong with samples of one? Why should researchers have to apologize for them?...The choice obviously depends upon what is to be studied. But it should not preclude the small sample, which has often proved superior.” (p. 583)

Selection Criteria

Selection criteria for participating in this study were based upon: agreeing to be interviewed and audio taped, representing a variety of professions, and representing a range of life orientations such as family, community, or spiritual focus (Bell, 1990). The latter criterion is important because life orientations define a woman’s values, interests, and directs her toward certain opportunities. Therefore, life orientations are guiding forces that direct and determine how a woman arranges her life. Given that our realities are transferable from one context to the other, this information will be helpful in analyzing the life orientations, if any, which influence the leadership experiences of the women in my study.

I sought participants that were 40 to mid-60s, with at least 5 years of executive or senior-level leadership experience. My rationale for this selection being, individuals in this age group are in the career refinement stage and are typically seeking to refine their work rather than follow competitive urges (Kummerow, 2000). As such, they will be more likely to equate leadership with a purpose beyond themselves (Gostnell, 1996). Additional criteria included living within a reasonable traveling distance and having no previous relationship between the participants and myself.

At the beginning, I solicited participants based on membership affiliation to African American professional organizations in the state of Texas. I approached organizations such as the African American Professional Organization, Texas A & M University and the National Black MBA Association, Houston, Texas. I targeted these organizations based on their large AA membership and the likelihood that membership would include AAW in executive or senior-level management positions. An advantage of choosing participants from a professional organization is the opportunity to attract participants from a cross section of industry sectors. I then identified a contact person for these associations that could disseminate a request for participation in this study via communication sources such as websites or email discussion lists. This method was not as effective as I had initially surmised because I discovered there was an involved process required to grant me permission to post an announcement via listservs. However I identified the pre-determined number of participants through personal contacts and the snowball effect.

For this research, I sought to assemble a group of participants that represented various occupations and sectors of society. Thus, the participants in this study reflect the leadership experiences of senior and executive managers from all sectors of the professions. While context of the experience may influence outcome, it is not the scope of this study. The common denominator among the participants in terms of context is that they hold leadership positions in pre-dominantly white organizations.

Initially, I thought to concentrate my selection of participants in corporate America. But I pondered on the rationale for this criterion as AAW are appearing in

leadership roles in all sectors of society including the public and private arenas. The phenomenon itself (leadership) remains the same whether AAW lead in corporate, public, or private sectors. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the issue of context will not be a major focus. Instead, the process of inquiry will focus on the leadership experience and how race, gender, and social class enters and influences the experience.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), due to the emergent and unpredictable nature of a qualitative research design, the researcher may find it necessary to continually refine, reorganize, and reassess the research process to accommodate the process of discovery. Therefore, this study will include participants from corporate, public, private, and community sectors. The requirement that the leadership experience is within a predominantly white organization remains the same.

Data Collection

Through an interview process, I collected data from the selected group of AAW in executive or senior level management positions. The data were collected by conducting face-to-face interviews. The interview is a form of discourse that is shaped and organized by asking questions (Mischler, 1986). It is a joint product of what the researcher and interviewees talk about and how they interact. Further, researchers conducting feminist related research are urged to “conduct sequential interviews in an interactive, dialogic manner that entails self-disclosure on the part of the researcher and fosters a sense of collaboration” (Creswell, 1998, p. 83). In a qualitative study, an in-depth interview is an appropriate technique for “locating the meanings people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives: their perceptions, assumptions,

prejudgments, presuppositions and for connecting these meaning to the social world around them” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10).

I used semi-structured, open-ended questions that were informed by the overall research questions (Briggs, 1986). These types of questions were used as they generally lend themselves to further and deeper probing. In designing the interview questions, I kept in mind the research questions that guide this study. Therefore, the interview questions were designed to invite the participants to tell a story of their lived experiences in such a way that some meaning could be extracted for further interpretation. The concept of lived experiences is consistent with black feminist thought and the assumption that AAW’s experiences are grounded in collective experiences of their everyday lives and the multiple perspectives from which we experience life, and in this study, how we experience the phenomenon of leadership.

The participants were interviewed in a face-to-face format at a neutral, mutually agreeable site. The length of time for each interview varied. In conducting the interviews I was aware of the busy schedules of each participant and initially planned for each interview to last about an hour. The interviews ranged from approximately 45 minutes to 2 hours. I audio taped each interview and transcribed them immediately afterwards. The interviews were scheduled far enough apart that I was not pressured to hurry through the process before moving to another interview. My goal was to transcribe the interview while I had vivid recall of the meeting.

I maintained a researcher's log during the data collection phase to record my personal reflections and learning experiences from the study. According to Ely et al, (1991)

Logs are chronological records of what we learn and our insights about how we learn it...where each qualitative researcher faces the self as an instrument through a personal dialogue about moments of victory and disheartenment, hunches, feelings, insights, assumptions, biases, and ongoing ideas about method. (p. 69)

I found the log beneficial to help manage and organize the data. As I made notes after each interview, I was able to actually connect to previous interviews and began to see emerging themes. In addition, the log helped me to make references to supporting literature that I recollected.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (1998), phenomenologists may vary in the data analysis approach. Regardless, the intended outcome is a textural description of what was experienced and a structural description of how it was experienced.

There are multiple ways to analyze qualitative data, including: Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparative method; Holsti's (1969) content analysis method; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis' (1997) portraiture method; and Riessman's (1993) narrative analysis. I chose the narrative analysis method. I chose narrative analysis in that it is suited to a phenomenological study (Taylor, 2004).

Narrative Analysis

The object of investigation in narrative analysis is the story itself (Riessman, 1993). Stories are not expressed through nature or the world. Rather, they are objectified

through the telling of the person that has had the experience. In this way, human agency dictates how that experience is structured, how the events are relayed, and what the experience means. The storyteller bears the responsibility for capturing the essence of meaning; the researcher bears the responsibility of retaining the authenticity of meaning.

Collecting the professional experiences of AAW can produce a form of narrative—the telling of one’s own story. From narratives, we learn one’s philosophy of life. Philosophy expresses one’s interpretations of the reality of life. Sharing realities grants us knowledge and perhaps greater wisdom that can be passed on. Taylor (2004) points out how narratives have emerged as a powerful tool for AAW’s “ways of knowing in structuring patterned relations of race, gender, and power structures” (p. 84). Narratives demystify AAW’s ways of knowing, in moments of reflection, relation, and resistance. Narratives create spaces where AAW “can know who we are when we are most us” (Dillard, 2000, p. 664). Individual narrative exposes the structural and cultural barriers that restrict AAW’s leadership within bureaucratic systems such as corporate environments (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). Using this premise, individual narrative should be a powerful tool for studying AAW because it “allows the person to withdraw from an experience in order to reflect upon it, then reenter active life with a new or deeper understanding of that experience” (Clark, 2001, p. 89).

Individuals are storytellers by nature (Lieblich et al, 1998). Narratives give us access to another’s experience and how that individual story has shaped and constructed their reality. Narratives are verbal accounts of experienced reality and provide coherence and continuity to that experience. Narratives offer an intimate perspective of a woman’s

life and provide deeper insight into interpreting and understanding her life unabridged (Etter-Lewis, 1993). As a mode of inquiry, narratives are a collaborative process, reconstructing past events to “make relevant to the present metaphors from the narrator’s past” (p. xii). Ochberg (1988) points out, “the stories people tell are important not only because they offer an unmatched window into subjective experiences, but because they are part of the image people have of themselves” (p. 174).

Another feature of narrative is the element of voice. Narratives are forms of voice that can reveal powerful and colorful images of AAW (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Relinquishing the right to be heard, relinquishes one’s power. Hence, narratives as a form of voice can be considered a source of granting power. Andersen and Collins (2001) believe a “voices” framework infers that an analysis is not complete until all voices have been heard. Instead an analysis grounded in race, gender, and social class offers a more complete understanding of the experiences of a single group.

Narrative analysis is a critical interpretation of the lived experiences of AAW through storytelling. As such, this form of analysis supports CRT and black feminist thought and are the theoretical frameworks that I used in this study. Narrative analysis, CRT, and black feminist thought are powerful tools for critical inquiry. As AAW tell their individual stories, collectively they may become empowered to resist their status of marginalization and respond as agents for change.

There are multiple ways to analyze narrative data (Clark, 2001). I chose to use a combination of two narrative processes: Etter-Lewis’ (1993) autobiographical method and Alexander’s (1988) principle identifiers of salience. I used Etter Lewis’ approach to

organize and present the interviews into story form and Alexander's principle identifiers of salience to interpret the content of the stories.

Narratives as Autobiography

Autobiography is a "fluid pattern of discourse that assumes a specific configuration of features according to the culture and world view which shapes it" (Etter-Lewis, 1993, p. 154). Writing about one's experiences has historical roots for AAW and became a vehicle for initiating change. After enduring a period of history that prohibited freedom of speech, written or oral, AAW began writing openly about experiences of racial and sexual oppression. The narratives in this study are "autobiographical in that each woman is telling her own story" (Johnson-Bailey, 1994, p. 64).

The emphasis of each woman's autobiography will be the segments of her life that apply to leadership roles in predominantly white organizations. It is not germane to this study to examine different phases or stages of the women's lives other than in trying to understand how the leadership image began to take shape. It is the phenomenon of leadership that is being examined here, how AAW experience the phenomenon when she enters a predominantly white organization, and encounters race, gender, and social class within these experiences.

Johnson-Bailey (1994) used a combination of narrative methods in a similar study of AAW re-entering higher education and emphasizes issues of race, gender, class, and color. According to Johnson-Bailey, AAW experience a world that is dictated by our race, gender, and social class. As we enter positions of leadership in organizations, these

social constructs do not automatically disappear, but instead they are already alive and well.

Etter-Lewis (1993) used an autobiographical, narrative analysis method to analyze the stories of nine AAW in the professions and their struggles against systems of race, gender, and social class. *My Soul is My Own* records the stories of nine AAW in the professions during the twentieth century. These stories tell of their struggles against race, gender, and social class during a period when rejection within professional organizations and institutions was the norm for AAW. Narrative analysis is commonly used in socio-cultural qualitative studies. Researchers use narratives when chunks of text from data are presented within the body of the study. Etter-Lewis took a slightly different approach in that she presents the data as stories that she refers to as autobiographies.

Etter-Lewis (1993) argues that the norm has been that only “white Western males are presumed to be capable of producing ‘pure’ autobiography” (p. xiv). AAW and other minorities are not acknowledged as possessing the creativity for autobiography. The mainstream attitude has produced a biased perspective of storytelling that does not fit the cultural and historical traditions of AAW. AAW portray stories of leadership in an intimate way and closely identify with community; whereas, white male autobiographies portray themselves as more individualistic and self-sufficient (Etter-Lewis, 1993).

In *My Soul is My Own*, Etter-Lewis (1993) used narratives to arrange interview data into stories. To do this, she removed the interviewer’s questions, pieced together the interviewer’s words, and presented the interview in its entirety as the interviewee’s

monologue. Following this process, after I had audio-taped and transcribed each interview, I removed my questions and responses to produce a cohesive unit of text that formed the interviewee's story.

Principle Identifiers of Salience

I analyzed each story separately according to Alexander's (1988) nine principles identifiers of salience to extract specific incidents that spoke to encounters with issues of power, race, gender, and social class within the leadership experience. I sought to extract collective experiences as well as unique experiences among the participants. Collective experience is a bond that unites women who self-identify as AA. My goal was to identify common threads of experience, which is a major tenet of black feminist thought (Collins, 1990). On the other hand, I realized no two experiences are the same. I looked for commonalities, but I also remained cognizant of the differences. I looked for unique ways in which each participant encountered race, gender, and social class in her leadership experience. The uniqueness of each individual was relevant to the findings as well.

According to Alexander (1988), a central problem of narrative analysis is how to treat the data so that it will "bare its order and thereby reveal the important information it contains" (p. 267). Alexander devised an approach of letting the data reveal itself using nine identifiers: primacy, frequency, uniqueness, negation, emphasis, omission, error, isolation, and incompleteness. Primacy is associated with first in importance or those experiences perceived of utmost significance. Frequency is associated with how often those experiences are communicated in the story. Uniqueness relates to how experience

is expressed. This might be through some unusual verbal expression or some form that the speaker shows the experience is set apart from anything experienced. Negation is salient in that the person having the experience seeks to play down the experience by trying to move away from the discussion or show indicators of wanting to repress that experience. Emphasis is an indicator that the speaker wishes to play up the experience by bringing it out more saliently and uses strong verbal expressions to achieve or make this point. Omission is salient in that the speaker appears to remove some essential piece of information perhaps to avoid some unpleasant memory. Error occurs as a salient indicator when the speaker distorts a fact when relating personal experience. This distortion is usually easily recognizable to the listener. Isolation refers to text that seems to appear out of nowhere and has no obvious connection to the discussion. Incompletion occurs when the speaker stops abruptly or changes the narrative flow. In this study, I bring the participant's story to life by "letting the data reveal itself" (Alexander, 1988, p. 269). According to Alexander (1988) stories from memory elicit a richer source of data as opposed to opinion, preference, evaluation, etc. Therefore, I was careful to make the distinction between stories and evaluative type responses. However as these responses were based on my interview questions, I made an exception to words of wisdom shared by these women based on their outsider within perspective. Outsider within is a term coined by Collins (1998) referring to the disempowerment of AAW within interactive systems of power, race, gender, and social class. Being an outsider within is consistent with AAW's process of collective wisdom and the continuing tradition of passing the knowledge (Collins, 1990).

Trustworthiness of Data

Trustworthiness is a term that refers to the credibility of a study and the researcher's belief that the phenomenon under investigation has been captured (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell (1998) suggests utilizing two or more of eight verification procedures to ensure credibility (prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer review, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checks, thick description, and external audits). Of these eight, I chose thick description, member checks, peer review and clarification of researcher bias as processes to establish trustworthiness of my data.

Thick description provides a detailed, rich, and vivid depiction of the participants and/or the setting under study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through detailed descriptions, the researcher enables the reader to make decisions regarding transferability of the data to other settings (Creswell, 1998).

Member checking allows the participants to test interpretations, findings, and conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, after I personally transcribed the interview tapes, I emailed each participant a copy of her transcribed interview to ensure I had accurately captured the essence of her experiences. In narrative analysis, member checking is also considered a part of the editing process and is a joint endeavor between researcher and the participants (Etter-Lewis, 1993). Additionally, having the same cultural background as my participants was an advantage during the editing process as I shared a mutual understanding of the linguistic form and dialect used in the telling of their stories.

Peer review was another method I chose as a means of verifying the consistency of the findings in this study. This procedure calls for experts that have conducted similar research to review the results of my findings. Given that both my co-chairs, Dr. Lynham and Dr. Stanley, have conducted similar research, they were able to offer me insight on possible interpretations that I had not considered as well as providing another set of lenses through which the data were examined.

In clarifying researcher bias, the researcher comments from the outset of the study pre-conceptions and assumptions that may be present due to past experiences or other biases that may impact the study (Creswell, 1998). This means my biases and assumptions as an African American female researcher was noted, as well as my former position of leadership in a predominantly white organization at the onset of this study. At the beginning of this study, I gave a brief story of my experience. This story essentially placed me within the study as having a personal interest.

Positioning Myself within the Study

Locke et al. (2000) point out the researcher's intensive interaction with the participants in a phenomenological study introduces a range of ethical and personal issues into the qualitative research process. According to Stake (1994) qualitative researchers are "guests in the private spaces of their subjects" (p. 244). Therefore, I understood the importance of building a collaborative and interpersonal relationship with the participants in my study, not for the purpose of gaining intimacy into their lives, but for the purpose of building trust and gaining their confidence.

Ruona (2005) points out the importance of a qualitative researcher acknowledging the role of bricoleur. In this role, the researcher produces a work of art that represents many pieces of a complex situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The researcher uses a variety of strategies and methods to weave together a unique work of art for “qualitative research is as much of an art as it is a science” (p. 236). I bring to my researcher’s role my natural gift of music. As a musician, I am an artist. The art of music has gifted me with the ability to be creative, to interpret, and to be expressive in a meaningful way. Therefore, I acknowledge my role as a qualitative researcher who, as a bricoleur, has the artistic gift to represent the participants’ varying and similar experiences with the phenomenon of leadership.

Furthermore, I have created a space for a selected group of women to tell about their leadership experiences in predominantly white organizations. Creating space means claiming the right to be heard and recognized by bringing previously silenced voices to the discourse of a topic (Sheared, 1994).

In Chapter IV Part I, I present the stories of a selected group of AAW leaders. In Part II, using Alexander’s (1988) identifiers of saliency, I analyze and interpret their stories to reveal the findings from this study. In Chapter V, I analyze the findings according to the theoretical frameworks, return to the philosophical framework, draw conclusions, and recommend further research of this topic, including my own current and future agenda for furthering the topic.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

This study is an investigation of the social phenomenon of leadership from the perspectives of 10 African American women (AAW) leaders and establishes the baseline for my study of AAW in positions of leadership. For this reason, this initial probe will focus primarily on AAW's leadership experiences in their respective professions. This study does not necessarily relate to earlier life experiences unless directly related to the leadership experiences the participants bring to this study. My rationale for focusing primarily on their professional lives and not particularly their lives outside their leadership experiences is so that the study does not begin to depart from the purpose of examining the phenomenon of leadership.

The review of literature suggests that perspectives of leadership from the experiences of AAW leaders are virtually absent from the body of knowledge on leadership. By allowing the voices of the selected group of participants in this study to be heard, new insights may be given by AAW who have experienced leadership in predominantly white organizations. Another potential outcome from hearing the leadership experiences of the selected participants is to stimulate interest in the lack of culturally inclusive perspectives of leadership theory and acknowledge socio-cultural informed meanings of leadership. Socio-cultural refers to theoretical perspectives that consider race, gender, and social class in analyzing power dynamics within bureaucratic and other systems where power can be used to oppress (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

As I began this phase of the study, I was aware I would have to use certain tactics as a researcher to bring out conversations that would essentially become my data. At some point in this process, however my role changed. I was no longer the researcher. I was a collaborator. I found that I did not have to seek or gain entry into these women's world. I was already a part of their world. Hence, I came away from the process not only understanding the essence of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 1998), but in many instances, I re-lived the experiences myself as I quite often heard stories or accounts that I, too, had encountered. The passages from the stories that appear in this section emerge from the data collected from the interview process. To form the stories, I removed the interviewer questions, edited the text, and presented it in the form of autobiographical stories. The interview questions from which these stories were formed centered around issues of race, gender, and social class. My aim was to present descriptive stories so that the participants would come to life through their storytelling.

The stories were edited only to the extent of presentation. Minimal revisions or rearrangements were made to the text. I removed the interview questions to create an uninterrupted version of the interview. Although I am invisible as the interviewer, the narrator's words are in fact in dialogue with me and in many instances are vivid and energetic. I removed pauses and false starts from the interview data. The editing process was also minimal as most of these women were well spoken, articulate, and highly expressive. I edited a second time for readability and clarity to ensure a smoothly flowing, coherent, story-like narrative (Etter-Lewis, 1993). I then submitted the story back to the participants. Seven of the women were available to review the final version.

For the remaining three, I assumed the responsibility as researcher to sanction the final versions that became a part of the data for this study.

This chapter is presented in two parts. In Part I, I present the storytellers, give my reflection of them, and present passages from selected stories. In Part II, through an interpretative process, I interpret the meanings that emerged from this process.

The names of the participants have been changed to protect their identity. In lieu of their given names, I have anointed each one with a name from the Bible as it is a befitting way to honor the courage and strength of these contemporary AAW.

Part One: The Storytellers: Telling Our Stories

In this section, I introduce the 10 women that participated in this study, giving a brief profile of each one, along with my reflection of her. I have also included a philosophical statement with each profile that captures my interpretation of the participant's epistemology. The introductions are made in order of the interview dates. Before the storytellers are introduced, I give my general reflections of the interview process. These reflections are taken from my researcher's log. I maintained this log to journal and record field notes after each interview. The log is a personal dialogue and contains my reflections of learning experiences, insights, biases, and moments of victory and disheartenment in my emerging role as a researcher.

General Reflections

Generally speaking, even though I tried to stay with the questions that I had prepared, individual experience often took the conversation in varying directions. As I

mature in my experience as a researcher, I should learn how to guide the conversation according to relevancy to my research.

In many instances, I found myself being taken back to my own leadership experiences. I found myself interjecting and describing similar experiences that I have had in a leadership role. I had to check myself by remembering this is not about me. But then again, isn't it about me as well? Isn't that what I am trying to find--a connection grounded in individual leadership experience?

Another thing I found is that it is rather impersonal to simply shoot questions at the participants. People seem to have their guard up when you question them in that manner. Instead I found myself trying to create small talk that would allow us time to bond and gain rapport, which was a much more personal manner to begin the process. I did not ask the participants their age. They had been given the criteria for participation. Their ages are primarily based on my observation and intuition.

I did not make notes during the interview, as I did not want to distract from the process and wanted to retain eye contact and involvement with my participant during the interview. So I made notes after each interview. I did this no later than the day after the interview while the whole process was still vivid in my mind. I transcribed each interview before conducting another one. I did not want to cloud my perceptions and other observations in the data I was collecting.

Many of the women had experienced being the "first" in some aspect of leadership. Priscilla was the first AA, period, in the commercial banking management-training program in the state. Julia was the first AAW to serve as city councilwoman and

eventually Mayor Pro-tem (interim mayor) in a mid-sized city in East Texas. Deborah was the first AAW to hold a leadership position in a male dominated profession as was Esther, Lydia and Kezia. Hannah was another pioneer in her community to hold leadership positions that were not previously held by an AA person. These experiences of being the first were enlightening as well as informative and deepened the insight these women brought to the study.

My last reflection on the interview process is how fabulous it would have been or would be to have these women in conversation with each other. I will keep that thought active and pursue it at a later time.

Kezia

We experience a heavy burden and pay the black tax to work in predominantly white organizations.

Kezia, Chief Information Officer,
public sector, former corporate executive

I've been in Information Technology Information Systems for over 25 years, 22 of those have been in leadership positions. Prior to coming to the position I am currently in, I was in corporate America. I also had my own consulting business where I worked for various oil companies and private law firms. Most of my experience has been in large organizations.

My Reflection of Kezia

Kezia and I met in a mutually agreed upon location. My first impression of her was classy, educated, and very professional. I would place her age in the early 40s range. I was delighted to discover her leadership experience spans corporate as well as the

public sector. The interview was enlightening because I found myself listening to the scenarios she described and being taken back to my own past leadership experiences.

But my greatest learning from this interview was a term that she used, “the black tax.” I was most intrigued by this term because it hinted at a burden being imposed upon African Americans. I have made a note to look further into the term and confirm my idea. Because if the “black tax” as Kezia used it, has been used to describe how blacks, in general, are burdened in society, then AAW may be subjected to a double taxation (being black and female) and perhaps even triple taxation if race, gender, and social class are looked upon as the taxing systems. This term also seemed similar to other terms I have encountered in the literature, such as “double bind” and “double blind syndrome.”

As this was my first interview, I wanted to reflect on what did not work well in this process. Rather than starting right into the questions, I should develop a better technique to lead into the interview so that the process is more conversational. Fortunately, Kezia is on top of her game and didn’t need much of a lead in to become conversational. This interview lasted approximately an hour and 15 minutes.

Lydia

I didn’t look to rock the boat; complaining has never been what I am about. I just wanted a job where I felt I was needed. I have been through a lot and I have the battle scars. But it only went to make me more determined.

Lydia, retired Senior Manager, state agency

I worked my way up in a male-dominated occupation to become a top manager in that organization. I retired after about 25 years with the same agency, 16 of those years were in a top leadership position. Currently I am actively involved in community

leadership, particularly with an organization that promotes the development of young African American girls.

My Reflection of Lydia

Lydia and I met in a mutually agreed upon location. She presented an impressive and powerful image. I placed her age to be about the mid to late 50s range. While she did not directly say this, I had the impression that the strict rules and regulations that must be adhered to in state agencies constrained her natural leadership persona. I also had the impression that in a less bureaucratic system she might have been a “power to reckon with.”

Lydia is a pioneer in her profession. She was one of the first women to hold a leadership position in a traditionally male dominated occupation in this state. The fact that she is an African American woman added another edge to her trail blazing leadership experience.

What worked well was that Lydia was eager to share her experiences. However she talked more in general than about specific incidents. So I need to gain a better sense of probing to extract deeper, more meaningful stories. But I found myself treading cautiously because I did not want to cross personal boundaries. I am also comfortable interjecting my own personal leadership experiences, which I do think was one way to help the participants open up. Other than that, the interview went well and lasted approximately one hour.

Judith

When a new leader goes into an organization, she needs to observe the culture first because the culture dictates how she will lead. I am in a constant state of observation.

Judith, Executive Director, Human Resources Services, school district & former school principal

I have been in the educational system for almost 30 years; 17 of those have been in an administrative capacity. Currently my administrative role is employee administration rather than school administration.

My Reflection of Judith

I met with Judith in a mutually agreed upon location. My immediate impression of Judith is “stylish, polished, striking.” She was very professional in appearance and I would place her age in the early to mid 50s range. Next, “she’s a talker.” But strangely enough she seemed to talk around issues that challenged her leadership. She kept avoiding direct discussion of negative experiences or specific occurrences that challenged her leadership in terms of race, gender, or social class. At first, I was a bit disappointed as I felt I had failed to bring out situations that were oppressive in nature. My mindset had been on extracting “war” stories that these women would tell, a bias I will need to contain.

As I was transcribing the tape of her interview, I had a new insight. I can see now how the actual interview does not always allow the researcher to hear with the depth that is needed to interpret the interviewees’ experience. It is often in the aftermath that we discover and can see through a clearer lens. So before I begin transforming words into meanings, I will need to read the interviews several times. I need to first have a deeper

understanding of the individual experience before I can find a collective understanding of this group of AAW leaders' experiences. Another important discovery I made was that each woman will tell her story in a different way. Storytelling is an art and no two artists will interpret the scene and paint the picture in the same way.

While Judith describes herself as an educational leader, she makes reference quite a few times to perceptions and resistance by the community. So I see her connecting and extending her perspectives of leadership to include the community as well as to the school system.

What worked well with this interview is that I actually glimpsed how Judith aligned with transformational and visionary leadership. Based on my recollection of these theories, she seems to look beyond rather than dwell in the past of how the AAW leader struggles against race, gender, and social class within predominantly white organizations. The interview with Judith lasted approximately two and a half hours.

Vashti

As with any job there are always the politics, and so you are expected to play the game by their rules.

Vashti, Research Chief, magazine industry

Currently I work for [name of magazine]. I have been working for them on and off since 1986. In 1991, I was named Research Chief, heading the research department for that magazine. There are two white men that report directly to me.

My Reflection of Vashti

Vashti is in the journalism field and leads a journalism team. My immediate impression of Vashti was that she was quiet, soft-spoken, and very graceful. I met with

Vashti at her home. It spoke of wealth and affluence. However she seemed very humble albeit the apparent wealth that surrounded her. I placed her age in the early 60s range. I felt very welcomed in her home and the atmosphere was very relaxed.

Like the interview with Judith, Vashti seemed reluctant to bring in issues of race and gender. It became apparent to me that social class may not be an issue for her and this is why. Her husband has a very prestigious, highly visible position within academia. From our conversation I discovered she moves about the social world with more ease than many African Americans. I also had the impression that she was used to interacting with all races of people.

Even though Vashti reached a position in the journalism profession that few AAW have achieved, I sensed her career is secondary to her role as wife and mother. My intuition is that she would be willing to challenge issues that face AAW in predominantly white organizations but she would do so quietly and behind the scenes. The interview lasted approximately one hour.

Claudia

I don't expect to change people, so I have had to learn how to change the situations. I had to learn how to assert myself, first quietly. And now, I just seem to know when, as my mother used to tell me...to choose my battles.

Claudia, Senior Program Administrator, state agency

I am an administrator for this organization and I have worked in this department for the entire time I have been here, which has been almost 30 years. I have held a supervisor's role for over 15 years. But I have held my current position as administrator for about eight years. I report directly to a division manager, who is top management

within the organization. For the most part, I have always had a white person, and at one time a white woman, that I directly reported to in this current position.

I manage a staff of about 65 people, including the four supervisors that report to me, and an administrative assistant. The department I head is responsible for keeping records. We do other things, but that is our primary responsibility. My supervisory staff consists of three white women and one AAW. My clerical staff consists of 11 men, one of these is an AA male, six AAW, and the remainder is Anglo or Latino. My present administrative assistant is an AA female, although that is a fairly recent change to the diversity of my staff. My staff is increasing in diversity representation but this has been slow in coming about.

My Reflection of Claudia

Claudia was another stylish and classy woman. I guessed her age to be about late 40s to early 50s. We met at her home. From the very beginning, I felt very relaxed in her presence and gained rapport with her early in our conversation. It was quite easy to converse with her. Claudia was a soft-spoken woman but she was very opinionated. I thought, at last! Someone who is finally giving me some stories!

Claudia and I connected on several points that she brought up. Like my interview with Kezia, I found it quite natural to share similar incidents during my career. This interview went very well and I collected data that contained specific incidents in her leadership experiences. This is the type of information I had expected to retrieve when I entered this phase of my study and I felt very pleased. The interview lasted approximately one hour.

Julia

We know that things can be better. As AAW, making a difference to someone is who we are and is what we do.

Julia, Senior Administrator, state agency;
community and civic Leader

I am a native Texan. I have worked for 24 years for the state of Texas, where I presently serve as a senior administrator. My education background includes an Associate of Science Degree and a Bachelor of Science. I am currently working on a Masters Degree in Business Administration. I have served in a lot of leadership positions not only through my job, but working with various church, civic, and community organizations. I am a graduate of the city's Leadership Institute, where community leaders learn more about the community and different organizations where you might be of assistance. One of my greatest projects has been a project I coordinate each March called Black Women of Texas. What we are trying to do is promote the history of the African American female and especially in Texas.

My Reflection of Julia

My interview with Julia was super! Julia is an auditor for a state agency. Her status is senior management. I placed her age in the mid 40s-late 40s range. My impression of her was educated and very out-spoken. We met in her home. She was most eager to share her experiences with me. So far, she has demonstrated the most interest of all my participants in how my study will contribute to the challenges we face as AAW. She was a very spirited woman and we had a very animated and lively interview! I actually believe I could have designed this study as a case study on her interview alone! I found this interview was the most conversational to date. I didn't really have to ask the

questions in order, as she just naturally addressed them during her conversation. So we basically just talked. Julia and I had instant rapport and often lapsed into “sistah talk.”

What really impressed me about Julia was her span of leadership. She has not contained herself as a leader within the workplace. She projects a social justice attitude that includes the entire community’s awareness of race, gender, and social class. She told me about similar research that had been archived at a location in this state supporting the study of AAW. She suggested after my study is completed I might want to have my work archived there. The interview with Julia lasted approximately two and a half hours.

Hannah

My strategy for dealing with issues facing me as a leader has been to stop, drop, and roll...because I knew ultimately God is in control and He would take care of me.

Hannah, Senior Administrator, school district

I’ve been in leadership about 20 years and have worked in predominantly white organizations ever since I’ve been employed. I started with the school district in 1986 as the Community Education Coordinator for the Continuing Education program. Before then I had been doing a lot of things in the community. A lot of that time I was the only black person in central administration, especially here in this school district. In fact, I may be the first black woman in central office.

I was in the first Leadership Institute sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce in 1981. There were black males involved in that first class but I was the only AA female. Then I was on the Chamber Board after that because they always recruit

members of the Leadership class to be on the Board--for maybe three or four years. Then later they held a Youth Institute and I was on that Board.

My Reflections of Hannah

Hannah recently retired from public school administration. My immediate impression of her was poised, dignified, and graceful. I placed her age in the mid 50s range. We met at a mutually agreed upon location. Another first impression of Hannah is her eloquence of speaking. She expresses herself very well. I found it quite easy to transcribe her interview and there was minimal editing required. Hannah has extraordinary leadership background. She was the first AAW in a number of civic and community positions and roles as well as being the first AAW to become a part of the local school administration. I began to make the connections to the literature that I have read about AAW's community leadership. It is a natural extension of who we are at work. It became very clear to me a short time into this interview that Hannah is a very spiritual woman. She has a deep and abiding faith in God that spills forth naturally. It is not that any of the other women did not express spirituality, but Hannah described her actions or rather reactions in terms of being guided by God. We connected on this aspect of our personal faith as being the guiding force of our survival in the workplace. Hannah completed a doctorate degree in Education several years ago.

After this interview, I could actually feel like I was evolving as a researcher. I am learning how to lead the conversation into the areas of leadership that are significant to this study. Yes, I am becoming more confident and more comfortable wearing my researcher's hat. This interview went well and lasted one hour.

Deborah

If it had not been for the Lord on our side, where would we be?

Deborah, Executive manager, private sector; retired Senior Manager, state agency

I began with the agency in 1973 upon graduating from college in May and was only in a lower line position until January of the following year. From 1974, when I was first promoted, until I retired and went back to work, I have been in some sort of leadership or supervisory responsibility.

My Reflection of Deborah

My first impression of Deborah was how beautiful she was. I guessed her age to be about early 50s and I thought how gracefully she was aging. She presents herself with such style-educated, classy, feminine, sophisticated and soft-spoken but at the same time possessing an air of warmth, congeniality, and calmness. She is very feminine, but she has an aura about her that commands attention and respect. She projects the image of the cool executive. A somewhat odd combination, I know. And the more she spoke it was evident she is a Christian lady.

Deborah is a pioneer in her profession. In fact, I later found information about her on the Internet. I do not wish to compromise her identity and discuss her profession. But I will say that she rose to a senior management position in a field that is traditionally a tough male dominated profession. And as we go deeper into her reflections of leadership, she indicates that it is the spiritual dimension of her life that played a major role in her winning the respect of a primarily male staff during her leadership reign. She is quick to say she is always ready to use the skills God has blessed her.

Deborah recalled a time when a particularly resistant white male visited her office. This person was one of her management staff but had barely acknowledged her from the beginning. He asked for a harmony visit, an informal one-on-one visit that Deborah explained was her trademark as a leader. But this particular request was not just aimed at creating harmony. It was to apologize for this individual's failure to acknowledge Deborah's leadership. Obviously she had passed his test, because this employee said from then on he would support her.

I learned a lot from Deborah in the short time that we visited. She offered me so much encouragement for not just the topic I am studying but also the fact that I am pursuing a doctorate and trying to give back to my race as I advance. She also reached out to me in another way. Deborah reminded me that life is a vapor and we should take time to enjoy each moment. This interview went well and lasted approximately one hour and a half.

The day after our visit, Deborah emailed me with additional insights. Again, she encouraged me and indicated how proud she was of the work I am doing.

Priscilla

We have...a seasoned perspective. And even though [younger AAW] may know where you are going...we know where we have been.

Priscilla, Vice-President/Banking

Let me begin by saying the corporate world--the entire business world--is changing so quickly. So many of us, especially AAW, need help dealing with change and taking advantage of opportunities. So the evolution of a field like Human Resource Development is really smart and is really needed.

I have been in banking almost 35 years. I came to this bank when I graduated after earning an undergraduate degree in Finance. I completed some Masters studies, but I didn't get a Masters. I was probably the first AAW to complete the Commercial Banking Officers' Management Training program back in the 70s in this state.

My Reflection of Priscilla

This was the hardest interview to secure because Priscilla's schedule was extremely busy. I learned later she was also shuffling personal issues. She actually cancelled our interview about four times. After the fourth cancellation, I had given up on hearing from her. When she finally contacted me, I was elated! I felt extremely fortunate to have her participation because of her position in the corporate arena. We met at a mutually agreed upon location.

This was also the most amusing interview to date. Priscilla is hilarious. My first impression of her would be smart. An individual can be educated but not have intellect and savvy to get ahead. She is definitely a "fight the system" kind of individual and she had plenty of stories to tell. She gave me the impression that she does not back down easily.

Of all the participants to date, Priscilla expressed interest in the field of HRD. She was interested to know how I would apply my knowledge of HRD after I completed my Ph.D. This is the first opportunity I have had to "sell" the field to someone outside the profession. I hope I did it justice. This interview went well and lasted approximately one hour and 15 minutes.

Esther

I knew that they were constantly watching me. I even realized after a while that was a good thing because not knowing it, I was proving to people that were curious about me that, I am who I am.

Esther, retired Senior Manager, public utility company

In the spring of 1972, the district manager for a large public utility company offered me a position with the company. I had become acquainted with this individual [white male] through a public service job I held at that time. He seemed very impressed with how well I articulated and thought I would be a good candidate for a customer service position he was recruiting for. So initially, I was hired into a lower entry-level position. Within a year, I was presented an opportunity from the same individual that recruited me to qualify for a management position and was the first AAW in this area to be named Chief Assigner. During the time that I entered the profession there was a big push for minorities, particularly women, to be hired. Prior to this time, this type of job had been held primarily--most likely exclusively--by white males.

My Reflection of Esther

My interview with Esther nicely rounded out the collection of stories. Esther has retired from the public sector. Most of her leadership experience was in an area of the public utility industry that was dominated by men until the mid 70s. She is another first in changing the face of a male dominated profession. I met with Esther at her home. My first impression of Esther was the eloquent manner in which she spoke.

Esther was very expressive and seemed to have flair or even a gift for articulation. Not only that--her thoughts seemed to flow so naturally. I did not have to coach Esther. When I asked a question that was actually an interview question, it seemed

that the question flowed naturally as part of the conversation rather than being a part of the process. Esther, like several other participants in this study, experienced leadership during an era of male dominated professions where it was unheard of for women to enter and lead. For women of color it was unspeakable. Esther had plenty of stories to tell. This interview went well and lasted approximately two hours.

Marilyn - Closing the Story

In Chapter I, I began this study by telling my story. In a way, I am the first storyteller. I find it befitting to close the collection of stories by returning to my story and the professional experiences that began this personal journey.

My journey began as an outgrowth of my need to understand my experiences as an AAW in a position of leadership in a predominantly white organization. When I left the organization a few years ago, many of the people that represented a challenge to me were no longer there, so the culture was gradually changing. In addition to that, upper management was being replaced with individuals that were more open minded and interested in addressing issues. Yet there were still those little encounters that happened daily, encounters that were “in the moment” that left me wondering whether or not my racial, gendered, and class location in society played a part.

Many of the experiences that AAW encounter daily are untold stories. We face situations, deal with them and move on. We don't necessarily expend time in trying to sort out the meaning of what happened, because by the time we have pondered it even for a short while, another event is encountered that takes its place. An old adage says that we learn from mistakes, but experience is also a teacher and rewards us insight in

retrospect. Experience gradually gives way to wisdom, and wisdom gradually creates knowledge.

From conducting the interviews for this study, I learned something from each of the women that has certainly stimulated and re-energized my goal for social change in organizations. The insight I have now is how to react to the situation and not the person. I agree with Claudia who said that we cannot seek to change people, but rather seek to change the situation. Even though seeking resolution is a rational course of action to take, reflecting on what happened and why it happened is the first step to being equipped for the next encounter. It is through the process of reflection, like storytelling, that triggers the process.

Although each of these women inspired me in her unique way, it was Hannah who touched me the most profoundly. She said that we know the beginning and we know the end because God has already promised He will take care of the end. But when we are in the middle trying to work out frustration, stress, and all those other emotions that are reactions to the challenges we face, we simply need to walk it out. Her words still resonate within me as I remember her saying,

The first thing we must do to successfully lead in these types of environments is to trust God. Because if you don't, you'll spend a lot of your energy trying to make things right that really you don't have the ability to make right. You cannot control how other people feel about you. You can't control how they react to you. But you can control your inner peace. And that's a part of your spirituality you have to know and that is knowing that God will level the playing field.

I have found closure with that part of my professional life. Yet the journey continues. My inner peace comes from knowing that now I have the tools that I need to

bring issues into the open--issues that AAW encounter and struggle against daily when and where we enter to lead.

Part Two: Asking the Data a Question

Alexander (1988) offers two techniques for working with narrative data, letting the data reveal itself and asking the data a question. Using either of these methods, the initial data can be sorted and reduced to manageable proportions. I used the latter technique. In asking the data a question, the investigator asks a question the response to which is relevant to unraveling the intricacies of the subject's personal view of the world. The question I chose to ask the data is: *What stories emerge that describe these storytellers' encounters with intersectionality (race, gender, and social class) in their leadership experiences?*

As explained previously, the participants' autobiographical stories emerged from the interview questions. Since I designed the interview questions to stimulate conversation about encounters with race, gender, and social class in the leadership experience, I looked for meaningful stories relating to those types of experiences. The question I asked the data also linked directly to the overarching research question for this study, namely: *What are the lived leadership experiences of African American women in predominantly white organizations?*

The next step was to "extract every sequence or incident appearing in the data" (Alexander, 1988, p. 285) in which the participant told a story that related to encounters with race, gender, and/or social class. There are two distinct ways to recollect events that

are have been experienced. Alexander (1988) refers to these as data of memory and data of present conscious reflection:

The richest sources of data are those which deal with the spontaneous recollection from memory of various aspects of life already lived, as in a freely produced autobiographical essay or directed interviews focused on lived experience. The critical distinction intended here is between the data of memory and how it emerges in description and the data of present conscious reflection as in opinions, preferences, evaluations, professed values, and the like. The former contains the promise of less contamination than the latter. People find it easier and less threatening to describe recollections of incidents and events involving the critical [events] in their lives. (p. 267)

I used the data of memory in the form of selected passages from the stories told by the participants.

Applying the Principles of Saliency to the Data

Applying Alexander's (1988) technique of narrative analysis calls for the data to be sorted according to a set of rules identifying "what in the material demands further scrutiny" (p. 269). These rules or principle identifiers of saliency include primacy, frequency, uniqueness, negation, emphasis, omission, error, isolation, and incompleteness. According to Alexander (1988), the researcher decides which indicators of saliency will be relevant to the investigation. I chose to use frequency and uniqueness. Alexander points out that when an experience is repeated we tend to assign importance to what is being said: "For the most part we are tuned to frequency or repetition as increasing signs of certainty and of importance" (p. 270). My rationale for using this indicator of saliency is that it supports an underlying assumption of black feminist thought that AAW have common experiences that lead to collective wisdom in our lived experiences.

Uniqueness signals a departure from that which is commonly understood and further supports an underlying assumption of black feminist thought that our personal biographies are made up of unique and concrete experiences and no two individuals will experience the world in the same way (Collins, 1990).

First, I searched for and extracted passages from each participant's autobiographical story that described how the participant experienced the phenomenon of leadership. These passages were microscopic stories with an introduction, an action, and an outcome (Alexander, 1988). I color coded each unit and assigned a general description based on my interpretation of the experience. After I had applied this process to all 10 autobiographical stories, I began to cluster the general descriptions for commonalities. In a phenomenological study, Creswell (1998) says that the researcher reflects upon her own experience and uses "structural description, seeking all possible meanings and divergent perspectives, varying the frame of reference about the phenomenon, and constructs a description of how the phenomenon was experienced" (p. 150). Alexander (1988) says that, "what should fall out from invoking this procedure is a finite number of salient units" (p. 278). The result was 10 clusters of meaning. These clusters of meaning gave an overarching description of how the phenomenon of leadership was experienced by the participants in this study. I then created a table that identified these clusters and the participant having the experience.

The first salient principle I applied was frequency. I looked for clusters where at least half of the women told a story. This reduced the categories to five clusters of meaning: disempowering encounters, being excluded from the good ole boy social

network, being the only one, needing validation, and de-mythicizing stereotypical images. Table 4 identifies these clusters of meaning and the participant who described having had the experience.

Table 4. Asking the Data a Question

<i>What stories emerge that describes these storytellers' encounters with race, gender, and social class in their leadership experiences?</i>	
Clusters of meaning	Experienced by
Disempowering encounters	Priscilla, Julia, Vashti, Claudia Lydia, Judith, Hannah, Deborah, Kezia, Esther
Being excluded from the good ole boy social network	Julia, Vashti, Claudia, Lydia, Hannah, Deborah, Kezia, Esther
Being the only one – outsider	Priscilla, Julia, Vashti, Claudia, Hannah, Deborah, Esther
Needing validation	Priscilla, Julia, Claudia, Lydia, Hannah, Kezia
De-mythicizing stereotypical images	Julia, Claudia, Hannah, Deborah, Esther

Applying the indicator of frequency to the overall stories of these women, I found the most salient experience was disempowering encounters. I noted that all the women had experienced some form of disempowerment.

The next task was to decide how to present supporting data from the text for further discussion. I faced the researcher's dilemma of deciding how to represent "judiciously and with clarity the data collected...and present the passages that best characterized the essence of the interviews, thoughts, commitments, and personalities

that seemed to best capture” (Gostnell, 1996, p. 206) and convey the participants’ experiences. I am satisfied I have achieved this goal and have selected passages from each of these clusters that gave a rich description of the experience. I give verbatim accounts taken directly from the participants’ autobiographical stories.

Salient Encounters in the Leadership Experience

African American people are alleged to “pull the race card” when encountering difficult or challenging situations. According to Parker and ogilvie (1996), AAW report “racism rather than sexism, as the greater barrier to opportunity in dominant culture organizations” (p. 197). Because these acts are often subtle and overt, these encounters can be a source of confusion and frustration.

The following are passages from selected stories of 10 AAW leaders that have encountered experiences in predominantly white organizations that were perceived as having a connection to race, gender, or social class. We are telling these stories because *if we don’t tell them, they won’t be told.*

Disempowering encounters. Deitch et al (2003) found that whites often use their privilege to circumvent, diminish, overrule, and control the actions of blacks in the workplace. Even blacks in positions of leadership are subject to having their authority undermined. Encounters with these types of discriminatory acts in today’s workplace are less blatant and is experienced in a more subtle and overt manner. Disempowerment may occur in the form of challenging, resisting, resenting, undermining, or even ignoring a person’s authority. All the women in this study related experiences involving some form

of being disempowered. Selected stories of those encounters are presented in this section.

Priscilla tells the story of the subordinate that questioned virtually everything she instructed the woman to do. She indicated the woman actually did underhanded things to cause her not to be successful.

Let me tell you this. I have kind of a funny story. Right now there are only two of us in the unit. So rather than hire an administrative assistant for us, we just use the administrative assistant for the international group, which has like five or six people. But I really don't write her review. I did encounter all the time a resistance, a rebellion from her all the time. Actually it ended up with the woman being terminated. Now that's another story. But the other is a service person and as a matter of fact she's still with me now. This woman [white] absolutely questioned everything I told her to do. And it really got to be bad. And finally I had to go to her manager and say, Listen you need to have her understand, or somebody needs to make her understand--and I'm nice and diplomatic--when I tell her to do something, I'm not asking her to do this. So she needs to do it! And it was always around times when I knew the bank had made a mistake and we owed the client some money back. She would just act like it was her money. But I was even able to uncover--along with her manager--a sort of conspiracy she and somebody else was trying to lead to make sure I would not be successful. This is true. As a matter of fact on one occasion, her manager actually called me and told me she knew this person was withholding information from me--anything for me to fall flat on my face!

Julia recalled disempowering experiences she has had.

I encounter situations every month in my present managerial position where my authority is questioned. I am in a role that I clearly have authority and I simply make it known that state and federal policy and procedures govern my position. A clerk recently left my department and in a meeting literally questioned why I was hired. She was informed of my qualifications and seniority that exceeds hers and others in the department. I am still amazed by people who look at the color of your skin and determine you are not worthy.

I recall when another administrator that I supervised continually challenged and questioned my decisions and I felt race played a part. For instance, once in a meeting she became so frustrated she remarked that it appeared to her that I held my position because I was black and most of the children at the center were black. Then when I was a councilwoman, my gender was many times challenged.

I was told that most council representatives were white males. I was even told by a white male council member that he felt it was difficult for me to understand the agenda at times because I was a black female new to politics. I accepted the challenge to prove him wrong.

According to Vashti, in the magazine business there are few leadership positions. So if someone had an aspiration to fill one of those slots, then they were probably trying to figure out how they are going to undermine you.

Every now and then I would have one coworker who would say, I think you need to do this or that. And it was always a case of me saying, I'm going to consider that but you need to come to *me* [emphasis added], you don't need to go to the people who work for me. I'll figure out what we're going to do and then I'll do it. You undermine my authority when you go around me or make it seem like it's a group decision when it's not a group decision.

Claudia shared another perspective of feeling disempowered when a white male administrator would overlook her authority. The lack of support from her superior to correct this type of situation was also a source of frustration for her.

There was a situation where another administrator, a white male, frequently assigned work to my staff without my knowledge. He was from another area of the organization, but often his area had dealings with my group. One incident in particular stays with me. There were two young white women on my staff that this individual approached without my knowledge and that basically ended up initiating a procedural change within my department. It was as if he simply overlooked my existence as the person responsible for assigning and being accountable for the work my staff does or at least having knowledge about the work they were doing. This was something that happened frequently in that he refused to acknowledge me and continued to give instructions to my staff without my knowledge. Now granted he was a higher level than I, although he was not my direct superior. The problem I had was that he did not respect my position. Or rather, he did not respect the person in my position. This went on for a few times until I finally approached him about it. When I confronted him about it, his response was that, I want certain people to do my work. That really upset me. My thought was, they are white and I'm black. I asked him what he would have done had the situation been reversed. He tried to make it seem like I was over-reacting. When I turned it around and asked him how he would like me assigning work to his staff without his knowledge, he became defensive. He finally said I shouldn't "sweat the small stuff." Eventually I went to my boss, which at that time was

another white male. Although he listened to what I had to say, I don't think he really understood my feelings. He suggested that I talk to this other individual. When I told him that I had already done that, he simply suggested we try to work it out. I was disappointed though that he did not try and intervene or even bring the two of us together and try to mediate what was happening. His attitude was more like he was indifferent to what was happening. And this was not the only time my boss showed indifference to things that I felt had racial undertones. But eventually this problematic individual left the organization. But it was hard...really hard for me.

Lydia relates her experience of feeling disempowered in a predominantly male profession.

I had one particularly challenging situation. It took a lot of praying and a lot of soul searching to deal with this employee. It was a male employee. This employee felt that... he told me that he had a problem with a female being his boss. He never said a black female but, I knew. But the one thing I respected about him was that he told me. He told me he had a problem. I knew to "dodge the knife" sometimes, you know. I didn't treat him any way differently or whatever. I thanked him for his honesty. But I told him "If you allow me to do and be what I needed to be... then I would allow you to do what you need to do." We butted heads several times. And he would most of the times come back and say, I know I didn't do what you told me to do and I know I said something out of the way to you when you instructed me to do this, but it's hard for me, it's just hard for me. It's just really hard.

Then there were times where I felt if there were males in the room there were subjects that they thought I didn't know anything about and sometimes I would sit there and wait and wait and wait. And then I would speak up and I would just blurt [whatever they had been talking around] it out. I could tell by how some of them would look at me when they were discussing things between themselves, they would sort of look at me...to me it was like a look of embarrassment like, She doesn't even need to be in this room. But they would just sort of cut their eyes and look at me to see what type of reaction I was having because they knew they should be addressing these issues to me. But they didn't know what type of experience being a female that I had versus the experience they had being a male, because the position I held had been filled predominantly by men for years.

Judith acknowledges that race and gender do issue challenges. In her case as an educational leader, the community has played a large part in her past leadership challenges.

There is not a leader who has not been challenged if you are doing what is in the best interest of the organization, what is in the best interest of the people within that organization. I'm an educator. I have dealt with many factions of people. And I don't mean factions in terms of separate and not being able to come together but different groups I should say of people. You're dealing with community members who may not even have children attending your school, but they're concerned with other things perhaps that are going on within the school. So there is not an effective leader who is going to please all of the people all of the time. That just does not happen. So you're going to be challenged. You're going to be perceived a certain way. And I've certainly been challenged--on many, many occasions. Definitely race and gender played into that! I had a conversation just yesterday with someone about that very thing. First of all--I am female. Secondly, I don't know if it's second, I think they kind of go hand in hand. If anything they are parallel. The way I perceive it--I am a black female, some people prefer to use the word African American--but I'm a black female. But the outcome depends on where you are, the situation that you are in, the culture of the environment, and what that situation has evolved into. For me one of the challenges was gaining the acceptance of the community where the school was located. The schools in the community were predominantly white and there is still strong Anglo influence. But the demographics are changing and the school population is beginning to reflect different ethnic groups. And at the helm of this school, leading this school is now a black female. And the leaders prior to her have been white males. So now the community must adapt to a new leadership, which bring challenges to the leader. So absolutely I have experienced challenges from individuals for whatever their reasons were.

In the early years of her career, Deborah says she experienced initial resistance from her staff. But she had a strategy for overcoming their resistance.

Being in upper level management so long--I encountered resistance often. I can recall the one male supervisor that was totally resistant--was black. As a matter of fact, he went to a higher-level authority and complained that I was not training him or showing him how to do his job. He was one of my upper level managers. We set up a meeting. I said you've been in that position for two and a half years. I can't tell you everyday how to do your job at 4:30 on a Friday afternoon. If you don't know by now after two and a half years perhaps you are in the wrong field. And I did the speech about some people being born managers, some are transitional, and some never get off first base. But in the same respect I have had some white males, white females, black females. And I would always respond one-on-one. Now if it was a group setting and someone challenged me there, I would not lose my cool. I would come back with something somewhat sarcastic, but smart and funny: Excuse me; you must have been talking to someone else. We'll talk about that later. Or perhaps you need to look at policy. Cite a policy or

something of that nature. Now if it were something completely out of character that I couldn't put that type of spin to it, once the setting or the meeting was over, I would ask that person to come to my office. Or I would go to my office ask my secretary to call that person in and I would do a little prayer meeting. And you would not believe...the majority of the people that gave me some type of resistance ended up being my right hand. I have never in all my years known people to have so many perceptions. And I would say, don't go by what you hear, go by what you know, what you see...and then measure. Go by my performance. What people say about me...that I'm this way or that....get to know me for yourself.

Kezia vividly remembers clashing with another manager when he circumvented her authority. Instead of this manager coming to Kezia about a technology issue that was clearly under her area of authority, the individual took the issue to Kezia's boss. Making matters worse, her boss handled the problem rather than sanctioning Kezia's authority with the other individual, making her authority appear minimal.

I have a title but my authority in that title has been challenged. One of the managers was upset about something that happened. We were providing a level of service that I thought was what he needed. An incident happened with one of my employees where I guess he didn't feel as though my employee fixed the computer the right way. But instead of coming to me, he went to my boss. My boss handled it and then talked to me about it. I quickly said, "If you want me to do this job you need to let me handle my business. I don't need you stepping in to save me." The other manager and I had a little run-in. Well he put his finger in my face and I got up. And my boss knew: He has crossed the line. I am not to be played with, you do not disrespect me, and you do not cross my physical space. It was a very tense situation and my boss dealt with that person from then on. I am professional but there are things that will cross the line and you will take me back to a place that I really don't want to go. It's almost as if 90% of the time it's going to be a white male you have to go up against. Or when my boss feels as though he's got to step in and deal with this because he doesn't want me to have to deal with it--that minimizes my level of power.

There was also a situation where one of the administrative assistants on the same floor. She would go directly to my boss. And it was always, Oh I forgot. So this is the case where we have the female going to my boss and just trying to usurp my authority. I said, you know, until you stop her from coming to you direct, I will have no authority. I'm not controlling my group. I don't need your assistance. So it's the thin veil of authority when in fact if it's challenged and you

feel as though you are not given the respect that you need, depending upon the individual, it will be handled and then they deal with the man and not with you. So it's a superficial level of authority. It is not the real sense of power to make a decision or to do something. I've been put in a situation recently where I did not agree with something. I took the position that "the direction you all are taking this, I don't think is the way I want to go; and I think you probably need to look for somebody else." That's when the authority was exerted by my boss that, "You will do this or suffer the consequences." So, *he* [emphasis added] has power. I have been relegated to having to do this or accept my lot. Your authority can be usurped for various and sundry reasons. And you have to wonder... Well, I guess, I thought I had this power.

Hannah shared this perspective of being disempowered and talked about her reaction strategy.

I had a boss who operated in a crisis mode all the time. And because she was also racist, when she came, she tried to turn everybody against me. I had gotten everybody to know me and we were all...together. But then she started creating little groups again. She would pull people in for little special meetings. So she did everything she could to cut ground from under me. And she would come into my office. And every time she came into my office--it was a problem. It was never anything that I had done right. And so the first thing I knew, my blood pressure was racing, I'm wondering what have I got to deal with now. What is this? Then the Lord just gave me a strategy...and this was just for me...it was stop, drop, and roll. The stop was to be still and know that God was ultimately in control. Drop your personal investment in the outcome because God has promised to take care of you. And the other was roll--instead of me trying to struggle with whatever this is that comes out of her mouth, and trying to make it right and give her an answer--what I can do is cast my cares on God. That is, trust God to take care of me and then just deal with the situation and leave the results to Him.

Because at first my heart is racing I'm trying to figure out what's wrong so I can fix it. And then I would get so calm when I saw her coming that immediately I went into a biofeedback response. My heart rate would slow down deliberately to keep her from triggering that adrenalin rush in me and getting me all fired up. And once I learned that strategy it was so good for me that I carried it over into other areas of my life.

Being excluded from the good ole boy social network. The good ole boy system is a system that allows racial prejudice to linger and endure and as a result create a social

stratification usually across racial lines. In addition, this system serves to keep a barrier in place that excludes AAW from social circles where opportunities may exist to advance. Often access and the freedom to exercise one's power and authority lies in informal social networking systems (Gostnell, 1996). However, as the participants in this study indicated, AAW may have limited access to these social connections in predominantly white organizations. Hence, the good ole boy system keeps in place a concrete ceiling. The concrete ceiling refers to a barrier(s) AAW encounter advancing in management and leadership roles (Bell & Nkomo, 2001). The concrete ceiling is denser and more difficult to break through than the glass ceiling. Several participants described being challenged by the existence of a good ole boy network system.

Claudia's encounter with the good ole boy system occurred when a white woman was placed in a position for which Claudia already had the qualifications and experience. This woman had worked for the organization before, and although she had left, she had maintained contact with some of the top managers. So returning to a management position was simply a matter of her saying she wanted it.

The person that held my current job before me was a white female. I had actually trained this woman several years before, but she left the organization. When this position came open a few years back, she applied as an external applicant and got the position. It was not until she was promoted to an executive management slot in another part of the organization that I was moved up to the position I now hold. Even though she had left the organization, she was still in the clique. She still maintained contact, went to lunch that sort of thing, with certain people--higher ups--in the organization. So coming back into a high position was just a matter of her saying she wanted it. The fact that I had working knowledge, qualifications, and all those things that you are led to believe will help you achieve--it didn't matter! The other thing she was white and I am black. And although I did eventually get the position, it still makes me feel like a second-class citizen. I had to take a back seat to this woman, who had much less experience about the operations of this department at that time. She had been

away from the organization for a number of years, which placed her in a position of not having the insight that I had.

Vashti talks about how social networks create opportunities.

One of the things that I have always said about the magazine is that it is the most incestuous place that I have ever worked. I say that because a job opening usually ends up being filled by somebody who knows somebody. I didn't really know anybody at the magazine, but I knew somebody who suggested I fill out an application. So when I applied for the job the man who hired me actually said, you blew them away with your interview. He said they had already picked out somebody else who they wanted for the job, but I blew them away with my interview, so I got the job. But once I started working at the magazine, I also found out that most of them had gone to the same college, a lot of them had boarding school experience, and I had none of that. So it really did take a while to get into that circle and be accepted.

Lydia confirms with the other leaders' perspectives and admits feeling left out.

Then there were the times when there were going to be social gatherings and if I were a male or a white--let's say a white male--and this happened a lot. If there was some sort of social gathering--after work, weekends, whatever. I didn't know about it. But if I were that white person in the same position, then I would have been the first to know about it. And so I was left out and it was just so obvious. It was, you know, very obvious. And I felt that several times. Now this is where administrative decisions and discussions take place. And you get back on Monday morning or whatever and you not know that things have been discussed or whatever or decisions been made. Of course discussing something and making decisions are two different things. These were things that were discussed among subordinates at picnics, drinking beer or whatever, over the weekend, or in the evening sitting in the backyard, whatever and I won't know anything about it. And...when did y'all make that decision and sometimes they had to tell me. And I'm like, Oh, ok. But the good thing is, I knew, and they knew any ultimate decisions had to go through me.

Kezia agrees and says AAW are locked out of social networking opportunities.

She offers this perspective.

The thing that happens with a lot of AAW is that we're on the peripheral of the social circles and we can be locked out in many instances. I don't play golf or play squash. So I don't get those invitations. So the relationships that I form can mostly be those relationships that are on a work level. A lot of the things that happen, and I watch it even amongst my male employees here, the younger

employees will all bond. They'll all go to lunch as a group and they will probably have "talk about the boss sessions." So they have formed a male social network. And a few of them go golf together. That is a part of the mentoring and leadership style that is very traditional and it's off the radar. But it goes on and it's natural. These are the types of things that many women, especially AAW, are left out of. And so on the golf course where you tell me about this and how you need to do that, I am missing out on those mentoring opportunities. The informal nature of the social context is being pulled into that circle. Oh you want to go to golf course with me. Oh you want to join me for my afternoon squash session. *I* [emphasis added] have to build other relationships or look for opportunities to get together with other AAW who might be experiencing the same types of issues. The things you deal with are extremely subtle. Although my title is CIO, I am not a part of the executive management team--which is kind of funny in and of itself. And I know that from a socialization perspective I'm not on the dinner invitation list--have never been. In my former job, and I was there eight years, and I would get invited to some things. Some friends and I talk about it a lot. My first job fresh out of school the thing you learn quickly to do after work is go to happy hour. And so I made it a point to go to these settings and just sit and listen because you can get information that way. And a lot of times you get a couple of drinks into folks and you find out so much. In my current position, it's a little bit different--it's more of social cliques. I'm not in the social cliques. The folks that get together and the topic of discussion may be the folks at work or the executives or whatever. So I'm not invited to the table. There are other social contexts in which I can cross over. I guess maybe if I joined XX country club. But then I'm still not going to get invited into their group. Or maybe if they see me they'll go, "Hey you want to join us." But I should not have to go through that extent in order to get the information that I need. So that can be an inhibitor. I have involved my children in soccer and through soccer I know two of the gentlemen at work whose children are in soccer. In fact, they coach my kids. So you do get to know a group of people in that type of social setting.

Esther recalls the following story about socializing in a white male world.

I recall a particular instance when I was part of a group of managers that had gone to an out of town meeting. I was the only black person among a group of about 12 white men. After the meeting we went out to eat at a huge cattlemen's association-type eating spot. But the atmosphere had a bar like setting. So this actually turned out to be a drinking session as well. I don't drink so I think that's why I say your integrity is constantly being challenged. I don't drink at home so I'm not going to drink in these types of settings. Some people get in those environments and try to act cool just to fit in. I always wondered why a person would go away from home with strangers and place themselves in a situation or be involved in some activity where they don't know how they are going to act.

So that particular night, they were drinking and talking loud and talking about something I wasn't interested in. Being the novice I was I had thought that going to supper meant just that. Now to be fair to some of the guys in the group, even though they were the hard and horrible type, they sort of looked out for me. I even asked this one guy for the keys to his car so I could go back to my room, feigning not feeling well. He offered to take me back and I declined because of how it would look. I really didn't know where we were or even how to get back to the hotel. But somehow I got back! The next day I go into the meeting bright eyed and ready because I had gone to bed early. I'm looking at the agenda and thinking about the decisions we would be making that day. And so they all walked in half-asleep, laughing at each other, and reminiscing about the night before. To them a meeting was just somewhere to be. They didn't believe in following an agenda. So when I began to bring up items on the agenda, I was told, Oh, we decided on that last night! So I soon learned that was where the decisions were made. Like people who golf now. One of the top managers took up golfing. And guess what? Because he was into the sport other managers began golfing. And you learn to do those sorts of things to get access to information. But I never played that game and I never wanted to do anything that was compromising.

Being the only one – the outsider within. Outsider within refers to the disempowerment of AAW within interactive systems of power, race, gender, and social class (Collins, 1998). The essence of this experience is that the individual is often the only woman of color, sometimes the only person of color in a group setting. Many times whites are not sensitive to how this situation often creates the feeling of being alienated, unaccepted, undervalued, and alone. In this study, more than half of the participants reported having experienced these types of emotions. The following are selected stories that were shared.

Priscilla recalls being the only AAW early in her career, particularly during social functions:

The first 5 to 10 years, everywhere I went I was the only little spook. I stood out more than a sore thumb. But another part of that is the bitch in me. I'm like you know, Ok, y'all deal with it! It's your problem. It's not mine! It was funny. Because my father even told me one time: Now look. Don't try to be so much of

a bitch that you hurt yourself. I'm not! But you know what? *I* [emphasis added] deserve to be here. So, *you* [emphasis added] deal with it. Oh Lord! They would be just so uncomfortable. I'd go talking all loud around them. What are you going to do to me? I do a good job. You don't have anything on me, and you're not going to have anything on me!

Julia's experience related to being the "only" one at meetings and gatherings and remembers feeling stressed and unaccepted. Julia relives an experience when she attended a workshop and she was immediately aware of the closed circles of whites around her.

I attended a conference and upon arriving I found I was the only AA person there. I did not know any of the people there and this was a 3-day event. And the whole time I felt so out of place. During the breaks I noticed how the white people sort of naturally started conversations with each other. And I'm generally a very sociable person. But it's like a wall goes up when you are the only black person. You look around and there are little groups of people talking. And you wonder how you might or how you would become a part of that group. Now people would speak to me but it was sort of like, because it was the socially polite thing to do. But no one tried reaching out to me. I even wondered whether or not they knew each other before the workshop. Although I knew this was probably not the case. They just seemed to know about the same sort of things, have the same sort of interests--things like that. That was a time that I felt very alone. Maybe they were not aware how alone I felt. I didn't know anything about them--they didn't know anything about me. But I survived those three days. I guess along the way, I have learned how to appear sort of indifferent. Like I'm on a mission of my own, and it doesn't really matter if I am invited into these little groups or not.

Claudia also talked about a similar experience being on a planning committee with a group of white women. But these women overlooked her and never once tried to bring her into the discussion or asked for her input. Claudia's perspective is that for people of color it is natural to assume that race plays a part in feeling like an outsider because in those instances that individual is the one that is different.

I had something that happened to me recently. I was on a committee to plan a retirement party for one of the executive management staff. I was the only AA person on that committee, the others members were all white women. When we had the first planning meeting, I really felt out of place because--it was like I was there and I wasn't there. They never acknowledged me in any way. It is hard to explain how white people overlook you. For the most part, white people don't know what it feels like to be--the outsider. Because that is how I felt. They don't appear to be sensitive enough to the way AA people have been treated. So with me having the vibes of how the meeting is going, they're not acknowledging me, so why should I say anything? None of these ladies ever asked me, Claudia, what do you think? This would have been an invitation to me to join their group. But I was just sat there--waiting. I didn't have any kind of input on anything. Even picking up on some of the discussions, I could tell they had discussed some details of the retirement party among them even prior to this meeting. But I had no prior knowledge of anything. This made me wonder why I was even selected for the committee in the first place. Although I know I was selected because to not include me would be obvious and they needed me there to prove they don't discriminate against anyone. So in situations where there is only one AA person, white people should have a little more awareness of the *uncomfortableness* [emphasis added] of the situation and maybe reach out a little more.

Hannah's perspective of being the only one related more to issues of class. She talked about her participation in the first Leadership Institute sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce. Participation in that first group, she says, was very selective and was made up of prominent and high status people from all over the community.

I was in the first Leadership Institute sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce in 1981. There were black males involved in that first class but I was the only AA female. When I first began with the Leadership class I felt kind of outdone because everyone in that first class was wealthy, not super rich, but several high status people in the community were involved, and I was only working part-time. But I had been active in the community so I really went in on my community based leadership background. I was the only AA on a lot of community-based boards. So that's how I ended up being involved in the Leadership Institute. But I felt kind of outdone in the sense that these people had wealth and I didn't. So I thought that put me at a disadvantage. But one thing I've always had--and I thank God for it--I've always been well read, and fairly well traveled... literature can take you vicariously a lot of places you haven't been. But I never felt *mentally* [emphasis added] outdone. I felt like I could intellectually hold my own. And I felt like with etiquette and social graces, I could hold my own. But I felt like they had more money than me. And at the time I guess money was an issue with me...

it remains an issue, but it's not the issue it was then. And then God just sort of revealed to me...it was kind of like a vision. I saw this box. It was very beautiful, but on the inside there was nothing in it. I read a scripture that said: *The rich and the poor meet together and God is maker of them all*. And for me that was like the equal playing field. I didn't worry about that any more. Because God showed me that wealth is illusory, in the sense that it is a defense. It presents some things but it has nothing to do with you and who you really are. That's something you happen to acquire. I figured out then...I looked around and most of them had acquired it generationally. They were very particular about who was involved in that first class. There were some attorneys in there; two of them eventually became DA. At the time, I was really impressed with the credentials of the people that were involved. And then I thought--that doesn't matter. God levels the playing field. So I accepted that and once I accepted that I was fine...I felt like I fit. I made a lot of contributions, and evidently I impressed them because they asked me to be on the Board.

But I tell you one thing that happened, that next year when I was on the Board, there were no blacks in that group. And I felt it incumbent upon me to stand in the gap. And I said: You know this is a Leadership Institute, but it's not representative of the community. There are Hispanics and blacks here in the community but there are none on this Committee. One of the ladies, who was "old money" said to me: What do you people want? You know we're trying to get the people that are leaders. And it was good that God had settled that wealth issue for me, not that it wouldn't re-occur at some point, but it was settled basically. And I think what she was saying is that we have picked all the people who have *wealth in the community* [emphasis added]. But they had not picked people who were leaders. Because in the black community and the Hispanic community there were people that were looked up to whether they had money or not...they had influence. So leaders come from different strata. And they lead in different ways. And I said we haven't looked hard enough. Their thing was--well we put this application out here everybody had a chance. I told them sometimes people have to be extended an extra invitation to come in. And so they went out and found two blacks. And I was happy with that. And after that this lady and I became very good friends because we were honest with each other. It wasn't a knee jerk reaction to what she said but I thought, I'm the only one in this room--and I was the only black person--that sees there are no people of color in this Leadership Institute. Now how are you going to have a Leadership Institute for the whole community and there are no people of color? What message does that send to the children? What message does that send to the community? So after that I had accomplished my mission and that everybody was convicted.

When Esther accepted her managerial position, she was the first woman, period, to hold the position in her community. That automatically placed her in numerous

situations where she was the only woman. There were other AAs present but they were custodial staff and her interactions with them were not work related.

...I had to deal with other department managers whose staff relied on my staff to supply them with information to meet their deadlines. All day I would have rugged, rough, and tough looking guys wearing cowboy boots and jeans coming in my office trying to intimidate me by saying how one of my engineers had not done his job so they could get their work done. Quickly I find out that I am “it” and that now I was in the direct line for having blame placed. Every Monday there was a manager’s meeting and that is when they would dump on my office. So here I am, the only female, and black on top of it, coming into these meetings among rough, gruff racist acting men who were quick to blame my office for delays when actually their people shared some responsibility. I would go back to my staff and try to sort out what happened in these specific situations. This is how I learned more and gained a better overview of how the company’s operations fit together. Which is interesting because my staff was willing to share information with me at this point because their work productivity was just as involved as my responsibility for being the manager. So I had to learn the “field.” Since I was an “inside” person, this was actually stepping outside the box for me. I mean I literally spent a day riding with one of my field workers. And that is another story because I had to confront him numerous times about conducting personal business when he should have been doing his job. This was a new experience for me because first of all I’m dealing with men and second these were men who didn’t think much of women, and they certainly didn’t think much of black women. Here I am like a kid to them. Before I approached him I would always try to understand the information I had been given. If somebody accused him of not getting the work done--and trust me he hadn’t--I wanted him to show me how this could happen. Well he would try to talk around how people had lied about what should have happened, when the bottom line is, I wanted him to *show me where you are* [emphasis added]. One particular day, I knew what I was looking for because I had it on paper. So I called him on it. I more or less told him he was stealing from the company because he was riding around all day, drawing overtime, but not doing the work. He fussed and jumped and ranted, threatening to quit and saying how he’s going to have me fired, that sort of thing. I just sat there and let him rant and rave. I always tried to stay calm. Because I knew that as long as he didn’t hit me, I’m ok.

Needing validation. Needing validation refers to situations where AAW have to pass the test of being knowledgeable or being qualified to perform in the capacity of leader. According to Catalyst (2004), 32% of African American women confirmed that

they encountered this type of experience in predominantly white organizations. In the present study the participants encountering this experience recalled how once they proved themselves, they seemed to receive more support. For example, Priscilla recalled that once her superior validated her with clients, she was more prone to be accepted in her position.

Now I have been in client management for many years. I was in international banking for almost 30 years before I moved to government. I saw it then and I see it now. So I can tell when I need to bring the white man along so that I can get something done. So--I just--do it. Actually they have pretty much gotten away from this now, but within the first year and a half to two years, I had clients who would direct their questions to my manager or their issues or their emails to my manager and these were my clients! And he finally had to tell them: You know what? Priscilla is your banker. You need to go to Priscilla. And when he did that, they started doing it!!

Julia talks about her years as a councilwoman and how every decision she made was scrutinized. Regardless of how she voted an issue, she says the media was quick to publish it. She also recalls how other council members referenced her inability to understand issues because she was new to politics.

When I was first elected to the City Council, there had never been an AAW on the Council. It's like they didn't know how to take me. In fact there had never been an AAW to even challenge a candidate for this position. I defeated the incumbent and was new to politics. Many of my constituents didn't truly believe an AAW should serve as a councilwoman. So it was a challenge. There had never been a black female to challenge or even run for a city office. It's just like that was uncharted territory. After I defeated the incumbent, I remember having to work hard to be accepted among the other council members. They had really liked the person I defeated because he was a good person. And every decision I made or whatever I voted on it's like they had to find something against it, no matter what. Even the newspaper would make a point of highlighting, even quoting everything I said. It was like my comments or decisions needed open scrutiny. I felt it was more my race than just being a female. I was a black female, so everything I said they wanted to make sure people knew about it. This was like wanting to find something wrong with what I said or what I did. And by

being placed in the media, someone would surely find something! It took me at least 18 months for people to trust me and know that I was dedicated, knowledgeable, and determined to be the best representative on that Council.

Claudia talks about how while interviewing prospective employees, she is often asked by whites (particularly white women) how she got her job. She senses she has to explain the why rather than the how.

Another thing that sticks in my mind are occasions when I have interviewed prospective employees, particularly white women. They often make comments like: How do I get a job like yours? I don't think these people even think about the years I have spent getting where I am. Or even the fact how much I sacrificed to get an education. And most of the people coming to me for jobs barely finished high school! But in the back of their minds, they see an AAW in a high position and it's like something has been taken away from them. They see my position as being something they can just drive up today and claim it tomorrow. White people have this taken for granted privilege that they can simply lay claim to whenever suits their purpose.

Hannah's perspective of validation has been to convince whites she knew what she was doing; once they had seen evidence of her qualifications she was validated.

I remember another thing that happened. When I went into the central office there was a new administration. This new administrator was like hell on wheels in terms of getting onto everybody about their jobs. So he jumped on me about something. He had written something up and I wrote him something back. And he was like... awed. Not only did I have the correct information and his was flawed, he said: You write better than anybody in this administration other than me. And so he said that in front of three of my peers and a few of the secretaries. So once that got out, that kind of gave me credibility.

De-mythicizing the stereotypical images. The authority to define societal values is a feature of power held by dominant groups (Collins, 1990). Therefore, this group has been instrumental in defining images of AAW. "These controlling images are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be a

natural, normal, and inevitable part of everyday life” (p. 253). AAW entering organizations to lead are challenged to de-myth the images that society has placed on us merely by nature of our group membership. Julia talks about going for an interview and it was assumed because she was an AAW she was a single parent. She also recalls a stereotypical remark being made about blacks filling quotas.

I’ll give you another example. The first interview I went on after I finished supervisor’s school back in the 80s, I was asked, Well if you get this position, what are you going to do with your baby? And I said, What baby? I don’t have a baby. The interviewer (a white woman) replied, Yes you do! And I replied, No I don’t! Well what happened is the very month I went to work for the organization my brother and his wife had a baby, and I had her picture on my key ring. So I asked, Do you mean my niece? The woman replied: That’s your niece? Someone had told her I had a baby, so she automatically assumed I was a single parent with a baby. And *that* [emphasis added] determined whether they would give me a position or not. We have to have a different moral than they have.

A group of us were on an out of town trip. So one of the guys said, Well they have to promote so many blacks because they have to fill a quota. The woman said--now I’m sitting right there--well I think they would have met their quota by now. And they couldn’t see how offensive and hurtful this conversation was to me. Because I have counted the number of African Americans that are currently in top positions in this agency and as a race we are still underrepresented. And AAW are not even on the radar!

Claudia’s perspective of stereotypical images relates to a conversation she was exposed to where other administrators were making belittling statements about black workers with no regard for sensitivity.

I was in the presence of some of my peers. As usual, I was the only AA person present. This was not a meeting or anything. We were just sort of standing around. A white woman in the group made a stereotypical comment about one of her black employees. Everyone present thought it very humorous. Of course, I did not see any humor in the comment, and finally after a few minutes I removed myself from this group. But it bothered me because the way these people see black people is so messed up. So I decided to speak to my boss about how discussions like this, particularly among the management staff is so belittling to

blacks. In fact, I told him there was a racial problem in the department. He said if there was a racial problem in the department, he would know about it. I told him, no, he would not know because he was white and could not see the problem the same way as I. He looked at me and stated in a very deliberate tone that I was never again to accuse him of being racist. At that point, I knew the conversation was useless. So I left his office. I felt as if I had just had a conversation with a brick wall.

Hannah seeks to de-mythicize stereotypical images by encouraging people to get to know her.

That's one thing I found...a cross an AAW has to bear, there are so many negative stereotypes of AAW. And you know what they are. All you have to do is watch TV. We're promiscuous, we're unprincipled, we're easy--all those things. So I found out I had to first establish what kind of woman I was. And once I beat those stereotypes, then I had to be careful to preserve my integrity--so that I was seen as a person of integrity. And that other stuff was off the table from jump. And when the group comes to know you--that's good. But every time you walk into a new group, you have to do it all over again.

Deborah agrees and adds that lighter skinned AAW are often judged for using their looks to try and advance their careers. She says that this was a stereotype she worked hard to prove a myth.

Black women are so often judged by the color of their skin and how they look. I never wanted that to be a factor for me. So I decided to step out of the norm. And not use the color of the skin that God had blessed me with to get me where I wanted to go. My parents sacrificed--they had sent us to school, they sent us to college. I know they did without. I had made it up in my mind that I was not going to let them down or do anything personally that was going to embarrass them. So I think that carried me a long way and it still carries me a long way. I don't mean that attractiveness is an advantage but I believe some people thought so. And once the other managers got to know me--they knew there was a line you could not cross with me. A lot of them knew there were certain things they could not say around me. I would not tolerate it and that I demanded respect.

Esther gives another perspective of how AAW have had to overcome stereotypes.

I accepted this job during a time when affirmative action and quotas were starting to be a big deal in hiring. But this also gave people the mindset that you were stupid or you didn't deserve the job or that you hadn't earned it. So I had to constantly work to overcome not being worthy of this position.

Uniqueness as an Indicator of Salience

Gostnell (1996) recommended that future studies engage AAW in reflecting upon and describing the meaning of leadership. In doing so, a “contextual understanding of leadership” (p. 211) may emerge. Following this line of interest, I sought additional insight on the storytellers' perspectives of how leadership is defined. During the interview process, each participant was asked to give her definition of leadership. Yukl and Van Fleet's (1992) definition of leadership was provided as a starting point for each participant to build upon, accept, reject, or re-articulate a definition of leadership from her own perspective of leadership. According to Yukl and Van Fleet (1992) leadership is a socially constructed process whereby the leader exerts influence over activities or relationships within a group or organization. In the beginning of this study, I offered this definition and indicated it was selected from the multiple offerings of leadership definitions. I chose this definition among the vast offerings of leadership definitions because it alludes to the power of the leader to influence followers within the organization.

I applied Alexander's (1988) principle of uniqueness to interpret the definitions. Uniqueness can be applied in multiple ways. This principle can be used to interpret verbal expression as well as the “content of what is being expressed” (p. 271). Table 5 represents a collection of definitions that I assembled from the perspective of each participant. The resulting definitions contain some aspect of leadership that is distinct

and separate from the other definitions. I noted some of the responses were not all definitive but some of them contained a value-based perspective or a belief about the phenomenon. Each participant was asked the following question:

Leadership has been defined in multiple ways. One definition describes leadership as a socially constructed process whereby the leader exerts influence and authority over activities or relationships within a group or an organization. How does this definition align with your own interpretation of leadership?

Table 5. Defining Leadership from the Perspectives of African American Women Leaders in the Study

Participant	Leadership Perspective	Key Components
Priscilla	A prerequisite of leadership is that you have to have convictions and you have to have a certain amount of intellect. You need to gather information and then end up with a conviction so that you can stand for something.	conviction, intellect
Judith	Leadership involves empowerment. An effective leader positions people to be empowered, which reflects that leader's influence.	empowerment
Deborah	Some people are born leaders and some people transition and become leaders. Born leaders have a natural instinct for born leader for dealing and working with people. The majority will follow because the leader knows how to deal with people without demeaning them. A transitional leader does not connect with the people as well as a born leader.	transitional
Esther	Having a good understanding before approaching a situation...and knowing where to get information that will make things clear.	informational

Table 5 Continued

Participant	Leadership Perspective	Key Components
Vashti	Leadership means getting along with the people you have to work with. It is how you conduct yourself on the job.	conduct, relational
Kezia	Leadership is the ability to bring individuals together of various backgrounds towards a common goal. There is a nurturing component, a development and training component and there is a component of challenging and stretching an individual. To lead individuals you need to get to know them and form relationships with them.	nurturing, developing; relational
Claudia	As a process, leadership should be an opportunity to make things happen in an organization, group, team, or the community. It is an opportunity to bring about change, if and when it is needed. Leadership has to be linked to relationships with those that follow because leadership implies a greater than one existence. It is an act of courage in that those that lead may have to stand alone to bring about the change needed.	promoting change; relational
Hannah	Leadership is creating opportunities for other people to be successful. Not to just line up people behind but to create opportunities for those people to come forward. Leadership is relational. Sometimes when followers come forward, they pass the leader; and the leader has to be ok with that. For AAW, leadership is also within the womb of female leadership; it is a process of evolving; it is a personal mission statement.	creating opportunities; relational

Table 5 Continued

Participant	Leadership Perspective	Key Components
Julia	To strengthen the relationship with the employee; to emphasize the strengths and recognize the accomplishments and contributions of the employees; to help them perform their jobs better.	relational; valuing human talent; performance
Lydia	Leadership takes a strong will. It takes a person that has the ambition to set an example. A leader must also be a follower so you can't lead where you don't go. Whatever is asked of employees should be nothing short of what the leader will do.	courage, ambition; willingness to follow

Half of the definitions in this collection contain some reference to leadership and relationships. However, the relationships inferred by this group of women suggest relationship building, collaboration, and consensus. Deconstructing the definitions, it was interesting to see how they varied, which supports Alexander's (1988) notion of uniqueness as a salient indicator. This indicator also supports an underlying notion of black feminist thought that single reality exists within collective experience (Collins, 1990).

Linking with Prior Research

A researcher may want to use earlier research "to replicate, extend, or refute prior discoveries" (Boyatis, 1998, p. 99). According to Boyatis (1998), "a researcher will often do preliminary investigation of a phenomenon and then move on to another phenomenon" (p. 100). However, research of a social phenomenon such as leadership

within the experiences of a socially marginalized group requires persistent, continuous research that builds upon each new discovery.

Parker (2005) encourages future studies of AAW leaders that will broaden and enrich the themes presented in her research. To this end, I have chosen to parallel discoveries I made with Parker's study of AAW executives in predominantly white organizations. Dr. Patricia S. Parker is one of the few researchers that I have studied whose research on AAW and leadership continues past an initial investigation. Her recent contribution on the topic, *Race, Gender, and Leadership: Re-Envisioning Organizational Leadership from the Perspectives of African American Women Executives* examines the ways that race and gender structure the leadership processes of AAW.

During the initial stages of this study, I had the opportunity to interview Dr. Parker. In that interview, she shared insights from her research that significantly helped me to refine and deepen my thinking about my own research. My research takes Dr. Parker's research a step further in that I am investigating specific theory for applicability to AAW's leadership experiences.

Parker (2005) found that AAW executives in predominantly white organizations communicate their leadership in terms of interactive communication, empowerment, openness of communication, collaborative decision-making, and boundary spanning. I was able to identify and make connections within my own study.

Interactive communication. In general, the participants in my study value creating and sustaining relationships with their followers and were less concerned with micromanaging and exercising tight control. For example, Kezia says the following:

I believe in getting to know an individual. I believe that as a leader I need to make sure the folks that I am leading are equipped. And especially in a technical field like I am in, individuals need to be willing to learn new things. They need to stretch themselves. And I have provide the opportunity and environment that I hope is comfortable enough so that they feel they can ask me anything, so that they can work in a context of a group because we do a lot of group projects. So it's important that each individual respect each other. So I need to formulate an environment that fosters collaboration and fosters mutual respect.

Empowerment. The participants commonly believed that followers should have the space and freedom within the organization to embrace the organization's goals so that they feel valued. This passage from Judith's story is an example:

It has been my experience that individuals will exceed your expectations- not just meet your expectations - but exceed your expectations willingly when they have been empowered; when they have been made to feel valuable; when they have been made to feel appreciated; when they have been allowed to demonstrate their self worth; when they have been allowed to cultivate their talents and skills. All of those things come through empowerment of those individuals from the leader. And as a result of that or a byproduct of that, so to speak, is the influence that you have been able to exert, to use, with those individuals to achieve whatever the goals are. Of course the expectations, the goals, are going to be clearly established. But you need for people to buy in to whatever needs to be done to achieve those goals of the organization. You need for people to have ownership and to me that's where the empowerment comes in. It cannot always be your idea so to speak and you cannot always be in the position to be top down and mandating or dictating.

Openness in communication. The participants expressed the value of bringing important issues to the open, that all voices should have the opportunity to be heard; there should be no hidden agendas. The participants referred to hidden agendas when colleagues or other associates met in informal sessions outside the workplace. In many

of these instances, AAW have no knowledge or are not part of the social cliques that would extend an invitation to us. Deborah had this to say about openness in communication:

I used icebreakers, briefings, debriefings, or some type of activity to generate communication - to generate some type of teamwork and feedback. And I used that quite often to draw them in. I also used quite often, well I did and still do...the methodology of...if we had a problem...not to dictate. I would ask the top leaders or top managers in and we would discuss and analyze the situation and the best possible way to handle the situation. So it was not like a dictatorship.... everybody had a voice. We came to a consensus.

Collaborative decision-making. The participants in my study generally recognize community building, a practice that can be traced to the historical traditions of AAW and expresses the spirit of ubuntu: *I am because you are*. Julia gives this perspective of collaborative decision-making:

One of the other things we do as AAW--we pull from our ancestors. We pull from the strength of those that paved the road. That's the strength that we have...

Boundary spanning. The participants in my study commonly expressed value in the process of having conversations that will make organizational boundaries more flexible and permeable. Judith offered this insight on boundary spanning:

Employees need to have the freedom to function within limits set by the leader. A leader should study their workers and learn their skills and abilities. A leader should be a motivator and be willing to appreciate employees and recognize their accomplishments. My goal has been to make others feel good about themselves and emphasize their strengths and contributions and by doing so help them to do their jobs even better!

Therefore, it is significant to the goal of this study to advance and build upon prior research on AAW's leadership experiences in predominantly white organizations.

Advances in our understanding of a phenomenon should depend upon the integration of findings into a single conceptual system (Cartwright, 1959). While Cartwright's statement was made decades ago, the meaning still rings true. Lynham (2000) agrees that:

Leadership theories and research need to be made more consumable to the practitioner who is looking to the literature for answers to very practical problems of leadership. Instead of making isolated, fragmented offerings on leadership to the practitioner, more integrated, 'big theory' perspectives and approaches to leadership need to be made available to practice. (p. 194)

CHAPTER V
FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR
FURTHER RESEARCH

In Chapter I, I presented the problem, purpose, and goal of this study. In Chapter II, I presented a literature review that, while not exhaustive, offered relevant research that has studied the topic of African American women (AAW) in positions of leadership. In Chapter III, I described the methodology that I would use in furthering the research on the topic. In Chapter IV, I presented and interpreted the stories of ten AAW in leadership positions across a variety of occupations and professions. From interpreting the data I found that this group of women found commonality of experiences in feeling disempowered, being excluded from social networking systems, being the only one, needing to be validated in their leadership positions, and facing stereotypes imposed upon AAW by society. In defining leadership they each had a perspective that was uniquely their own; defining leadership in not only definitive but includes value laden terms. In this section I support these findings using the theoretical frameworks of black feminist thought and critical race theory (CRT).

Creswell (1998) writes that qualitative researchers may elect to use “ideological perspectives to draw attention to the needs of people and social action” (p. 78) and look for ideologies that interpret the lived experiences of the individuals being studied. Ideologies are integrated concepts or theories about the human experience. Black feminist thought and Critical Race Theory are ideologies in that they both aim to unveil the oppression experienced by marginalized groups and present opportunities for those

groups to tell about their experiences. Creswell (1998) asks why a researcher would use an ideology to investigate a phenomenon.

...the personal concerns of the researcher...may reflect a heartfelt need to promote social action, to lift the 'voices' of marginalized or oppressed people, to explore gender issues that have served to dominate and repress women, or to bring about general change in our society. (p. 78)

In addition to black feminist thought and CRT, I examined French and Raven's (1959) bases of social power theory for applicability in investigating the phenomenon of leadership in the lived experiences of AAW. The focus of this examination is legitimate power as the source of power. I then return to the philosophical framework for this study, draw conclusions, and make recommendations for further research of this topic.

Analysis of the Findings Using Black Feminist Thought

Black feminist thought is a theory that evolved from the work of AAW scholars and intellectuals for the purpose of empowering the AAW. In this study, the most salient indicator that challenged this selected group of AAW was disempowering encounters that challenged their leadership power and authority. According to Collins (1990) empowering AAW requires identifying the domains of power that constrain AAW and how such domination can be resisted (Collins, 1990). Hence according to black feminist thought, AAW cannot be fully empowered unless intersecting oppressions such as race, gender, and social class are eliminated.

Black feminist thought supports leadership as "power with rather than power over" (Astin & Leland, 1991, p. 7) which encompasses the role of human agency and collective action for bringing about social change. "People working together for social change generate social and psychological power that is greater than the sum of their own

individual effort--through their collective activity and also by constructing counter-narratives that are critical of power and privilege” (Powers, 2007, p 159). The idea of power with power is that it involves the process of sharing rather than demanding (Guinier, 2003). “It expands in its exercise”...and... “finds a way to call on people to connect with something larger than themselves” (p. 141).

Black feminist thought describes two types of power that challenge AAW in positions of leadership: a disciplinary domain of power and a hegemonic domain of power. These power structures are not formally created but the nature of their existence is designed to suppress AAW that occupy positions of authority. Under the disciplinary domain of power, AAW are constantly under surveillance, even AAW who are themselves in positions of leadership. On the other hand, AAW’s success in gaining positions of authority provides opportunities to challenge unfairness in organizational practices (Collins, 1990). In the present study, Esther confirmed this idea.

I knew that they were constantly watching me. I even realized after a while that was a good thing because not knowing it, I was proving to people that were curious about me that, I am who I am.

In the hegemonic domain of power, dominant groups attempt to justify actions through organizational practices and social interactions (Collins, 1990). In the present study, the participants experienced situations where being disempowered, being the only one, being excluded, needing validation, and being judged by stereotypical images of AAW were controlled by the practices and social network systems within their organizations.

To maintain their power, dominant groups create and maintain a popular system of ‘commonsense’ ideas that support their right to rule. In the United States,

hegemonic ideologies concerning race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation are often so pervasive that it is difficult to conceptualize alternatives to them...An important feature of the hegemonic domain of power lies in the need to continually refashion images in order to solicit support for the U. S. matrix of domination...The endorsement of subordinated groups is needed for hegemonic ideologies to function smoothly...[and as AAW in positions of authority] threaten existing power hierarchies, organizations must find ways of appearing to include AAW [but at the same time] disempowering us...The significance of the hegemonic domain of power lies in its ability to shape consciousness via the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies. (p. 285)

Hence, for dominant cultures to maintain their hierarchy of dominance and power, a matrix of dominance must remain intact. AAW are contained within the matrix of dominance at the juncture of race, gender, and social class. Therefore, AAW that have crossed the threshold and occupy positions of leadership in predominantly white organizations continue to face practices and social actions that can dominate and control.

The women in the present study shared many similar experiences, although each one told her story a different way or had some experience that was uniquely her own.

Black feminist thought supports this finding (Collins, 1990):

Despite the fact that U. S. black women face similar challenges this neither means that individual AAW have all had the same experiences nor that we agree on the significance of our varying experiences. Thus on the other hand, despite the common challenges confronting U. S. black women as a group, diverse responses characterize U.S. black women's group knowledge. (p. 25)

Therefore, our (AAW) growing body of common and varying experiences contributes to the power of our knowledge, which lies in our self-definition as individuals. In this study, I found that while each participant acknowledged some disempowering experience that challenged their leadership, they each had a distinct trademark that expressed she had reached consciousness that was unique to the

experiences of the group. A central premise of black feminist thought is the power of self-definition that AAW identify with when reaching a state of changed consciousness:

Rather than viewing consciousness as a fixed entity, a more useful approach sees it as continually evolving and negotiated. A dynamic consciousness is vital to both individual and group agency. Based on their personal histories, individuals experience and resist domination differently. Each individual has a unique and continually evolving personal biography made up of concrete experiences, values, motivations and emotions. No two individuals occupy the same social space; thus no two biographies are identical. (Collins, 1990, p. 284)

For example, I discovered that all the participants expressed having had some disempowering experience that was perceived as a result of their race. This discovery is consistent with a study by Parker and Ogilvie (1996) whereby AAW reported racism, rather than sexism, as the greater challenge to their leadership in dominant culture organizations. In the present study, although Judith acknowledged experiencing encounters with racism and sexism, she expressed she chose not to dwell on those experiences, but rather on the good experiences she had throughout her career.

In addition to being disempowered, the women in this study described how AAW continue to face challenges of being the only one, needing to be validated in roles that have been traditionally defined and occupied by white men, being excluded from social networking opportunities, and being defined in terms of stereotypes that have been associated with AAW. Black feminist thought supports the idea of self-definition whereby AAW have countered these types of challenges through a process of self-definition.

According to Seidman (1991), the ways that individuals interpret their experiences influence their reactions. Stotland (1959) postulates there are three possible

reactions to power that threatens: withdrawal, cooperation, and aggression. Using aggression, an individual seeks to decrease the source of the threat of power by weakening it, gaining independence over it, or eliminating it altogether. In withdrawal, the individual relinquishes his or her goals and therefore cannot succumb to the threat. By cooperating, the individual succeeds only to the extent of the power holder.

Among the determinants of an individual's choice of reaction to threatening power is his membership in groups consisting of others in a similarly threatened position. The first way in which these effects can take place is through the supportiveness of the groups. By support is meant the agreement that a person receives for his ideas and perceptions relevant to these interactions with the power figure. This support can be expressed either by direct agreement with a members' perceptions and ideas or by means of group norms in which there would be uniformity of perception and ideas. (Stotland, 1959, p. 55)

Stotland's (1959) explanation of reactions to power that threatens shows a striking resemblance to black feminist thought and the notion that AAW identify and find support in sharing collective experiences. However, in the present study, this group of women did not react by withdrawing from, cooperating with or using aggression when encountering disempowering experiences. Instead, I discovered that they each used a unique strategy for coping.

The autobiographical stories of Kezia, Lydia, Judith, Vashti, Claudia, Julia, Deborah, Hannah, Priscilla, and Esther are consistent with the beliefs supported through black feminist thought that AAW continue to use a collaborative and inclusive approach to leadership. This approach to leadership fosters our own empowerment and seeks to dismantle the hierarchies of power that challenge our leadership in predominantly white organizations. While the women in this study shared many similar experiences, each one told her story a different way or had some experience that was uniquely her own.

This was consistent with Gostnell's (1996) discovery of how AAW react to encounters of racism and sexism in the workplace:

They neither deny the residual pain of their experiences, nor do they embrace them too tightly. Rather they keep it an instructive distance, using it to continually learn from, but not to clutter their paths or direction, or impede their effectiveness. That they develop a satisfying and productive life despite the persistence of racism and sexism as givens in their lives is a part of the story about African American women that is too rarely heard. (p. 207)

Like the women in Gostnell's (1996) study, the voices of the participants in this study "speak neither of martyrdom, nor of defeat, but rather of the capacity of ordinary women to play the hand they've been dealt with uncommon finesse" (p. 207).

In order for AAW to be successful in gaining rights and being empowered to exercise power and authority in predominantly white organizations, new ways should be found to re-negotiate the terms "leader" and "leadership" so that AAW can be defined and recognized in those terms.

Analysis of the Findings Using Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) evolved during a period of social unrest in the United States (Crenshaw, 2002). This theory is rooted in legal scholarship, evolving from Critical Legal Studies and expanding the critique of social power and illegitimate social hierarchy to address social power and illegitimate hierarchy of race as well. CRT is gaining recognition in the field of education as a tool to uncover the inequities existing in the educational system and to promote social change within that system.

CRT speaks from a critical raced-gendered epistemology that allows researchers to embrace the use of counter stories, narratives, and autobiographies to unveil the unique experiences of AAW and other women of color (Bernal, 2002). The stories of

the participants in this study support CRT in several ways. First, through their stories, the participants in this study challenged dominant ideologies of what constitutes knowledge creation by telling their stories. Through storytelling CRT gives “meaning to the creation of culturally and linguistically relevant ways of knowing and understanding and to the importance of rethinking the traditional notion of what counts as knowledge” (p. 110).

Second, the participants in this study described encounters with issues of race, gender, and social class in their leadership experiences. Encountering issues that are oppressive in relation to one’s social location is consistent with how CRT gives centrality to racism and other forms of intersectionality. “Race-gendered epistemologies emerge from ways of knowing that are in direct contrast with the dominant Eurocentric epistemology partially as a result of histories that are based on the intersection of racism, sexism, classism and other forms of subordination” (Bernal, 2002, p. 110).

Third, the women in this study showed some level of commitment to social justice in their leadership roles. This tendency is consistent with the aspired outcome of CRT, which is to promote social justice and create social change in society.

Therefore, CRT supports the autobiographical stories told by the participants in this study as knowledge produced through situated knowing. AAW are situated knowers in that our social location at the intersection of race, gender, and social class has positioned us as holders and creators of specialized knowledge (Collins, 1990).

Judging the Soundness of French and Raven's Theory of Social Power
for Explaining African American Women's Leadership

French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power is a seminal work in leadership theory. Social power is the potential ability of an agent to influence a target. Influence is that force that one person (the agent) exerts on someone else (the target) to induce a change in the target, including changes in behavior, opinion, attitude, goals, needs, and values. Therefore, social power is potential influence and influence is kinetic power (French & Raven, 1959). The drawback to this theory is the inability to address socially constructed systems such as race, gender, and social class that work against the assumed power and influence of the leader. By the same token, the theory lacks an explanation for socially constructed systems such as race, gender, and social class that control and limit the leader's authority and legitimate power.

In French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power, *O*, the social agent, produces power and influence over *P*, the target. I will first replace AAW with the actor *O*, where she is attempting to exert her authority and influence as a leader over *P*. However as has been shown in this study, in exerting authority AAW often encounter acts of questioning, resisting, circumventing, and challenges to her authority that were perceived to be related to her race, gender, and/or social class. In a role of leadership, an AAW has legitimate power or power which stems from her right as a leader to exert her influence and authority and the other party's obligation to accept that influence and authority. If this theory holds true for AAW, a leader's race, gender, and/or social class should not interfere or enter the leadership and follower relationship. On the other hand,

take for example an AAW in the role of *P*. Now she is in the position of having a superior, *O*, exert power over her. According to French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power,

Cultural values constitute one common basis for the legitimate power of one individual over another. *O* has characteristics which are specified by the culture as giving him the right to prescribe behavior for *P*, who may not have these characteristics...Culturally derived bases for legitimate power are often especially broad. It is not uncommon to find cultures in which a member of a given caste can legitimately prescribe behavior for all members of lower castes in practically all regions. (p. 161)

This explanation is troubling in that the question is, *who* determines the characteristics of *O*? Moreover the language used in this explanation is gender biased and discriminatory. Raven (1993) revisited the bases of social power and made the declaration that this typology is considered the best known framework for studying social or interpersonal power. However, Raven's re-examination of the typology involved testing applicability in various organizational, confrontational, and relationship arrangements. The most salient factor missing from Raven's (1993) review of the typology is reference to race and/or gender. Instead, Raven reviewed how the theory has been useful in examining how doctors are influenced by hospital policies, how children from different countries and ages influence each other, and the power strategies used by political figures. According to Raven, his research is periodically revised to maintain consistency in relation to interpersonal and social power theory. If that is the case, why are women, in general and AAW, specifically, not included in the review and updating of this theory? French and Raven (1959) hypothesized and confirmed that the "stronger the basis of power, the greater the power" (p. 165). However, from the findings in the

present study, French and Raven's finding does not hold true. In exercising their legitimate power, the participants in this study often encountered instances of having their power challenged, questioned, or resisted. In those encounters, their legitimate power was diminished rather than increased.

In an earlier discussion, I pointed out how consideration should be given to the ways that theory changes over time in response to the emergent nature of research and the changing dynamics in society (Brookfield, 1992). Several elements for judging theory have been offered including creating a response, reaching a point of saturation, driving the next steps, and being suitable to the context (Lincoln & Lynham, 2006). In addition, consideration should be given to the transportability of theory (Y. S. Lincoln & S. A. Lynham, personal communication, October 31, 2007). The assumption being made is the ability of a theory to not just "hold true" and explain a phenomenon across multiple epistemologies, but also across multiple contexts and be relevant to multiple stakeholder groups and participants. In my study, the transportability of a theory would relate to the ability of the theory to describe and explain the phenomenon of leadership for AAW. Finally, Patterson (1983) advanced eight points for judging good theory that I restate here: importance, preciseness and clarity, parsimony and simplicity, comprehensiveness, operationality, empirical validity or verification, fruitfulness, and practicality. In my study, the comprehensive or inclusive nature of a theory is judged for its ability to describe and explain the phenomenon of leadership and encounters with race, gender, and social class.

From the findings in my study, French and Raven's theory of social power is inadequate in three key areas. First, it does not offer a response (Lincoln & Lynham, 2006) to the dilemmas created by race, gender, and/or social class. Second, it is not comprehensive (Patterson, 1983) in that it does not consider all aspects and actors involved in the phenomenon of leadership. Last, it is not reflective of contemporary society and does not consider dynamics such as gender, social class, ethnicity, and age (Brookfield, 1992).

In general, traditional theories have advocated the notion of "power over" which "encompasses not only direct control but more subtle forms of power, including control over the rules within a social setting and the capacity to shape what symbolic interactionist have described as the definition of the situation, or the meaning an event has for oneself and for others" (Powers, 2007, p. 159). Traditional theories of power, such as French and Raven's (1959) social power theory, are fixed and do not lend themselves to sociological aspects of being a leader. These theories have generally described power as a system that a leader utilizes. On the other hand, they do not explain nor take into account for how power interplays with race, gender, and social class and can then become a system of disempowerment to the AAW leader. Black feminist thought brings a wealth of information to this discourse and gives new insight on the theories of power and influence. Collins (1998) makes this observation:

It is one thing for African American women or other similarly situated groups to use deconstructive methodologies to dismantle hierarchical power relations. However it is quite another for members of the privileged elites to appropriate these same tools to undercut the bases of authority of those long excluded from the center of power. (p. 145)

Furthermore, leadership based on traditional assumptions has not focused on the processes that give meaning to the definition of the phenomenon (Allen, 1995). In this regard, ways of knowing about leadership have been limited to *a priori* assumptions about the phenomenon. Black feminist thought challenges us to redirect *a priori* assumptions and connect to the social and cultural implications of being a leader. In doing so, AAW are brought into the circle and discourse on leadership. CRT provides a vehicle for bringing issues into discourse, which can then counter, and challenge traditionally held viewpoints. Viewing leadership through socio-cultural lens such as black feminist thought and CRT empowers women because only AAW can “feel the iron” that enters a black person’s soul (Collins, 1990).

Returning to the Philosophical Framework

At the beginning of this study, I stated my philosophical assumption for this study. I acknowledged there was something more I could know about AAW’s leadership experiences outside my own consciousness and experiences in a predominantly white organization. Through conducting and participating in learning about the leadership experiences of the selected AAW leaders in this study, I have brought to the discussion of leadership that multiple realities and perspectives of this phenomenon exist. Black feminist thought, one of the theoretical frameworks in this study, has strong roots in philosophy. For example the notion of self-definition is a major tenet of black feminist thought and is consistent with Buber’s (1958) philosophy of individual worth and the potential for change. The individual “*is* [emphasis in original] not but is forever becoming” (Creswell, 1998, p. 274). Collins (1990) explains self-definition as:

...the rejection of historical, stereotypical images of black women, transcending the confines of intersecting oppressions and rejecting the power dynamics and the authority of those who have sought to define AAW's reality...by persisting in the journey towards self-definition...our actions as individuals change the world from one in which we merely exist to one over which we have some control...enabling us to see everyday life as being in process and therefore amenable to change. (pp.114 & 121)

One of the salient indicators in this study was how AAW experienced encounters with stereotypes of AAW. The participants generally agreed once they dispelled the notion that they were worthy of their positions, people seemed more willing to accept them as leaders.

Black feminist thought also explains how disempowering encounters can stimulate a new way of thinking and can actually be empowering...

...change can occur in the private, personal space of an individual woman's consciousness...this type of change is also personally empowering. Any individual black woman who is forced to remain 'motionless on the outside,' can develop the 'inside' of a changed consciousness as a sphere of freedom. (Collins, 1990, p. 118)

A changed consciousness means an individual has reached another level in their way of thinking about a situation. The women in this study exhibited a unique and changed consciousness in their autobiographical stories. They described experiences whereby they were disempowered and rendered motionless through encounters with race, gender, or social class. But they were also changed from within and lifted to another level of consciousness.

As a critical social theory, black feminist thought exposes the inequities embedded in power structures and opens up a new avenue for deconstructing these structures. At the same time black feminist thought brings to the conversation the voices

of AAW leaders whose leadership experiences are not defined by the status quo. As shown in this study, interpreting the leadership experiences of these AAW provides another perspective from which to examine leadership and represents a shift of focus from a deterministic individualistic paradigm to a more reflexive non-deterministic and collective one (Allen, 1995).

Addressing the Research Questions

The initial overarching research question for this study was: *What are the lived experiences of African American women in positions of leadership in predominantly white organizations?* However, as the processes, analysis, and evaluation of qualitative data is emergent and unpredictable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), I reframe my initial question and restate it as: What encounters with race, gender, and social class emerge from the lived leadership experiences of AAW in predominantly white organizations? The rationale for doing so is based on the nature of the stories that emerged and the interpretation of the data. In the following discussion, I address the restated overarching research question and the sub-questions for this study.

Re-stated Research Question #1

What encounters with race, gender, and social class emerge from the lived leadership experiences of AAW in predominantly white organizations?

In this study, the lived experiences of AAW leaders in predominantly white organizations related to disempowering encounters, being excluded from the good ole boy social network, being the only one, needing validation, and demythicizing

stereotypical images. The most salient of these experiences was disempowering encounters with race, gender, and social class.

Based on the findings from this study, the lived experience of being an AAW leader in a predominantly white organization brings a socio-cultural perspective to leadership. Lived experiences are ways that people experience life based on their social location within society. Lived experience is experience that is not secondhand. It is experienced in how an individual perceives, describes, feels, judges, remembers, makes sense of, and talks about the experience (Patton, 2002). “A person cannot reflect on experience while living through the experience...reflection on lived experience is always recollective; it is reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through” (Van Manen, 1997, p. 9).

In addition, findings from this study indicate that encounters with issues related to race, gender, and/or social class often included the use of power and control by a power holder that further limits an AAW’s leadership in predominantly white organizations. This finding is consistent with and supported by black feminist thought (Collins, 1990).

Research Question #1a

What traditional and dominant leadership theories appear to inform the lived experiences of African American women in positions of leadership in predominantly white organizations?

The traditional theory of power examined in this study was French and Raven’s (1959) theory of social power. This theory establishes five bases of social power:

reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert power. Legitimate power of the leader recognizes the power and influence of the leader and establishes a leader and follower relationship. In this study most of the participants recognized a power with approach to leadership and many emphasized relationships as being an essential feature of how they define leadership. While French and Raven's (1959) theory does recognize a leader and follower relationship, the theory does not include constructs such as race, gender, and social class that can interfere with that relationship and may very well create other power relationships that interfere with an AAW's presumed (legitimate) right to lead.

Furthermore, French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power is written from a positivist research paradigm. As such, it presents a universal perspective of leadership and implies a singular reality of leadership and a universal set of leadership experiences.

Etter-Lewis (1993) argues,

...the myth of a singular reality has contaminated scholarly research to the detriment of us all...the large group norm which creates a single reality can be observed by the conspicuous absence of African American women from major studies in most disciplines. (pp. xv & xvii)

The purpose of theory is to explain and inform. From the stories of the participants in this study, French and Raven's (1959) leadership theory does not necessarily explain challenges presented by their race, gender, and/or social class and is inadequate as an informing theory of leadership for situations AAW experience in their lived leadership experiences.

Research Question #1b

How do implications that AAW in positions of leadership encounter intersectionality (race, gender, and social class) in their lived experiences in predominantly white organizations appear to inform traditional and dominant leadership theories?

Culturally informed theories such as black feminist thought and critical race theory offer a wealth of knowledge to the study of leadership. Leadership theories such as French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power that are considered classic and traditional emerged from a positivistic research. The experiences of AAW speak from a paradigm that is grounded in interpretation and subjective meanings.

Traditional theories of leadership such as the French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power uses a positivistic assumption that the leadership experience can be generalized and made universal to all leaders. Missing from this assumption is the a priori meanings brought to the experience from the social location of the leader in society. Only through considering the socio-cultural perspectives of leadership can the experiences of AAW be understood.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it brings intersectionality (race, gender, and social class) into the discourse on leadership. There is a lack of research and theory on AAW's leadership and intersectionality in predominantly white organizations and this study will contribute to research in that area. The lack of research in this area may be due to several reasons.

First, researchers may have simply overlooked AAW in research studies because of the low numbers of these women holding positions of leadership (Parker, 2005). However, studies indicate the face of leadership is changing, and AAW are now holding executive positions, albeit in small numbers, in predominantly white organizations (Catalyst, 2004). This indication alone highlights the potential for unique leadership experiences for AAW, and as such, should serve as an impetus rather than a deterrent to research interest (Parker, 2001). Second, while some research has been conducted on AAW in organizations, these studies have generally focused on topics such as job performance, job satisfaction, evaluation, and barriers to career development opportunities (Parker, 2001) and have addressed AAW in general, without focusing on the phenomenon of leadership from the experience of the AAW. As a result, there is a lack of research on the exercise of leadership by AAW. Third, research on AAW as leaders may be subsumed within the feminist literature and as such does not add to our understanding (or lack of understanding) of how AAW lead within predominantly white organizations (Waring, 2003).

In addition to addressing the lack of more research and theory on AAW leaders, this study has implications for the fields of human resource development (HRD) and higher education (HE). First, HRD professionals should recognize the importance of designing leadership and executive development programs that are representative of the multiple perspectives of leadership. Second, faculty in higher education, particularly in adult education, should recognize the importance of offering courses and developing curriculum addressing race, gender, and social class in leadership education programs.

Leadership research and theory building should include a systematic study of leadership from the cultural perspectives of AAW (Parker, 1997). In this regard, I propose to contribute to the body of literature on AAW's leadership in organizations and to the diversity of perspectives of leadership in predominantly white organizations. Viewing leadership through the lens of race, gender, and social class offers a perspective of leadership that appears to be missing from traditional and dominant theories of leadership.

Consensus among researchers of AAW in positions of leadership generally agree that studies of leadership have taken for granted notions of white middle class men as the defining group for studying leadership. Further, most challenge the lack of inclusive perspectives of leadership that consider the possibility that race, gender, and social class can define the leadership experience. I argue acknowledging intersectionality is the first step, being vigilant in continuing the conversations the next step. However if we (AAW researchers) are to actively engage in changing the worldview on leadership we must be actively engaged in research that moves toward theory building and enhancing the current theories of leadership.

A model that is promising for beginning theory building research on AAW's leadership in relation to race, gender, and social class is Lynham's (2000) Theory of Responsible Leadership for Performance (RLP). Two key propositions of this model are:

- 1) As responsibility (effectiveness, ethics, and endurance) increases, performance of the whole performance system can be expected to increase (p. 177), and

- 2) Leadership is a purposeful, focused system not an individual or a process managed by an individual (p. 179).

The RLP promotes connectivity between existing theories by rethinking leadership from more than one perspective and reframing the purpose which leadership has to fulfill (Lynham & Chermack, 2006; Lynham, 2000). Hence, the Theory of RLP can “bridge the gap between two or more leadership theories and can be used to explain something between the domains of the existing theories” (Lynham, 2000, p. 193). Furthermore, the RLP could be used as an initial step for bridging the gap between traditional and socio-cultural perspectives of leadership.

Contribution to Human Resource Development and Higher Education

This study contributes to the fields of Human Resource Development (HRD) and Higher Education (HE). First, leadership training and development programs in the field and profession of HRD need to emphasize socio-cultural challenges to leadership. Second, HE should build leadership curriculum around race, gender, and social class. Furthermore, both these fields should begin introducing and utilizing culturally inclusive terms such as intersectionality that are not generally equated with the study of leadership.

Delimitations/Limitations of the Study

Delimitations establish boundaries and narrow the scope of a study (Creswell, 1998). Therefore a possible delimitation is the age group targeted for this study. In this study, the participants ranged from 40 to 60 years in age. By focusing on a specific age group, perspectives of younger AAW in positions of leadership are excluded.

The goal of a phenomenological study is to understand the experiences of those being studied, not to generalize the findings (Ruona, 2005). The findings presented in this study are based upon my interpretation of the data from my experiences of the phenomenon within a predominantly white organization. I have made every attempt to produce dependable data, specify evidence, and present clear arguments that will allow the reader to understand the experiences of the AAW leaders in this study.

Implications for Further Research

The findings from this study were intended to stimulate further inquiry into the phenomenon of leadership at the intersection of race, gender, and social class. In addition, this study of leadership from the perspectives of AAW sets the stage for inquiry into several other issues.

First, according to Kanter (1977) organizational change initiatives are associated with effective leadership. A key prescription for organizational change is building a support system for the leader as the change agent (Cummings & Worley, 1999). However, in the present study, many of the participants perceived that their race and gender played a part when actions they took to implement changes were blocked or hindered. Future studies might examine how leadership theory explains, or does not explain, AAW's capacity to use power and influence to effectively lead change within their organizations.

Second, individuals are often developed in one-on-one relationships, such as mentoring or coaching (Thomas, 1993). In the present study, the majority of the participants indicated they were the first African American woman in a leadership

position within their respective organizations. In the absence of having a mentor to learn from, most of the participants used intuitive skills or gained support from other influential people in their lives. Future studies might investigate how leadership theory explains, or does not explain the development of AAW that encounter barriers created by race, gender, and social class juxtaposed with organizational barriers such as lack of mentors.

Third, participants in this study indicated AAW do not have easy access to informal social networking systems, such as the good ole boy system. Combs (2003) reported that informal social systems provide greater opportunities than formal socialization for successful leadership. Future studies might examine how leadership theory explains, or does not explain, the interactive effects of race, gender, and social class on access to informal social network systems.

Finally, the participants in this study commonly recognized the need to demonstrate equity and fairness to all before being accepted in their capacity as leader. Ohlott, Chrobot-Mason, & Dalton (2004) found that because people prefer to interact with others like themselves, they are less likely to have meaningful interactions with those different from themselves. Future studies might examine how leadership theory explains, or does not explain, how marginalized leaders such as AAW manage race and gender conflict without identifying with the issue.

Next Steps--Advancing My Research Agenda

As I was interpreting the data from this study, the data revealed itself to me in another way. The data revealed that these women were not only speaking about

challenges to leadership at the intersection of race, gender, and social class, they were speaking about learning, values, and beliefs. This discovery links to ubuntu, a concept emerging in the workplace learning literature. The participants in this study expressed three of the basic tenets of ubuntu: spirituality, consensus building, and power of community (Bangura, 2005). Ubuntu is consistent with studies that have identified history and culture as an ideology that unites AAW under a common heritage, creating a force that resists oppression (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Allen, 1995). I also realized that being disempowered, excluded, isolated, and all those other negative experiences these women encountered may have stimulated a transformational learning point in their professional lives. My next step is to use the data collected to examine how traditional theories of learning inform the professional development of AAW in predominantly white organizations. In Appendix D, I provide an agenda of how I will pursue my interests in the topic of AAW's leadership experiences over the next five years. In Appendix E, I provide a current list of publications, including how I have already contributed to this topic.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the lived experiences of AAW leaders and their encounters with race, gender, and social class in predominantly white organizations. A review of the leadership literature and literature of AAW in positions of leadership suggests the body of knowledge is limited in respect to theorizing the experiences of AAW in these encounters.

Although AAW have played a vital part in the history of this country and we are emerging as leaders in U. S. organizations and institutions, our perspectives of leadership are markedly absent from leadership research and theory. According to the majority of the women in this study, the problem was not being an effective leader because many times after the people in their respective organizations learned more about them and observed their leadership ability; they were more willing to support them as the leader. However, people had to first get past the image of the leader being an AAW who is exercising her legitimate right as a leader. The image of AAW as token women and as token blacks has granted us membership of two oppressed groups (Etter-Lewis, 1993; Giddings, 1984). To conjure up the image of an AAW as a leader within a predominantly white organization means the image embedded in society has to be replaced with that of an AAW who is sharing the title “leader” with that of white men.

In addition, I introduced into discourse an epistemology from the viewpoint of AAW leaders in predominantly white organizations that gives new perspectives on how leadership is defined. These perspectives are in sharp contrast to positivistic perspectives of leadership that dominate the leadership literature. According to an old African proverb, “Until the lions learn to speak and write, tales of bravery and courage will only be told of the hunter.”

The results of this study are not intended to generalize the findings to all AAW in predominantly white organizations. Rather, the aim is to begin a dialogue that might stimulate interest for more inclusive and diverse perspectives of leadership. Through the process of investigating the phenomenon of leadership from the perspective of AAW, I

have sought to present another perspective of leadership that is not generally articulated through traditional, mainstream leadership literature, and thereby articulate a more informed and inclusive perspective of leadership.

It is often difficult to separate the influence of race from that of sex; there is no doubt, however that the combination levies a heavy toll on the black woman who tries to exercise her authority and responsibility in groups. Herein lies the most significant challenge to black women [leaders] ...and to all who are concerned with the development of social and psychological theories of organizational leadership.

...R. G. Dumas (1975, p. 49)

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APPENDIX A

LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION

May 30, 2007

Dear Prospective Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Human Resource Development program at Texas A & M University in College Station, Texas. I am writing this letter to request your participation in my dissertation research on the leadership experiences of African American women (AAW) in predominantly white organizations.

A primary focus of this research is to challenge the traditional theories of leadership that were written from the perspective of white, middle class men and therefore excludes the voices of women of color. This study was born from my interest in leadership development – a concentration area of human resource development. From my coursework I became aware of how the impact of race, gender, and social class on the leadership experience is virtually excluded from the literature. In short, as an African American woman and former administrator within a predominantly white organizational setting, *my* reality was missing from the literature that discusses leadership. Beyond my personal interest in this research topic, my goal is to advance research in an area that has received little scholarly focus. I believe that this study will benefit future AAW leaders as well as other women of color by adding new perspectives to the conversation on leadership. Your participation in this research will be a significant contribution towards that goal. The criterion for participating is that you have held or currently hold a position of leadership within a predominantly white organization, institution, or group. This includes current or previously held civic or community positions of leadership. Participation requires a face-to-face interview that will last approximately one hour. These interviews will take place between April 2007 and July 2007. If you agree to participate in my study, I will call you to schedule a time and place that are convenient for you.

The following information sheet explains other details of this study. I am also including a list of the type of interview questions I will be asking for your perusal. Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,
Marilyn Y. Byrd
Doctoral Candidate
Texas A & M University
College Station, Texas
maribyrd@tamu.edu

APPENDIX B
INFORMATION SHEET

You have been asked to participate in a research study that will examine the lived leadership experiences of African American women in predominantly white organizations. You were selected to be a possible participant because of your membership with a professional organization for African American people (or from a personal contact). A total of 15 African American women have been asked to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how well, or not, African American women in positions of leadership are represented by traditional and dominant leadership theory given their position within an interlocking system of race, gender, and social class.

If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview. There will be an initial interview that will last approximately one hour. Taping of this interview is necessary to participate in this study. If necessary a follow-up interview will be conducted to verify or clarify responses during the initial interview. This study will take approximately 6 months. The risks associated with this study are minimal to none. The benefits of participation are to: advance research in an understudied area, and contribute to the professional leadership development of African American women.

You will not receive monetary compensation for participation. This is a confidential study. The records and data collected will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Audio tapes used during the interview process will be accessed by the researcher only for the purpose of this study. Tapes will be erased after all data has been analyzed and the final report written and approved by the dissertation committee for this study. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Texas A & M University. If you decide to participate, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make you uncomfortable. You can withdraw at any time without your relations with the University, job, benefits, etc. being affected. You can contact Marilyn Byrd (maribyrd@tamu.edu) or advisor, Dr. Susan Lynham (slynham@tamu.edu) with any questions about this study.

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A & M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, you can contact the Institutional Review Board through Ms. Melissa McIlhaney, IRB Program Coordinator, Office of Research Compliance, (979) 458-4067, mcilhaney@tamu.edu. Please be sure you have read the

above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the information sheet for your records.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

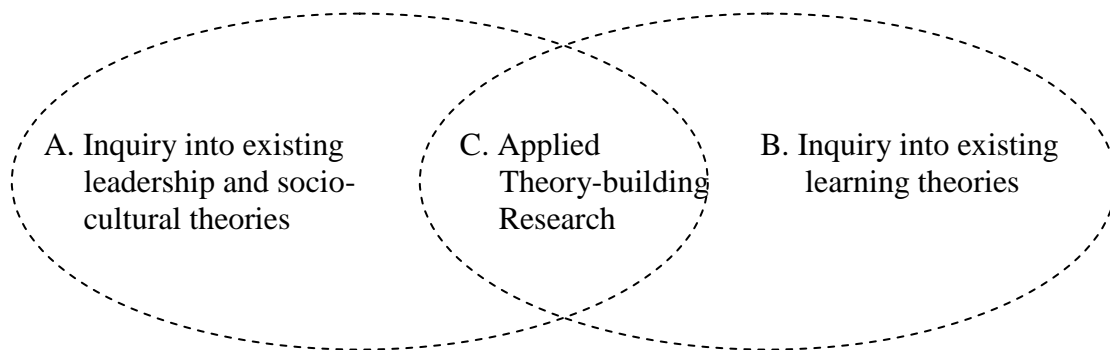
1. Leadership has been defined in multiple ways. One definition describes leadership as a socially constructed process whereby the leader exerts influence and authority over activities or relationships within a group or an organization. How does this definition align with your own interpretation of leadership?
2. Leadership is often associated with the successful use of power and the leader's access to resources to achieve certain goals. How does this interpretation of power align with your demonstration or use of power in your organization? Can you tell me of a time or times when you felt the most empowered in this capacity? The least empowered?
3. Can you think of occasions when you felt you lacked influence with superiors, peers, or subordinates in some aspect of your leadership position? What about times when you perceived an unwillingness of superiors, peers, or subordinates to accept or acknowledge your authority?
4. Like the broader of society, social class is most often a perception. In reality, this perception distinguishes the powerful from the powerless and could influence the leader's access to social networks necessary for successful organizational outcomes. How has this perception (if at all) been a challenge to you in your position of leadership?
5. Have there been times you were the only African American woman in a group session, like an informal or formal meeting, when you felt your opinions or ideas were not valued or accepted in the same way as others that were present? How did this make you feel? How do you meet these types of challenges in order to exert your position of authority?
6. Can you tell me about situations you may have encountered when you felt employees (or others) under your administration were trying to implement their own agendas in direct opposition to yours?
7. Describe for me experiences where you felt your orders, directions, or decisions were challenged or questioned? In what way do you feel race or gender played a part?
8. Tell me about one of the most difficult situations or challenges you have experienced in your position of leadership? What was your way of responding to or resolving the difficulty?
9. Thinking in terms of your experiences as an African American woman leader, if you were to write a letter to your younger self, what would you say?

10. In conclusion, tell me about some experience you have had as a leader that we have not discussed, but has some memorable meaning for you?

APPENDIX D

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH INTERESTS – 5-YEAR AGENDA

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP



A. Existing Socio-cultural Theories

Black feminist thought
Critical race theory
Intersectionality

Existing Leadership Theory
Power and Influence
(French & Raven)
Trait theory

C. Area of Theory building research

Addresses gap
between
traditional
and socio-
cultural theories

B. Existing Learning Theories

Transformational theory
Leader-Member Exchange
Social Learning
Experiential Learning

*The broken lines reflect the flexibility and emergent nature of the process of inquiry.

APPENDIX E
PUBLICATIONS

Refereed:

Byrd, M. (2007). Theorizing African American women's leadership: Expanding the conversation on power and influence within predominantly white organizations
2007 Academy of Human Resource Development International Research Conference Proceedings, Indianapolis, IN.: AHRD.

Byrd, M. (2006). The search for applied theory that informs the effects of racial conflict on organizational performance. *In F. M. Nafukho & H. Chen (Eds.) 2006 Proceedings of the Academy of Human Resource Development International Research Conference Proceedings*. Columbus, OH: AHRD.

Hart, S. A., Byrd, M., & Stowe, C. R. B. (2000). The feasibility of offering an American Bar Association approved Legal Assistant program in the collegiate curriculum, *Academy of Business Law Journal*, 3(2), 73-99.

Refereed, accepted, and pending publication:

Byrd, M. The effects of racial conflict on organizational performance. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*. Florida International University.

Non-refereed:

Byrd, M. (2007). Educating and developing leaders of racially diverse organizations.

Human Resource Development Quarterly, 18(2), 275-279.

Byrd, M, & Demps, E. (2006). Taking a look at National Human Resource Development

(NHRD): Interviews with Gary Mclean and Susan Lynham. *Human Resource*

Development International, 9(4), 553 – 561.

Non-refereed, accepted, pending publication:

Byrd, M. Negotiating new meanings of “leader” and envisioning more culturally

informed theories of leadership: An interview with Patricia Parker, *Human*

Resource Development International.

Book Chapter, under review:

Byrd, M., & Chlup, D. Expanding the conversation: Creating a dialogue between black

feminist theory and adult learning theory in order to theorize race, gender, and

social class from the perspectives of African American women working in

predominantly white organizations. Manuscript submitted for publication.

VITA

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Education: B.B.A., Sam Houston State University, 1991
M.B.A., Sam Houston State University, 1999

Experience: Texas A & M University, August 2004 to May 2007
Graduate Assistant, Texas Center for Adult Literacy and Learning
Assisted staff on research and development related to the professional development of adult literacy practitioners and administrators.
Adjunct Faculty, Spring 2007-Taught undergraduate level course (EHRD 374), Organization Development

Teaching Assistant, Fall 2006-Assisted Dr. Susan Lynham with graduate level course (EHRD 601), Foundations of Human Resource Development

Texas School of Business–East Campus, Houston, Texas, June 2003 to August 2004
Instructor-Taught Business English, Business Communications, Professional Development, Administrative Office Procedures, and Information Technology classes.

Angelina Community College, Lufkin, Texas, January 2003 to Present
Adjunct Instructor, Business-Teach Business Principles course online via WebCT.

Kingwood College, Kingwood, Texas, January 2001 to May 2007
Adjunct Instructor-Management-Taught online courses in International Business, Human Relations, and Strategic Management online via WebCT.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Huntsville, Texas, October 1995 to August 2003
Program Administrator-Responsible for maintaining manual records keeping system; responsible for all departmental human resource related activities.